

ALL THAT MAN SHOULD BE UNTO WOMAN

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"John McCullough, as Man, Actor and Spirit,"
"A Look Upward," Etc.

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CHAPTER

A YEARNING SPIRIT

THE crimson glow of the sunset had deepened into purple. Shadows were creeping over the earth's quiet breast and rolling up the steep slopes of the Sierra Madre range, on whose jagged summits the warm kiss of the Sun God lingered longest. It was already night in the depths of the adjacent Arroya. One by one, Heaven's lamps were revealed in the blue vault above, and the Milky Way, with its myriad stars and worlds, seemed flung like a lace scarf, studded with gems, across the ether's wide expanse.

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It was a fair scene, one that Nature weaves nightly from her loom of mist and light, of cloud and soft enswathing atmosphere, but mortal eyes are beauty blind, and fail to appropriate, or absorb its marvel. Having eyes they see not the things which God hath prepared, even in this life, for those who love the Infinite Beauty, which is His garment, for those who desire to hear the voice of Truth in its purity.

The radiant glory with which the earth is clothed and adorned is but a hint of that clearer radiance, the greater glory which awaits the now embodied soul when the fetters of its present tabernacle are outgrown. Every terrestrial hill and mountain lures the clear-sighted child of Nature to forge onward toward the heights of spiritual achievement. Earthly valleys symbolize, with equal potency, many human experiences, but the merry brooks running through them voice the songs that are sung in the

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night by mortal hearts, who grandly triumph over their sorrow and loss. The sunset hour reiterates the promise "At eventide it shall be light," when this veiled existence is merged into glorious, immortal life.

And this was the refrain that sprang to the lips of the young girl who sat alone, gazing upon the radiant picture of cloud and mountain, of earth and sky, drinking in its beauty, absorbing in her inmost soul its sublimity and its peace.

"At eventide it shall be light," she mused, and then she quoted a couplet of Emerson's, read that day:

"Wilt thou not ope thy heart to know
What rainbows teach and sunsets show?"

Barbara Vernon had shown from childhood a sober, thoughtful nature, perhaps because she was a motherless bairn. Children need the warm glow of the mother heart to bring out the sunshine

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which lurks in every nature, to enkindle its latent merriment into expression through many unexpected channels. They need the brooding tenderness, the clear comprehension, the quick, maternal response to love's strong yearning.

Barbara's mother had left her before her baby eyes had sought the pale face bending above her, in mute anguish of hopeless possession, of greeting and farewell, and thus the numberless sweet offices of a mother's love were all unknown to her.

In the formation of a well-rounded character, nothing can supply the place of a happy childhood. If life's early years are empty, or devoid of congenial companionship, if they are hungry for Love's sweet nourishing, all later experiences are shadowed thereby. Wealth, culture, society can never satisfy the yearning heart which knows not for what it yearns.

But Nature lends to each plant of her

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vast creation the right soil, exposure, altitude, to ensure its fullest fruition and the fulfillment of its destined mission. Human flowers likewise, embodied spirits, are placed in just the right environment, and given often the fostering advantages of discipline, of severe pruning, sometimes of hardship, sorrow and loss, to unfold rightly the beautiful lotus flower of the soul.

Barbara's experiences and consequent thought-life had all been introspective. Tutors had been furnished her of the best quality that wealth could procure, or wisdom could select. Her silent father, bereft of every tie but this strange child, whom he never could understand, himself a scholar and bookworm, determined that every advantage should be hers to encompass a cultured education. The treasures of literature, music and art were poured lavishly at her feet. Only one incentive to unfoldment was lacking—helpful friction with other

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minds. Competition, which forms such a prominent incentive to the efforts of classmates in academy, or college, lent no spur to her progress. Her themes were studied and lessons recited alone, but even this seclusion was perhaps wisely ordered to quicken into expression the more valuable intuitive quality of her nature.

For a child like Barbara, to whom true companionship was an unknown word, would always live her life alone in ever so merry a company, in the midst of a multitude. She hewed new pathways of thought toward heights of conscious life, to which books or academic lore can never serve as guide-posts.

Already at this crisis in her life, where budding maidenhood is ripening into the flower of womanhood, grave problems assail her keenest interest, questions arise of deepest import which her tutors are unable to answer, and to which her father's large library offers no key.

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It may be that her soul felt the lure of the gentle mother from her bright home in Paradise. Unable in earlier years to realize her loss, now that maturity brought the keen sense of bereavement, a consciousness of her life's incompleteness, Barbara yearned more and more for the gratification of this unborn side of her nature, for the comradeship of mother and daughter—one of the holiest ties in affection's range. She hungered for a close, loving communion between heart and heart, between spirit and mortal; she dimly sensed the fact of such possibility, even now and here, despite human separation. She longed to rend the veil of the unseen, to transcend mortal limitation. She often felt as if a responsive note were sometimes struck to her own strong aspirations, like a fragrance in the air, as if a breath was wafted to her from beyond the border land.

She had once questioned her grave

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father regarding the next state of existence; she asked him if conscious life continued when the form was laid aside, or if Death was a dreamless sleep which knew no waking. Reasonable, proper questions all, but her father, after starting painfully as if an old wound were opened afresh, had straightway sent for their family physician, and thereafter her studies were temporarily suspended. Her beloved books were denied her, and the state of her nerves was closely watched.

She pondered over this restriction, wondering why study or conversation along this line of thought should be considered more unhealthy than to delve among fossils, or trace the orbits of the stars. Was there not a world beyond the stars? If she were going to Europe, she would be allowed a thorough investigation and careful research regarding the countries she was to visit, the manner of life and the customs which

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obtained there, the languages spoken. Then why this unreasonable reticence regarding the real world, which all mortals shall some day inhabit? If life is to be continued in a disembodied state, would it not prove advantageous to know all that could be learned regarding the conditions and features of the celestial realm?

This query pursued her in various ways and would not be vanquished. She sensed a call from somewhither to her inmost soul, a call that pleaded, entreated with her to be heard. More than this, she often felt as if accompanied by an unseen presence. She knew it was not a trick of her imagination. When she sat at her desk something stood just back of her elbow. It was so tangible that she was often prompted to speak aloud, to talk to this invisible companion, who visited her at noonday as often as at twilight, and whose atmosphere always breathed love and blessing

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unspeakable. Her young heart, chilled by its austere surroundings, bathed in the warmth and glow of this unseen companionship and learned intelligently to welcome the touch and sign of the beloved visitant.

Of late, likewise, she had noticed a strange manifestation in her great dog, Regent, who was often called upon to extend his canine prerogative as comrade and protector to the office of confidant and adviser. He was a faultless listener, nobly keeping awake and alert, while Barbara poured into his patient, willing ears her perplexities, her pronounced opinions on many matters, her longings and her griefs. He often extended his great white paw as if to clasp her hand in sympathetic comprehension of her need of consolation and his pathetic eyes seemed to express a deep regret, for her sake, that he was dumb.

At the present hour, not being especially interested in the radiant beauty of

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the sunset, he had wandered off on an exploring trip of his own, communing with Nature after his own fashion, and from this satisfactory quest he dashed back to see if she had missed him, or if he could be of further service in her twilight ramble.

Her eyes and smile welcomed him.

“Dear old Regent! Good boy!” she said, “come and tell me what it is that ‘sunsets show.’ What is this wonderful lesson of color? What does it teach? Can you hear the music of this beauteous symphony of Light? Anything so universal as is color in the natural world must hold some marvellous message for us all; it should teach some important lesson. Is it the reflection of a fairer, brighter world than this, which shines through these radiant cloud windows, even as the white light of a winter’s day becomes blue and red and purple when it gleams through the stained glass window of the chapel yonder?”

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Regent had not sufficiently analysed the rays of the spectrum to express an intelligent opinion on this profound subject which puzzled her and her soliloquy became too prolonged to hold his close attention. But, as he approached her, Barbara noticed the same manifestation she frequently, of late, had observed. He gazed not directly *at* her, but at a point *beside* her. His glance seemed to include something standing there. His intelligent, soulful eyes looked inquiringly at this object, with a friendly wag of his great bushy tail, as if pleased with a responsive recognition.

What could it mean? What did he see, or think he saw? Barbara had heard of second sight, as a faculty possessed by some mortals. Did the higher grade of animals, acquiring ripened intelligence by human companionship, likewise exercise this power, as compensation for their lack of speech?

But she could not see through Regent's

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eyes, and so she arose from her rustic seat, her mind full of queries which she longed to propound to some wise teacher, and turned into a garden walk that led through the shadow of drooping tree and luxuriant shrub, threading a wilderness of flowers and fragrant vines, back to her beautiful home—the Crescent Villa.

CHAPTER II

A NEW DEPARTURE

THE evening lamps were lighted when she entered the wide portal, and she noticed that her father had seated himself, with his books, in the drawing room, instead of in his cosy den as usual, and this indicated, she was sure, that he had something of importance to impart to her.

Presently he laid down the volume he was reading and began:

“Barbara, how would you like to attend a house party?”

She started with surprise, as it was a rare event for her to leave home.

“Whose—where?” she asked.

“Why, our new neighbor, Mrs. Wheaton, proposes to celebrate the completion of her fine residence by giving a house-

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warming on a large scale. We are honored with an invitation to this merry party, which includes many notables from near and far. It is one of those week-end affairs. We go on Saturday and return on Monday or Tuesday."

"Then you have decided to accept the invitation," she inquired with deprecatory tone. "From this hour I shall anticipate our return to our own quiet home."

"Perhaps not, my child. I fear that I have kept you too secluded here. You may need to see how frivolous the rest of the world can be. Perhaps a little harmless frivolity of your own would prove a healthful medicine, might clear away the cobwebs that at times festoon every brain."

Barbara's quick intuition caught the spirit of sacrifice in which her father had accepted this invitation. It was as distasteful to him as to her. He was forcing himself out of his congenial re-

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tirement for her sake, that she might extend her circle of youthful friends and become familiar with the gayeties of the world.

“It means, father,” she suggested, “the end of our pleasant, quiet life here together. New acquaintances will be formed who must visit us, their calls must be returned, and gradually our old home life will fade away and be known no more.”

“Well, daughter, perhaps a change will be beneficial for us both. We may not realize how rusty we have grown, until ‘we see ourselves as others see us.’ ”

“As you will, father,” Barbara reluctantly assented, while feeling much as if an execution awaited her.

Then she fell to wondering if in the great world outside their placid home, anyone might be found who could answer her puzzling questions, and henceforth this hope lent contentment, even

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a quiet anticipation to the project.

Days of preparation flew quickly by, and the hour arrived when Mr. Vernon and his quiet daughter drove away from Crescent Villa, to Regent's great bewilderment and strong disapproval, though he followed them with dejected mien to the entrance gate and spent most of his time for the next three days lying in the driveway with his head drooped sadly between his outstretched paws. Life held for him no horizon outside of Barbara's sphere.

The avenue through which the pair drove was one of the beauty spots of earth, one in which the goddess Flora holds high carnival. It is known as the Crown of the Valley, a crown indeed, among the valleys of earth, the fairest gem which adorns the breast of this planet.

It may be that in future years a poet shall arise who can worthily sing the praises of Pasadena, in fitting tones, in

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richest accent. It is certain that no one, as yet, has caught the cadence of its peculiar charm. And it grows more and more lovely constantly, year by year, as its beautiful homes increase, as its stately palms toss their great fronds higher toward the zenith, and the graceful pepper trees—that fairest creation in Nature's vast realm—extend their branches wider and trail their fern-like fingers caressingly over street and lawn.

Everywhere golden fruit glows against its glistening background of dark green foliage. Gaudy poinsettias flame their gay greetings to the beholder, and back of all, the silent hills brood over the indescribable charm outspread at their feet, as they point ever toward the Source of all beauty, all growth and aspiration.

At this hour, when the afternoon was waning and the shadows began to gather in canyon and chasm, the rough, wrinkled

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contour of the mountains was revealed as it never is beneath the strong sunlight. Deep gorges are seen and forest-fringed precipices outlined, undreamed of at noonday.

Even so, it is only when the shadows gather in human lives, when God ploughs deep furrows into the stricken heart, that strong outlines of character are revealed, depths of the divinity always latent in the human soul are disclosed which only darkness and sorrow can unfold.

Beyond this immediate range of mountain peaks, in farther perspective, the ermined mantle of "Old Baldy" began to assume a roseate hue, as the departing sun glorified it, and all the world of their environment smiled a warm welcome to the pair, as they turned into Mrs. Wheaton's palm-bordered avenue and beheld the finished beauty of Rose Manor.

With the fertile combination of virgin soil and abundant irrigation, with the

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union of a warm, southern sun and an atmosphere full of magnetic ozone, it is easy to create a Paradise in this fair Golden West, if one has also the purse strings of Midas as motive power.

Mrs. Wheaton, aware of her own incapacity to formulate her desire for a beautiful home, park and garden, had given *carte blanche* to architect and landscape gardener and had the wisdom to let no passing whim of her own interfere with their more experienced design. The result was a harmonious symphony of color and form that was a rare delight to the artistic observer.

As the Vernons alighted at the *porte cochere*, they beheld some of the guests, who had arrived at an earlier hour, strolling about the spacious grounds, making the air vocal with merry laughter and cheery call.

Barbara wondered how she was to adapt herself to such gay company, and only hoped her grave demeanor might

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not cast a shadow on their happy hour.

But Mrs. Wheaton soon made her feel perfectly at home in the pretty room assigned her, and fastened a glorious bunch of Gold of Ophir roses upon the white gown which Barbara had donned for the evening's festivities. She was soon made aware that the program consisted of tableaux and dancing with a brief address on the morrow by the chief lion among her guests—Professor Montverte.

“What will be the subject of his lecture?” asked Barbara.

“Oh, telepathy, I believe,” laughed Mrs. Wheaton, “or something more abstruse and occult. You know the reigning fad at present is to investigate psychic marvels and call up ghosts.”

This was something which Barbara did not know. No rumor of such a fad had invaded her quiet seclusion. But she was deeply interested in the subject, and earnestly inquired:

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“My dear Mrs. Wheaton, what are ghosts?”

“Oh, don’t ask me, child,” merrily protested the lady. “You are just the walking catechism which will gladden the Professor’s heart. Come with me while I present you to him,” and tucking Barbara under her arm, they descended the stairs.

The spacious living room occupied almost the entire width of the mansion, and Barbara was not then subjected to the ordeal of a general introduction to the assembled guests, but noticing Mr. Vernon in a quiet corner, conversing with the learned Professor and the ladies clustered about him, Mrs. Wheaton led her charge to this congenial coterie and then withdrew for other hospitable offices which claimed her attention.

After Barbara’s presentation to Professor Montverte, he paused in his remarks to her father and bent his deep, intelligent gaze upon the maiden. His

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intent and kindly scrutiny seemed to yield him a keen gratification, and his glance (like Regent's) included the atmosphere about her as well as her own personality. Then turning to her father, he exclaimed under his breath:

“A rare psychic!”

“A what?” gasped Mr. Vernon, although, as he beheld her there, in festive attire, flushed with the excitement of the hour, wearing a new ethereal beauty which he never before had observed, he felt that she was removed from him leagues beyond their paternal and filial ties, and he dimly sensed how little real relationship they bore to each other, as if she was a visitant from another world and he was entertaining an angel unawares.

“What did you say, Professor?” he resumed. “I did not catch your meaning.”

Professor Montverte smiled significantly, realizing that the task of his

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questioner's enlightenment was too vast for the present hour.

"My child," he asked, turning to Barbara, "are not your eyes open to behold the things of the spirit? Do you have visions that are not of this world?"

Fearing her father's disapproval, she answered reluctantly:

"I have feelings that I do not understand. I sense a presence near me, at times, but I see nothing save occasional luminous lights and colors."

"I was sure of it," exclaimed the Professor. "Lights and colors always indicate incipient clairvoyance, but the psychometric faculties, which you are beginning to exercise, are often unfolded before those of sight."

"Psychometric? Clairvoyance? These are strange words to unsophisticated ears. I had supposed them to be the assets alone of charlatans," broke in her father, who wished to give a more

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healthy, normal tone to the conversation. "You speak in riddles, my dear Professor."

"I will make myself and my terms more clearly understood in my lecture tomorrow," courteously replied the older gentleman.

The ladies had already moved away to more congenial circles, and the professor became silent, biding his time for a longer and more private interview with this young girl, who interested him so deeply.

Just then a gay party of maidens swarmed noisily in from the garden, and beholding Barbara, flocked around her with a merry challenge to join them in a new game that was then forming, and bore her off with them to the beautiful green lawn, which soon resembled a living flower garden of varied hue, although these animated human flowers did not remain quietly anchored to earth, but soon engaged in a merry dance.

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE PARTY

MRS. WHEATON, ever original in devising new methods for the entertainment of her guests, treated them this evening to the pleasure of a dinner in the open air. The broad veranda surrounding the house was set with small tables, always so conducive to informal sociability and which likewise allowed the arranging of old and young in congenial groups.

Barbara found herself assigned to a seat where Blanche Wheaton, the vivacious daughter of the hostess, was her vis-a-vis, with her fiance, young Saltonstall, and his college chum, Maurice Fitzgerald, on either side.

Flushed with the dance just enjoyed, her face glowed with a still rosier tint,

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at the novelty of her position, seated between two stalwart young men, who were exerting every effort to make the hour a merry one. Her father was nowhere in sight and so forgetting Barbara, the student and recluse, she threw herself into the social gayety which surrounded her with the abandonment of a child. She wondered a little at the quickness of repartee, the merry badinage of her companions, for these were arts she could not practice, a contest of wits in which she could not engage. But she enjoyed it all and learned many surprising lessons from the conversation of her companions.

At a neighboring table, the young scion of the house, Ralph Wheaton, was a host indeed to a bevy of three beautiful young girls, between whom and Barbara's table many sharp sallies were exchanged.

When the repast was ended and the guests drifted apart in social groups,

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Ralph offered to conduct Barbara through the extensive Rose garden and adjoining Maze. But before many of the winding paths had been threaded, the quick departure of twilight, common to this Western land, drove them into the drawing room, from whence sweet strains of music were already proceeding.

The quaint, crisp Norwegian folk-songs and descriptive melodies received a soulful interpretation from Bertha Langdon, an accomplished pianiste, who had recently gained fresh inspiration from a summer spent among the odorous pines and picturesque fiords of Norway, and she was repeatedly urged by her appreciative listeners to contribute another and yet another selection from her wide repertoire.

But there was a spirit of expectancy in the air, an anticipation of something pleasant yet to come. Gradually and quietly, the young people slipped away to their rooms to don other costumes,

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in preparation for the tableaux which were to follow.

The evening's entertainment was to be enjoyed in the large ball room on the upper floor of the Manor. Here a little stage had been constructed, around which the seats for the guests had been placed.

Barbara was conducted to her father's side, that together they might enjoy these living pictures. As she approached him he realized, by her enlivened, sprightly demeanor, the wisdom of his decision that introduced her into this bright company. He himself felt a new life, a quickened responsiveness to which his being had not thrilled for many a long day.

The first tableau represented "The Spirit of '76," being an exact copy of the painting by A. M. Willard, which hangs far away in old Marblehead. During this portrayal, an invisible orchestra, hidden by a mass of palms,

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rendered the "Star Spangled Banner" and "Yankee Doodle," and in the interlude of preparation for the next picture Mrs. Wheaton suggested that the musicians lead the company in "America," which was spiritedly sung, with an echoed refrain from behind the curtain.

The next scene was of a more quiet type, but one that elicited exclamations of admiration from the charmed beholders. It represented that early idyl of austere New England history: "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" At her spinning wheel, with its full distaff, in kerchief and cap, sat Blanche Wheaton "modest, simple and sweet," her mischievous smiles sobered into a demure yet arch expression, as she looked shyly upward into the face of Dick Saltonstall, who in Puritan garb was an ideal John Alden, "the thoughtful." Again and again was the curtain rung up that the spectators might enjoy every detail of the beautiful picture and the enthusi-

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astic audience finally demanded that this modern Priscilla and her lover should bow their acknowledgment of the generous applause which they received, at the footlights.

Following this was a scene from *Hiawatha*, which was more picturesque and full of color. But here, Barbara was surprised to notice that her eyes were again playing her tricks. Vaporous lights and stars floated over the Indians grouped in the background, a tinted radiance illumined the whole picture, but she decided that it must be some electrical effect, intended to represent the reflection of a camp fire.

Pleasantly the entertainment moved on, some of the pictures being extremely artistic. Two young ladies, one a very pronounced type of blonde beauty, the other a brilliant brunette, were chosen to represent "Morning and Evening," Aurora being arrayed in pale, fleecy blue and white drapery, with the crown

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of sunrise upon her brow, Nox being gowned in black tulle, studded with stars, each goddess constituting alone a complete and graceful picture.

With this last tableau another strange thing happened to Barbara's vision. The young lady representing "Night," Clara Clayton, was one well known to her as an orphan who lost her mother about a year ago. In the midst of this sombre impersonation, Barbara suddenly saw the maiden's mother bending over her, with arms lovingly outstretched as if to embrace her, and so lifelike did she seem, that Barbara, at first, forgetting Mrs. Clayton's transition, was wondering what part she had in the picture. But instantly correcting her impression, she noticed that where the arm of the lady crossed Clara's shoulder, that it did not eclipse her star-gemmed dress. Every outline was seen through it, clear and distinct.

