

Voices from the Open Door



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This series of booklets is dedicated to all those who want real and definite knowledge of conditions where relatives and friends have gone and where they too, from the very nature of things, must soon expect to follow.

One dollar paid in advance will secure, as fast as published, the whole series of twelve booklets containing over forty voices from the unseen world, giving definite knowledge of the surroundings and states of departed friends, and instructive and thrilling experiences in the life after the death of the body.

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VOLUME ONE

CLEVELAND, OHIO

NUMBER TWO

CHAPTER IV

"What a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6: 7.

The Search for Pleasure

A Relation by

GILBERT S. SEVILLE*

I will begin by saying that I am more delighted than I can express to have this opportunity of speaking to one whom I knew and esteemed when we were neighbors in El Paso. I have come through much tribulation into a state where it is pleasant to meet the friends whom I knew in the natural world. For a long time I had no desire to see any one I had ever seen before; for I was conscious of being in a condition that would disclose a poverty and distress which I wished to conceal from all human gaze. I can only speak of it now because it is past; and out of it

*He had lived in this world for more than sixty years, without any definite purpose to guide his life.

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has come a humility of spirit that is willing to be abased in order to acknowledge the goodness of my Saviour and Redeemer, and the kindness that I have received from His servants, who relieved my distresses and assisted in every way possible when I was made willing to accept their aid.

This, and also that my experiences may be a warning to some who are bent on having their own way, and following their own devices in spite of admonitions and warnings, rejecting the opportunity of building for themselves noble mansions, and acquiring riches which will increase and endure throughout eternity.

To make my narrative clear, I must go back even to my childhood. I was brought up in a home where the Bible was revered and read daily by rather strict parents, who insisted on my going to church and Sabbath school, keeping the Sabbath and avoiding cards, places of amusement, novels and idleness. For all these things which I was taught to shun, I had a strong craving,—except the last, idleness. I wanted to be busy about something.

As soon as I was away from the home influence, I threw off restraint and really enjoyed the prohibited recreations, all of which as I now see may be innocently indulged in moderation, and for rest and relaxation. No reason had been given for the prohibitions, only that they were wicked and that God would punish all who broke his commandments. My reason had never been appealed to in matters of religion, nor any attempt made to explain the Bible in a rational way.

In my early manhood, there was presented to me a system of truth which gained the assent of my understanding, but demanded more of surrender than my will was

ready to consent to; so while I commended it to my friends, I gave my energies to secular business and worldly delights, such as my circumstances and the surroundings afforded. I was not grossly immoral, but was not controlled by spiritual motives.

Though changes and vicissitudes came with added years, and unrest and disquiet within produced corresponding effects upon business and family relations, I was not attracted towards spiritual and heavenly truth as a means of relief, but resorted to stimulating drinks and diversion of thought from serious subjects to relieve my depression. I did many foolish and reckless things, and was kept within bounds by the influence of my wife more than any other. When about threescore and ten, bodily and mental strength failed, and I passed into a state of oblivion.

It would not be useful to dwell longer on that side of my life. The particulars are not inspiring nor instructive; only I hope this general statement may be of use in showing that what men are apt to think lightly of, may be fraught with gravest interest.

FIRST EXPERIENCES IN THE NEW WORLD. IS WELCOMED BY HIS MOTHER.

I was not conscious during my last hours on earth, and entered this world as one awakens from a long, deep sleep. Before opening my eyes, I felt a presence strong and sweet about me. I lay quiet for some time trying to think, but passive, and with a little wonder as to whether life went on and on, never ending, and what it meant to live forever. After some time a gentle hand touched my face,—it seemed with a soft, moist cloth, and wiped something off

my eyes, which I then opened; and looking up, I saw the gentle face of my mother, as I had seen it as a child, only much more tender; and smiling, she bade me "Good Morning," and said she was glad to be the one to welcome me into a higher and better state of life than I had known before.

The past seemed to fade out of my sight, and I put out my hands as if to be taken in her arms, and said, "How sweet you look, mother; and how glad I am to see and be with you again. It seems as if I had been away from you a long time, and had bad dreams that I do not remember."

She soothed me and said, "We will not now try to recall them, but accept the glad present and trust for the future."

We then conversed for some time about my early life and the friends of my boyhood and early manhood; and at length my mother said, "Would you not like now to rise and dress and look about you a little?"

I said, "Yes, indeed; where are my clothes?"

She pointed to clothing in the room, and said I would find water in which to bathe, behind a screen she designated, and left me to make my toilet. I arose at once and went to the water; but though it looked clear, and provisions for a bath were at hand, I did not feel inclined to make use of them, even to wash my face; but turned to the clothing and selected what seemed to suit my purposes, and was soon dressed, and opened the door to go out. My mother looked disappointed when she saw me, but said nothing, and we walked in silence for some distance.

At last my mother said, "If you had your life to live over again, how would you begin and in what place would you prefer to live? Among christian people, where the

laws require a man to live soberly and orderly, attend church and learn the laws of a truly spiritual life? Or do you think there is happiness in going contrary to the order that you were taught to respect in your childhood and that of later years, by the example of the best people you knew?"

