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ILLUSIONS

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(MRS. K. COOK)

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PREFACE.

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The following essay is an effort towards the freeing of our consciousness from the limitation in which it habitually dwells, and which exists only by means of certain illusions that are common to all men. To encounter illusions which are universal and which are practically unanimously accepted, is a task of great difficulty ; it has, therefore, seemed both excusable and necessary to relate, as illustrations to the essay, various experiences. These experiences have come to a psychic sometimes in dream-consciousness and sometimes in trance-consciousness ; they have been given under the guidance of a teacher or Master, evidently to make clear the illusions under which man labours. In the case of such guidance as this it is easy to turn the pages of the records of the past and therein again experience events which have occurred long since, and by this means obtain enlightenment. Man is so engrossed in that which is happening, when it happens, that he is unable to realize the methods by which events are brought about, and

the relations existing between the visible and the invisible. If he could do so at the time it would be possible for him at any moment of acute experience to attain knowledge and freedom from illusion ; but it is not possible because his whole being is absorbed either in pain or pleasure, and in desire. In the schools of the psychic world the history of each incarnation is used for reference, and as each spirit begins to acquire knowledge it is shown pages in its own past which illustrate and confirm that knowledge. The reading of such pages is the same to the spirit as the re-enacting of the events ; and the forgetfulness of the present is similar to that which is experienced by a novel reader in reading an absorbing picture of life, with the added interest of feeling that you are yourself one of the actors in the drama. When the page is finished and the book of records closed the sensation of returning from the past to the present occurs, and the disciple is only then aware that he has been reading, not living. This overwhelming interest in the revelation of the long past is one of the experiences which await us across the threshold, and those who look for oblivion beyond physical death will be amazed to find not only intense activity and consciousness in the immediate moment, but in all the volume of

the past which will be re-enacted in due course with full freshness of sensation.

That while we are dwelling in bodies upon the earth we are dwelling also in the midst of illusion is a very familiar idea to all students of occultism. Many believe that death is not only the doorway to an increased intensity of life, but also to a state of greater reality. But these may find that when the body is laid aside the spirit is still within the dominion of desire, and this being so, illusion still surrounds it and holds it in a blinding and baffling atmosphere. It seems often as necessary for the spirit to have facts, which it is perfectly capable of perceiving for itself, pointed out to it, as it is for a child to be led and guided and shown the truth as to everyday physical life.

Guides and teachers come to those who are passing away from this life into other lives, and help them to escape from the illusion which makes the way so difficult. We need not fear for those who are freed from the physical state ; from out of that which is to us now invisible come the sure and certain friends to help them. When we can recover our memory of the periods between our incarnations one of the deepest feelings that will come to us will be gratitude to those who helped us in these

times of perplexity. Always the spirits of men have had this unfailing aid, so that illusion has never been allowed to baffle those who desired to pass beyond it.

But now the whole race is reaching a point when it must put off childish things and become a man. It is no longer seemly that it should dwell in ignorance, only a few of its advanced members knowing the truth about the simplest facts of its condition. The order is given that by degrees much shall be explained in such a way that all who read shall understand. The things which require explanation are, many of them, of so very simple a nature that the best way of making them clear seems to be that of the relation of experiences. The bare statement of a fact, a condition, common to all men, but not observed by them, carries but little conviction with it, unless it is illustrated by some recital of events which reveal its truth. It is for this reason that certain experiences are included in this essay.

Some of the experiences are those of a psychic who has been able to bring across the threshold a memory of something just then seen, or something which has just then occurred, and which illustrates or explains the subject. There are many psychics in the world now who are able to retain more or less of the

memory of their experiences on the other side of the threshold ; it is to be hoped that some will think fit to record their own experiences and give them to the public. It is time for man to begin to know himself and not to remain in the dark, a seed hidden in the earth.

M. C.

August 7, 1905.

ILLUSIONS.

ILLUSION 1.—That man is imprisoned in the body.