Thus the conviction was forced upon

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Barbara that she was indeed beholding, to use the Professor's words, "visions that were not of this world." Quickly she glanced at her father and at the guests about her to see if surprise or bewilderment was evidenced in their faces. But all were placid and serene. She alone seemed conscious of the double picture. And of what momentous import it was to her yearning soul! She had seen an arisen spirit? Henceforth she *knew* that Death was not a dreamless sleep. She had received proof that conscious life and love survive transition. It seemed too wondrous a discovery to grapple with alone, and yet she must remain silent.

At this point, water ices were passed, and the musicians took their places upon the stage to direct the dancing which was to follow, Mrs. Wheaton first calling for Virginia Reel, in which old and young could unite, in a merry frolic.

But Barbara soon excused herself and

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went to her room, where she sat long at her window, looking out into the quiet night. Her heart sang a Te Deum of gratitude that at last one of her problems was solved, and a strange, sweet peace filled her soul with joy and thanksgiving. She realized that there is but one world—the realm of spirit—in which we all dwell today, of which this plane of mortal consciousness is but the shadow, a reflection in sepia, and henceforth for her the veil between the Seen and Unseen was rent in twain.

CHAPTER IV

OUR FINER FORCES

BREAKFAST was also served on the broad veranda, in an atmosphere and commanding a landscape which it would be difficult to describe, or to duplicate in any land.

The snowy tables were each crowned with choice flowers and trailing vines, upon which still rested the glistening tears of the night. The beautiful lawn, like a floor cloth of emerald velvet, stretched away to the broad avenue skirting the grounds, while beyond, in near perspective, arose the majestic hills. Their valleys and gorges still held the white fog which had enswathed them through the night, producing at certain points the effect of the rolling billows of a vast ocean, whose islands were the

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jagged hill-crests emerging from the waves.

On the plateau of Mount Lowe, some one was flashing a signal through the aid of the sun's rays upon a mirror's surface, to the trained eye of an observer in Los Angeles, ten miles distant.

The serenity and peace of the Sabbath's dawn was felt by every guest and tinged their morning greetings to each other with a quiet dignity and reverent grace.

Professor Montverte, as he joined the genial company, paused for a while on the broad threshold to drink in the inspiration of the scene, then exclaimed with solemnity:

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help.”

“How do the hills help you, Professor?” chirped a little lady who could not conceive that his words might hold an esoteric meaning.

The Professor smiled pleasantly.

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“The hills, which so grandly arise from earthly plains, remind me, my dear Madame, that the heights of my own being are also attainable. It is these altitudes to which I would lift mine eyes habitually. It is the constant lure of my soul to rise on the stepping stones of my once dead self, to a grander growth, to a more lofty realization of my own divinity.”

Then as he seated himself at one of the vacant tables, he continued his instructive musings, which his companions gladly lent their ears to hear, hoping to familiarize themselves with his thought, in preparation for the morning's address.

Glancing again reverently at the sun-kissed hills, he continued:

“How often the fainting soul would flee as a bird to some mountain sanctuary, where ‘God freshens again within them as he passes by all day.’ We instinctively lift our thoughts and even our

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faces to invoke re-enforcement of strength and power, not that our Source, our Reservoir of supply, is any more above us than beneath, or on every side, like the air in which the bird floats, or the sea in which the fish is immersed; but to gain the inspiration we seek, there must first be aspiration, a realization that the soul's true home, its native air, is the high, pure Atmosphere of Spirit, which is the Deific Breath."

Following the light repast, the company strolled through the grounds, admiring everywhere the abundant floral wealth, the exquisite taste and effective arrangement of this beauteous garden.

As the forenoon hours advanced, the guests were invited into a delightful dell, a natural amphitheatre embowered by trees, where seats had been placed and a flower-decked rostrum arranged for the greatly anticipated lecture.

On the way thither, Barbara chanced to join company with the Professor,

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and after a cordial greeting, she ventured to ask him how he had enjoyed the tableaux of the previous evening.

He looked at her quizzically to see if she had any especial purpose in her query, as he quoted in reply:

“The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see nor hear the sounds I hear.”

“Then,” persisted Barbara, “what did you see in the last picture—the goddess of Night?”

“I clearly saw,” answered the Professor, “an attending spirit bending over the lady. It was not her guardian angel, it was a spirit more recently translated from earth. Did you also see it?” he questioned.

Overjoyed at this proof that it was not a mere creation of her own fancy, Barbara answered:

“I saw the semblance of the young lady’s mother, Mrs. Clayton, whom I knew well, who died, as we call it, about

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a year ago. But I never saw anything like it before.”

“But now, dear Miss Vernon, that your spiritual sight is unfolding, visions will increase and wonderful experiences of which now you do not dream will multiply.”

He could say no more, as Mrs. Wheaton came to conduct him to his place of honor.

A silence fell upon the little company as he stood before them, broken only by the warbling carols of the birds who flitted over them, in their excitement at seeing so many people invading their sylvan haunts. It was the most fitting music that could be provided for the service. But, in addition, Professor Montverte requested that they join in the good Old Hundredth hymn, thus tuning the consciousness of his audience to one key, as he would attune the differing strings of a musical instrument. He also felt that in the midst of so much

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beauty, it was fitting that human hearts should recognize the Infinite Power of which it was a faint reflection, that "Beauty so ancient, that Beauty ever new," as voiced by Saint Augustine; it was imperative that the Creator's praise should here be sung as "in every land, by every tongue." The grand old measures were poured forth heartily by young and old, which provoked the birds to still wilder melody.

Following this song, the Professor asked that a few moments might be spent in the silence of aspiration, that each soul might echo the prayer of Emerson:

"I the imperfect, adore my own perfect."

He then announced his theme to be "Our Finer Forces," first remarking that he would prefer the hour should be a symposium of expression, embracing various opinions from other minds, rather than a monologue, the contribution of

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one intelligence, and he begged his hearers to interrupt him at any point with their queries or criticisms.

He then stated that he had been both amused and gratified at the growing interest in psychic and spiritual truth, as evidenced in this little company by the various queries that had been propounded to him as he met them socially as also in the larger world outside, which to a degree they represented.

“Everywhere,” he continued, “the veil between earth and heaven grows thinner, souls are awakening to realize their lineage, their divine birthright, to know that they live in a world of enfranchised spirits, today. Mortals are no longer content to lay their dead hopelessly away and await some distant hour of possible reunion, for tidings of them. Communion between heart and heart, the interchange of thought and message between mind and mind, is now unbroken and continuous. We are trans-

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ending the bondage of the flesh, while wearing and using it. We extend our sight and hearing and feeling to a realm of higher vibrations, where organs of clay cannot function.

“This statement,” he added, “touches upon my theme. I have been asked by a very scholarly and learned gentleman present to explain clairvoyance and psychometry, or clair-sentience. Clair-audience also should be included among our spiritual faculties and their higher offices.

“It is only the animal man who is a creature of five senses. People of finer unfoldment recognize the possession of a sixth, intuitive sense, now being unfolded in this age, which prophesies its completion in the seventh sense (which will transcend the sense plane) and will mark the perfectly developed being, the type of man made in the image and likeness of God.

“Paul says ‘there is a natural body

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and also a spiritual body,' and this latter, more ethereal organism has likewise its organs, its five spiritualized senses, with many other powers, as yet undreamed. It is as orderly and natural for spiritual eyes to discern spiritual things, to recognize spiritual forms and faces as it is for physical orbs to observe the various objects of the material plane. It is quite as easy for the inner or spiritual ear to function on a plane which recognizes a far higher rate of vibration than mortal ears can catch. There is nothing uncanny about this, nothing supernatural, it is merely beyond the normal ability of the undeveloped human being. But clear seers have abounded in every age and the era is fast approaching when people who have not yet unfolded and do not freely use their spiritual faculties will be considered abnormal beings.

“Even the sense of smell has its spiritual counterpart. Strong fragrance,

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spicy delicious odors are often wafted to us in rooms and places, to which no earthly flowers have been brought. An arisen friend will often make her presence known by some delicate aroma, of which she was once particularly fond."

This was an experience which Barbara had more than once enjoyed, although she attributed it to her imagination, not dreaming that there was a law back of this demonstration, now so reasonably explained.

"But Professor," here broke in Mrs. Wheaton, "you were to speak of Psychometry, which to many of us is an unknown word. What relation does it bear to Psychology, although that also is a science of which our ignorance is doubtless colossal."

Pleased at this interest in his subject, the Professor graciously reminded his hostess that "the whole world is deplorably ignorant of Psychology, even the academic world, where most worthy

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and erudite teachers occupy chairs in our colleges for psychological instruction, but confine this far-reaching science of the soul and its agent, the mind, to the realm of pathology, neurology, and hallucination, or unusual mental demonstrations, striving to explain them as they never can, on the mental plane, exclusively, without recognition of the momentous fact that man is a soul, swayed by spiritual laws. The truths of the spirit are to the savants of the schools, a dead letter.

“Now among our five senses, next to sight and hearing, which is the most useful? Evidently the sense of touch in some respects, the most wonderful of the five. Its spiritual counterpart is Psychometry, a word coined from two Greek words—*psyche*, soul, and *metron*, measure—the measurement of the soul. For, as with our physical sense, we can decide if an object is rough or smooth, cold or warm, so with our spiritual

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sense of touch we can detect spiritual values, gain premonitions of coming events, measure the soul quality of the friend or stranger whom we meet.”

“Is this faculty in common use?” asked Mrs Wheaton. “How long has man known that he possessed it?”

“Since 1842,” answered Professor Montverte, “when Prof. James Rhodes Buchanan thus designated an acute sensibility, or psychic power, first discovered by Bishop Polk of the Episcopal church (sometimes called ‘the fighting Bishop,’ because he became a general in the Confederate Army, and lost his life in the war), who, if by accident, touching in the dark a piece of brass, immediately felt its influence through his system and recognized the offensive metallic taste in his mouth.

“Professor Buchanan, rightly supposing that if such sensibility existed in a man so vigorous in mind and body, it must be a universal power, or as he expressed

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it, 'the divinity in man coming to the surface,' soon began a series of experiments upon different individuals, with metals, sugar, salt, acids, and found a large majority of persons possessed this hitherto unsuspected sense, always predominating, he discovered, 'in people of refined nature and of mental and moral excellence.'

"You all doubtless possess this psychometric power, in greater or less degree," he added. "Test it, the experiment will be harmless, and a latent, unsuspected gift is often easily unfolded. It will prove of great value."

"Of what use is it?" almost savagely demanded Mr. Vernon, who listened to a discussion of the intangible with the inhospitality of ignorance.

"It has myriad uses," courteously responded the lecturer. "If a bit of lava from Pompeii, its origin quite unknown to the sensitive, elicits a full and graphic description of the great eruption,

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the fright of the people, the varying sights and sounds with which the air vibrated centuries ago, now reproduced through this microscopic, telescopic faculty of the soul, then of what utility the extended exercise of this power must prove to the world.

“If our libraries should be destroyed how they could thus be restored, how the science of geology, the record of a forming planet, might be thus enriched. Aye, more, for not alone the *acts* of the world’s leaders can be unrolled, but the often veiled *motive* back of each event, the good one tried to do but failed to accomplish, the cruelty at the heart of others which can no longer be concealed. If Queen Elizabeth did sign the death warrant for the execution of her innocent and royal cousin, which injustice was carefully concealed in her life time, the least article of her wardrobe would now reveal the secret.”

“But,” persisted Mr. Vernon, “of what

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practical use could it serve at the present day?"

"It could become a strong incentive to righteous living and holy thinking. If Psychometry were taught and practiced in our schools, would it not prove a forcible antidote to crime, since each child could be made aware of the sure detection which must overtake each wicked deed, thus superseding an uncertain trial by jury.

"Another practical use for this subjective sense of touch is the discovery of treasure and ore beneath the soil. It is well known that some people possess the gift of locating springs of water far below the surface of the earth. Mining in this golden state today does not scruple to engage the assistance of Pschometry to detect the presence of gold, silver or copper in the soil, whether the deposit be vertical or horizontal, and the direction in which the vein trends.

"A more beneficent use for this psychic

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sense is the accurate diagnosis of disease, one which reaches the root of the matter and deals with the cause of human suffering. Nowhere is the soul's sense of touch so remarkable as when accompanied by the healing gift. For to such a healer every organ and nerve in his organism is a sensitized plate to receive clear impressions, or an aeolian harp to respond to every vibration, gentle or rude.

“We cannot sufficiently appreciate, dear friends, this refined sense of touch or realize when lacking it, how far we have drifted from our true spiritual estate—the illumined life of the soul. There are institutions for the physically blind, where a leading purpose is the cultivation of another physical sense, until reading is rapidly accomplished by the fingers. But no attention is given, even in our normal or art schools, to spiritual touch, or to reading with the fingers of our souls. Yet such powers should be recognized and utilized.

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“A phrase now somewhat commonly used, is to come *in touch* with persons or events. It is an unconscious recognition of the soul’s power to reach and touch other souls, independent of and transcending mortal sense. How many avenues the soul seeks through which to illumine our clay-bound consciousness. And the one under discussion is of the broadest and most infinite variety, one in every way worthy of our attention.

“Would that we could all become psychometric in every fibre of our true being, until in word and deed, in spirit and truth, we come through blessed realization, *in touch with Deity*.

“But in this discussion of our faculties, I have hardly touched upon my theme, or outlined those forces which express the soul’s dominance over material appetites and tendencies, its triumph over all temptations, the conquest of the law of fatigue, and the mastery of a perfectly

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pure and healthy life, with that greatest force of all, the power of aspiration to uplift us toward a still more illumined life.

“I know I shall trespass upon your patience if I continue longer, though I am most ready at any time to answer individual questions.”

Mr. Vernon here looked at his daughter to see how these new ideas had affected her and found to his amazement and not a little mortification that she was asleep. He was about to touch her, when she stirred slightly and rose to her feet, her face glowing with a supernal light. Slowly her lips moved, and naturally, modestly, most impressively, she voiced an invocation of praise and gratitude to the Over Soul, the Source of each wonderful power, with a beauty of diction, a thrilling force of utterance, unusual even to the finished orator, which proved an uplifting benediction to the rich hour they had all enjoyed together.

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Filled with consternation as Mr. Vernon was, that Barbara had dared thus to obtrude herself in such strange manner, faultless as was its expression, he was still more aghast to see her eyes suddenly open with bewilderment to find herself standing and evidently unconscious of what she had done, thus forcing upon him the conviction that some power outside of her own brain had used her organism and vocal organs.

Professor Montverte alone, understanding her state to be an instance of entranced inspiration, moved down to her chair, and stroked her forehead quietly for a moment, saying to her father:

“You have a rare treasure here, whom the world will one day seek, when rich gems of wisdom shall drop from her inspired lips.”

But Mr. Vernon's only desire was to get her home, away from these uncanny influences and interests, and was about making his excuses of withdrawal to

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Mrs. Wheaton, when she insisted on their remaining at least to enjoy the afternoon's motor ride to Santa Monica, which would drive all the cobwebs from their brains and give them a healthy appetite for the dinner which would await them at the brink of the Pacific's sparkling waves, just as the sun should sink into its wide depths, in the heart of the Golden West.

CHAPTER V

AN UNINVITED GUEST

A FEW weeks later, as Barbara and Regent returned from their usual sunset ramble, Mr. Vernon was awaiting them in the drawing room.

“Who were you talking with, Barbara?” he asked, “I thought I heard your farewell greeting to some caller.”

“Oh, Ralph was over for a little while,” she answered. “He joined us on the Lookout.”

“A fine fellow,” added Mr. Vernon. “You certainly have enlarged your list of friends of late, and they present a wide range in age and in thought calibre.”

“How so?” asked Barbara.

“Why, this afternoon, for example, you have held a long conversation with Professor Montverte, and I presume his

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subjects for discussion differed somewhat from Ralph's, and yet I venture to say that you enjoyed them both."

"Oh, yes," she said, "I always enjoy the Professor's portrayal of occult mysteries. Ralph was only trying to persuade me to go to the Opera House with them next week, when a comic opera will visit the city."

"Did it require so much persuasion?" asked Mr. Vernon. "It might prove a very enjoyable diversion. You have my consent if you awaited that formality."

Indeed Mr. Vernon was more than anxious that his daughter should become interested in the pleasures, even the gayeties of this world.

"Thank you, father, you are always kind, but I fear my companions, the Wheatons, would discover how bored I should become over the performance. For try as I will, I cannot enjoy frivolous songs and dances, or strained efforts to

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be funny. I feel more than ever there, a thing apart from the rest of the world, as if something in me were lacking when a large audience is in an uproar of laughter at the most trivial anecdote which I cannot enjoy. I thanked Ralph for his kind desire to give me pleasure, and he took my declination very sensibly, only remarking, with an indulgent smile, that I was a 'queer girl.' ”

“Well,” sighed Mr. Vernon, “what abstruse wisdom did the Professor impart this afternoon?”

“I hardly know where to begin,” mused Barbara, “and besides, father, you are not interested in the subjects wherein he has learned so much through rich experience. You are intelligent and wise in different channels of thought—the broad field of literature, and of scientific discovery, and yet, as science means knowledge, the Professor’s philosophy must take rank as a deep and wonderful science.”

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“One it would seem,” reasoned her father, “that might attract the octogenarian, or a person about ready to shuffle off this mortal coil, far more than it could appeal to a youthful mind, full of the fire of life and activity. Is there not danger, my child, of your becoming morbid by dwelling on these mystical, intangible matters?”

“But,” objected Barbara, “they seem more tangible to me than anything on this material plane, which is always fleeting, changeable and evanescent, merely the shadow of the real, the reflection of Spirit, which is the primal cause, the original matrix of all life.”

“I cannot follow you, my child. This world seems to me very solid and real. We are sure of its existence, as we are not sure of any other. Space is but miles and miles of vapor, a nebulous realm of intangibility.”

“Ah, but,” pleaded Barbara, “physical worlds as you know, father, wax old

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and wane. Their cycles pass and they are known no more. What becomes of the life, the rich, full, abundant life, with which these dead worlds once teemed? As not a drop of water exists which does not contain its colony of animalculae, as revealed by the microscope, so each interstitial of space, which seems to you an intangible void, is filled with spirit life, which the clairvoyant eye can readily perceive. So, father, instead of becoming morbid by this investigation of Truth, it encourages an intelligent growth, it extends the range of vision, lends an optimistic fellowship with all life, on all the worlds, in any sphere."

"Well, my child," assented Mr. Vernon, "I must honestly admit that the fears I have held of your becoming morbid seem groundless. You certainly seem far happier, more light of heart, than you were before your acquaintance with the Professor and his occult phil-

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osophy. There is a new tone in your voice, an added light in your eyes, which betokens health and growth.”

“Why should it not be so, father? There are no cosmetics for the complexion that can compare with the radiance which the love of Truth imparts. Moreover, we learn that this world was not intended as a place of happiness merely, but as a school of education and growth.”

She would have said more, but her attention was suddenly arrested by a low troubled growl from Regent, who had stretched himself beneath the hall portieres. It was a sentiment to which he seldom gave expression, having slight cause, therefor, but after keen listening had confirmed his first suspicion, he threw back his great tawny head and fixed troubled, disapproving eyes upon the outer door.

His companions likewise listened intently to detect the reason of his dis-

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turbance, but so dull are human ears, that it was some moments before a faint footfall on the gravel of the drive revealed the approach of a caller, evidently a stranger, not included in Regent's list of friends.

The bell soon sounded through the house, and responding thereto, the butler brought in a card to Mr. Vernon, upon which he read the name of Sterne Wadleigh.

"Wadleigh!" he exclaimed. "Why, I have not thought of him for months. He is an old business associate, a brilliant man. I believe he has been abroad and now doubtless seeks to renew our pleasant acquaintance."

"Shall I retire, father?" asked Barbara, instinctively longing to escape.

"Why, no, my dear," adding with a smile, "it may be that he has heard of my gifted daughter and desires to make her acquaintance, also. Moreover, as dinner is soon to be announced, we

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must ask him to join us. Another plate, James, and show him in.”

As Mr. Vernon advanced toward the vestibule to welcome his guest, Mr. Wadleigh made a somewhat boisterous entrance, extending both hands.

“Well, well, Vernon, is this where you hide yourself, in this Paradise of greenery, this elysium of fruits and flowers, a veritable *dolce far niente*. And with an houri as companion,” casting an admiring glance in Barbara’s direction.

“Allow me, Mr. Wadleigh, to present my daughter. Barbara, this is an old friend, Mr. Wadleigh.”

Barbara greeted him with all the friendliness she could command, although instinctively feeling that he belonged to another world and another race of beings than her own, with whom she could not accord.

As he turned to accept the easy chair Mr. Vernon offered him, she was amused to notice Regent move to her side and

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establish himself there, in mute protection from an environment which he evidently mistrusted.

The gentleman had scarcely picked up the threads of former interests, when dinner was announced and adjournment was made to the spacious dining room.

After soup was served, Mr. Vernon inquired:

“Did you have a pleasant European trip? Tell us of your varied experiences there?”