"Well," I said, "I am not used to going to church; and the conduct of a good many religious people doesn't recommend religion very highly. Of course I prefer the company of decent people, and believe in obeying law; but as to binding myself down to anybody's notions about order or religious observances, I would prefer some place where a man is free to choose his own likings in these things. I have great respect for the Bible, but have not read it much since I was a child. I am inclined to try the world a while longer before giving much attention to preparation for the future world."

Of course I was not awake in the sense of realizing my relation to my mother as one of a long past; but like one in a dream I spoke from a present consciousness, and that was in order that I might for myself and others be made aware of the state of my affection for goodness and truth.

I had not realized, either, that I was in a different place from where I had lived when I had conscious life, so gradual was my introduction into the new world, where I had the opportunity given me to begin to amend. Now I began to notice that things about me were not such as I had been familiar with, and I asked, "What place is this? Is this where I am to live? And who brought me here?"

My mother said, "How soon can you be ready to go home with me? I have a place for you, if you will be

content with my style of living. You have been out West and may not like our sober ways."

This made me reflect as to where I had been, and how I came to be with my mother again. I thought for some time, and gradually my memory returned. I said, "Things seem strangely mixed in my mind. I have some remembrance of going West and of a wife and children that I claimed, and a home and business in a city not so large as this, but of good size, where I lived and had many friends. But it may be I was dreaming; or am I dreaming now that I see my mother, who has been dead these many years? I know I must be dreaming; for now I remember distinctly that my mother died many years ago, and my wife comforted me, saying I would see her again, young and beautiful; but I did not think that could be until I, too, died. But this is surely my mother, and young and beautiful, as Louise said."

"Yes, my son, I have come to bid you welcome to the home where you, too, may become young and strong again, if you are ready to profit by the past and begin a life of true order."

"That depends," I said, "upon what you call a life of order,"—speaking again from my interior thought, without considering where I was or whom I was addressing. "If what you mean by true order requires a man to give up all the pleasures of life and live according to fixed rules, afraid all the time of offending the laws of the church, I prefer a worldly life, as I said before. I don't want to lie or steal or cheat, if I can get along without; but generally a man has to look pretty sharp or some fellow will get the better of him, and then he has to fight the devil with his own weapons."

It was answered, "I did not mean a life that requires any fixed rules that are imposed from without, but whether you are ready to accept the law of loving God above all things and your neighbor as yourself, as the rule to go by, and make other things serve these when any question is to be settled as to your conduct."

"That sounds reasonable," I said, "and if things are not too hard, I will try to go by that. But how am I to know just what is the right thing to do? In many cases one church teaches one thing and another something quite different. My wife—," and here I seemed to waken again, but went on, "used to read books that seemed the most reasonable of anything I ever met; but the people wrangled over some things that didn't amount to much, and I gave up trying to understand what it was all about; though I think it would have been better for me to have done as Louise wanted me.

"But that is all past and here I am,—I hardly know where, or how I came; and you ask me to begin now and love God and my neighbor. Who is God, anyhow; and where are the people I am to love?"

"God," my mother answered reverently, "is the One Life-giver and source of good to all created beings. He is not visible unless the soul longs to see Him; but He is near to us always and will reveal Himself to anyone who desires His presence and help. I hope you will remember this in all the trials that I see you must pass through before you get into heaven."

"Into heaven!" I said. "I have no desire to get into heaven these many years. I feel young and stronger than I have for some time. Let us go where we can have some good music and maybe have a dance."

I turned to look at my companion, but there was no one beside me, nor anywhere within my view. This startled me, and I rose and looked around; for we had been sitting in a resting place under the shade of a tree with wide-spreading branches.

"Where am I and what does all this mean? Was this indeed my mother who had been talking to me, and had she come from heaven to warn me that I am soon to die? If that is the case, I am afraid I did not answer her very politely or kindly. It must all have been a dream. But where am I? And how did I get here?"

"You have made the change called on the earth *death*, but here called *birth*. You are now a spirit and in the spiritual world, of which you did not think a great deal in the life of the body," answered the voice of a man near me; and turning, I saw a fine looking stranger quite close to me.

I gazed at him in wonder for some time after he had ceased speaking, and then he proceeded to say; "Since you are, as you see, in a strange country, I have come to offer any assistance you may desire and to answer any questions you may wish to ask."

I hesitated a few minutes and he then said; "All are made welcome who come here and every want has been foreseen and provided for by the Heavenly Father, who, loves all His children, and only asks that His bounty be accepted and enjoyed in common with whomever may need our sympathy or assistance. For in this world everyone desires the happiness of others as much or more than his own."

"Then I cannot have anything for my own!" I exclaimed. "Not even my own clothing or house to live in?"

"Everything you need will be provided, as I said; but it is the gift of the common Father to all His children alike. We cannot earn anything, since all belongs to God and is a gift from Him, and is received on this condition, that no one claims anything as his own, but is willing to share as others have need."

"Then there is no security to property and no incentive to acquire it," I answered. "I think I like the old way better, even if a man had to work and struggle to acquire possessions,—he had the satisfaction of knowing they really belonged to him, and that he could leave them to his children when he was done with them."

"But," was answered, "if the children, too, are provided for out of the common bounty, why should one wish to hold things in his own name or under his own control?"

"If one could only be sure of that," I answered, "then of course there would be no need of providing beyond one's own needs. But you said that is provided, too, on condition that one holds it ready to give away at any time. Then it is mine no longer than it is not wanted by any one else. If another should claim my house at any time, then I must be ready to move out."