ILLUSION 2.—That the Unborn are unknown.

ILLUSION 3.—That there is any secret in the mind
or memory of man.

ILLUSION 4.—That the earth exists apart from man.

ILLUSION 5.—That Nature is indifferent to Man.

ILLUSION I.

THAT MAN IS IMPRISONED IN THE BODY.

It is an illusion that the spirit of a man is within his body all the time. It is only within it for certain periods of time. When within it consciousness, knowledge, perception, apprehension, are limited by its senses and its brain capacity. These literally form a cage in which the spirit is confined, and such confinement would be absolutely insupportable even to the most materialistic of human souls, were it maintained consecutively. But this cage is an instrument, and the spirit enters it to use it, as a hand is thrust into a glove. Moments of deep thought, amounting to unconsciousness, occur throughout the whole of life, from childhood to old age, and in these moments the spirit stands out from the body. Usually it remains beside it, but if the abstraction is deep and lasts some time it will go some distance if called by any interest. Sometimes it will do so in order to speak to another embodied spirit when outstanding, and communica-

tions are thus exchanged of a nature not to be reached by either spirit when within the limitation of the human body, and not to be expressed in human language. But this is only possible to those who understand the conditions of embodiment, and cannot be attempted by the persons who believe themselves to be encased in bodies from the time of the birth of those bodies to their death. The materialist believes that his body is himself; the religious man and the spiritualist frequently believe that they cannot be separated from their bodies while life lasts except during sleep or trance.

The truth is that this earth is the scene of a drama of which we only perceive scattered portions, and in which the greater number of the actors are invisible to us while we are inside our bodies. But in the moments of abstraction, of deep thought, of reverie, the spirit frees itself and uses its psychic senses. It is then among those who are invisible to its physical eyes, and if not entirely absorbed in the affairs of its physical body, is aware of their presence and can be as one of themselves. It is then that the spirit of man, during his physical life, grows and expands and develops, so that when released from the physical body he has outgrown it and casts it aside like a worn-out garment.

It is necessary to understand in what sense man is now a spirit and can claim the position and power of a spiritual being while living in the physical body. To this end some experiences are given which shed a light on certain states. The first of these, given in a vision, is a recollection of a past episode between two incarnations.

AN EXPERIENCE.

I was walking about in a large, fine old house, late in the evening. The corridors were very shadowy and, in some places, quite dark, but there were lights in the rooms, where people were talking a great deal. There was a sense of trouble and agitation everywhere, and I myself was in a very confused and distressed state of mind. I hardly knew what had happened; it seemed as if so many events had occurred, one coming rapidly after another, that I was left by them simply in a state of confusion. I wandered down a long corridor, pushing open the doors of the rooms and looking in; no one seemed to notice me and I felt very lonely and unhappy. And yet I knew that I was the mistress of the house, who should have commanded more attention than anyone else in it. I could not understand why I was so disregarded,

and searched my confused memory in vain for the reason. My husband was in one of the rooms, sitting in the midst of a group of persons and talking very loudly and positively. His voice grated on my ears ; it was harsh and sometimes very sneering. The sneers were often directed at me. I heard him say more than once " Lady Ann's wishes ! What do they matter ? I can't attend to those now—there is more important business to be done than attending to her wishes !"

I left the room when he sneered like this. That was my way. His sneers were very painful to me, and I had never been able to bear them. I went on down the corridor, my heart beating fast and aching sorely. What should I do ? I knew my husband intended to carry out plans of his own which I entirely disapproved of, some of which would vitally affect the future of my boy, my one child—his heir, and my idol. I must find sufficient courage to encounter him, to state my views and to insist on their being respected. I was dreadfully timid, and overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness. I could not go in among all those people who paid no attention to me. I would wait till I could be alone with him. So I went away from the room

he was in, down the shadowy corridor, and saw my little dog coming running to meet me. He had been my consolation in the early days of my loveless marriage, my one companion before my boy came. He was always a little friend and comforter to me. I stretched out my hands to him and he rushed to me with delight, jumping upon me and fawning on me. But suddenly he turned and fled, darting down the long corridor like lightning, and disappearing round the corner without a single glance back at me.