“I fear,” laughed Mr. Wadleigh, “I should wear my welcome out as a guest, if I related half that I observed and enjoyed. I was not presented at Court anywhere, though I visited many kingdoms,” adding facetiously, “deuced mistake of the reigning sovereigns, don’t you know, not to command my presence and seek my mature criticism and advice regarding the principles of good government from the standpoint of American culture and experience.” After which

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mirthless sally, he spoke with greater sincerity of the increased affection the true American feels for his native land and his keener appreciation for our glorious Republic, when he views it from an ocean-wide perspective, admitting that "Travel is a great leveller, educator and revealer."

"And yet," responded Mr. Vernon, "the security and perpetuity of our Republic is not immune from the danger of disruption and eclipse. It is menaced today in many ways."

Whereupon Barbara, who did not wish to engage in the conversation, but felt an inner prompting which forced the utterance, replied:

"Ah, but greater is He that is with us than all that can strive against us. The Greatness must dispel all darkness since it is the Light itself. Liberty and Righteousness must prevail."

"Yes, my daughter, and so must Law prevail and broken Law will bring

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its just retribution, sooner or later.”

Mr. Wadleigh had been watching closely for some hint of Barbara's interests and preferences, that he might ingratiate himself in her favor, but after this expression of her thoughtful nature, he relinquished his previous purpose to paint for her edification the gayeties of "beautiful Paree," or things he had witnessed at Monto Carlo. Here seemed a new specimen of the genus woman, such as he never before had beheld, or had an opportunity to study, but the game seemed worth the candle. The Cathedrals of the old world were certainly a safe subject, and he was about launching into a description of that lace work in stone "carved by the wise Erwin of Steinbach," or the wonderful Dome of Michael Angelo, when Mr. Vernon remarked:

"You know, Barbara, you were wondering the other day how it would seem to live in countries exclusively dominated

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by the Catholic religion, under the influence of its costly shrines, the grand imposing music of its masses, the pomp and splendor of its ceremonials. Perhaps our guest could tell us what psychological influence, if any, it had upon him."

Perhaps this was the one subject to which Mr. Wadleigh had given the least attention, if he had thought of it at all, but he laughingly reminded his hosts that religion in southern Europe was a very easy-going affair.

"The Italian," said he, "wears his obligations very lightly. He sits in the sun, when it shines, and occasionally at the vesper hour drops a bead of his Rosary, mechanically; he may go at lazy intervals to Confessional and have all his sins of omission or commission absolved, and go on living the same careless, indifferent life."

"Well," exclaimed Barbara, "that must be the most depressing part of those

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priest-dominated countries, that there seems no incentive to individual unfoldment, for a man stands in the place of God.”

“The ignorant man,” suggested her father, “needs a man-god whom he can see and hear, as a healthy restraint upon his lower propensities. His blind faith constitutes the police force of the world.”

“But,” continued Barbara, “a religion that holds him in ignorance is unworthy the name. Each soul should be its own high priest, and make steady, earnest advance toward grander ideals. The very word from which religion was derived—*religare*—means to bind back again the soul to its Source. To see so many lives in bondage to a human hierarchy must be depressing and might easily sway the too plastic mind of the visitor to acceptance of Catholicism. There have been many such instances.”

“Tourists as a rule,” remarked Mr. Wadleigh, “are too flurried, too frivolous

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and superficial to be easily psychologized by any phase of belief.”

“Your word ‘psychologized,’ ” said Mr. Vernon, “reminds me to ask you if you visited any of the hypnotic clinics in Nancy, Paris, or elsewhere. Some very interesting reports proceed from those schools and hospitals. Professor Charcot’s recent work seems most valuable.”

“Yes,” answered his guest. “I made quite a study of the power of hypnotic suggestion and took some lessons myself. That is the one practical thing I brought back from Europe.”

“For what purpose?” asked Mr. Vernon. “Do you intend to practice the art of healing?”

“Oh, bless you, no,” was the response, “but there are often times and places when one strongly wishes to sway another to meet his wish.”

Barbara’s eyes opened very widely at this unprincipled confession, and to

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turn the conversation into another more desirable channel, she asked the gentleman if he devoted any time while abroad to psychic investigation.

At this query Mr. Wadleigh leaned back in his chair, and flirting his napkin through his moustache, laughed boisterously, and then exclaimed:

“Why, my dear Miss Vernon, I never would have suspected you of being a practical joker.”

“But I am not joking, Mr. Wadleigh,” asserted the somewhat indignant girl. “Our papers and magazines abound with the results of scientific researches in this hitherto unknown field of knowledge, by such learned men and renowned scientists as Alfred Russel Wallace, Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor Richet, Camille Flammarion, the late Professor Lombrosa and many others, until the earnest student of occult truth often wishes for a nearer perspective, to see for himself the mar-

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vels thus witnessed and described.”

“Merely tricks, my dear young lady, tricks which deceive the very elect.”

“You are mistaken, sir. You simply have given the matter no attention and know not whereof you speak, and—pardon me—you know the rejection of ignorance is valueless.”

“Then allow me to quote ‘where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise,’ the most arrant folly I should say.”

“Well, I must confess, Wadleigh,” interposed Mr. Vernon, “the subject has seemed to me beneath one’s consideration, but some very remarkable demonstrations have been observed that are beyond the power of material science to explain, though I admit my surprise that psychic investigation by such erudite minds has not included a higher range, been focussed on a loftier plane than the trivial tricks which they require of the media under their observation. If there is a spirit world, how much of interest and

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instruction regarding it might be revealed through an instrument for inspiration."

"And did you notice," asked Barbara, "that even the uneducated Eusapia Paladino herself, in her broken speech and simple language, rebuked their methods and low range of demand? For when a lady said to her before she yielded to entrancement, that she hoped she would be able to make an inkstand move from the mantel to a table, Eusapia replied:

"What you want me to do tricks for all the time? Why you not want your mother to come and talk with you? I can do that too."

"I think I should prefer to see the inkstand dance," coarsely replied Mr. Wadleigh, to which Barbara vouchsafed no reply, feeling that to tread further upon what to her was most sacred ground would be indeed to cast pearls before swine.

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When the trio had adjourned to the drawing room, she acceded to their visitor's request, and seated herself at the Grand Piano, of which she was a master, and gave two or three fine selections from different composers, adding one little morceau that had "come to her," she knew not whence, but which bore the stamp of true inspiration. Its present rendering lifted her consciousness so far above the plane of social chit-chat, that she arose, excused herself for so long entrenching upon the renewal of old-time interests, in which she knew these former business associates wished to engage, and withdrew.

But Sterne Wadleigh seemed to lose his sociability after the maiden left them, and soon took his departure. He lingered, however, at the gateway, surveying the beautiful scene, the shadowy fern tracery cast upon the lawn by the soft moonlight shining through the delicate branches of the drooping pepper trees.

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He scanned the stately mansion which he fully intended should become eventually his home. He even paused to plan some alterations he should introduce in his rearrangement of the grounds, a tree sacrificed here, or a new driveway there, before he turned confidently on his heel, to seek conveyance to the neighboring city of Los Angeles.

CHAPTER VI

AN UNSUCCESSFUL SUIT

“OH, Alphonso! Here, boy! Where’s my coffee? You are growing more and more lazy every day. Still pining for your native heath, I wager.”

A slender French garcon responded to the querulous command.

“Non, Monsieur, the master sleep such verra long while. Alphonse, he do many things, he clean master’s clothes, he polish shoes, he wait and wait. The coffee here already—pretty quick.” And the boy vanished into an adjoining room.

The sun had mounted high toward the zenith when Sterne Wadleigh opened his eyes, the morning after his pleasant visit at the Vernons’ home, in Pasadena. And before his brain was quite free from the drowsy effects of his long heavy

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slumber, thought became busy with crafty plans for the fierce, relentless siege he intended to wage against a maiden's heart.

“There is nothing else for me to do,” he soliloquized, “although I have always been considered a man of wealth and elegant leisure, and” (casting his eye around the luxurious appointments of his suite) “I have thus far been able to keep up appearances, I cannot do it much longer. I must provide for my advancing years. Vernon is a millionaire, he will not cumber the earth many years longer. That stilted daughter of his is his only heir. She must and shall be mine. To be sure she is a tasteless prig, whose senseless pate is filled with all sorts of silly notions, but I'll make short work of her reconstruction. She did not like me a cent's worth, I could see that. She showed her hearty disapproval of every idea I advanced, but I'll soon win her over, if not by fair

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means, then by foul. I'll practice every hypnotic art which I have learned, until she becomes my abject slave, and then I'll spend her dollars as my own desires dictate."

Here Alphonse entering with Mr. Wadleigh's breakfast ended his soliloquy for the present, and this unscrupulous schemer began chaffing the boy upon a recent attack of homesickness from which he had suffered.

"What's France to California, I'd like to know?" he asked. "Look down that avenue. Observe those beautiful residences, embowered in beauty. Notice the rich emerald tint of those velvety lawns which border the palm-shaded flaggings, on either side. Is there in any land a scene more fair?"

"Verra fine, master," agreed Alphonse. "America beautiful, rich country, but I love best my old home. I miss much my little brother. I return some day if master please."

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“Oh, but I am to give you a better home than this before long, a place which is a dream of luxury. In short, Alphonse, I am to marry soon and settle down, so you won't have to go roaming round the world with me.”

The boy opened his large black eyes with surprise, not having seen his master in the company of any ladies, but he remained discreetly silent, while he removed the waiter, and busied himself with Mr. Wadleigh's morning toilette.

Immaculately attired, at last, this gentleman sallied forth into the warm sunshine, thoroughly pleased with himself and the world, while he greatly anticipated the improved status in his affairs which awaited him in the near future.

He resolved that no time should be lost in taking the first steps toward the desired goal. Therefore, a few days later, as the formality of a dinner call made ample excuse for his re-appearance

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at Crescent Villa, he arrived there early one afternoon and was fortunate in finding Mr. Vernon seated on the broad veranda, screened by a luxuriant bouganvilia vine which tossed its crimson clusters of strange blossoms far above easy reach.

After an hour spent in social converse upon current topics of the day, Mr. Wadleigh began in graver strain:

“Vernon, I am burdened today with a strong impelling purpose of my heart, which only you can gratify. I crave your sanction and consent upon my earnest desire to win your daughter’s hand in marriage.”

“O Wadleigh, *don’t*,” almost groaned Mr. Vernon, and he started as if stung by a vital thrust. “Would you rob me of the only jewel I possess, the one treasure which the robber Death has left me of all the dear ones my long life has known? What would existence hold for me without my child, my beloved daughter,

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Barbara, never so beautiful, so dear as now?"

"My dear old friend," expostulated the wooer, "do you imagine I would be so cruel as to deprive you of your daughter's companionship, or of her devoted love? I would not wish to take her from your home, your daily comradeship. Would not life be richer rather than poorer, to gain a son without losing a daughter? And life could glide on as smoothly as it has sped before."

"It is difficult," responded Mr. Vernon, after a painful silence, fraught with suffering, "to think of you, Wadleigh, in the capacity of a son. You have been nearer my equal in years, in maturity of thought and interests. Barbara is still in her youth, with her life all before her. I want to leave her untrammelled for many happy years yet. We see too much in these days of youthful lives thwarted in their natural unfoldment, deprived of a ripened

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growth by premature alliances which thrust burdens upon young shoulders too grievous to be borne, cares which make the heart weary and old before its time. Oh, no—no, I cannot think of it for my child.”

Then, deeming postponement the easiest form of refusal, he added:

“Return in ten years from now and then renew your request, if it still remains your desire,” and he waved his hands in final dismissal of the subject.

But such postponement did not suit the schemes or the immediate needs of his visitor, who asked meekly if Mr. Vernon had any personal objection to himself as a suitor, or if there was a more favored one in the field.

“None, whatever,” courteously responded Mr. Vernon, “unless perhaps I would prefer a mate for my daughter nearer her own age. A stag does not mate with a fawn. An adult mind of wide worldly experience like your own,

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could not understand or share the guileless immaturity of a child. I doubt if you could win her affection, and lacking this high esteem, well—Barbara shall know no loveless marriage.”

Mr. Wadleigh smiled, feeling that his hypnotic art could make her fancy she was in love with him, which was enough for his purpose, and any later rude awakening of hers would affect him very little.

After a pause he resumed:

“‘Lulled in the countless chambers of the brain,
Are memories linked by many a hidden chain,’

and our conversation has strangely aroused the recollection of something I have not recalled for years. In the palmy days of old 'Frisco and her bonanza kings, when Ralston built the California Theatre, upon whose boards the dramatic giants of those days played their great parts, winning thus honor and fame, I used often to witness the portrayal of

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that tragedy of a father's love—'Virginius'—so masterfully rendered by 'genial John,' as his friends loved to call him, the great tragedian, McCullough, he of the eagle eye, the Roman bearing, the noble, generous heart. It was, I think, his greatest part. In an early scene of the play before the dark days dawned for the hero, Icilius is asking for the hand of the gentle Virginia, (as I have asked today for the hand of your daughter). Her father reminds the lover how great is the gift he craves, and mentions the fact that her mother died in her infancy (as did Barbara's I reverently recall) and that he, Virginius, had been forced to render the kind offices of both father and mother. Then turning most impressively to Icilius; he asks, 'Will you promise to be all that a father has been, and all that a lover should be?' Icilius replies, 'All that man should be unto woman, I will be.'

"Vernon, I can only reiterate the

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avowal of this Roman youth. All that man can be, I will be to Barbara.”

Mr. Vernon sat in silence for a little space, and then replied:

“I doubt if Virginius would have been so generous if his daughter’s heart had not been already centered upon this youthful lover. There was strong reason for this sacrifice.”

“Will you then withhold your consent if I win Barbara’s love?”

“I doubt if you could ever meet her on her own plane. My own outlook upon life has changed with her unfolding nature. She has educated me in many ways, for she is far beyond both you and me, in mental development, or as she would call it, in spiritual growth. I doubt, Wadleigh, if your nature is capable of being ‘all that a man should be’ unto such a woman. But here she comes. Let nothing be said of this to her, at present.”

Barbara was advancing up the drive,

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rosy and brilliant with her long stroll. Her hands and arms were laden with clusters of the golden poppy, which was then in the height of its season, and her gathered treasure would soon flame from every vase and jardiniere in the Villa. A large wreath of the glorious blossoms encircled Regent's neck, as he walked proudly beside her. She frowned slightly when she caught sight of her father's caller, but with scant courtesy greeted him and accepted the chair he proffered her, for a brief rest.

Regent, however, was less polite. He stretched himself at Barbara's feet, between her and the visitor, and occasionally expressed the sentiments which filled his loyal heart, with a sigh that was almost a growl. His emotions of distrust and dislike were too deep for complete repression.

Mr. Vernon, on seeing Wadleigh and Barbara together, was struck afresh with the incongruity of any possible union

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between them, and welcomed the call of a gardener who sought fresh direction for his labors, to withdraw from an interview which had proven so painful.

Mr. Wadleigh at once improved this opportunity to ply his arts upon Barbara. He endeavored with all his power to charm the young girl, to coerce her attention, to attract her regard, quite ignorant of the fact that hypnotism is powerless to affect the spiritually unfolded being. A "good subject" can only be found on its own mental plane. A soul that has begun to *know itself*, that has gained the freedom of conscious power, cannot be moved by the mesmeric eye any more than can the chair upon which its form rests.

Surprised and nettled at his lack of success, the failure of his studied efforts to demonstrate the potency of hypnotic suggestion, Mr. Wadleigh arose from his seat and was about to approach Barbara with a keen, fixed gaze and ex-

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tended arms, as if to encircle her, when before one step had been taken, a shaggy form suddenly arose erect between them, and two strong white paws were placed firmly upon his shoulders, forcing him back quietly, but decidedly, into his chair.

Looking for some rebuke or punishment from Barbara for this uncalled-for insult, Mr. Wadleigh noted instead that her hand rested upon the dog's head, or toyed with the poppies which still adorned his collar, as if in approval of his protective action. Indeed Barbara's confidence in Regent's keen intelligence was so implicit, that she knew he must have had good and sufficient reason for his unusual discourtesy.

Inflamed thus to fierce anger, which he did not wish to exhibit before his prospective bride, Mr. Wadleigh, after leaving adieux for his host, straightway took his departure.

At the gate he turned and muttered:

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“The first thing I do after I get settled here, will be to shoot that damnable brute, and I am not sure that I shall wait for that hour.”

CHAPTER VII

A STRANGE VISION

LIFE to Barbara now became far happier, more satisfactory than it ever had been before her spiritual nature was quickened to growth and realization. Indeed, there is no other happiness worthy the name. Every material blessing and luxury had always been hers, but these cannot appease the hunger of a soul filled with diviner cravings, the yearning of a spirit athirst for the waters of life.

Occasionally she almost pitied the Barbara of her earlier girlhood, as she recalled her ignorance, her blind longings, her persistent questionings, which no one seemed able to answer. Puzzling problems still remained, to be sure, but she could trustingly await their slow but

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inevitable revealment, as gradually but steadily she grew nearer the Source of all Truth. Her dauntless soul forged right onward, unhasting, unresting, undismayed by obstacles, or beclouded by doubts.

Psychic powers and their resultant phenomena interested her. She rejoiced at the unfoldment of her own latent gifts, but true inspiration could not linger here; these were only means to a greater end, guide-posts toward a clearer realization of the regnant soul which endeavored through these avenues to pierce the density of mortal expression.

The grandeur, the potency of the eternal soul, without beginning or ending, uncreate as is the Over Soul, filled her with awe and reverence. To be consciously one with Divinity! This alone proved immortality and also reunion with all other kindred souls, since all possess the same divine lineage.

She often marvelled that minds both

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erudite and scientific could remain so long on the phenomenal plane, with ever-increasing skepticism, that they were convinced with such laborious difficulty of the continuity of life, real proof of which must always proceed from the inward conviction of an unfolded spirit, which thus *recognizes itself*, and its true destiny, rather than through any external sign, or message, from an entity once supposed to be dead.

Oh, that mortals would seek for individual growth, which must always be endogynous, as the divine germ, like the lily, expands from within toward expression. Spiritual advancement cannot be gained by accretion from without of oft-repeated tests of a self-evident Truth. The status of every man's growth, the strength and purity of his aspiration, measures his capacity for receiving Truth. A full vessel cannot receive another drop. Thus a mind absorbed by worldly interests and pursuits must be emptied of

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all these ignoble desires before new, heavenly manna can be imparted and constantly renewed.

Barbara's soul was like a clear, limpid lake, reflecting in its crystal depths each vibration of Infinite Truth. And it was her pure purpose to use every gift which she possessed as a stepping stone toward grander heights of spiritual unfoldment, by which she might educate and uplift the world about her. She felt that she was consciously living in the realm of spirit, today; then why should not she and other mortals use their spiritual eyes and ears and every faculty of the soul, even while functioning for a brief while on this earthly plane? It is a legitimate, normal privilege.

Many spiritual visions were hers, ethereal forms often floated in her atmosphere, or walked beside her. She enjoyed a beautiful companionship with her mother, hitherto denied to her young life. There was constant interchange

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of thought and feeling between them, of query and response, frequent requests for guidance to which wise counsel and advice were imparted.

Occasionally her brain was touched from a still higher source, (an entity as yet invisible and unknown), with a flood of inspiration, an influx of new thoughts, of lofty ideas, which rushed to her lips for utterance, or to her pen for written expression. She sensed the greatness of this inspiring soul, its ripened advancement, as also its vast distance from her present sphere. It was as if a telephonic wire from supernal realms of conscious life were using her sensitized brain as receiver, which she lent for its use, with reverent gratitude.

She once had a vision of the murky atmosphere surrounding this planet, all threaded and thickly interlaced with lines of flashing light, extending downward to our plane, which represented the efforts of ripened souls, perhaps of

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the old Masters of Art, of Science and Poesy trying to touch the plastic brain of some mortal with a new message of Truth and Beauty, wherewith to bless the world. These planetary angels are often unsuccessful, but try again and again, waiting with infinite patience, to perfect their lofty design, while those chosen for this high mission are seeking the baubles of earth, feeding upon husks, or if by chance their tardy attention is turned toward spiritual verities, they are engaged in the puerile effort to make a table tip, a curtain wave, or hear the electric tick, or rap of some unadvanced intelligence, still hovering near the mundane plane, and therefore, unable to impart any spiritual instruction.

Small wonder that the inhabitants of this "Sorrowful Star" advance so slowly toward the realization of their spiritual possibilities. Education is needed far more than the gratification of witnessing psychic phenomena—the educating of the

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soul's innate powers and faculties. Conviction of truth cannot be otherwise gained, it can never be intellectually apprehended.

Of late a new feature of unfoldment had come to Barbara. She had taken journeys into the unseen world and beheld glories inexpedient to transmit, for they were almost incredible to her own consciousness, when she recalled them. These experiences she carefully withheld from her father, knowing what anxiety would be his, lest she might not on some of these weird excursions return safely to her body, and this element of fear would restrict her freedom. He had made rapid growth during recent months, but there are some soul experiences unlawful to utter to those of immature unfoldment, and she recalled the command of the Master: "See that thou tell no man."

One recent vision of Barbara's had puzzled her not a little at first, though

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it led to the mastery of another chapter in Truth's vast volume. It seemed a veritable record of some past experience her soul had known in the vast eons of its gradual unfoldment, through repeated expression. For it awakened a recognition in her own consciousness, a reminiscence, more than a memory, of events in which she was once an active participant.