"All that is also provided," was answered. "Every one is best suited with his own house and could not be prevailed upon to live in another. Come with me and choose for yourself a home among these new buildings."

FINDS A PLEASANT HOME.

There appeared before us a wide and attractive street, with trees (maple) on either side; and among the commodious houses was one that was especially beautiful. I stopped in front of it and exclaimed, "If I could have

a choice, there is a house and grounds that are just to my liking and I would ask no better."

"Then," said my companion, "let us enter and see how it is inside."

We entered and the arrangement and furnishing were even more perfectly to my liking than the outside. I stood afraid lest I should intrude upon the inmates; but my friend said, "Make yourself at home. This house and grounds are at your disposal as long as you choose to make it your home. Only be careful that it is not defaced or injured by any disorderly conduct on the part of visitors."

I assured him that no one but orderly people would be admitted, and no conduct allowed that would injure in any way the beautiful walls or furniture.

"You will notice," he said, "that there are many mirrors; and these have the quality of retaining any pictures thrown upon them, which can afterwards be reproduced by one skilled in the art. There are also registers, called sounding boards, that retain and reproduce any sounds that fall upon them. You now have the opportunity of choosing the life that is most agreeable, and calling to you the friends whose society you most enjoy."

"That is certainly all anybody could ask," I remarked. "To whom am I indebted for all this,—the home and the opportunity to enjoy myself so abundantly?"

"To the One Source of all good," was replied, "The Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave us in His life on earth an example of true heavenly life, and said, 'If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and follow me.' But there is no compulsion in His service. As I said before, you are free to choose your friends and live the life you most enjoy. There are compen-

sations attending every deliberate choice you make, but no arbitrary punishment nor reward."

I was now left alone and went through my house and garden, more and more delighted with everything I saw. What a lovely place it is, to be sure; and given without my asking! Lonesome, though, if no one is to live with me! I wonder what the man meant about my choosing my friends and living my own life?

I lay down on a couch and fell asleep; and in my sleep dreamed I saw my family about my coffin and my body enclosed for burial. I tried to speak and tell them I am alive and much better off than ever before in my life; but I could not make them understand and in my effort returned to consciousness.

I was greatly disturbed by this vision, and recalling what had occurred since I awakened in this world, I began to reflect on my life in the world and thought what a failure I had made of it, but said to myself, "That is all past and I am here alone to begin over again,—so my mother said; but I cannot do as she wanted me to do. I have no love for that kind of life. I will go out and see what I can find in the city."

MEETS A FORMER ACQUAINTANCE AND TESTS THE EFFECTS OF PURE WATER.

I had not yet felt the need of employment or of money to pay my way and not much about the kindness that had provided clothing and so good a home. Sauntering along the street I met a man I had known years before. He greeted me cordially and asked me when I came and how I liked the looks of things.

I said, "This is the first I have been out alone. My mother met me, and later a man showed me a very nice place he said is to be my home; but I got rather tired staying alone and thought I would look about me and find what there is to enjoy. It seems quite a city and so there must be places of business and amusements of various kinds."

"Yes," was the answer, "one can find almost anything he looks for; some dangerous places, too, as there were in the world you left. Did you have something special in mind that you wished to see? Suppose we take a look at the public library and the parks provided for recreation. These are protected places in which a stranger cannot be molested."

I followed, first into the library, and looked at the rows of books, some of which had familiar titles; then into a park, where were fountains and public baths, and my friend suggested that we try a bath, as, he said, "the day is fine and the baths are refreshing after one has made such a change as you have."

To this I consented reluctantly, saying I preferred to bathe at home and was afraid of being chilled.

Being assured there was no danger of this, I disrobed, and touching the water with my hands, received a shock that made me draw back and exclaim with an oath, "Why didn't he tell me these baths were charged and then I would never have tried it, or would have known what to expect?"

My guide, hearing my exclamation, called from an adjoining room that he was sorry I did not find the water agreeable; that the effect was not the same to all; that healthy people found it most agreeable and invigorating; that if I would persevere and try again, I might overcome the first impression.

JOINS A PLEASURE EXCURSION.

But I said, "No, I will wait till I get home, or find another kind of water."

"You may find that in another part of the city, but it is not so pure as this, nor so likely to conduce to health of body and vigor of mind."

"That may be," I said, "and yet better suited to my condition."

"Very likely," was the rejoinder. This was said sorrowfully; and afterwards he added, "But I wish you would try this again, and not try to find the other. If one can learn to like it, there are no such dangers here as in the lower places; indeed it is very much safer and better in everyway."*

"Every one to his liking," I said, and hastening to put on my clothes, I went alone into the park again, and seeing a crowd of men and women not far away, I approached near enough to hear what was said by one who appeared to be spokesman of the company.

"Let us arrange," said he, "for a pleasure excursion, where we can have music and dancing and a general good time. There is a boat ready to carry us where we decide to go, and good bathing and boating facilities." Seeing me within call, he beckoned me to come nearer and said, "I see a stranger who will perhaps join us, and then our party will be complete."