Then I knew ! I stood still, amazed at the discovery I had made. I had been very ill, and had lain in delirium for some days. I thought I had recovered ! Instead of that I must be dead, for evidently I was a ghost.

Now I understood what my husband had been saying about disregarding my wishes. There were many things which I had prevented him from doing which now he would do without any interference. Of course, he would sneer at those who reminded him of my wishes.

Now that I really understood what had happened and what I was, strength and intelligence began to
 : in me and I lost all fear. It was a relief to know
 that I was free, that I was myself, a being in my

own right, no longer under the dominance of the man who had made my life so dreary. That was the first feeling, followed by a sense of power, and freedom, and exultation. I went on down the corridor, moving lightly and easily, realizing for the first time that I no longer suffered, that my head did not ache, that my mouth was not parched and dry, that my limbs were not heavy and tired. My youth had come back to me and pain and sickness were gone. I turned the corner round which my dog had disappeared, and came to the servants' quarters. Here there were loud voices, and heated discussions were going on. I passed the door of the steward's room, which was closed; I heard the steward say in a raised angry voice, "I have to go—the master has given me notice to go!—it's a shame—but there's no help for it—"

"Hush!" said someone in a quivering voice. "I hear Lady Ann's silk dress in the corridor!"

Instantly there was silence. I went on, trying hard to make no noise. But I could not manage it. I myself heard the sweep of my dress on the stone floor. It seemed strange, for I saw no silk dress, when I looked down. All that I saw were floating white draperies about me, soft and soundless. "—"

"The steward to go!—all these changes to be

made directly !—no one to guide my boy's life or protect his interests ! ”

I went swiftly back down the long corridors, past all the doors, caring not who heard my dress, or who was plunged into fear and silence by the sound ; I reached the great oak staircase and hastened up to my boy's room. He should be asleep—it was growing late.

He sat in a chair by the window, stupefied with grief, paralysed by it. He was utterly alone, with no one to turn to, no one to comfort or help him. He knew not that I was there—he neither saw nor felt me. What could I do ? I could not leave him like this. I must go to him. I must find some way of returning to the earth life I had left, and of being with him, to help him through the difficulties I saw before him and the bad influences that surrounded him. Oh, my son ! This boy of fourteen was the one love of my life, for him I experienced the only passion of feeling my heart had ever known. I must and would return to him. The sense of power was growing in me ; I felt capable of performing miracles in order to accomplish what I desired. But to be with him now, intangible, invisible, unfelt, was more than I could endure. I turned away and left the room.

It opened on to a large, wide corridor, carpeted and hung with family portraits. There was no light but that of the moon, which came in through a high window at the end. I saw that someone stood there, looking at me, evidently intending to speak to me. The figure was that of a tall man in a white dress, with an intensely black beard cut in the Egyptian shape, penetrating and most brilliant eyes, and wearing on his head some fine white linen in folds, coming to a point and with a blazing jewel in the centre. This was a very extraordinary figure to see in the thoroughly English surroundings. But he seemed as familiar to me as the surroundings themselves. I went towards him unhesitatingly.

"I see your desire," he said. "You want to return to earth to be with your twin soul, the one you love, who has come to you in this life as your son."

"Can you help me?" I demanded eagerly. "Will you? I must return to him. I cannot leave him."

"Passion is as strong in you as it was when you were born into ancient Egypt," he said, looking at me very coldly; "you fell from your place then because you would not be parted from the one you loved. Do you remember how he came to

you then as your child, and died while still a baby and you would not accept the decree, but tried to follow him and killed yourself ? Do you remember how you wandered in darkness, an earth-bound soul ? And how I came to you when I left the earth life, and pitying you, enabled you to incarnate again in a human body ? ”

“ I remember—indeed I remember,” I said, and tears came to my aid. “ How greatly have you pitied and helped me in the past. Will you not pity and help me now ? ”

“ How many times have you been born and re-born since then ! ” he said, “ and I, not once.”