She saw at first a little girl who seemed a part of herself, only that she lived in a strange, tropical land, such as Barbara had never seen. Her home, where she first saw this little girl at play, was a diminutive, thatched cottage, surrounded with strange plants and blossoms, a wilderness of vegetation on either side, stretching away toward forest and jungle, which the child longed to explore, but had been forbidden, as a region in some way unsafe. She could feel in her own heart, as she gazed upon this child, the longing that filled her mind to extend

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her field of observation and knowledge, just as in this present life, Barbara herself had yearned to reach beyond the temporal to the spiritual, to gain more light, more of truth than her present slender store.

Again the veil lifted to reveal a scene of the long ago. The child had grown to maidenhood, and Barbara read in many of her tastes and proclivities, prophecies of gifts and powers she herself was today exercising in a more unfolded state. She saw this maiden wander forth one morning for a ramble beneath an intensely blue sky, she even felt the fierce heat of the tropical sun which shed its strong, radiant beams upon her, and Barbara delightedly basked in its rays, drank them, absorbed them into her being, as she often now yearned to do. Was this, she questioned, the reason why she always craved a high temperature? Heat seemed the key-note of her life. Was it because of some past tropical

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experience, which she missed and yearned to reproduce in a temperate zone?

Soon, as she watched this maiden, she saw her pass under the shade of the trees that bordered the dense forest. She seemed absorbed in some happy thoughts, perhaps it was the dawning of Love's young dream, and so oblivious of time and distance did she become, that she wandered far away from her home, farther and deeper into the forest. Her path on one side, wound along the edge of a precipice, whose steep walls were a tangle of vines and bushes, growing it would seem from the nourishment of the luxuriant air, for there was slight anchorage from the soil for their support.

Barbara here began to feel a premonition of danger, which she could not fathom, or explain, a tremor of fear and foreboding ran through her as she watched the care-free maiden. She longed to shout to her to turn back, but the dreamer wandered on till suddenly Bar-

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bara saw the maiden throw up her arms and scream in helpless despair. For there in the underbrush beside her gleamed two fierce wicked eyes, a tawny, yellow form crouched there ready to spring upon her, to tear her and devour her. In this deadly peril, looking about her for some refuge from the dreadful tiger, some way of escape from such cruel death, she saw only the precipice, which, while it likewise seemed to offer death rather than life, still presented it in a less cruel manner. Quickly the maiden jumped aside from the range of the tiger's projected leap, just as he flung himself forward, and before he had time to recover his aim, she sprang far over the edge of the cliff down into the heart of the growth which fringed its side.

She could not foresee how long this slender support could bear her weight, or how long she might have to hang suspended there, before she was missed

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at home and deliverance came, if they could find her. But death by starvation was preferable to being eaten alive by the terrible creature above her, who was growling hoarsely over his lost prey.

As she lifted her face, rigid and wan in its terror, Barbara saw that it was unmistakably *her very own*, and thus realized that this was veritably an experience her soul had once known. This accounted perhaps for her usual, agitated fright on the edge of any elevation and for her unreasonable distress at visiting any exhibition of wild animals. These were the scars of reminiscence.

The day seemed to wear on, as Barbara watched the tragic scene. The pitiless sun which had almost mocked the sufferings of the maiden, increasing her agonizing thirst, was setting at last. Night would soon enwrap her with its gloom. Ah, how many nights might come and go before the oblivion of death would bring release. Already the slender

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growth to which she clung was beginning under her weight to cleave from its slight anchorage.

At last the maiden's strained ears caught a rapid footstep approaching, a step which she knew and loved. She cried out joyfully, imploringly, and soon far above her she saw the face of a youth, who had been seeking her everywhere, already having slain the tiger, with horrible doubts as to her possible fate.

Eagerly, tremblingly, Barbara watched the slow process of the maiden's rescue, saw their rapturous embrace of joy and thanksgiving, and then saw youth and maiden, with arms interlaced, pass out from beneath the deepening shade of the forest, and move onward through the wide, beautiful moonlit country to her home.

With Barbara's spiritual discernment, she saw that this happy pair were true soul companions. They were dual expressions of one soul, and although they

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might seldom meet on earth, in the varied vicissitudes of spiritual unfoldment, which requires bereavement as well as fulfillment, solitude as well as happy companionship, still the fruition of every trial, the completion of each separation, must be eventual reunion, the absolute blending of the perfected angel.

“For in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels.”

CHAPTER VIII

RECOGNITION

NEW joys likewise came to Mr. Vernon, in the exercise of his daughter's varied gifts. The treasures of literature were still attractive, but did not completely absorb his attention. His library no longer limited his horizon. He realized that there were vast fields of research, avenues of advanced knowledge beyond the intellectual plane, which the printed page had never revealed. His pure, gentle daughter was the evangel of Truth to his soul. In the fruits of her inspired pen, he recognized a peculiar quality lacking in some of the best authors. New ideas, most forcibly presented, inimitable comparisons and illustrations, quite foreign to her own mind, all constituted undeniable proof to him of a

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super-normal consciousness, a source of intelligence far transcending the mortal brain.

Barbara came to him one day, with a fresh production from her pen, a poem that embodied ideas and aspirations of deepest import and instruction, and hesitatingly, likewise, she offered him a written message from his angel wife, doubting if his acceptance of spiritual testimony would reach so far.

But he seized upon it eagerly, solemnly, and read this letter from the beyond with the hunger of a starving heart, perusing it again and again, pondering upon all it meant to him, for it was veritable proof, at last, that life was continuous. The veil of the long silence between their severed lives was now lifted. The grave no longer held its victory, and permitted no grief or hopeless mourning to the enlightened soul.

“What pitiful ignorance,” he thought, “has held the world so long in bondage!

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What misinterpretation of the significance of that blessed transition which must come alike to all, this promotion from the primary class to a higher grade, which advancement need not include a voiceless separation? How many years I have shrouded myself in gloom, because a pure, sweet angel had found her wings, had outgrown this plane and won the privilege of Paradise. How I withdrew, in the selfishness of grief, from this rarely gifted daughter of mine, leaving her to a loveless solitude, depriving her thus of the fostering tenderness needed for the intelligent unfolding of her spiritual nature."

But truth finds a way for its expression, and was bringing to him now, garlands of joy to replace the ashes of bitterness.

Returning to this poem, he said:

"Really, daughter, some of these gems are too valuable to be kept in seclusion. I am tempted to publish a collection of

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your writings, only as I am reminded how few people could comprehend their lofty significance.”

“Not yet, father. As of old ‘the Light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not.’ He that hath unfolded ears alone can hear the divine accent. The Master counselled us not to cast pearls before swine.”

“Well, ” said Mr. Vernon, “we will sometime have a few copies for our own private use, to preserve these teachings in collected form.”

“I have only begun to be taught, father. Wait until still more valuable truths are gleaned, as my capacity for receiving them increases.”

“Be careful, my dear, not to sit too long at your desk at one time. I want your development to be a healthy one, natural, not forced, and free from all nervous strain.”

“My wise guardians, father, are as careful of their instrument as you could

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be, and regulate the duration of the sitting. When near the close, I hear the click of a signal, as if some celestial machinery were silenced, or a faucet was turned off. I can then invite no more inspiration. I usually sit twenty minutes at high noon, when the sun is at its meridian, and all force is strongest, but for peaceful baptism or for communings with my dear mother, the twilight hour seems most favorable. I suppose Time is an element which does not exist in the eternal realm, and yet these appointments are as rigidly kept as if there were veritable clocks in heaven. Even when I am unmindful of the approach of the hour, the power descends at the exact moment."

"Wonderful! Marvellous!" exclaimed her father. "Indeed are these things 'not dreamed of' in our mundane philosophies. But, daughter, be sure that you balance these spiritual experiences with plentiful exercise in the open air

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and sunshine. That deep, dreamy expression in your eyes increases; I want to see it modified with the flash of mirth, the light of merry companionship.

“By the way, isn’t it time that we made our long deferred call on Mrs. Wheaton and the young people?”

“If you are ready, father. It is always a great pleasure to enter their delightful home.”

“Very well, we will go at once. No, my dear fellow, good boy, not today,” (as Regent raised his great, questioning eyes), “you can accompany us part of the distance and there, if you like, await our return,” which concession quite satisfied the intelligent companion who translated their every word, quickly and accurately.

The trio sallied forth in happy mood, Barbara and her father recalling what changes had been wrought in their lives since Mrs. Wheaton’s house party, not

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so very long ago. So much of growth and new rich experience had been theirs that it seemed almost like another embodiment which they were expressing today.

They were again cordially greeted, as they arrived at the hospitable doors of Rose Manor, and a delightful hour was enjoyed. Then Blanche, whose wedding day was approaching, invited Barbara to examine in an upper room the elaborate trousseau which was being prepared for her. Returning from her delighted inspection of these mysteries, they soon took their departure, Ralph walking away with them.

Turning to Barbara, he asked: "Have you seen Clara Clayton lately?"

"No, I have not, and Father, will you not call with me today? We are so near, and I know she would esteem it an honor if you would accompany me, and you come, too, Ralph."

"Certainly, I will, with pleasure,"

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replied Mr. Vernon, and Ralph had already decided to go.

As they turned into her quiet street, Ralph remembered to tell them that a cousin of Clara's had recently arrived in Pasadena from the East, and settled near her, with his mother and sister. He himself had taken a position as clerk in one of the large banks of Los Angeles, coming very highly recommended from a similar institution in New England.

'You must call on them some time, Barbara, they have no acquaintances here.'

'I should greatly enjoy meeting them, I am sure,' returned Barbara. 'What name do they bear?'

'The young banker's name is Norman Ashmont. I have not yet met Mrs. or Miss Ashmont.'

The maid who answered their ring showed them into the parlor, at the farther end of which they espied Clara,

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who stood turning over an album of pictures for the inspection of a young man who bent over her.

“Why, here is Ashmont now,” exclaimed Ralph.

As the couple turned to greet the guests, Barbara received a most unexpected shock. Indeed, had she not suddenly clutched a chair for support, she might have fallen, for in the young man who was soon to be presented to her, she recognized with startling vividness the youth of her recent vision, the rescuer of a former, younger Barbara. Not that his face was an exact copy of the one she had seen, or that his lithe form repeated the exact mould of that one of long ago, but the kinship of soul was unmistakable, and her soul *recognized its own*. Suddenly realizing the full significance of this meeting, the blood rushed back to her heart and face, with a warm glow, which saved her from fainting.

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Norman Ashmont was likewise transfixed with amazement and turned pale, as he looked upon Barbara, for her face was one he had often beheld in his dreams. And if it had been merely a case of love at first sight, his emotion at his first glimpse of so beautiful a stranger would not have been surprising, but he held himself in check by great effort, and as their hands met in the clasp of courtesy, a strong magnetic current thrilled them both, like the spark of contact between two poles of an electric battery.

It was fortunate that Ralph and Clara were chatty and merry, for Barbara could not speak at first. Her father began to think she was having one of her spiritual experiences, but she soon emerged from her daze, and took a minor part in the friendly conversation.

Mr. Vernon, quite uninitiated in the subtle mystery of soul counterparts, turned his attention to young Ashmont,

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and became much interested in the information thus elicited of his former career in the East, and his reason for removal to a sunnier clime. He had readily relinquished the proffered promotion, which would be his if he staid, and cheerily began again here, at the foot of the ladder, that his mother might spend her declining years in a less severe climate.

“Already,” he added, “the roses are beginning to bloom once more in her fair cheeks.”

“I hope indeed,” said Mr. Vernon, “that many happy healthy years are in store for her. I assure you that my daughter and myself will soon have the pleasure and honor of calling upon your mother and sister, and you will always be welcome in our own home.”

As Ashmont voiced his thanks and appreciation, Mr. Vernon referred to the bank in Los Angeles, with which he was connected:

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“I am unacquainted,” he said, “with any of its officials save one, Wadleigh—Mr. Sterne Wadleigh, who is, I believe, one of its directors.”

“I have not seen him yet,” replied Ashmont, and Mr. Vernon said no more, for he suddenly realized how little of a friend at court this selfish, cynical man would be, how poor a benefactor to any one whom Mr. Vernon might recommend to his notice.

Returning home, Barbara seemed to walk on air, or in a mist of mingled prospect and retrospect. She rejoiced when she espied Regent’s huge white tassel wave its joyful welcome to them, from the path in the near distance, Reaching the Villa, she left her father at the door and passed on with this trusty confidant of her youth to the Lookout, where she could pour into his safe and willing ears all that was in her heart.

CHAPTER IX

A SMALL DINNER PARTY

AS the weeks and months rolled by, the Vernons and Ashmonts became very congenial freinds. Irene Ashmont was a girl after Barbara's own heart, quite independent of the fact that she was Norman's sister. She was unlike any associate Barbara had hitherto known, and while not herself a psychic, she was rich in experiences with noted media of the East. Many long conversations the maidens held together, each learning much from the other, and whenever they met, if unhindered by other companionship, they plunged at once into earnest discussion of the deep truths of Spirit—the vital principles of life.

Irene had gained considerable insight into practical metaphysics, the New

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Thought movements of the day, and as she outlined their various phases, Barbara at once realized that this was the legitimate practicalization of her gospel of Spirit. When in her spiritual excursions she had departed from her body, she had sometimes looked back upon the deserted, senseless form of clay, powerless as it was to move, or to assume any condition without the inspiration of the spirit, and she had marvelled that mortals had so long exalted it to such undue prominence, watching it so fearfully, anxiously, to see what conditions it might assume, which they could not control or avoid.

“Oh,” said Barbara, one day, as she and Irene were reading together a recent metaphysical work, “that mortals were only conscious of their power, of their ability and privilege to live the free life of the spirit, today, disease would be known no more. This complete enfranchisement from the bondage of the

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flesh and its pains, must come to the race as the years roll on. All sickness must become a forgotten feature of the past. It will be inevitable as knowledge of spiritual truth and power increases.”

“But,” said Irene, “as I have heard this new truth presented in the Metaphysical Clubs and Conventions of the East, there is little said about the emancipation of the spirit. They emphasize solely the power of thought, of pure mental action to bring freedom from illness and prostration. They almost seem afraid of the word-spirit, the real source of Truth. They do not look high enough. Perhaps they have not yet gained freedom from prejudice.”

“And yet Spirit is the real Thinker,” responded Barbara. “While all conditions of the mind are reflected inevitably upon the physical organism, the mind in its turn is the tool of the spirit, a lens which the spirit looks through, while serving itself as the agent of the

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inspiring soul. If mortals are learning to withdraw from their recognition of the physical plane, and from material remedies for their ailments, why should they not advance another step toward Reality, and live consciously in the realm of Spirit, allowing their spiritual growth and estate to decide what thoughts shall be theirs. Then to treat a sick person by mental action alone, by focussing righteous thoughts upon him, must make the mind of the practitioner so tense as to annul receptivity to the baptism of the healing influx from the Infinite Healer, the only Power in the universe. Oh, they have only grasped half of this mighty truth—the lesser half.”

“All people, dear, have not been blessed with your experiences to make the spirit seem so real, so potent, the body a thing apart from prominent recognition. You hardly seem to lend it sensation any more than intelligent power to afflict you.”

“I admit, Irene, that the sensation

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of weight has lessened to a remarkable degree. My body hardly seems to weigh an ounce. I am not sufficiently related to it to be unduly fettered by it. When one has once been conscious out of the body, fleshly walls can never again enfold one so closely. It is because mortals focus their consciousness on the physical plane that the body gives them so much trouble. If they would lift their consciousness, their recognition to the spiritual plane, and realize that even now they are spirits, there would be little left to feed their bodily ailments, which thrive on recognition and worry. I confess I can hardly feel the chair touch me, or sense the ground I tread upon. With Paul, I am in the spirit on the Lord's day and every day."

"But, Barbara, many of the psychics I have met, although sharing your experiences, have not gained freedom from pain and prostration. If they likewise 'know the Truth,' it does not 'make them free.' "

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“That is singular, I admit,” assented Barbara, “but such freedom lies within their power. They externalize the spiritual, they make it objective, instead of realizing and practicalizing its purity and potency *within*, where alone the kingdom of Heaven and of Truth can be found.”

“Is it not a beautiful possibility, Barbara, to live in Heaven while we are here on earth, to create a Heaven for others as you do? I have always tried to live nobly. I have had high ideals and endeavored to reach them, but life has taken on new meaning, and grander possibilities open before me, since I met you, *cara mia*.”

“And how much I have learned and gained from you, sweet sister,” and Barbara embraced her visitor with true and strong affection. “But we forget, dear, while we are talking here that a small but very select dinner party is on the program for tonight. Your mother and brother may have already arrived.”

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Descending the broad stairway, arm in arm, they reached the vestibule simultaneously with the expected guests. Mr. Vernon was already greeting them on the veranda, and Barbara heartily welcomed the sweet little old lady, conducting her to the easiest chair the drawing room afforded.

The familiarity of frequent intercourse had worn away the peculiar strangeness of her feeling about Norman, and yet both sensed, perhaps, a closer tie than could be explained in human speech. The manner in which Norman followed Barbara's every movement with his soulful eyes, revealed his devoted reverence, his yearning readiness to kiss even the hem of her garment. But no word had been spoken. There was good fellowship between them, excellent comradeship, a warm esteem which neither attempted to conceal, a perfect understanding, in a silence which was more potent, more pregnant with meaning than speech.

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Norman often thought with deep discouragement of the improbability that his position could ever warrant his presuming to seek the hand of a millionaire's daughter? What could he, a bank clerk, offer in exchange for this palatial home and the luxuries she had always known? But he would not cloud the blessings of the present hour with future forebodings. That he could call Barbara friend, that she had come into his life, was joy unspeakable. His sunny nature would see no clouds even on a distant horizon.

It was amusing to watch Regent, who always greeted every visitor at the Villa as courteously as did its host, in his inspection of Mrs. Ashmont. This placid, white-haired old lady was a specimen of humanity he had never had an opportunity to observe at close range, and he walked around her, looking upon her long and steadily. The scrutiny seemed to please him, however, for he smiled upon her, as openly as a dog could, then

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nudged her elbow with his great head, as an invitation for a reciprocal caress from her hand, which was affectionately bestowed.

He then turned his attention to Norman, whose acquaintance he had already made, and greeted him with the delight of an old friend, finally seating himself in front of him, and cordially extending his paw for a hearty shake.

“You should feel complimented, Ashmont,” remarked Mr. Vernon, “for that is an attention which never can be wrung from Regent by persuasion. It is a full and complete surrender of his heart, to one whom he decides is worthy of his esteem and confidence. And as he is a reliable judge of character, it speaks volumes for your worth.”

The young man flushed with pleasure, and bestowed upon the noble dog every mark of appreciation and respect.

Dinner between these congenial friends was an occasion of deepest enjoyment

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and cordial social interchange. On their return to the drawing room, the girls were about to sing some old-time heart-songs to entertain their elders, when an unwelcome peal of the door bell elicited a low moan from Regent, as Mr. Wadleigh was shown in.

He purposed to make frequent calls at the Villa, that neither Barbara nor her father should forget him, and he also wanted to keep watch of their movements. They might decide on a long journey and thus escape him. As he entered this evening, he took in the situation at once, with anger and disgust, when Mr. Vernon remarked:

“Wadleigh, I am glad to introduce to your notice and kindly offices this young man, who is now employed in your bank, although he held a higher position in an Eastern National, from whence he came.”

Mr. Wadleigh bowed distantly, without the courtesy of an extended hand, and crossed over to the ladies, with

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effusive flattery upon their fine appearance, muttering to himself meanwhile under his breath:

“Gad! A bank clerk! I guess even Vernon with his Quixotic ideas would pause before selling his daughter so low as that. Yet it is plain to see the kid is in love with the girl. As for her, I guess she is too much of an iceberg to love anything, but just wait till I get a good chance at her.”

Looking around to see if the brute who caused his former discomfiture was in sight, he was furious to observe that Regent had stretched himself beside Ashmont's chair and had rested his chin confidently on the toe of the young man's boot, in striking contrast to the dog's scornful contempt for himself since their first meeting.

One or two songs were dispiritedly sung by Barbara and Irene, but a serpent had entered their pleasant Paradise, and the trio took an early departure.

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Barbara soon after excused herself, and as Mr. Wadleigh left the Villa he paused at the gate and vowed before Heaven to disgrace and ruin that insignificant clerk, whether or not he was a possible suitor, or perish in the attempt.

“I’ll wreck him,” he exclaimed with clenched fist, “so help me Hell!”

CHAPTER X

THE ARREST

“ISN’T it a beautiful world, mother dear?” asked Norman Ashmont one morning, as he stooped for his good-bye kiss, before starting for his day’s duties.

“Yes, my son, it is a beautiful world, and there are beautiful people in it; none more worthy in my eyes than my own children,” and she warmly pressed his hand.

“Well, mother,” laughed Norman, “I’ve always heard that love is blind, and yet, was it not Josh Billings who declared that he had known fellows who could see more in their girls than he ever could. That sentiment is quite apropos to your dear blindness in this case.”

“I think Heaven’s verdict will agree with mine, my child. But, tell me,

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Norman, do you never feel any regret at leaving some of the advantages you enjoyed in our old home? You relinquished so much for my sake, and I shall not stay many years more at the longest."