I did not quite like the free manners of some of them;

*Pure water, or the "water of life" in the Word, is spiritual truth, and is that which judges (John 12, 48); therefore bathing or drinking spiritual waters, or waters on the spiritual plane of life is a test of character, that is, the affection for the truth of the Word.

but on the whole they looked to be a respectable, orderly crowd; so I joined them and was given the company of a very pleasant, good looking woman, who seemed also something of a stranger. We found the boat ready—a neat, pretty craft, just suited for such a party—and were soon under full sail before a stiff breeze. Nothing unusual occurred until we had landed on an island that seemed fitted up as a resort, and then preparations were made for a general good time.

It was proposed that we first take a swim in the lake. I drew back remembering my first experience; but the leader said, "This water is not like that in the park; I couldn't stand that myself; but here it is delightful." So I put on a bathing suit and plunged in, and to my delight found the sensation quite agreeable. We swam and floated and played in the water for some time, and then resuming our clothing, prepared to dance, which we did to very good music furnished by a band; and I thought, "What delightful company I have found! This is much better than moping by one's self at home, if the home is ever so nice. This seems a very comfortable world I have gotten into, and nothing to pay for anything we have, either. And everybody seems obliging and willing to do his or her part towards entertaining the others.

We stayed here until it began to grow dark, and I asked if we had not better return home, when some one proposed that we remain for the night, saying, "The ladies can occupy the boat, while we men can gather leaves and make ourselves comfortable on the land, and tomorrow we can go on a tour of exploration. There must be many attractive places on the lake, and I see no reason why we may not enjoy ourselves as long as we wish. There is no

law to prevent ; and if we are agreed, we can make a merry party."

No one objected, and so we settled for the night. In my dreams I saw my mother beckoning for me to return to the city and to my home, but when I awoke, all seemed fair for a good time and I joined in with the rest for a day of pleasure. The lady who had been my companion the day before seemed sad, and said to me privately, that if there was a boat going to the city, she would be glad to return. She had been told there was a danger line going too far west, and she did not trust—or feared there was no one who could manage the boat in a storm. I made inquiries about the danger line, but was answered that that story had been disproved long ago ; the whole region was perfectly safe. One of the company had been all over it before. Thus assured, I gave myself up to the pleasures of the occasion ; but the lady, later, seeing a small boat going to the city, called to it and was carried to her home. I met her years after, and she told me she was warned in a dream not to go farther. Well had it been for me too, if I had heeded the warning that came in the same way !

We sailed for sometime before a gentle breeze, but later, dark clouds rose before, and angry looking bolts of lightning darted about above and among them, with every appearance of a coming storm. I thought of my pleasant home in the city and of my dream, and begged the party to turn back ; but they laughed at my fears and said I was a newcomer and "tenderfoot;" that they could not be frightened by a few clouds ; that there were plenty of places to turn in, if the storm became severe, and proposed to defy it by some stirring music and a lively dance.

This was begun ; but the wind increased, and it became so cold we were all glad to huddle in the little cabin and turn toward a small island not far distant. We were driven back and forth in our efforts to reach this, but at last were able to fasten our boat to a tree and wait till the storm should be over.

While waiting, one of the company proposed that we should narrate our experiences since coming to this "new country," he called it, saying it was absurd to believe we were not on the same earth where we had always lived ; though when he first came, a stranger told him he had left the natural world and was now a spirit in the spiritual world.

I said, "how do you account for seeing people here that we know died many years ago, if we are not in the spiritual world?"

At this they looked at one another knowingly, and another answered, "That is either a dream or a hallucination. People often resemble, and it is easy to take one for another. I have known of many such cases."

So we all had, and I was silenced, if not convinced. The storm having somewhat abated, on examining our boat, we found it leaking and so badly injured by the beating of the waves as to need repairs before being seaworthy. We decided to go on shore, try to build a fire and prepare a place of shelter until we could proceed on our tour of exploration.

WAS CAPTURED AND MADE PRISONER.

This, however, was never accomplished ; for while we waited to prepare our boat, a band of outlaws came upon us and we were captured and made to do the menial work

on their ship, and carried to a place barren and desolate, where we were deprived both of our liberty and the common comforts of life. Often we seemed ready to perish from cold and hunger, and knew not which way to go to escape from our cruel captors, who seemed to delight in seeing us suffer. There were both men and women in our party—about twelve in all. The men were made to gather materials and build forts and houses that our captors might sally forth for more prisoners, and for booty with which to enrich themselves. The women were given lighter work; but all were treated harshly and made to feel their degradation and bondage. We had little time to bemoan our fate, for the task-masters were very exacting, and we were terrified by their threats of dreadful punishment, if we showed any signs of rebellion. This continued for what seemed a long time, when we were again taken on board ships and carried to a place of still greater desolation, and cast into prison, dark and dismal, where it seemed we were beyond the reach of hope or rescue.

In this place I remained in a state of abject fear and horror, bemoaning my fate and cursing my Maker, until I fell into a kind of stupor, having given up hope; when suddenly a light shined in my dark cell, and a voice roused me as from sleep, and said, "The Lord will not cast off forever; though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion. If any turn from his evil way and call upon the Lord, He bringeth the prisoners out of their prison and breaks their bands asunder."

*"It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." (Heb. 9-27.)

The reader should keep in mind that this man, together with all in the intermediate world, is passing through his judgment, and is being led in freedom by the Divine Providence, to see and forsake his evil ways.

I started up and said, "That sounds like the voice of my father, reading, when I was a child. He believed the Bible; and after all there may be more in prayer than I supposed."