“ But you are a master in life and freed from passion,” I said. “ I am but a poor human soul.”

“ My love is greater than yours,” he answered, “ as my knowledge and power are greater. The one I love is at the foot of the Great White Throne, in deep peace ; I know that is so, and that I must find my way there by tortuous paths, helping, climbing myself and helping others to climb. Therefore am I here. But I am told to help you on—not back, out of the earth darkness—not into it.”

“ I must go back,” I said, with overwhelming power and passion, such as I had never been capable of while in my body. “ I will not leave him.”

“ You could help him much more if you entered into a spiritual state than by remaining on the earth.”

“ I cannot do it. I cannot and will not go away from him,” I said fiercely.

“ Then it is the shortest way for you to reincarnate,” he said ; “ you must be re-born as a child at once, and then you will again meet him during the life he is to spend on earth. You must understand that it is only by my help that it is possible for you to do this and to return to earth immediately. There is an opportunity at hand, and you shall take it if you choose.”

“ Yes ! ” I said, “ yes, and I will thank you for ever.”

He smiled a little at this—a strange, subtle smile, with no sneer in it at all, and yet a great deal of scorn. But it was tempered by a sweetness that overmastered all else in him, and therefore I could bear it.

“ This is but a small debt of gratitude,” he said, “ compared to some that you owe me in the long past. Think nothing of this. If you will have it so you must have it so, though I would greatly wish it might be otherwise. Come, I will guide you. The first thing is that you choose whether you will be born as man or woman this time.”

I was surprised—I faltered and hesitated. Perhaps as his friend and fellow-man I might be nearer his heart than as a woman. My recent experiences had made me feel that women have but little power in the world and little chance of winning real regard from the men they care for.

“It is difficult for you to decide,” he said, “I see that it is. You shall put the matter to the test. It is easy for you, if I show you how to do it, to enter into the bodies of the persons who are awake in this house, and then you will be able to tell whether you like the man’s or the woman’s body best.”

I stood still, wrapped in thought on this subject, brought so suddenly before me. I found the idea strange.

“I did not know I could choose,” I said. “Surely I have not been able to choose before?”

“Yes,” he answered, “you have always chosen, as all do; but without thought. You chose just what you wished for at the moment, and that needs no reflection. You have had more experience now and you know that your choice is of importance to yourself and to another whom you care for more than yourself.”

“I will be a man,” I said, “then I can be his friend. A woman is never a man’s friend.”

‘ You speak out of the experience of your latest incarnation,” he observed. “ Wait until you have recovered more memories of the past ; and it would be well, perhaps, to wait also for more experiences. In the meantime do not decide too hastily. Come and put the matter to the test, as I have suggested. Come down into the library, where your husband and his friends are sitting. They are just preparing to separate ; but we have still time. Come.”

He led the way and I followed him down the oak staircase, and along the corridor, to the lighted room into which I had already been more than once. We went straight in and stood in the midst of the group. The men had all risen and were speaking some last words. One was the family lawyer. He, I knew, would fetch his horse out of the stable himself, and ride home to his house in the neighbouring town. It was his custom to do this when he came, which he often did. He was very intimate with my husband, and I feared and distrusted him. He was nearest to us as we entered the room, and the Egyptian paused by him.

“ Now,” he said, “ watch this man’s spirit attentively. You will see that constantly, in moments of deep self-absorption, it stands out from

his body, which remains at its command, like an automaton. The next time you see this you yourself step into his body, for the fraction of time for which he vacates it."