"None whatever," stoutly affirmed the young man, with a slight blush at the reminder of the rich blessing he had gained by the change. "Don't let any such thought linger in your mind for an instant, or entertain the least doubt of my perfect contentment. As to prolonging your precious life, I think we shall all go when our time comes, and that hour cannot be hastened by adverse circumstances, although thus it often seems. Not that we are under the decree of an arbitrary fate, but I believe that our own soul, before taking up this new expression in matter, looked down the life line upon which it was entering, gauging the work to be done, the growth to be attained, the expiation

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for former mistakes to be outwrought, and set the limit of its exile from Paradise. But while we stay in the form, it is our privilege to a degree, to choose our environments, and it makes me happy, mother, all day, when I am at work, to think of you sitting here on the veranda of our cosy little bungalow, feasting your eyes on all this radiant scene outspread. For the soul needs the nourishment of beauty as much as the stomach requires food. It becomes pinched and shrivelled without this beauty bath. I rejoice that I could give it to you."

"But *I* am not always happy, during the day, when I think of your sacrifice, the present menial position and more meagre salary in comparison with that which your ability ought to command."

"Oh, that is the fly in your ointment," laughed Norman. "Then pluck it out. I shall doubtless be promoted before long. Remember there is always room at the top," and he gaily started down

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the path; raising his voice to a louder tone to reach an inner room, he called:

“Good-bye, Irene,” to which she returned heartily:

“God be with you, Norman.”

The world never seemed to him so fair as on that morning, during his ride to the city. Recent rains had caused the verdure from the valleys to climb up the graceful slopes of the foothills, as if some invisible hand was drawing a green mantle, ever higher and higher. The gardens he passed were aflame with brilliant poinsettias and scarlet geraniums. The orchards glowed with golden fruit. The air was rarefied, clear and radiant, and he gained inspiring glimpses of snow-clad “old Baldy,” which emphasized the tropical beauty which surrounded him.

“Can Heaven be fairer?” he reverently asked.

His healthy sunny nature absorbed it all, and each charm he had enjoyed was

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reflected from his bright countenance when he entered the small, square enclosure of the bank, which was his especial nook during office hours.

“Where’ve you been, Ashmont?” cried the teller. “You look as if you had seen the burning bush.”

“I have,” he solemnly returned, “and heard the Divine Voice, therein.”

Faithfully he turned to his ledgers, and put all the energy and fidelity of his nature into his work.

The day wore on, and just after the hour of noon, as he glanced up from his desk, he noticed Mr. Wadleigh enter the bank and go directly to the president’s room.

Norman would not think of presuming upon the introduction he had received at Mr. Vernon’s a week or two before, until the older man should evince some recognition of him.

And as Mr. Wadleigh, after his call, left the inner office, he stepped to Ash-

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mont's enclosure, as to a stranger, and said:

“Boy, Mr. Weston wants to see you in his office, a few moments.”

Norman had never been thus summoned before, but quietly laid down his pen and turned to obey the command.

A second later, while both cashier and teller were closely absorbed with business, at their respective windows, Wadleigh seized a large bundle of bills—a recent invoice from an Eastern depositor—and quickly hid them from sight. A double handful of gold eagles were dropped into Norman's hand-bag which stood near, and the next instant Sterne Wadleigh was far up the street, muttering:

“There! I guess that will fix him effectually.”

Meanwhile Norman stood just within the open door of the president's room, awaiting his pleasure.

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Surprised at his uncalled-for intrusion, Mr. Weston asked:

“To what do I owe the occasion of this call?”

Bewildered, Norman replied:

“Why, Mr. Wadleigh just told me that you wanted to see me I came in obedience to that summons.”

“You must have strangely misunderstood the gentleman. I have not mentioned your name or thought of you this morning.”

Bowing in confusion, and with sincere apology, Norman hastily withdrew. But it was with deepest consternation on returning to his desk, that he discovered the package of bills which he had been recording was missing.

His exclamation of fright and dismay brought the other clerks to his side, and a hasty search was immediately instituted in every possible and impossible place, without avail. Lifting his bag

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to see if the bills had dropped behind it, the tell-tale eagles jingled. Alert with suspicion, the cashier thrust his hand into the bag and brought it forth full of ten dollar gold pieces. The ashen pallor with which Norman beheld this discovery was easily interpreted as the sign of guilt, and he was at once locked within his enclosure, while Mr. Weston was informed of the theft.

Coming forth to inspect him, Mr. Weston at once burst forth with a torrent of invective.

“Oh, that is the reason you came unsummoned to my room. You wanted to fasten suspicion on some one else, who could have had no opportunity to take the bills while you were here. You had to vacate the premises, leave your desk alone, to cover up your villany. Take him into my office,” he commanded, “and thoroughly search him, then call up the police ambulance. That’s the worst,” he added scornfully, “of taking in a stranger,

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and yet he came well recommended.”

As in a nightmare, Norman helped the young men to remove his clothing, and emptied his pockets for their inspection.

“You must know, boys,” he said when they had finished, “that I am as innocent as a baby of this foul deed. I know appearances are against me, but before God, I don’t know how the gold came in my bag, or where those bills have gone to. Would to Heaven I did. I have no one to defend me, or prove my honesty, so I suppose I must go to jail. But before the officers arrive, will you allow me to write a note to my sister, and please see that it is delivered privately and speedily?”

Paper was furnished him, and he wrote as cheerily as he could:

“Dear Irene: I shall not be at home tonight. Money is missing at the bank, and I am held for the time, on suspicion. Try to explain my absence to mother, in some other way. Keep

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up good heart. Truth must triumph. Always
your true-hearted brother,

NORMAN."

As he raised his eyes from the super-
scription, two policemen stood beside
him, one of whom slipped a hand cuff
onto his wrist, linking him thus to
himself, and together they entered the
black wagon, which, surrounded by a
curious crowd, stood at the door, and
drove away to the City Jail, where
Norman, still bewildered and incred-
ulous, was thrust into a cell to await his
trial.

As the key turned in the lock and the
retreating footsteps of his jailer echoed
along the iron corridor, Norman took
himself in hand with a strong effort and
faced the situation bravely. He keenly
sensed the psychic atmosphere of the
barren cell, the emanations of brutality,
crime and despair which it had known,
but having nothing in himself related
thereto, he was soon able to become

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positive to those lower stratas of thought and feeling, and create his own atmosphere.

Throwing his head back with an aspiration for strength and courage, he began to pace back and forth in his narrow confines, soliloquizing:

“Well, there is so much still to be thankful for. First and greatest of all, I have a clear conscience, to whose promptings I have never turned a deaf ear. I have a strong, upright heart, a consciousness of my own innocence. But I realize that the circumstantial evidence against me is very strong, not alone the gold found in my bag, but the complete disappearance of the bills, only possible, it would seem, through my having handed them to some accomplice at the window. I am totally unable to make reparation of the loss; I am a stranger here, with no one to plead my cause. It looks as though I should be sentenced to a term of hard labor with criminals in the Penitentiary.”

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Seating himself on his iron cot, he buried his face in his hands with horror at the prospect, but his optimistic nature refused to be crushed, and soon he decided that he could bear even this, if it could only be withheld from his mother's sad knowledge. It would break her heart. And then came the thought of Barbara. Would she ever believe that he could commit such a crime? Must she know that even now he was the occupant of a felon's cell? Would this incredible episode leave an enduring blot on his reputation, barring him thus from her dear society and friendship, or would it eventually, could it ever prove a blessing in disguise? His trust in the omnipotence of Good should soar as high as it could reach, his firm faith that "Whatever is, is right."

"While wisdom and sight are well,
Still trust is best."

CHAPTER XI

AN ASTRAL DISCOVERY

“OH, Barbara—Barbara,” cried Irene as she burst into Barbara’s chamber, late that afternoon. “Such a dreadful thing has happened,” and laying her head upon her friend’s shoulder, she burst into tears.

“Why, my dear,” said Barbara, surprised beyond measure at this unwonted display of emotion, “what grieves you so? Pray tell me. A trouble shared is half endured. Is anything the matter with your dear mother?”

“No, no, she is well, and happy in her ignorance, though I know not how long I can keep from her the sad truth. My beloved brother Norman has somehow got into trouble at the bank. I know

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not its nature yet, but for the present he is held a prisoner.”

Barbara felt as if the floor was slipping from beneath her feet, and then she said:

“I knew I was going to hear of some trouble, by Regent’s actions throughout the day. He has been so restless, walking aimlessly to and fro, or throwing himself down with a moan, and when he has looked into my face, there have been real tears in his sad eyes. He is a true seismographic indicator of human earthquakes. In some occult way, he knows when any sorrow threatens those he loves.”

“I wish,” replied Irene, “that his keen intelligence could discover the real malefactor in this case, but that would be impossible at this distance, and his testimony would not be taken in any court.”

And then she rehearsed all that she had been able to glean from the bank messenger, of this strange occurrence, and to-

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gether the girls faced the painful situation and tried to devise means for the deliverance of their innocent brother and friend.

“Of course,” asserted Barbara, “he shall not remain in jail while awaiting his trial. My father will gladly furnish bail for his temporary freedom.”

“Oh, thank you, dearest, but it is the future of which we must think, for which we must plan. It is vindication Norman needs and must have, more than present release. He is stout-hearted enough to endure anything but dishonor, which does not belong to him. How can we prove this to the world? Is the Infinite Justice caught napping that this monstrous thing should occur?”

“He that watcheth over Israel,” quoted Barbara, “slumbers not nor sleeps.”

“But, oh, Barbara, there is no justice apparent anywhere in the world. The poet sings:

‘Give to the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you.’

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It is never, never true. It ought to be, and I watch for it anxiously, eagerly, for some manifestation of Justice on earth, not alone in my own life, but in other lives around me. I cannot find it. In fact, the reverse is so painfully true that it has given rise to the proverb 'the world stones its prophets and crucifies its Saviors.' All public benefactors have this experience. Those we do the most for, turn and rend us. Think of my dear brother, doing his duty so faithfully, honestly, performing his tasks with all the honor of his nature, and as a reward he is cast into prison. It is a terrible test of our faith in the Supreme Love which includes Justice and Mercy."

"Lowell once wrote, dear, 'the scale of Justice is so vast that we cannot behold either end of it on this plane.' It can only be discerned by that clearer sight which recognizes sequence, sowing and reaping in a continuous expression of the soul. Some error of past imma-

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turity reaches a culmination in its chemicalizing process, which will leave the soul freer, grander, purer. Fermentation means purification, always. Continued stories, you know, dear, sometimes have sequels which often furnish a key to the whole purpose outwrought. This is a brief sequel to one chapter of Norman's long soul history. We shall rejoice in its happy conclusion. Perhaps he once doubted some one, wrongfully, without cause, and must be suspected in his turn as the true expiation of his error on its own plane. It was so slight a wrong that his redemption of it must be likewise brief."

"But there seems no hope in sight, no way of vindicating him; and Barbara, his absence may be too prolonged for successful concealment from my mother. She gathered from my conference with the messenger that Norman had been sent away on some business for the bank and was even pleased at the confidence

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thus reposed in him. I let her think so, but if later on, she should have to see me go out into the world as breadwinner for herself and me, she would soon discover the deception.”

Suddenly starting to her feet, Barbara exclaimed:

“The world often questions *cui bono* to the exercise of psychic gifts, which it considers visionary, unreliable, impractical, of no useful benefit to the race. Yet they are of the highest value to educate, uplift and reveal, in fact, the only powers that function in the realm of reality. Physical senses see only the shadowy, the counterfeit, always discerning ‘through a glass darkly.’ Spiritual vision beholds ‘face to face.’ And I hereby resolve and pledge you my solemn vow, Irene, to prove the truth of this fact tonight. I will go into the silence this evening, and in the clairvoyant state, I will follow Norman to the bank, I will behold each event that

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transpired there, this morning, for every act is indelibly recorded on the astral ether, and eyes unclogged with clay can read each inscription. I will discover what led to this strange accusation. I will *find those bills*. So, dry your tears, dear, go back to your mother, strong and cheery. Norman's bail shall be ready for him, at the right hour."

Barbara finished the duties she had in hand, and that she might maintain a healthful, natural calm, she took her usual sunset walk with Regent, who seemed to catch the contagion of her hopeful spirit, and was his helpful self, once more. She presided at her father's dinner, she played to him one or two of his favorite selections, and then leaving him with his magazines, she retired to her chamber, to undertake her voyage of discovery.

She engaged first in silent prayer, for protection from all selfish motives, for a stronger union with the divine, that

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she might not be too ready to welcome any voice, or vision from the unseen, but only the highest message of Truth—the truth against the world, first, last and always! Waxing stronger, more personal in her demands, she implored the Eternal Principle of Right that as this young man had once saved her life, when in gravest danger, that she might now be allowed to save him from this awful peril. The law of Karmic Justice must permit her to render this devoted service.

Then releasing her spirit from its customary office of infilling and controlling her physical members, she left them behind her and floated away in the glad consciousness of spiritual freedom, light as a summer cloud drifting in the blue ether. “Underneath are always the everlasting arms.”

She first saw and joyfully greeted her mother, who came to meet her, on the borders of the spirit realm and she, with her guardian angel, attended her, on

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either side. She implored their assistance in her mission of love and benevolence. They led her first into a beautiful garden where even the fragrance of the flowers were breathed forth in the vibrations of harmony. Colors sang their hymn of praise, and music glowed with visual radiance. They paused here that she might gain refreshment and strength for her task and also taste the buoyancy that is a feature of spirit unclothed with matter.

Then intent on her mission, she hovered again over the earth, and by focusing her mind on Norman, as he went forth that morning, she was drawn irresistibly to the scene of his labor, which she had never seen with her mortal vision. As thoughts and motives were as clearly revealed to her spirit as actions, she experienced a little confusion, as well as pleasure, to sense the loving nature of his thoughts for her.

She next saw him, as he turned to his

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desk, expel from his mind everything foreign to his duties. She sensed the strong upright purpose with which he engaged in his work, the strict conscientiousness of his devotion to it. "What chance for wrong to enter here?" she asked. "What room for suspicion?"

Then as she watched, she sensed a venomous wave of opposition directed mentally towards him, and extending her range of watchful scrutiny to detect its cause, she saw Sterne Wadleigh pass by into an inner room. What was his business there, she wondered. She waited for him to emerge and then beheld the strange command which sent the younger man away from his post of duty. Still watching the precinct more than Norman, to her horror and incredulity, even while she saw it, she beheld Mr. Wadleigh's hasty action that snatched the package of bills with one hand as he drew forth the top drawer with the other, and dropped them in behind it,

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before replacing the drawer in its position. His disposition of the gold she also clearly saw and his hasty flight.

She could discern the bills most plainly now, some of them dropped down to the space back of the lower drawer, others caught by their crisp edges in the passage thither. But there they remained, not one missing, and she alone was conscious of their safety.

She sought her mother's counsel as to what was her duty in the matter and received the advice to reveal the fact at once to the proper authorities. This was her duty, whether or not it led to Norman's vindication, a task most unwelcome to her retiring nature.

But her present purpose was accomplished. With loving farewells to her mother and the attendant angel, and promising a longer visit soon, one less fraught with a painful mission, she sought her quiet chamber, and the limited tabernacle of her waiting form.

CHAPTER XII

RESTORATION

THE glorious sunshine of a new day was almost unwelcome to Barbara on the following morning, since it ushered in for her a task which she was most reluctant to accomplish. Stanch always in the fulfillment of duty, with a heart strong as steel, the cause one in which her affections and desire for loyal service were warmly enlisted, it was still such a departure from her preference and the normal routine of her life, to enter alone a strange place, to call uninvited on an unknown gentleman, that she shrank from the fulfillment of her mission.

She remembered also that she could only tell part of the truth. She must simply relate a dream that she had had, which would result in the restoration of

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their property, but she could not reveal the name of the real delinquent. Accusation was not a necessary part of her mission.

But above and beyond her reluctance, she remembered with deepest sympathy, that this same warm sunlight could only faintly penetrate the gratings of a cell for Norman, and this thought lent her courage to achieve for him all that lay in her power.

She felt that she had better not confide to her father the purpose of her trip to Los Angeles, until after her return, for he might consider it his duty to accompany her which she knew would be to him a most distasteful ordeal.

So in the early forenoon, she entered the bank which she had visited in spirit a few hours before, and very familiar it looked to her in the glare of day. She recognized each detail of its arrangement, even the veinings of the marble floor and walls. She stepped to a window, and

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handing her card to the official there, requested an interview with the president. After waiting a brief interval, her desire was granted. As she entered Mr. Weston's office he politely handed her a chair and then again inspecting her card, he asked:

“Have I the honor, Miss Vernon, to address the daughter of Alfred Vernon?”

“Alfred Vernon is my father,” assented Barbara.

“I have not the pleasure of his personal friendship, but I know him to have been in the business world before his retirement, a gentleman of great worth and honor—a ‘knight sans peur et sans reproche.’ ”

Barbara smiled in her pleasure at this praise of her noble father, and began to apologize for this intrusion.

“No apology is necessary, I am sure,” suavely remarked Mr. Weston, ‘and I am ready to serve you in any way which lies within my power.’ ”

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“I hope to render a little service to you, Mr. Weston. You met with some loss here yesterday, I believe.”

Mr. Weston frowned.

“Yes,” he said, “a very clumsy attempt at theft it was, too, by a stripling who proved himself a novice in the business.”

“Are you sure,” asked Barbara, “that he was not the innocent victim of circumstances?”

“Oh, quite sure, my dear Miss Vernon; besides we are fifteen hundred dollars out, from bills he passed to an accomplice, who made off with them. But why, may I ask, does this case interest you?”

Barbara was approaching the most difficult part of her mission, one that would subject her to great ridicule if she could not prove her accuracy, but she went bravely on.

“As Mr. Ashmont is an acquaintance of ours and has been frequently in our

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home, we are confident of his unimpeachable honor and honesty. But I did not come here today to plead for him, but to restore your missing bills."

"You restore them?" wonderingly questioned Mr. Weston, "how can that be?"

"Well, my dear sir, I am one who from childhood has had very vivid and singular dreams. I seem to travel when I sleep. Last night, having heard and grieved over your strange loss and its resultant consequences, I came in slumber to this place, which I had never seen in my waking hours. As I stood here, the events of the day seemed to pass in review before me. I saw Mr. Ashmont standing at his desk, I saw him momentarily leave it, and at that instant, I beheld a man, who suddenly appeared in my range of vision, snatch a pile of bills, and pulling out a drawer, thrust them in behind it. Seizing a handful of gold, he dropped it into young Ashmont's bag and was off by the side

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door, before the clerk returned to his desk."

"Well, well," laughed Mr. Weston, "you did have a fantastic dream. What queer stuff our dreams are made of, to be sure!" and he scrutinized Barbara more closely to see if there was any sign of lunacy about her.

"But," firmly insisted Barbara, "if you should find the bills in the place designated, it would prove my vision was not all a dream, and also restore your missing property."

"Why, my dear young lady, the idea is preposterous. We have searched everywhere. But," he added, (thinking this concession would be the speediest way of dismissing his caller) "if you wish, I will go and pull out the drawers you mention."

With an indulgent chuckle, he led the way into the banking room. Eagerly Barbara followed him, watched him enter Norman's enclosure and pull out the top

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drawer. Thrusting his hand laughingly into the vacant recess and to the farther wall of the desk, his expression suddenly grew more grave, as he felt between his fingers two or three bank notes. Hastily he pulled out the second drawer and then the third, piling them up on the floor, gathering more and more bills as his search continued, until the entire package was secured.

For a time he was speechless with amazement, tempered with rejoicing that the institution under his charge had received no loss, and then he drew Barbara back into his inner office and asked:

“Now, Miss Vernon, what does this mean? Do you still wish me to believe that you dreamed this strange vision, or has this recreant clerk confided to you where he had hidden the bills, intending to remove them at another time?”

Horrified at this suggestion of duplicity, Barbara assured the gentleman that she had neither seen nor heard from the

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arrested clerk, that the truth of the matter was exactly as she had stated it.

Then he questioned her more closely:

“Who was this man whom you fancied hid the bills and the gold?”

“Naturally,” she replied, “in a vision I could not see his name, only his action.”

“But Ashmont came to my office and told me someone had sent him.” (Mr. Weston in the subsequent excitement, had quite forgotten the episode of his morning caller, or who it was, the clerk asserted, had given him this order.) “Is it not a little singular that he should leave his post of duty at just the moment this stranger came into the enclosure?”

“No more singular,” suggested Barbara, “than that this thief, if such he was, took away none of the money, or that he should try to fasten suspicion on an innocent man. There must have been some unusual and sinister motive for this attempt to ruin Mr. Ashmont.”

“I admit the whole affair remains a

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mystery, and while I thank you for the trouble you have taken to do me this favor, I cannot see that the restoration of the bills exonerates the clerk from blame, or proves his innocence. However, if it should be your father's advice, from his wider knowledge of the boy, I will promise to be lenient in my prosecution of him, and perhaps crave his release on parole."

Barbara breathed faint thanks for this partial charity and gladly terminated this most painful interview.

On her return to Crescent Villa, as she approached the driveway, she saw a strange motor car standing at the door, and on the veranda sat her father inspecting it, in company with Mr. Wadleigh.