HE CRIED UNTO THE LORD IN HIS TROUBLE, AND WAS SAVED
OUT OF HIS DISTRESSES (PS. 107).

I fell on my knees and said, "If there is a God who pities the miserable, oh, send some friend to release me from this dreadful place!"

The words were scarcely spoken when the whole structure seemed to have vanished, and I was again in a city and standing outside the gate of the beautiful home that had been offered to me soon after my mother left me. I fell on my knees again in joy and wonder at such a speedy deliverance in answer to my cry of despair; and going into my house, I threw myself upon a couch and gave myself to reflection until I fell asleep; and in my dreams again heard my mother say, "The Lord Jesus Christ is ever present to help and to save those who want his help."

When again awake I resolved to stay about my own home and to avoid the company of strangers, at least of any that would lead me away from the city where my home was. For a time I turned my attention to reading.

There were books in my home on various subjects, some in the form of stories, others descriptions of different forms of government, of people, their habits and customs; also histories of ancient times and parables teaching moral lessons, etc. Tiring of being alone, I walked about the grounds, sat under the trees and finally went out into the street without any definite purpose except that of wanting a change. Soon I met a man coming to see me,

who said, "I was just looking for someone to join me in a game. Being a stranger and having nothing special to do, I would like a social game while I wait for something to turn up; for time begins to hang rather heavy on one's hands when not employed, and there is no excitement."

I replied that I was just thinking the same thing.

"This seems rather a queer world," he continued, "where all the necessities are provided and no special motive for work of any kind. I see some people who seem to be quite busy, though to what purpose I do not know. For my own part, I am not inclined to hard work unless there is a necessity for it," the man said.

"You have expressed my sentiments exactly," I replied, "though I think people are happier who have something to do. Lets look around and inquire if there is not some kind of work that would at least break the monotony and bring us some sort of returns."

* * * * *

Question—Do you eat food as in this world?

While in the prison, I seemed to live a purely corporeal life; to eat and drink and sleep as I had done in the former world; to feel cold and weariness; but when freed from that, I had not thought much about wanting to eat or drink; I was still in rather a passive—half awake state. The food I ate in prison and while at work seemed cold and poor; but still I had to have something and so took what I could get. The clothing, also, was coarse and scanty. There are houses for refreshments and tables where people gather and find refreshment. There are trees and plants and all things to delight the eye; sounds to exhilarate and cheer through the ear, and an appetite and desire for knowledges through these. This is the food of spiritual beings.

Question—Do these take the form of fruits, nuts and vegetables?

Yes and no. In the first stage we seem to eat as in the natural world, but it is only an appearance. We hunger, and see things that we eat, as bread, etc., and drink, but hunger and thirst again, until we find the true source of food and drink, by finding the Lord's love and truth, which alone can satisfy spiritual beings. As He said, "Unless ye eat the flesh of the son of man, etc." I tried many things to find happiness and failed, until I sought to know and do His will, and then I found rest and satisfaction.

Before proceeding with my narrative I will say first that I am temporarily with the same friends that I was when I spoke to you last, several of whom I had known and esteemed in the natural world. It is impossible to describe the scenes through which I have passed in coming here, or to tell of the kindness I am receiving.

* * * * *

I will now go back and take up the thread of my story. My new friend did not seem to relish the idea of trying to find work, unless it was "something easy and genteel," as he said; so we walked on without definite plan until we came to a large building, in which many people were gathered, some looking around idly; some restless and eager, seemed to be asking questions of others who appeared to have control of the building. There were a number of different rooms and offices and among them one that furnished guides to strangers. We approached the man who had charge of this room and sat at a desk. He was dignified and commanding in bearing, and asked kindly if he could serve us.

I replied that we were comparative strangers and did

not very well understand the ways of the city, and had been thinking that every one needs some employment that would bring him in touch with the life of the city where he has his home; that a pleasant home had been given to me here, but I felt rather restless and lonesome with nothing to do but read; and not being acquainted, I had no friends to call on, and had met my companion on the street, who seemed aimless as I.

The man listened patiently and then asked, "What would you like to do? What is your purpose in life?"

I was rather stunned and confused for a moment, but answered presently that I had no definite purpose—only to get on as pleasantly and comfortably as I could and provide for my wife, who is not here. The children had all grown and left us; and here I am, all alone.

"But you can find friends and companions, if you so desire. You have but to call for the kind you want and they will not be long in answering your call. As to employment, that, too, can be found, when you decide what you would like to do—what use you wish to be or serve as a member of the community."

This puzzled me somewhat and with some hesitation I asked, "What steps am I to take to find congenial friends?" My mind reverted to this from the feeling of loneliness with which I had left my home. The answer was, "Think intently of some person whom you know to have preceded you into this world, or of some kind of person you wish to come to you, and wait, expecting the presence of the one you called."

"Thank you," I said, "I will go home and try that."

I hastened away filled with the new idea of obtaining companionship. When I reached my home, there seemed to have been some change from when I first entered it, as though preparation had been made for company. I wondered a little at this, as I had seen no one about, and then sat down to think as to whom I would call. At first I thought of my mother, but reflected that she must be a long ways off, and I had better ask for some one nearer. Then, too, she had disappeared when I refused to go with her and live a strict life without amusement. No, I wanted recreation and diversion; for life would be very dull unless I could find lively people who relished games and fun. When I had enough of this, I would think about work.