I obeyed. The man was standing near the door, ready to go out. He had said good night. His soul was absorbed in the effort to probe my husband's secret thoughts and intentions, and as he pondered deeply on this he stood outside his body, beside it and I saw the two figures plainly, with equal distinctness. I stepped into the body, as one might step into a carriage—but I could only remain there for a second—the pain of it was intolerable—and the spirit stepped back and pushed me out. The lawyer said "good night" again, and went quickly out of the room.

"What an awful cage for an immortal spirit to dwell in!" I exclaimed. "How coarse and hard and fierce and unbearable! Oh, never, never could I endure such an imprisonment."

"Look at the others," said the Egyptian. "You will see the same thing occurs constantly. You are mistaken in supposing you are imprisoned in a body. You only enter it to use it, as you would enter a machine. It is literally only an instrument, but men do not understand this, because while they

are inside it they are limited by its senses and power of apprehension, and they know nothing of the life they live apart from it. And that is going on the whole time. See, your husband is standing there in deep thought—he is apparently listening to what is being said to him, but he will not remember anything about it, because his spirit is standing outside his body.”

I looked and saw that it was so. The two figures stood side by side.

“Speak to his spirit,” said the Egyptian.

I shrank from doing this, but dared not disobey. When I approached him I entered again into the thought and intention which had made me desire so much to speak to him before I discovered that I was now a spirit.

“Robert,” I said, “can I talk to you alone. There are some things I want so much to say to you.”

The two figures abruptly became one. He looked round, with a dazed, half-frightened look.

“Heavens!” he said to himself, under his breath. “I felt as if Ann was here, I could swear I heard her speak.”

“Watch for the next opportunity,” said the Egyptian, “and step into his body.”

“No ! no !” I cried. “No, that I cannot and will not do ! Let me go upstairs and see if my boy is awake. Let me try his—but not this one.”

He made no objection. This time I led the way, hurrying along the corridor and up the stairs. I heard the sweep of my dress as I went, and I felt that my husband heard it, and that it filled him with horror and dismay. I was careless as to this, but I did not want to frighten my boy. I tried my utmost to repress the sound when I went into his room. But I could not. It arose from some law of being which I did not understand. Had I been in my body I could surely have held the skirt of my dress tight and close so that even if it rustled, at least it would not make that sweeping sound. But I could not do this, for I could not perceive or feel that which made the sound. I saw that my boy had tried to rest, had tried to sleep, and in vain. He had left his bed and was standing at the open window looking out. It was very warm, and the moon shone brightly on a lake that lay at a little distance from the house. I saw at once, without having to be told to look, that his spirit stood outside his body. Both were regarding the lake very earnestly. Both turned at the sound of my dress.

“Quick !” said the Egyptian, “Enter his body now.”

I did so, without pause or hesitation, and stood within it, gladly, lovingly, longingly. It was my child’s body, the shape I had borne, that I had nursed and reared, and always loved.

I experienced two fearful shocks during the second that I stood within. The first came from the brain ; the deep pre-occupation which made the spirit stand out so long was the result of an intense desire to die and come to me. The physical eyes looked longingly at that bright moonlit lake, as a way of passing on to where I was. And the spiritual eyes looked chilly and unintelligently upon the same thing. The whole being was unenlightened and sunk in despondency. My poor, poor boy ! Then, before the shock of realizing the mental and spiritual state had passed away from me, came the consciousness of the physical body. The developing manhood, the overwhelming longing for physical life and physical exercise and physical power and supremacy struck upon me like a great wave of pain. It pressed upon my spiritual body everywhere, from every nerve centre. I was thankful when the second of time had passed during which his spirit stood outside, and when it pressed back into its place and pushed me out.

"Oh, no ! no !" I cried to the watching figure which stood beside me. "Never will I enter a man's body again. I must return to him, but I will return as a woman."

"Be it so," answered the Egyptian. "Your opportunity is at hand. Come with me, and I will show you where it is."

"Have I to go away from here ?" I asked in dismay. "Surely I am not to leave the boy in this dreadful state of mind ?"