"How do you like my new automobile?" he called out as she appeared. "I am christening it today. Won't you take a spin?"

"I have ridden far enough already,"

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replied Barbara, striving to frame an answer that should not express, in her father's presence, the scorn she felt for so vile a man.

"How much did you pay for it, Wadleigh?" asked Mr. Vernon.

"Well, I have not paid anything yet. I am trying it. I hope to educate my French garcon, Alphonse, as chauffeur, though he does not take kindly to it as yet.

"By the way," he continued, "that was an unexpected arrest yesterday, of the young man I met here. My eagle eye discovered then that he was not all to the good, that there was something duplex about him. I can always tell. Such rogues try to worm themselves into good society, but sooner or later they find their level."

"His level may yet prove to be above the common herd, even on the heights, leagues above his accusers," flashed Barbara.

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“Oh, ho!” laughed Wadleigh, “then you are trying to vindicate him. I believe women are always soft-hearted towards criminals. A felon always makes demands on their sympathies, and they slop over, of course.”

Surprised at this tone of disrespect toward his daughter, Mr. Vernon, while not sure of Norman’s innocence, suggested that we give him the benefit of the doubt, until after his trial.

“Well,” continued Wadleigh, “I rather think the bank would prefer those missing bills, which some accomplice of his made off with.”

“There are no missing bills,” quietly remarked Barbara, “there was no accomplice, and the package of bills is found safe and intact.”

Had a thunderbolt fallen at Wadleigh’s feet, he could not have been more stunned and his face turned all colors, as he gasped in his effort at composure.

“What ground have you, my dear

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Miss Vernon, for such a bizarre statement? Is this the fruit of one of your psychic investigations?" and he laughed loud and coarsely. "You must know that I am a director of the bank which has sustained this loss and am an indirect sufferer from Ashmont's deviltry. There are about fifteen hundred dollars in bills missing, and more would have been taken in gold, if the clerk's bag had not been searched in time."

"But," serenely declared Barbara, "I have just come from the bank, and have seen with my own eyes the missing bills collected from their hiding place, where the real malefactor placed them."

Mr. Vernon's surprise at this statement of his daughter covered somewhat their guest's speechless discomfiture and guilty confusion, but he blurted forth:

"You speak in riddles this morning, Miss Vernon. I guess I will run my new machine around to the bank and

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secure the correct translation to this strange fantasy of yours.”

And to Barbara's great relief, the hoarse chug-chug of the motor was soon heard from a steadily receding distance.

CHAPTER XIII

A SOUL REDEEMED

WHEN they were alone, Barbara gave to her father her full confidence, relating her nocturnal journey in its every detail, even to the personality of the man who had tried to ruin Norman by misplacing the money.

“What! Wadleigh?” ejaculated Mr. Vernon. “Why, child, you must be mistaken. It can’t be possible.”

“I tried to think I was mistaken, father, but his own demeanor this morning was sufficient proof of the accuracy of my vision.”

“I admit he acted strangely, but then—Wadleigh? Why, I’ve known him for years.”

“Yes, father, and being the soul of honor yourself, it is natural for

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you to judge others accordingly.”

“Of course I have known little of him in late years, and I’ve noticed he has coarsened and grown somewhat blase. But, my daughter, what motive could he possibly have to wreck the life of an innocent young man—a stranger who had done him no harm?”

Barbara blushed and was silent for a space, and then resumed: “Perhaps jealousy of our friendship, father; he wanted to effectually exclude him from our home.”

A light began to dawn upon Mr. Vernon’s mind, as he recalled Mr. Wadleigh’s vehement desire to pay court to Barbara and his inquiry if there were any other suitors in the field. In his blindness he had never thought of Norman in that light, he seemed so immature as a companion for Barbara, though most exemplary in conduct hitherto. He regarded their courtesies to the Ashmonts as merely the kindness expected

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of old residents to the strangers in their midst. But now that Norman might henceforth become known as a jail-bird, no such smirch of bad reputation must touch his pure daughter.

Correctly translating intuitively, her father's train of thought, Barbara reminded him that immaturity, unripeness of soul was more easily overcome than base motives or ignoble aims; that the martyrs of old have suffered no disgrace in the eyes of posterity by their persecutions and "imprisonments oft." Galileo and Columbus, as well as Paul, and many more had known prisons and chains, but were honored the more thereby.

"Well, I certainly hope, my child, the young man will emerge triumphantly from his present ordeal."

"Meanwhile," responded Barbara, "I must seek to comfort and encourage his mother and sister. I will go to them now, with the tidings that the lost bills are found."

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Calling Regent to share her walk, she passed from sight down the avenue.

* * * * *

Just as breakfast was over the following morning, Mr. Vernon was called to the 'phone to receive a summons to visit without delay a hospital in Los Angeles, where a friend of his lay dying, and it was further requested that he bring a Justice of the Peace with him. The vibration of the wire blurred the message so he did not catch the name of this friend, and while quickly heeding the summons, was quite unconscious of the painful experience which awaited him.

The nemesis which must inevitably overtake the wrong-doer, sooner or later, is usually a tardy pay-master. Indeed do "the mills of the gods grind slow, while they grind exceeding fine." But occasionally retribution follows action with unusual celerity.

The career of Sterne Wadleigh, which

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had been rapidly progressing from bad to worse, until the germ of true manhood seemed almost extinct, had reached its limit. He was perhaps mercifully spared from accumulating further dross to weight his soul with fetters which must sometime be laboriously unforged.

While returning from Pasadena to Los Angeles the previous day, distraught by Barbara's tidings, unaware how much of his agency might be discovered, excited also by the rapid, exhilarating motion of his flying car, its ready response to his hand upon the lever, gratifying his sense of autocratic power, he went ever faster and faster until, at a curve in the road, in his effort to avoid an approaching vehicle, the auto struck an electric light pole with tremendous force and at once turned turtle, imprisoning beneath it its reckless, inexperienced driver. Before he could be extricated from his dangerous position beneath the wreck of the machine, by those who rushed to his aid,

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it had caught fire, burning not only part of his clothing but filling his lungs with its death-dealing fumes. With a broken leg likewise, he was removed unconscious to the hospital, where his condition was at once recognized to be hopeless, and it was not expected he would ever regain consciousness. He had lain thus throughout the night and the physicians who watched his faint irregular breathing prophesied he would pass away at day-break.

But just before the dawn, he stirred uneasily and began muttering snatches of broken conversation with someone, for whose replies he seemed to wait. Gradually as his mind cleared, Alphonse, who stood over him, caught the words:

“Yes, mother—I will. I promise you, I will. Give me strength to stay till it is accomplished.”

“His mind’s away,” explained Alphonse to the doctors, “he thinks his mother is here.”

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A strong stimulant was administered, which cleared the brain somewhat and his eyes opened with recognition of his surroundings.

“Master’s better,” was Alphonse’s greeting.

“No, boy,” he answered, “not better. I have died and —” pausing to gather breath, “have been sent back from Death’s gate to render justice.”

“Master will stay now,” said the boy. “Alphonse nurse him back to health—oh, so strong.”

“Yes—you are a good faithful boy. I have not realized it before and—say—in my dressing table, Alphonse, you will find money enough to pay your passage back to France. Take it and go, at once. Be happy and prosper.”

He waved away the boy’s expostulations and closed his eyes to rest from this great effort to speak, for his inflamed lungs made talking most painful.

The doctors again administered restor-

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atives and with the flashing up of the vital spark, which often occurs just before it goes out, he said clearly:

“Gentlemen, is it true that in dying every event of our past lives passes in review before us?”

“Oh, there is no accounting,” responded a physician, “for the strange hallucinations and vagaries that fill the brain as it weakens.”

“But memory gives up its forgotten treasures, does it not?” insisted the patient. “Perhaps, as we already begin to live in the other world, which must be ours when Death comes, the records held there are clearly revealed.”

The physicians nodded to each other, tapping their brows, significantly, when he added: “But I have a work to do before my departure. Send for Mr. Alfred Vernon of Pasadena, and keep me alive and conscious until he comes.”

His order was obeyed, and the dying

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man eagerly watched the door until his friend entered.

Checking his visitor's shocked expressions of grief and sympathy, he begged to be raised on his pillows, and then to be left alone with his friend.

'Vernon,' he began, "I have tonight entered the spirit world. I have seen my sainted mother. I seemed to be a child again, at her knee. With her I have traced the line of my life, from the time it started forth strong and clean, full of energy and righteous purpose. I have seen where selfishness and unscrupulous ambitions turned my feet aside into the wrong path, attracting to me forces of darkness which, of course, never could have approached me had there been no affinity with error in myself, but once having admitted these baser promptings, my state was worse than otherwise it would have been. These influences and tempting voices led me farther and farther away from

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rectitude, until even my angel mother was prevented from reaching and impressing me; the darkness surrounding me was too dense.”

He paused to rest and then continued:

“But I have refrained from actual crime until yesterday, and I want you now to admit the Justice, while he takes my sworn affidavit, given as you can testify, with a sound, repentant mind. My mother says this act of reparation will greatly advance my growth and estate in the spirit world, without which my condition would be deplorable. Your daughter was right, Vernon. There is a spiritual realm and its inhabitants do commune with the denizens of earth constantly, helpfully. The very air around us now is filled with angels, can you not see them? And let her know, too, that I never polluted her pure nature by loving her. There was nothing in common between us to make such sentiment possible. But I am already such a

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different being from the man you have known. The devil that was in me has been cast out. I am a boy again. The angel which dwelleth latent in every human breast shall yet shine forth—please God.”

When the Justice had arranged his paper on the table near, and Mr. Vernon, deeply awed by the impressive scene, had supported the dying man's hand against his own, Mr. Wadleigh dictated his asseveration of Norman Ashmont's innocence, minutely detailing his own action while in the bank. He begged that this paper, after receiving his signature, should be taken at once to Mr. Weston, who would lose no time in securing the young man's liberation, and his pardon for the injustice of his incarceration.

“Let his memory of me be not too severe,” moaned the stricken one, for it was evident he was suffering acutely, and his eyes already showed the dim glaze of death.

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Another stimulant was given, and from the very borders of unconsciousness he once more rallied to dictate his last Will and Testament.

“I have not much left,” he explained, “from the fortune I have squandered. Alphonse here, I have already provided for, and all my other assets, bank stock, real estate, furniture, clothing, *et cetera*, I wish sold to the highest bidder and the proceeds given, with my hearty good will, to Norman Ashmont, and may he escape the mistakes which I have committed.”

With his feeble remnant of strength, he affixed his signature to these two papers, which were then duly witnessed.

Feebly pulling his diamond ring from his finger, he asked:

“Would you accept this, Vernon, as a token of the deep regard I have always felt for you? Who knows? I might have been a still worse man but for the silent force of your example.”

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Pressing his hand warmly, Mr. Vernon assured him that the ring should always be sacredly treasured as a sign of victory, of triumph over error, of purification accomplished.

“Not yet fully accomplished,” returned the sufferer, “but eternity is long and I shall mount steadily upward. The Wadleigh you have known no longer exists. I have put off the old man with his deeds. I shall sometimes visit you and strive to bring you a blessing. Farewell, dear old friend. Yes, mother, I come now. I have done your bidding and am so happy.” Then after a pause in which the watchers thought he had ceased to breathe, he exclaimed:

“O light—light! What blessed peace steals over me! Death, you are very welcome! O—is—it—this—to—die?”

His breathing grew shorter and shorter. Mr. Vernon tenderly lowered his pillows and with a smile that left the glow and radiance of youth on his face,

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he sank like a child to peaceful rest, while Alphonse, gliding to the bed, knelt beside it in tears, covering the cold hand, again and again, with kisses.

CHAPTER XIV

FREEDOM RESTORED

LEAVING directions that the deserted form should be cared for at the chapel of an undertaker near by, with whom he would make arrangements for suitable obsequies, Mr. Vernon entered his carriage and was driven to the bank, where, closeted with Mr. Weston, the dying man's affidavit was read with deepest pain and consternation.

In the duty which lay next, the release and vindication of young Ashmont, Mr. Vernon requested Mr. Weston to accompany him in his landau to the jail. Together they were allowed to visit the cell where Norman was wearily wearing through his third day of confinement. Lifting his head, as footsteps drew near and the key turned in the

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lock, wondering if he was now to be led forth to trial, he recognized with amazement his notable callers. He arose and stood waiting, supposing they had come for some fresh cross-examination, but the smiles on their faces, the cordial grasp of their hands which meant exoneration, which expressed their congratulations on the freedom they came to extend to him, made him almost dizzy with bewilderment. As in a dream, he was led forth, out into the corridors, and thence into the outer air and sunshine, where he was invited to take a seat in the carriage which awaited them.

Rapidly they were driven to the bank, and after Mr. Weston had alighted, Mr. Vernon said to him:

“I think you have no work laid out for this boy today, I will take him first to his mother.”

Cordial consent being given thereto, the horses' heads were turned towards Pasadena, and during the drive thither,

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Mr. Vernon explained to Norman the sad event by which his innocence had been proven, and also related the noble manner in which Mr. Wadleigh had tried to make restitution, which legacy would prove to Norman, if not a fortune, a comfortable little competence, a nest egg for the fortune he would gradually carve out for himself.

Upon Norman's asking what became of the bills, Mr. Vernon rehearsed Barbara's nocturnal excursion and her brave invasion of the bank to discover them, which action on her part for his sake, made Norman's heart glow afresh.

It was the same beautiful world he had ridden through only the day before yesterday, but such an eternity had passed since then, such nights of horror had come to him, such dreary dawns, with forebodings he could not wholly repress, of a possible worse fate in the near future, that his burden of present thanksgiving almost stopped his heart's

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beating. He rejoiced to recall, however, that not once had he yielded to despair in his lonely cell, that his trust in the Omnipotent Good had sustained him triumphantly.

As he tried to express his deep appreciation and gratitude for the kind interest which Mr. Vernon had taken in his behalf, the Ashmonts' bungalow was reached, and quickly alighting, with cordial adieux, he sprang to the low portico, where his mother was again sitting, her face illumined with smiles at the approach of her boy, and Irene, who was trying to repress her tears, in an inner room, attracted by the commotion, came running out to be caught in the arms of her happy brother, who laid his finger on her lips, in token of silence, until they should be alone.

What a happy hour it was—a holy day, indeed—before work should be resumed on the morrow. Freedom was his, once more, the priceless boon of liberty,

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and it had not been bestowed as a gift, but was his birthright. He could lift up his eyes to the eternal hills as to the king in His beauty. His gaze was no longer restricted to four barren walls. No blot of suspicion rested upon his fair escutcheon. The world was all before him once more, the possibility to make of Life one grand sweet song.

In the early twilight, while they sat drinking in the radiance of the sunset, reflected on the mountains, a letter was brought by special messenger from the bank, expressing in kindest tones the apology of the officials for his unjust arrest, their appreciation of his fidelity to their interests hitherto, and the noble manliness with which he had borne the recent ordeal, and offering him as reparation for his trying experience and unwarranted incarceration, the position of cashier, the present incumbent of that office having resigned to go to Honolulu.

“Verily,” quoted Norman, with rev-

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erence, "Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. Didn't I tell you, mother, dear, that I should be promoted? Oh, you'll be proud of me yet."

"I am now, my son," she called back to him, as she sought her quiet room for the night, after which Norman gladdened Irene's heart with all the wonderful tidings of the day.

CHAPTER XV

BETROTHAL

LOVE likewise beckoned him with winsome hand. Oh, what would he not become, how would he struggle and strive if some time he could win the priceless boon of Barbara's esteem? He must go to her now with his grateful acknowledgment of her kind endeavors, her valiant service in his behalf.

As he walked briskly down the beautiful avenue, under the graceful branches of the pepper trees, whose aromatic berries exhaled their spicy odor from beneath his feet, and as he tried to formulate in his mind what he should say to Barbara, a flash of reminiscence brought to him the strong conviction of having done this same thing before, of having sought at an earlier period

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in his consciousness, this same maiden with a message of love and devotion, and yet she was certainly a recent acquaintance. Were the mists in his brain playing him tricks?

As Barbara came forward to greet him, with hearty welcome and congratulations, and as their hands met, there was the same magnetic thrill so marked at their first interview, like a recognition of former experiences, so vivid as to be unspeakable, a strong remembrance of having often met thus before. She likewise seemed to sense their mutual ownership of a past which was unexplainable in human speech.

As they stood thus with clasped hands, and eyes intent on each other's faces, there seemed no longer place or excuse for concealment of their conscious kinship of soul.

Almost reverently she led him to a seat, Mr. Vernon having been so deeply moved by the strange experience of the

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morning, that he had shut himself in his den, and they were alone in the drawing room.

“Barbara,” he began, “I had not meant to say this so soon, perhaps not for years. I only came to thank you from the depths of a grateful heart for all your sympathy and helpful interest in my recent strange experience and for your strong efforts for my vindication and release.”

“It seemed,” interrupted Barbara, “as if I was only paying some debt of the past, in exchange for some service you had once rendered me, but had it not been so, it was a great privilege, I assure you, to lend my aid to any friend in need, as it would have been for you, had the case been reversed.”

“‘Some debt of the past,’ Barbara? Just what do you mean by that? My soul is not so clear and illumined as yours, and yet it dimly realizes a mighty truth in your assertion.”

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Barbara flushed slightly and then with gravest manner, she related her vision (if such it were) of their past experience together, omitting the loving embraces of their reunion and homeward walk together.

“This makes it easier, Barbara, to express what, all unexpectedly, I began to say. A something within my soul impels me to this confidence. It flows forth from my heart to my lips, it will not be denied. I do not now presume, believe me, Barbara, to ask you for your love; my audacity would not soar so high. I might never gain courage to ask your father for your hand, even did you lend your gracious consent thereto. But justice to my own soul’s cravings and righteous tribute to your rich deserts, demands that you know my devoted love is yours, now and always, in time or in eternity.”

He reached for her hand which yielded to his grasp with a strong pressure, as

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she replied with a holy light upon her face:

“Should not the same justice, Norman, demand that my heart hold no secrets from you, that I openly, sacredly confess as you have done, that my love is yours, my allegiance, my devoted loyalty while life lasts?”

He clasped her in his arms with a warm embrace, which was eloquent with silence, until she continued:

“All souls, dearest, as you know, are created dual—‘male and female created He them.’ They go forth from their Garden of Eden (the unexpressed state), the Paradise of innocence and inexperience, into varied expression. They wander far and wide, over the surface of the earth, by continents and seas divided, rarely meeting for mortal union until, when all experiences have been met, all weakness outgrown, and spiritual growth gained, they are restored once more to each other, the long unvoiced yearning

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satisfied, the half understood sense of incompleteness fulfilled, when reunion is complete in the perfect angel. I cannot help but feel, Norman, that you and I are such severed segments of one divine entity. We have been singularly fortunate in meeting twice in our long soul pilgrimage. Can you not feel, dear, does not some voiceless monitor reveal how age-long it has been?"

"Yes, indeed, dear heart. I often have to suppress a smile when I am spoken of as a young man. Something in me feels so hoary with experience, in comparison with which, this whole mortal existence seems like a brief winter's day."

"Yes, in the light of universal consciousness, we can be large enough and great enough to waive even this opportunity for mortal union, while living in the realization and anticipation of our eternal companionship."

"We might, Barbara, if it was necessary. Let us trust it will not always

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prove so, but we can for the present wait confidently, even contentedly, sure in the knowledge that we have each other, and that neither heights nor depths, neither life nor death can ever separate us."

"Surely we could not deserve the blessedness of this recognition, if we could forget others whose happiness is dearer to us than our own."

"I was going to speak of that," said Norman. "Of course, I never could deprive your father of your dear presence while he needs you, or lessen the comfort of his declining years."

"I want to tell you right here, Norman, how much this recent event has advanced you in father's esteem. At first, from the disparity of years, perhaps, he was not particularly drawn to you, and I think would have refused any advances of yours. But his conversation with you on the drive home today, and your noble demeanor quite won his will

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and what is even better, his profound respect.” And Barbara added shyly: “I am not at all sure that he might not, on some distant day, welcome you as son and companion.”

Norman smiled his pleasure, as he affirmed his purpose to deserve still more his affectionate regard, and then he referred to his mother and sister.

“Of course, Barbara, you could not respect me so much if I forgot their claims upon me. The old declaration voiced by Icilius, that well-known phrase ‘all that man should be unto woman’ should not alone refer to man’s duty to his wife. It is what man is to his mother, sister, friend or stranger which counts. To devote himself to wife alone often expresses the narrowest form of selfishness in man. It is an effort that ensures his own comfort, pride, gratification, only a little larger form of self-seeking, which there is little sacrifice. But sary. *ll* that man should be, is to look

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into Paradise and turn away from its portals with an unregretting heart, to behold the companion of his soul, beautiful as an angel, gifted and dear, beyond expression, his from the foundation of the world, as in eternity, and while lacking nothing in devotion to her, still cheerily withholding the joy of possession till every duty of son and brother has been fully, amply met, this is to be 'all that man should be unto woman.' His chivalry should burn as brightly for the wrinkled cheek, the faded eye that with unspeakable devotion and unwearied service once devotedly watched his every need, as could be expressed in gallantry to the fresh radiant beauty of girlhood. I should not deserve you, Barbara, if I could for a moment forget my duty to my mother."