This being decided upon, I looked out and saw a party of several persons approach and stop before my house. They were lively, pleasant-looking people; and as I went out to inquire if I could be of service, a fine looking man with something familiar in his face, said, "We were out for a stroll and were strongly attracted to this part of the city; and when we came to this house, seemed to feel, or rather felt that we were wanted here, and stopped to inquire if such was the case."

I answered, "I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, but was feeling the want of companionship that would join in some games, or other means of diversion; for I was rather tired of reading and also of staying alone, though my home is as pleasant as I could ask. Will you not come in? You may prove to be just the people I want."

They answered, "We felt there was some attraction,

and will be glad to accept your invitation and become further acquainted."

We entered into conversation in regard to the amusements the city afforded; also the libraries and other public buildings, which brought to mind my experience with the baths; and I asked if the water in all the bathing places in the city was so highly charged as the one I had visited. They said they thought not, but were not very well informed on that subject. Having had similar experiences to mine, they had not been attracted to the water, except in boats. They had made short excursions. I did not care to give my story to strangers, so said, "I prefer to seek diversions on the land and near my own home."

Various topics were discussed and games proposed. The company seemed very congenial and just what I had been longing for. It is not necessary to detail the steps by which we ascended, or rather gradually *descended*. They did not remain long the first time, but being urged, promised to come soon again. At the first there were three, who came in, and I made the fourth. Soon they brought another four, seven, coming; so we had two tables, or played double games; and my house became a place of rendezvous for quite a circle of men and women. All at first seemed orderly and respectable and not inclined to excess. But people who have no employment will not remain satisfied to go on long without a change. Our gatherings became more boisterous, and story-telling was one means of diversion. These grew to verge on the improbable and unclean. One day when I was alone in the house after the company had just gone, I seemed to hear whisperings about me and the stories told were repeated from the walls. I became alarmed. "What can this mean?" I

gasped. Then ugly pictures began to spread themselves about; and what had been beautiful and clean walls became galleries of horrors, representing scenes that had been narrated. I seemed in a different place and in new surroundings. I was alarmed and horrified and sat down to reflect on all that had occurred. Had I not followed instructions? True I had not called anybody in particular; indeed, had not really called at all; had only wished for people who were interesting and had nothing special to do. It was true we had been free to indulge in all sorts of mirth and somewhat intemperate in our indulgences, but hadn't really meant any harm; and here are these noises and ugly pictures about me, and I'm afraid to go out for fear I get into some other trouble.

When I could bear it no longer, I opened the door and looked out, but everything seemed changed. I tried to think what to do, but grew more and more perplexed. At last, overcome by weariness, I fell into a troubled sleep and in my sleep dreamed I saw my mother again, in a bright place, and with her other friends, who looked sorrowfully at me and said, "When will he learn to be wise?" "Why does he make such foolish choices?"

When I woke, I resolved to try to find work to do and quit hunting for pleasure and amusement. So I got up, and looking out saw the notice, "Men wanted for many kinds of work." Following directions, I was again in what looked like an office, but in a smaller building, and under care of not so good looking a manager. However, I was kindly received and asked if I wanted employment and for what purpose. I answered, I had no definite purpose; I was tired of amusement and of doing nothing; I would like to be of some use.

He said he was glad to hear me say that and would be glad to assist me to find a use that would be suited to my ability and tastes.

RESOLVES TO BUILD HIMSELF A NEW HOME.

I replied that I had not been used to hard work in my later years, but that I felt well and strong now; and since my house had changed so that it was not agreeable to stay in, I would like to plan and build one more in the heart of the city, so that I would not be so much alone or dependent on visitors for company. He gave me a curious look, and said, that sounded as though I rather wanted to make myself comfortable than be useful to others; and if my house had become unpleasant, it was because I had not made the right use of it. However, if I still had my own pleasures in view as the first consideration, I would not be hindered in carrying out my wishes; that not far away there was ground and material for building, and I could choose both and get what help I desired to erect any structure that I would plan.

I felt greatly elated at this offer and started in the direction I was told to go, and soon found abundance of material of various kinds, seemingly prepared to order. I looked about to find the owner and was told that anyone was welcome to use anything he found here, and to select any place that suited his fancy. I was not long in choosing a lot well located, with trees and shrubs growing about the border of it, and set to work to plan a house that would be suitable for the location.

I worked for a long time with pencil and paper, trying to get a suitable design; and at last settled upon a plan that I thought would answer the purpose. There, too, I

found material ready, and was soon, as I thought, in a fair way to build just what I wanted. I found also people willing to help in consideration of my offering to do as much for them when wanted.

Still I could not get things just right. The foundation shifted and crumbled when I came to lay the timbers on it. My design lacked in detail and I did not put the pieces together so they would stay. At first I blamed my helpers, but they referred to my plan, so that after many efforts and failures I sat down in despair to consider how and why it was that I could not succeed in this, my first real undertaking, and whether I had better give it up and go back to the house that had been given me. I shuddered at the thought of the noises and the pictures there, and concluded I would try to put up a smaller place that would do for a shelter from the cold; for the season of winter seemed to show signs of approach. The trees looked bare and cold winds blew. My clothing, too, became worn and ragged, and I felt the need of shelter and warmth. My old comrades did not seek my society and I felt forlorn and forsaken. When I thought of company, I felt rather like hiding, because homeless and having nothing but rags to wear.

REJECTS THE OFFER OF INSTRUCTION AND FAILS IN ALL HE UNDERTAKES.

Things went from bad to worse until I was impelled to try to find some help, but did not know to whom to go. At last, seeing a man approach, I asked if he could direct me where I could find work of some kind that would give me shelter and food. The man proved to be an angel of mercy to me. He took me to a place he said would be my home, if I wished to learn to live according to the laws

of order, which required that every one should be of use to others and have an employment that would benefit the people among whom he lived. He gave me food and better clothes, after he had showed me water in which to bathe. I felt my need of this now, and the water refreshed and invigorated me all through, so that I felt soothed and encouraged as I had not for a long time.

The man then asked me what use I would like to perform, and said there were schools of instruction, if any one was not prepared to enter upon the life or use he preferred, and that I would be received upon application to the proper person.

I replied that I didn't expect to have to go to school like a child again; that I was a man and knew how to do many kinds of work—teach a school, conduct an insurance business, or manage a farm; that I had been a lawyer and in the real estate business, where I succeeded very well until I lost my health.

"You are in a new world now," was the answer, "and new conditions require new aims and purposes, as well as new employment; and if one has not had right ones, he must begin as a little child and learn everything anew. Those who were willing to do this would be helped in every way possible."

I had had many severe lessons and did not resent this advice, but asked if he would not give me a trial and see what I could do.

"Yes," he said, "if you are not yet cured of self-conceit. Go into that forest; select material with which to build a shelter for the sheep you see in yonder field and then call them into it."

"That is easy enough," I said, piqued that he did not ask something harder. I went into the woods, where seemed to be everything one could want. After wandering about for some time, I began to look for material suitable to build the shelter for the sheep. I selected some small trees that I thought would do for posts and planned to cover these with the branches and leaves; but I had forgotten to bring anything with which to cut the trees, and so returned to the house, where I found implements of many kinds. Selecting an axe and a saw, I went again to the woods and was making some headway with the work, when I heard strange noises not far distant; and looking through the trees, saw men and women dancing, while nearer to me was a musician playing on a violin. I stopped work and going nearer saw some of the people with whom I went on the boat. They accosted me and asked how I had gotten away from the robbers whom they saw take me and some others; and before I had time to answer asked "What are you doing now? Will you not join our party again and go sight-seeing, as we are doing? We were passing along the road, and seeing the pleasant wood, stopped to rest, and enjoy ourselves with a dance."

I thanked them and said I had been given some work to do and afterward would be glad of a visit with them. At this they laughed and said they were not looking for work, which they thought dull business. Remembering former experiences, I thought best to go back to my work, but had lost some of my interest in it, and soon became tired of the cutting and went to gathering branches that had fallen and boughs to make the cover. I was in the edge of the wood and had not far to take them; and when I began putting them together, found my parts of unequal

length, and the branches I had picked up would not bear any weight; so I had to throw them aside and go back for others.

I did the same thing in a different way until I was exhausted and discouraged, yet not humble enough to go to my employer and confess my failure. I lay down among the boughs and fell asleep. In my dreams I heard wild beasts who were catching and killing the sheep that I was to have sheltered. I woke in a state of horror and distress, and getting up, thought I would try to protect the sheep by frightening away the wolves; but looking around could see neither and began to consider what I had better do next. I was ashamed to meet my employer and tried to hide when I saw him coming, but he paid no attention to my failure, and called me to mow some grass to feed the sheep. I said, "They have all been destroyed by wild beasts;" but he pointed to a barn where they seemed quite secure. I felt greatly relieved and asked for a sickle to cut the grass. When one was given me, I seemed to have forgotten altogether how to use it and made such poor work that the man said, "You destroy more than you save. You need to learn the use of tools before you try to engage in that kind of work." I tried different things, but in all failed, and wandered about like a beggar.

At last I met a man who accosted me and said, "Friend, you seem to be in want. Can you not think of some one you knew in the other life that you would like to see? Some one who could give you advice and help, if you are not able to find it yourself?"

"Hungry and thirsty, his soul fainted within him then again," he cried unto the Lord in his trouble and He delivered him out of his distress (Ps. 107-5, 6).

Then I thought of Brother T, and though I was ashamed of my miserable appearance, I said, "I had a neighbor—a good, kind man; if he is in this world, I would like to find him."

"Then think earnestly of him and pray to the Lord for help."

I thought of my former experience in prayer and fell on my knees, crying, "Lord, send me help!" and in a few minutes saw a man I recognized, but now young and strong, his face beaming with kindness, and sympathy. That was the beginning of my deliverance.

I was overcome with joy at seeing this friend and clasped my arms about his knees as I still knelt. He too, was much moved—too much to speak for a time; and raising me in his arms, we wept together. He seemed to understand without words, and we walked silently in the way of his choosing until we came to a large building surrounded by beautiful grounds. These we entered; and going to the entrance hall, he called for the superintendent, who, after a moment, seeing my needs, beckoned us to follow. When in a private room, my friend said, "This man I knew and loved in the natural world. He needs rest and comfort and sympathy, all of which I know he will find in this house."