"Well said, Norman. My heart glows with pleasure at your words, and I shall not be less unselfish in my devotion to my noble father. We will

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tread the path of welcome duty together, dear, hand in hand. But has it never occurred to you," she added merrily, after a pause, "that Ralph Wheaton will soon declare himself as abundantly able to provide for your sister's future?"

"Such a possibility has forced itself upon my attention," laughed Norman, "although it is still an open question whether he is making love to mother or Irene. He devotes himself to mother by the hour together, holding her skeins while she winds them, and I think it is to her that he always brings his choicest flowers, the largest fruit."

"Ralph is a royal good fellow," agreed Barbara. "He, like yourself, is absolute devotion to all of womankind. True courtesy is, after all, only the natural expression of a kind, noble heart. I am sure he would never build a home for Irene that her mother did not share,"

"Yes, my dear one, but both Ralph

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and Irene are young yet. We may have to wait years, Barbara."

"What are years, dear, in the light of eternity where we consciously dwell?"

"By the way, this reminds me that my cousin Clara's engagement is soon to be announced."

"To whom?"

"Oh, Dick Saltonstall's great friend, Maurice Fitzgerald."

"A fine man! I met him first at the Wheatons' house party. I am glad for them both, especially for Clara, who has borne her solitary life since her mother's transition so bravely and cheerily."

Many other confidences and soul communings the pair enjoyed together. And when they separated, as they came out onto the broad veranda, beneath the blue sky, they solemnly pledged their spiritual betrothal, enduring as the stars of heaven, even though it might not result, at present, in mortal ties. It

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was the spiritual, the eternal, which alone to them was the real.

Happy in this confidence, their lips met in the long, holy kiss of soul-to-soul union, of true betrothal; and Norman turned away, while Regent arose from his long nap on the rug to escort him proudly down the drive.

As Barbara entered the house, crowned with a happiness she had never known before, or dreamed of as possible, she saw her mother's shining garments, as the dear spirit bent above her, in approval and benediction, without which blessing every pleasure lacked its completeness.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SPIRIT WORLD

BARBARA went at once to her room and seating herself at her desk with her head dropped in her hand, she lifted her heart to the Infinite Giver in fervent thanksgiving for all the munificent blessings which crowned her days. She craved a still larger growth, a richer worthiness, a broader unfoldment of her psychic and spiritual gifts, pledging to use them freely, devotedly, for the benefit of all, in any walk of life whom she could thus uplift.

Then, as often at this retiring hour, her thought soared to the realm of spirit where it seemed her conscious life was lived as much as on the mortal plane, and she yearned for its clearer realization.

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“Oh, mother,” she cried, “take me with you to your home. Take me now.”

The response came quickly:

“Not tonight, my child. The vibrations upon your brain are too rapid. Your emotional nature has been too deeply stirred. Some time when more calm and placid, I will make the attempt to take you consciously. You have already visited my home many times unconsciously, for in true slumber the spirit always departs from the body for a season.”

“Yes, I am aware of it, for a faint reflection of such experiences has often been flashed upon my brain at the moment of waking, like a dream I could almost but not quite recall. And oh, I want to know more about it. I crave more spiritual knowledge, for the conditions upon which we shall some time enter when this brief dream is ended seem of gravest import, the one thing most worthy

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of our earnest attention and study.”

“And yet,” assented her mother, “the world searches everywhere else for knowledge rather than to gain light through inspiration from the spirit. It is ever deaf to the clear tones of the bell of truth which sounds only from spiritual heights.”

“May my ears be so finely attuned,” said Barbara, “that not one of its rich accents shall be lost, and may my faltering tongue be able to translate its message to a drowsy world.”

The morning following this wonderful evening in Barbara’s life, ushered in a day when nature seemed especially in tune. The broad earth was like an aeolian lyre, swept by invisible hands of beauty and harmony. There was a charm in every wave of light, in each breath of shining air that gently swayed the tree tops. It was a joy to be alive, to drink in the invigorating ozone, the radiance of sky and hill, of garden and lawn.

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“Can the spirit world be fairer, I wonder,” questioned Barbara. “And yet this world must resemble that realm, because that is the primeval type, the substance of which this is the shadowy reflection. How strange that the things of the spirit seem to many people so visionary and intangible, that to the eyes of the materialist, only material things are real, when it is the power of spirit alone which holds physical atoms together.”

As the day wore on Barbara began to feel premonitions that she was preparing for some unusual experience, that perhaps tonight she would take a temporary departure from her body. So she kept much alone, ate very sparingly and after a brief hour of music's harmonizing influence, with her father as quiet auditor, she kissed him good-night and went to her room.

Peacefully as the retiring hour drew near, she lay down upon her couch and

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prayerfully awaited the strong messenger who would skillfully direct her journey into the Unseen.

Instead of feeling a drowsiness steal over her, as she had expected she might, there was instead a keenness of perception, though without excitement, an alert consciousness, with strong waves electrifying the nerve centers of the brain, and gradually she noticed a curious vibratory, separating sensation in her limbs and throughout her frame, as the spirit prepared to withdraw from its tenement of clay. She was still *with* her body but not a part of it, and every moment lessened her grasp upon it, until with a little tremulous jar, which was hardly a shock, she found herself floating just above it.

Calmly she looked back upon it as it lay there, an inert senseless thing, save that respiration and circulation were continued through the connection still maintained with herself. She plainly

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saw the spiritual umbilical cord which stretched between them. She saw a bright spiritual attendant take her position beside it, to guard against possibility of rude disturbance that might separate them prematurely and thus result in the dissolution of the form.

Then she turned to the Radiant One beside her and felt herself mounting rapidly upward—up through the walls of her room—oh, how insignificant, intangible seemed then every material barrier, which to the freed spirit does not exist. Out and away into the clear atmosphere, leaving her home and all familiar scenes far behind in the dim distance. Rapidly onward and upward they arose. When the atmosphere of earth was left behind, they came upon billowy clouds of ether, wave on wave, through which they quickly passed.

She was too eager, expectant, at first, to ask any of the questions she had hoped to propound, but soon she noted

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in the astral realm they had entered that they were hurrying by gray dun forms with unhappy faces, some even terror-stricken, all hungry, yearning, dispirited, even despairing.

“Who are these?” she asked of the Radiant One. “Are there many such unhappy souls in the spirit world? Can they not find the Heaven they seek? Why does not some angel come to guide them?”

“They could not see such a one,” explained the Radiant One, “if he should come, as often they do. Their gaze is fixed only upon earth where their consciousness is held. We are now passing through the purgatorial zone or belt, which surrounds the planet, and these poor unfortunate entities are the earth-bound spirits who cannot yet get away from their old localities, interests, desires, even appetites. They have lived base unaspiring lives and are still of the earth, earthy, seeking renewed gratification of the old propensities. Although

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invisible to mortals, they are not yet in the spirit world. They cloud the very air of your planet. Small marvel that mortals appropriate the truths of Spirit so slowly, reluctantly, thus handicapped. Less wonder still that this unnecessary cause of disease is not yet overcome or outgrown by the people of your planet.”

“Why, do these unhappy waifs occasion sickness?” asked Barbara.

“More than any other cause,” the Radiant One replied. “Having lost their bodies and longing desperately to regain one, if they find a mortal organism, plastic and pliable to their touch, they seek to sway it to their will. They thus sap their innocent victim’s vitality and by seizing the *medulla oblongata*, as a telegraph operator would touch his key, they can command even the thought of the brain. They can restrict the flow of nerve fluids throughout the organism, causing paralysis and divers ills, which

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materia medica never can reach, or any other form of healing which does not recognize this great need, as did the Master so prominently in his healing work upon earth.”

“How pitifully ignorant our poor world seems,” thought Barbara, “but how should these cases be relieved, how shall this crying need be met?”

“By treating the mortal patient less and striving more to uplift the disembodied spirit in prison, who should be considered the real patient. Release him from his material proclivities. Educate him, inculcate longing for spiritual growth and emancipation, and speed him onward toward the upper spheres.” And after a pause he added: “It would be better still to begin this grand work before he leaves the body, that he might gain the ability to skip this dark belt fraught with so much of misery for himself and danger to others.”

“But there,” pointed Barbara, “are

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a group of spirits in very dark garments who seem to be looking away from earth, and still are most wretched and making no progress.”

“Yes, spirits that are not earth-bound also have to remain here, until they have outgrown old errors of sentiment which they once entertained—all old grudges, jealousies, enmities, hatred, revenge. They cannot move onward until they have paid the uttermost farthing of their error and injustice, until they have advanced to a point where it would be no longer possible for them to harbor such an emotion. These we are passing have hardly begun their effort of expiation.”

“How do you know this?” asked Barbara.

“Because of the color of their garments,” replied the Radiant One.

“Is this always indicative of their state in the spirit world?”

“Absolutely. There is no false keeping up of appearances in this realm. Each

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spirit is revealed at sight for what he really is. His present state is irretrievable, unchangeable, save by growth, by victory won over weakness and error. The spirit wears as its covering the stuff its mental and spiritual condition provides as material therefor. The murderer, whether such by sword, or tongue, is robed in black or muddy brown, if the red of temper modifies the hue, and outgrows his sombre raiment, only through ages of struggle and effort. There, you see, are some spirits in gray, who are now slowly coming out into the light. As we sow, we reap, inevitably. There is no forgiveness of sin, save as it is outgrown, but we can outgrow the consequences of sinning."

"Do some spirits on leaving the form pass through this zone, as we are doing, without stopping?"

"Oh, many indeed are thus freed from error by lives of beneficence and purity, by loftiness of purpose and aspiration,

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by having gained conscious at-one-ment with the Father, which draws them like a magnet to their own sphere.”

And now Barbara saw that they had sped with great rapidity through this zone and were emerging into a light that was radiant without being dazzling. There seemed no need of the sun by day, or of the moon by night, since He is the Light thereof.

“We are approaching,” said the Radiant One, “the first sphere, which also surrounds our planet and moves with it through space.”

“Why,” said Barbara, “it seems like the rings of Saturn, and the dark zone might represent the atmosphere between the planet and the first ring.”

“I should make clear that the earth is a material counterpart, the reflection of the real world, since it is only a crude copy of the realm of spiritual reality. And all scientific discoveries, all inventions that benefit your world are

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first thought out and perfected in our world before they are transmitted to the lower sphere, through some brain prepared to receive them. Our libraries and galleries of art contain a copy of every book, painting or statue that your world has ever known, which appeared here prior to their advent upon earth.”

“How I should like to visit your grand libraries,” said Barbara, “as I shall some day. But first I want to see my mother in her home.”

“I am taking you there,” said the Radiant One, “though she has passed beyond this sphere and occupies a higher one.”

“How is it then that I, a denizen of earth, can visit her in the exalted state to which she has grown?”

“Although,” smiled the Radiant One, “she passed from earth at your birth as pure as an opening flower, she was all unenlightened regarding spiritual truth, hardly knew that she was a spirit. She

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knew less of this truth than you do today. Hers was at first a negative goodness, like that state of innocence which has not yet attained the conquest of purity. She had to grow, to achieve, and conquer limitations by laborious effort and real work for unripe souls, on the mortal plane, often where the work was distasteful and hard, instead of where Love would make all labor delightful, as was always her effort for her darling child, to whom she was likewise permitted to minister. You have each grown together, side by side, in either realm, and your souls today stand very close together.”

“I am so humbly grateful to be permitted to approach so near the beautiful angel which she now is.”

Here for the first time, Barbara glanced down at the robe her spirit wore, and was pleased to find it was white and spotless, though not lustrous and shining like those of the ripened, arisen ones.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SPIRIT WORLD

CONTINUED

IN this first spiritual sphere through which they were passing, Barbara now noticed groups of little children playing on the rich emerald turf. How beautiful it was, of far deeper hue, of richer luxuriance than any green grass she had ever seen on earth. Wonderful flowers of every hue, and displaying many tints never caught in the spectrum of earth, expanded with an ideal loveliness, and their sweet emanations filled all the air with delicious fragrance. The children and flowers both seemed like different colored gems adorning the breast of this beautiful world.

Barbara asked about the children, who cared for them, and if they were happy without their parents.

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“Whenever the children long for them, as they often do,” replied the Radiant One, “they are taken to them, but the little ones, alas, gain slight satisfaction from the visit to their earthly homes. For human parents are usually blind and deaf to their approach, dumbly unresponsive to the patting of baby fingers upon their faces, or to the little arms which encircle their necks. Instead of consolation, the gloom with which these earthly mourners enwrap themselves, their ignorant prolonged grieving so depresses the children that they have to be taken back to this beautiful Paradise.”

“But who receives them when they first come alone?”

“Perhaps their true mothers who only lent them to earthly parentage for a purpose. Then there are many spirits who yearn for such a charge. Many hearts are filled with a true warm mother love, which never could find expression

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on earth, hungry, starving hearts who yearn for love and for an object to shower their love upon. Then there are teachers who are born instructors, to whom it would be a heavenly joy to continue their chosen occupation, and thus devote themselves to these little ones.”

“Do they remain babies and children?” asked Barbara.

“No, having been arrested in their development on earth, their expanding spirits must reach a fuller expression, until the soul’s propulsion is completed, and they attain the maturity of a ripened growth. But they grow no older and the lessons they would have learned on earth, had they remained in the form, are here absorbed in different fashion, in the sphere of causation rather than the realm of effect.”

“Do the very old remain aged in their appearance?” again questioned Barbara.

“No. There was no need for them to grow aged on earth, since the body

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is constantly renewed and the spirit can drink its vitalizing power from the exhaustless fountain of eternal youth. But the law of expectancy is very potent and the sordid cares of a densely material existence suffocate the immortal fires of the spirit. Yet when the fleshly cloak has dropped from their shoulders, all traces of age gradually disappear and they return to the freshness of youth, which they always retain.”

“Yet gray-haired people are often seen by clairvoyants.”

“Yes, they can assume that appearance at will, to aid recognition of their former selves, or they can impress on the seer’s mind a vision of their forms in that guise. But the spirit is without age. It cannot grow old, it is immortally, eternally young.”

As they passed over one of the children’s playgrounds, the sweet carols of birds were heard and Barbara asked if birds and animals were likewise immortal.

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“The life principle of which they are a part, being of Deity, can never become extinct, and so a *continued existence* as bird, as dog, or horse, must be theirs, but not an immortality as an animal. They move on through spiritual involution, through an increased descent of soul power, to larger evolution. If, as is possible, they reach the human plane of expression, then after repeated attempts for a worthy existence on earth, they achieve immortality.”

Barbara's heart expanded ever more gratefully and reverently for the wonderful Divine Plan of Life, the marvellous Creative Thought of the Infinite Thinker.

Gradation from the first to the second of the spiritual spheres was so gradual that Barbara could hardly decide when the border of the latter had been reached. This second realm, the Radiant One assured her, was as far as he could take her, though she knew by his illumined form, the glowing light of his eyes, which

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was like a living flame, the shining robe, the coronet upon his brow that he was one of the Mighty Souls who dwell in the Upper Spheres, and only descend for some purposeful mission.

The light of this sphere seemed iridescent, as if from the radiance of a shattered rainbow. Color with its marvellous significance, which always gives such character to light in any world, here seemed to feed Barbara's inmost soul. She now beheld still more beautiful homes on the landscape outspread than those she had recently observed. Lakes, whose bosoms, like a clear mirror, gave double reflection to the beauties on every side. Fountains dropped gems of fire, as if handfuls of rubies, sapphires, diamonds, and emeralds were being scattered with liberal hand, making music as they fell, like an exquisite symphony of color.

Raising her intense, admiring glance from one of these scenes of beauty and

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following with her eyes up the slope of a lawn beyond, she saw on an adjacent eminence, the glistening white veranda of a beautiful structure, where stood her mother, with outstretched arms, waiting eagerly for her approach. By volition merely, without effort, she glided to her mother's side and was folded in a rapturous embrace. Then placing her in a chair where the loveliest view could be obtained, the mother seated herself beside her, while the Radiant One left them alone together.

“Oh, mother, is it so real as this? And am I really consciously in your spirit home? But how was it builded, dear, and do you live here alone?”

“I cannot answer all your questions at once, my child, but you surely do not need to be told that our spiritual homes are builded, day by day, while still in mortal form, by our every thought and word and act. If we lived in absolute purity, these walls could be spot-

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less as the whitest marble. They are now often marred by stains and dark veinings, which it costs infinite pains and effort to erase. If selfishness, (the one sin of the world) has ruled our acts, we may be surprised perhaps to find our homes adorned everywhere with tell-tale mirrors, in which if we have lived solely for self, we can see nothing but self—self—self, everywhere. There are many barren homes in the spirit world to which no friend from his abundance can contribute a single adornment. Each touch of beauty, or of worth, must be individually won.

“Even now, dearest one, your own spirit home has gained considerable advancement. I often gaze upon it, watch its progress with pride and thanksgiving, for there are no weak places in its foundation, no grievous blots upon its walls. Every good deed you try to perform embellishes it with some mark of beauty. If, for example, you should wish to

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unfold your artistic genius by painting a picture, that aspiration of your soul would be indelibly impressed on some portion of your home and you will find the picture here, when you come. Each worthy desire finds fulfillment, each deed of self-forgetting sacrifice adorns the structure with a sparkling gem.”

Barbara wondered if Norman's home would not scintillate with jewels, so absolutely unselfish was his life, and if they were already building a joint home for mutual occupancy.

“But come,” added her mother, “I want to show you the interior of my home, but remember I shall always keep one resting place for you here on this veranda when you visit me. It shall never be otherwise occupied.”

As they entered a beautiful apartment on the right, Barbara started with pleasure to see upon the opposite wall a fine portrait of her father.

“Why should I not have it here?”

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exclaimed her mother. "Does he not often sit in his library in front of my picture? I do not want to deprive you of his mortal companionship, my daughter, for some time yet, but the time seems so long that I have waited for him. I shall so gladly welcome the hour when the summons comes to go and meet him. His life has been so noble that he will quickly pass through the first sphere, and join me here. I shall be with him constantly and advance his growth. Thence we can go on together. There is much already of his thought and fidelity blended with mine in this home. He is providing far more building material than his spirit would ever have furnished on earth, had not you, Barbara, and your unfolding gifts, aroused him from the density of his intellectual pride."

"Yes, mother, he has changed so much of late and is growing in spirit constantly."

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Barbara next entered a glorified reproduction of his library, adorned with rare mosaics and elaborate ornamentation, not one of his refined tastes or artistic desires omitted.

On the upper floor, long windows opened onto flower-twined balconies, whose blossoms thrust their fragrant lips far into the beautiful rooms and made them redolent with sweetness. Paintings adorned the walls, which were themselves inlaid with exquisite flowers, but these were usually reproductions of those which had been favorites on earth. For when the whole world here is a succession of beautiful pictures, the portrayal of art is less necessary, as an inspiration and delight.

After inspecting the various rooms, with their exquisite adornments, the rare beauty of the garden which surrounded the home, the orchards laden with perfect fruit, and the views of loveliness which stretched away on every side,

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Barbara came forth again through the wide portals, to take her leave, as she saw the Radiant One approaching, and thus knew that her leave of absence from her body had nearly expired.

“Good-bye, mother,” she said, half merrily, “I’ll be back again soon.”

“Yes, my child, you frequently come in slumber, unconsciously, and the visit brings such dear delight to my heart, even though you cannot remember it upon waking.”

“Count on me always, mother dear, to be faithful to my trust, to follow unerringly my highest ideal.”

“I need no such assurance, my child.”

As she turned to yield herself to the guidance of the Radiant One, she suddenly heard on the clear air the sweet, delicate chiming of myriad bells breathing forth a music which the grandest campanology of earth never approached.

Pausing, enraptured, to listen, the Radiant One explained that this glorious

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melody proceeded from their beautiful Temple of Music. It was a summons to a grand Musicale Recital, frequently given by the old Masters, whose finest compositions on the mortal plane were now regarded by them as puerile and almost worthless, save as they keep alive in human hearts the love and yearning for Music's matchless message, without which souls might shrivel and starve.

Barbara pointed to another noble dome, covering a majestic edifice, a little farther on (which Michael Angelo might have copied for his masterpiece) and asked to what purpose that noble structure was devoted.

"That," the Radiant One replied, "is the Temple of Wisdom where grand addresses and revealments of Truth are given by ripened souls who come hither from the upper spheres for that purpose. Vast numbers of aspiring spirits gather here to receive the instruction which they earnestly crave, by which their growth is

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advanced. But the teacher does not have to voice laboriously his high message, for the emanations of his thought assume color, form, intelligence, which readily reach the consciousness of his auditors. Thought is the universal language of spiritual realms.

“Each night, when it is midnight in your world, a lecture is given here, which is attended by the guardians of spiritual workers on earth, by the messenger spirits of your media, and the inspirers of your variously gifted psychics, that hour being chosen because then their services and assistance will not be needed by the instruments through whom they try to bring comfort to sorrowing hearts, the light of Truth to humanity.

“Practical suggestions are thus imparted, calculated to increase the value of their devoted efforts for the race. The best means are outlined by which they can strengthen the morally weak, arrest temptation’s power, uplift the

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downcast, heal grievous wounds, and bring freedom to those who are bound with any fetters, physical, mental or creedal, or saddest of all, an unlawful spiritual bondage.”