I begged him to stay with me, and he did until I was well settled in my new home, where at first I was given a private room, water to bathe and new and comfortable clothing. Here I lay in a semi-conscious state, while my friend watched beside me. After a few days, he said he must return to his work, but would soon come again, and hoped to find me refreshed and ready to begin life anew. When he did come again, I could walk about with him,

and we conversed in a general way about the things we saw and the arrangement of the house, where provision is made to suit the necessities of all who need rest and refreshment, preparatory to entering places of instruction. I felt helpless and dependent as a little child, and ready to do whatever was suggested or advised by my friend or those with whom he had left me.

After a while I began to go daily to hear a lecture that was given in a hall or chapel of the building. My interest in the topics discussed led me to ask for books and so began a course of instruction that has opened a new life for me.

I later removed from this place to a regular school for instruction, at my own request; for I had come to see that I knew nothing as I ought to know, and to be willing to be taught, even as a little child, the first principles of right living.

I have wanted to speak to you further to tell you that though my progress was slow, I have never turned back and wanted to have my own way again. I have not sought pleasure, but duty, and pleasures pure and plentiful have come to me. I am still learning, but working also, trying to guard and protect others from the terrible mistakes of my own life. With some I am successful; but others have to learn as I did—by experience. I have been to visit Brother T. a few times, but the plane of thought in his society is too high for me to stay long; but still I am so glad there can be communication between us. I am studying hard now, that I may have a home and be with my wife when she comes.

O, the goodness of the Lord that we are given the opportunity to retrieve the past and to be made new creatures when we destroyed ourselves. My home is near a place of instruction, and I have much liberty in coming or going as there is need, or I may desire.

I will not ask for your time again soon, but know you will rejoice that I have come into a state and place of peace and harmony with the laws of Divine order, though not by any means into the perfect manhood to which I aspire, and which I see much of among my teachers and their friends.

God is with you. Fear not! Adieu!

*The above was given in short conversations during a period of nearly seven months, beginning on August, 1906, and ending March 6, 1907.

And HE spake unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, which need no repentance.

Gospel by Luke 15, 3 to 8 in N. V.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

J. G. WHITTIER.

Testimonials

These narrations all without exception speak of the importance of the Word of God, and many of them urge the daily reading of it, and I have seen that they speak of it with the *greatest reverence*. And the supreme Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ is universally kept to the front.—Rev. B. Edmiston, Riverside, Cal.

I have read nearly all of the communications to be published in "Voices from the Open Door," and I fully accept and believe them to be absolutely genuine and in harmony with the divine teachings of the Word of God.—Dr. James W. Forquer, Cleveland, Ohio.

I believe in the genuineness of the communications as given in "Voices from the Open Door," because they are at once so *sane*, so deeply religious, so thoroughly consistent with the *Word of God*, emphasizing the great cardinal doctrine of the Lord, the nearness and reality of the spiritual world, and are, in every particular, in harmony with the *Truth*, as revealed in the writings of the church—Nina E. Pershing, Cleveland, Ohio.

We have read with great interest a number of the "revelations received" portraying the advent in the higher life of a number of persons, some of them well known to us in the earth life, telling of their reception there, their meeting of mutual friends there, their homes there, their development and preparation for work in their chosen fields there, etc., with scenes and incidents connected therewith, and because these revelations accord with our knowledge and ideas of the future life and because of our firm belief in the integrity of the narrator as an instrument of good in the matter, we are constrained to affirm our belief in the verity of the "revelations," which we hereby do with pleasure.—Mr. and Mrs. Reifsnider, St. Louis, Mo.

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Many marvelous things have come with the new Religious Age. The internal or spiritual sense of the Lord's Word has been opened to men, and this has brought the heavens into closer touch with the human race, and it has made possible an orderly communication between the church in heaven and the church on earth. I have no reference to spiritism, for that is an utterly disorderly thing. I refer to the communication that is possible between those who are in heaven and those chosen instruments in the church on earth who are in faith in the Lord's Divine Humanity and thus protected by Him from the infestations of evil spirits.

The one through whom the communications now given to the world have come, is well known to the writer as a person of unimpeachable character, clear and abiding faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only God of heaven and earth, and one who reverently accepts the Holy Scriptures as the only inspired Word of Truth. I have read many of these communications and have found them correct in doctrine and highly helpful in their moral uplift.

And it is the writer's sincere wish that they may meet with Divine blessing and be a source of comfort and help to those who may chance to read them.—Rev. Dr. Thomas A. King.

These narrations, speaking in general, are very unlike the communications of spiritism. I have the utmost confidence in the integrity and intelligence of all who are interested in obtaining and publishing them. The influence of the narrations has been good upon me, and has brought very vividly to me certain things which I knew before, and has set me on the stretch for them with renewed earnestness. If the influence they exert upon others is like that which they have exerted upon me, they cannot fail to do good. I was acquainted with three of the parties, and in reading the narrations bearing their names, I have been struck with the fact that they exhibit perfectly the natures of the individuals as I knew them to be. The narration bearing the name of each one is just what he might be expected to give.

I believe that open vision is the normal state of man, that the race lost it because of sin, but that, in the regeneration of the race, they will be brought back to it; that since the time of the most Ancient Church called Adam, there have been a few in unbroken line, who have had open vision, if we only knew where to find them; and I am not so certain that we don't know where to find them.—Rev. E. D. Daniels, Berlin, Canada.