“In the far distance,” said Barbara, “I see another Temple which seems wholly built of mosaics and sparkles with such brilliancy. To what use is that edifice devoted?”

“That is History’s shrine, where are kept the age-long records of soul experiences. One could trace therein, if he desired, his prolonged pilgrimage since he first attempted expression in matter and the various personalities his soul’s individuality has worn. If, as so often happens on earth, in meeting a new acquaintance, we feel sure we have known them before, such fact could here be discovered and proven, and the relationship between them could be accurately revealed.”

Barbara sighed, as she replied:

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“I hope I shall not be too homesick for this radiant sphere when I return to the darkness, the limitations of earth.”

“Your life henceforth will know little darkness,” said her guide. “It will be full of brightness, of love and usefulness, which is the highest form of happiness, and this is not your only flight into the spirit world.”

Barbara breathed her thankfulness, and they glided rapidly on in their course earthward.

Just before emerging from the lower zone, Barbara's gaze was attracted toward a bright spirit robed in white, bending above a prostrate form, to which she was ministering, though her charge seemed wrapped in profound slumber.

“Yes,” said the Radiant One, “that is a spirit newly born into this realm. They are always allowed to sleep at first, a long time, in undisturbed seclusion, until the shock of the transition is overcome and the spirit becomes ac-

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customed to the change. But this mother is so anxious for her boy that she endeavors to enrich his rest by trying to shower upon him magnetic strength."

Just here a quick flash of intuition revealed to Barbara who this new-born spirit was.

"Oh," said she, "I wonder if it can be Mr. Wadleigh."

"In truth, it is he," responded the Radiant One.

"Oh, what will be his state when he awakens?" she asked eagerly.

"With such angelic assistance, and a heart that was once kind and generous, he will not have a prolonged or painful passage through this zone. His noble act of reparation at last will expiate a multitude of errors. His choice to leave the world with the stain of dishonesty upon his own fair reputation, rather than that another should suffer unjustly, will win for him a rich reward. It is painful to think what prolonged misery and

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woe might have been his, had he chosen otherwise. He was allowed to return, after he had once entered here, to perform this act of justice.

“Selfishness was his chief error, and this attracted to him one of those earth-bound spirits of which I spoke, who swayed him cruelly to more unprincipled action than his own soul would ever have prompted. It was because this incumbent was suddenly dislodged by the shock of the accident that his own better nature could assert itself.”

Barbara wafted toward the unconscious spirit a fervent blessing, a strong Godspeed in the upward path, upon which he had entered, and soon after she felt the walls of her room close about her. She knew not how long she had been absent, but she submissively approached her sleeping form, and standing for a moment above it, she felt herself gliding downward into its encasing sheath which stirred at her quickening touch,

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although its confines seemed all too narrow to contain her. She ensphered it from without, breathed through it and around it, but she felt that, knowing now how absolutely her real self was a thing apart from it—the life of the free spirit—henceforth her clay dress could never more afflict her, or fetter her unduly.

The Radiant One, his mission accomplished, laid his strong, beneficent hand upon her head, in blessing and restoration, then vanished, while Barbara sank into a natural, healthful slumber.

CHAPTER XVIII

TRUE SERVICE

THE bright sun of this beautiful lower world—which never shines more brightly than in southern California—flooded Barbara's room as she awoke, and she felt as if she was awakening to a new life, that she had veritably received a new birth, that the baptism her spirit had gained in its own realm, would inspire her henceforth to nobler action, a wider usefulness.

As she sprang from her couch full of vigor and fresh power, and proceeded with her toilet, her thoughts and impulses went out to all the world with such a strong wave of love and blessing, as if she wanted to take all the needy ones to her heart, in a warm healthful embrace.

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She knew now that ignorance of spiritual truth was unconsciously their chief woe. They were pining for the light of knowledge, as she once hungered and yearned. She smiled to recall how this natural lure of her soul was once sternly repressed by professional ignorance, as a form of hysteria, and it was then declared that all interest in spiritual things must be absolutely checked, or it would result in increased nervousness, if not insanity, though now she knew that there is no other source of health and wholeness, save in spirit.

Ah, it is ignorance that ever enslaves. True enlightenment brings freedom, growth, upliftment. Spirit is life, health, power. It insures blessedness and peace. Oh, the joy of realizing one's spiritual birthright—one's inheritance in the order of soul!

As was her custom before breakfast, she went out into the garden and said "good-morning" to the world, this beauti-

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ful Paradise in which she now lived. She had a brief romp with Regent. She bent over her favorite flowers, held up their faces that they might better receive the warm kiss of the sun. She even told them of their sister blossoms, which she had recently beheld, how fair and sweet they were, an ideal loveliness which these might copy, were almost attaining, in their beautiful possibility of adorning this bright earthly Crown of the Valley.

As she turned to the house, a call from the telephone brought her a cheery word from Norman, just starting forth to his new position and well-merited honor. Perhaps he craved proof that his happiness of a recent evening had not been all a dream, the assurance also of her cordial "God speed," although, that he already had it, he knew full well. But the exchange of voices was such a joy each to the other; the love tones which the vibrating wire could not blur or distort.

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Therefore, her cheeks were particularly rosy when she met her father at the breakfast table, and his gaze rested upon her admiringly, most affectionately.

Noting her happy exalted mood, he refrained from reminding her of the sad duty which awaited him that day, in arranging for the last mark of respect to his departed friend. He could not know that she had paid her last tribute to him elsewhere. So he asked if Aurora's bath was particularly invigorating this morning, that she was so especially bright, after all the exciting episodes of the week.

"Nothing as you know, father, ever comes without strength sufficient being likewise imparted, wherewith to extract the lesson it came to teach. If we learn its purport well, it will not have to be repeated."

"What is the most valuable lesson, my child, which this trying week has taught you?"

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Pausing to remember with a throbbing heart that Love's young dream formed also a part of her last week's experiences, the sacred pledge between two united hearts, she lingered a moment over the insight she had gained of Norman's true nature, his stanch devotion to his mother and sister, his desire to be all that a man could be unto them, as she answered:

"The week has brought me increased desire to be of some use in the world, to be all that I can be to my mortal brothers and sisters. In short, father, I think I *want something to do.*"

Her father smiled amusedly.

"And what line of work do you think of adopting? What will be your chosen occupation? Shall you open a cooking school, a conservatory of music, or a course in botany? I will write out the necessary advertisements this evening."

"Trying to ring the changes on my few accomplishments, are you not, father dear?" Barbara laughed merrily. "No,

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there are plenty of people who can teach those branches far better than I could, and need it for a livelihood, of which I would not deprive them. No, I want real work, not smattering, or copying. I want to teach people what they are, from whence they came, and the true goal for which they should strive, and above all how to outgrow the prominence of the lower self, the universal error of the race.”

“A worthy aim surely, but you are aware, my child, that the stomach must have an appetite for food before the nourishment provided can be absorbed. The same must be true on the spiritual plane. Mortals must first attract spiritual instruction by desiring it. Where will you find such humble minds? How can you create an appetite for the spiritual food you would offer?”

“Strive to quicken such desire, to encourage an appetite, though I would not give meat to babes. But I want some-

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thing to do. God needs laborers in his vineyard; it is white for the harvest. As did Samuel of old, I would fervently pray: 'Here am I, Lord, send me.'"

"I thought you had always been Lady Bountiful for everyone in need that you ever heard of."

"Only an agent for your wide charities, father mine. I want to reach people's souls. I am not satisfied with merely feeding and clothing their bodies."

The pair noticed here that the butler, instead of withdrawing when they were served, as was his custom, busied himself about the room with several unnecessary tasks, until they should have finished, indicating that there was something he wished to say to them.

"Well, James," said Mr. Vernon at last, "what is it?"

"Please, sir, the cook wished me to ask if you and Miss Barbara could spare her for today?"

"Why certainly. I am to be away

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all day myself. What's the matter? Is she ill?"

"No, master, she is all right, but her little sister is dying of pneumonia."

As Barbara started to her feet, Mr. Vernon exclaimed:

"Why, that is very sad. Tell her to go at once and to stay as long as she is needed."

When the butler had departed, Mr. Vernon, as if impelled by an inner force that prompted his utterance, said gravely to Barbara:

"My child, if you want a work to do, here is a labor of love at your hand. Go in the power of the spirit which you wish to proclaim, and restore this child."

Raising her eyes upward, Barbara solemnly affirmed:

"God helping me, *I will.*"

She had had such recent demonstration of the insignificance of the body, its impotency to assume any conditions without the quickening touch of

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the spirit, which could so masterfully inspire it with health and activity, that it seemed as if a baptism from another strong spirit might assist the fainting sufferer, might prove a channel through which the one healing force in all the universe might pour, for even Divinity needs intermediary agencies by which to reach its children.

She had known little of the healing art save that which Irene had told her of the different cults with their diverse labels, all seeming to be a sectarian distinction without a difference. But she knew the gift of healing had an honored place in Paul's spiritual repertoire and she felt that whenever exercised, it was a spiritual endowment that must be won, a latent gift to be unfolded, not a trick, or a method to be taught.

She had not dreamed of possessing this beneficent gift herself, but she had recently asked the Infinite Wisdom to send her wherever it had a mission to

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perform, and if this call was the answer to her earnest desire, she would devote her energies to its accomplishment.

As she walked with the cook to the house of her sister, she was surprised to feel suddenly a strange weakness assail her, a high fever, with severe pressure and pain in her chest, as if it were she instead of the child who was suffering from pneumonia.

This phenomenon gave her confidence and courage, for she knew that her psychometric sense, her soul feelers, had already come in touch with the child's need. She was like a clear mirror, reflecting the condition in her own organism which made it seem of such little moment.

Prayfully she entered the sick room, where the child's labored breathing could be painfully heard. The bronchial tubes had so nearly filled that the Doctor had pronounced the end very near.

As Barbara seated herself beside the bed, she first expelled all anxiety from her

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mind, banished the overpowering sense of grave responsibility which had come to her, she lifted her heart in unflinching trust, in the realization of her at-onement with the Omnipotent Good, and made no further personal effort. She was simply a passive instrument for the transmission of the healing influx, with which her brain and entire consciousness was soon so flooded that mental action, argument, or affirmation would have been impossible, had she not known it was unnecessary, the mind being always a lesser power than the unconquerable potency of spirit.

Soon she began to feel in herself the effect which was being produced on the child. The fever gradually subsided, the breathing became less short and painful, until it was almost normal. The watchers noticed with surprise and gladness the great change that was apparent, the calm that stole over the child, the color of health. The crisis

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was certainly passed, and a natural slumber soon added its restorative agency to the patient's recovery.

As Barbara arose and quietly left the house, she felt as if quivering under the vibrations of a powerful electric battery, so strong a force had been focussed upon her. Her heart also thrilled with profound joy and thanksgiving, that she had been counted worthy to serve, that her ability to save and to heal had thus been proven, that she was one through whom the Infinite Spirit of Life could reach and bless its children.

Tidings of this wonderful cure soon spread far and wide and was the means by which many minds were turned to the light, many spirits quickened to desire further knowledge of spiritual verities. She had indeed, as she affirmed she would, created an appetite for spiritual truth.

Gradually she formed little coteries of both friends and strangers, to whom

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she would talk, or answer their questions for an hour, under an inspiration which came to her freely. Many times her healing presence was requested in other homes, where sickness in various forms had entered. Pain or disease always yielded quickly at her approach, prostration was transformed into strength and action.

She had indeed found something to do and it filled her heart with gladness. She welcomed the present opportunities for service, knowing the hour might come in the not distant future, when the narrower ties of life and home-maker would require her devotion in another field.

Wonder was often expressed by many friends that gifted as she was in art and music, with unlimited leisure, the luxury of wealth surrounding her, and money to gratify her every desire, she should devote herself to this work, but she would remind them that those mortals who, like herself, had every wish

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gratified, had to make double effort to avoid a narrow selfhood. For selfishness is the canker-worm at the root of all true growth. It is the saddest blight on the tree of human life.

“Daily, hourly,” she assured them, “it should be the effort of every spirit to live itself ceaselessly, untiringly, into the needs of other lives, to help others to grow wise and strong and pure, and thereby grow itself the faster, make itself grander and richer, that thus it may serve humanity better, that it may become *all that it should be* to the world and the inhabitants thereof, a savior to every child of God.”

CHAPTER XIX

WEDDING BELLS

BUT, while drawn much from her home, Barbara was careful that her father should not have a chance to miss her and feel neglected. She also desired that he should share the pleasure of her blessed ministration to humanity. She was merry and bright, at all times, for there is nothing depressing or sad about spiritual work. New joy bubbled up in her heart continually, which she scattered broadcast, and entered heartily into the delight of other hearts, whatever its nature.

A gala day was approaching, in which she was to take a prominent part. Blanche Wheaton's nuptials were to be celebrated on a grand scale, with the pomp and splendor of a church wedding,

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followed by a brilliant reception at the spacious Rose Manor before the departure of the happy pair for Europe. Her chosen attendants were Irene Ashmont, accompanying her own brother Ralph, with Barbara and Norman also serving as handsome features of the bridal procession. Dick Saltonstall laughingly expressed the hope that the Rev. Dr. Fernald would make no mistake and perform a triple ceremony. He knew it would bring such sorrow and chagrin to their respective bridesmaids and groomsmen.

The preceding weeks were busy with modistes and seamstresses and the dainty finery which the occasion required. But all was at last completed. Blanche was a veritable Queen in her royal beauty; her rich satin gown, scintillating with brilliants, seemed to reflect its bright lustre upon the softer sheen of the silk, pearl-embroidered attire, which was chosen for her attendants.

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The festal day dawned gloriously, with a merry sparkle in the air. All nature donned its wedding garments, and even Regent, though not an invited guest, wore proudly a huge white satin bow, perked up just behind his left ear. Barbara was a dream of loveliness. Her father had never seen her in such bridal array, and his eyes glistened with pride and thanksgiving, mingled with a few tears, as he recalled that sometime her own wedding day must dawn. But he would not so far fail to absorb her teachings as to desire selfishly to detain her from the happiness of Love's sweet fulfillment, or leave her alone, without companionship, when he should be called to join the bride of his youth.

It was a beautiful scene, and as the impressive group stood at the altar, the sun, having reached in its course a stained glass window, showered the bridal party with such brilliant radiance of prismatic tints that Barbara almost felt that she was

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in the second sphere, where even the light is iridescent. But earth today was Paradise, with Norman by her side, her hand upon his arm, his admiring glance resting upon her and their hearts attuned to one sweet melody.

During the reception, among other old friends whom Barbara was glad to meet, she was especially pleased to renew her acquaintance with Professor Montverte, whose gray eyes sparkled with delight at the evidences he observed and sensed of her wonderful growth, far beyond his early prophecies, also of Norman's soul kinship to Barbara's own. Many confidences were exchanged between these friends on topics not often discussed at a wedding reception. She asked him how he could ever have seen aught of promise in one so weak and ignorant as she was at their first meeting. But he assured her that the wealth which the soul has acquired in past experiences always shines through what-

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ever physical mask it may be wearing.

We all occupy different rounds of the ladder and we never shall reach the topmost round, else progression would be at an end. But the Infinite Magnet draws us ever onward and upward, toward Itself.

* * * * *

Some months later, as Barbara and her father were seated around the evening lamp, a glad bark from the veranda announced some welcome guest, just as Norman entered.

“I am homeless,” he began smilingly, “so I come as a pensioner on my neighbors’ bounty for shelter and companionship.”

“What’s the matter with the bungalow?” asked Mr. Vernon. “I hope it has not burned down.”

“Not so bad as that,” laughed Norman. “It will still shelter me, but my dear mother and sister are soon to have a grander home than I could give them,

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and my heart is filled with devout thanksgiving therefor.”

A light began to dawn on Barbara's mind as to the purpose of his present call.

“You see it is this way,” Norman continued. “Mrs. Wheaton is very lonesome in her great house since Blanche went abroad. She feels quite forlorn with only Ralph as companion, and she complains that he is only there to eat and sleep, as he spends most of his leisure at the Ashmont bungalow. So to fill her home again with cheery voices and wider interests, she suggests that while awaiting his prospective marriage with my sister, Irene, which will occur some time, that she and mother, of whom she is very fond, should come to live with her, that is, for the present. She has reserved the sunniest corner in all the Manor for my dear mother's use, from which the widest outlook can be obtained over all the wide valley.”

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“That is so like Mrs. Wheaton’s great heart,” said Barbara, “but how does your mother feel about it?”

“Very happy and pleased, of course, with the invitation, the knowledge that anyone wants her company, for you know that old people are so apt to get the idea that they have outlived their welcome on earth, though, thank Heaven, she has never had occasion for such suggestion. But she turns down this proposition because she will not leave me, and I, of course, would not share in Mrs. Wheaton’s generous hospitality if it were offered me.

“And now, Mr. Vernon,” continued Norman hesitatingly, “I come to the hardest part of my errand. I crave the priceless honor of your daughter’s hand, and while I would not take her from this beautiful home into my little bungalow, it would strengthen my efforts to secure a better habitation if I knew I could sometime be rewarded by her

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sweet company, as I already have been blessed beyond measure by the assurance of her love.”

He paused and Mr. Vernon remained silent for a time, but looked up at last with a smile. It was a sad smile, and yet it gradually grew more self-forgetting, as he said:

“I surely should not be less generous than my esteemed neighbor, Mrs. Wheaton. Why can't you come and share my home? I certainly cannot spare my beloved child, on any other conditions. There is ample room here for us all.”

Norman sprang forward and grasped his hand in both of his, while Barbara glided to her father's chair and stood with her arm thrown about his neck, as fresh proof that nothing could ever separate them, or dim her fond love for him.

“Thank you, my children, for your nobility of heart. This is doubtless as it should be. I may need a son in my

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declining years, as Barbara will need an earthly companion when I am gone.”

“I shall be no less devoted to *you*, father, if you consent to receive me as a son, than I shall be to Barbara. My life will be the test of my claim on such high honor and happiness. We shall need your advice and counsel, the fruits of your ripened wisdom, I am sure, but far more the pleasure and comfort of your noble company.”

“Thanks, my boy, and rest assured that there is no one in all the world to whom I would more willingly entrust my precious daughter. I am deeply touched to notice that even in this moment of your betrothal, your first thought is of me. You forget yourselves in your benevolent kindness. Lovers are not apt to be so unselfish. I am sure we shall all be very happy together.”

“Oh, as my mother says, ‘it is such a beautiful world and there are such beautiful people in it.’ ”

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“And, father,” added Barbara, “we are to be more than merely happy. Happiness is not enough. True life has no place for self-seeking, self-gratification. We are to be of grand service to the great wide world, and by the silent force, the momentum of our strong lives, sweep all other lives along with us toward the heights. We are to be *all that man or woman should be unto humanity.*”

CHAPTER XX

FIVE YEARS LATER

THE setting sun is again bathing the world with peculiar tenderness in this beautiful San Gabriel Valley. The same eternal hills rear their majestic crests toward the soft blue sky, the same silent stars are watching overhead. Similar charms of nature are outspread on every side, though of double variety and luxuriance.

The rapidity of floral and arboreal growth in semi-tropical climes, which Jack Frost never invades, is incredible to Northern eyes. A year is almost sufficient to transform a grove into a forest, a barren wilderness into a luxuriant garden.

Thus in the progress of five years the palms and foliage of tree and vine

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that clustered around and clambered over Crescent Villa, have so embowered it as to almost eclipse it from view. The same beautiful lawn stretches down the slope from its portals toward the broad avenue and upon its rich green sward at this hour is a happy group, which the glow of the sunset hour illumines.

Beneath a spreading tree, in a large garden chair, sits Alfred Vernon, younger in appearance, happier, more vital, than he ever was before. He holds upon his knee a fair little girl—a younger Barbara—who has paused in her play to caress the grandpa of whom she is so fond.

On the grass near by is stretched a noble dog, over whom, to his own delight, is rolling and tumbling an angelic child—little Norman, who often buries his tiny hands into the shaggy coat of his faithful friend and protector, to Regent's infinite patience, for his consciousness of

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personal responsibility in rearing these little ones is most profound.

A footfall on the gravel arrests the attention of all, and soon the children are struggling to meet their father, who lifts the little Norman to his shoulder, and gives his hand affectionately to the older child.

He is a bank president now, Mr. Weston on retiring having recommended him strongly for that position, and he received the unanimous vote of the Board.

The pleasure expressed in Mr. Vernon's face at his approach, reveals how close is the affectionate regard and comradeship between them.

As they all turned toward the Willa, Barbara came out onto the veranda to gather her flock together for the dinner hour. She never looked more radiant and beautiful than now in her ripened womanhood, her white dress framed in by the bright roses that cluster all about

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her. As she beholds the group, she calls out half merrily:

“I used to wonder how I could ‘ope my heart to know what sunsets show.’ This sunset hour surely reveals to me my jewels, enshrined in the most glorious setting that even the Infinite Beauty could devise. How can I expand my heart to hold one more throb of devout thanksgiving?”

Norman’s deep voice rings out in reply:

“Remember, dear, you sought first the kingdom of Truth and its righteousness and all other things are added unto you. Whoso loveth much, to him much is given. He that would be happy among you, *let him serve.*”