The Egyptian paused and looked at my son who had gone up to the window and was leaning out.

"He is falling into deep thought again," he said, "very soon the spirit will stand out. Go then and speak to it, touch it, give it the feeling that you are close to it."

I watched, and waited. Soon I saw the boy lean his head upon his hand and fall into a deep reverie. The spirit withdrew from the physical body and stood beside it. I went close to the spiritual shape and touched it—timidly—and with a strange sense of something like fear. For this was not the shape which I had borne, which I had nursed, and reared and loved. It stood taller than the boy, taller than myself. When I touched its hand it

turned towards me and looked down upon me with a grave, sad scrutiny.

“Beloved,” I whispered, “I am returning to the earth. Do not leave it ! Wait for me ! We shall meet again. Will you wait for me ? ”

“I will wait,” came the answer, in tones of ineffable love and sweetness.

The boy moved slightly, drooping a little—sleep was overpowering the physical frame. Instantly the spirit was within it and lost to my sight. I saw again one figure only—my son—worn out—utterly exhausted. He wearily turned from the window and went towards his bed. There he lay down and very soon the opiate of sleep came upon the tired brain.

“Come ! ” said the voice of the Egyptian.

I found myself held, impelled, guided, and was obliged to yield to the guidance. We were immediately outside the house, passing swiftly through the warm air of the still summer night.

ILLUSION II.

THAT THE UNBORN ARE UNKNOWN.

When a new-born child opens its eyes upon this world there is often what seems like a strange familiarity in its gaze, to those who are watching it. The mother will say that these new eyes remind her of some other eyes now closed for ever; the father will see a family likeness in the unformed features which is no likeness, since none is yet possible. It is the recognition of the spirit which looks out upon them that gives them this confused sense of a likeness. Most often all have come together from a far past and have been together through a long interval between the incarnations; and then the familiarity is intense and very bewildering to the unaided physical consciousness. Sometimes a soul from another sphere of life has arrived in the new-born child, and the development of its character will, in that case, be a source of great surprise and wonder to the parents. But when this is so the acquaintanceship is begun

further back in the history of its arrival than is generally supposed, even by students of occultism, because only a few as yet are aware of the fact that the spirit of man is outside his body almost as much as it is in it, and that during the outstanding he is conscious of the spirits near him. Those who have lately passed away can speak to the spirits of those they have left, face to face in these moments of outstanding, and so can the spirits of those about to arrive. The soul which comes from another sphere of life is drawn by the attraction of its desire for re-birth into the neighbourhood of its parents long before the actual birth takes place. The ideas conveyed by the words accident and chance exist only for the materialist. The student of psychology sees law and order more and more plainly every day, and sees that each incident is evolved and that nothing can be accidental. Of whatever order the spirit is which enters a new body it enters by the well-known road, and obeys the laws governing human birth. If it is seeking fresh experiences, in a race and a country hitherto unfamiliar to it, it is gradually drawn there, long before its birth and dwelling among the incarnated spirits becomes acquainted with them during their outstanding moments.

Otherwise the human life would be too strange to be useful in the short space of one incarnation. Vital differences of thought and feeling have, of course, to be fought out during that space, but there must be a certain familiarity established before this or the climax would not arrive at the required time. The young man who takes a separate course from his father and shows good reason for so doing, has known before his birth that this would be necessary. The spirits have become acquainted as equals, and have weighed and measured each other. Often in such instances the father is aware that his child is of another order, and will offer to his creed of life a steadily growing opposition, from that child's infancy. Sometimes the order is higher, sometimes lower. But if it is entirely different the fundamental opposition will be felt from the first. It does not come as a shock or a surprise. It makes itself known as a familiar fact.

The formation of family ties involves a protracted and difficult exercise of powers possessed by the spirits of men. Before each incarnation the spirit has to discover what conditions will best suit its needs, and will best aid its growth and then to search these out. In the search for these it is

drawn by the mystic threads of affinity and attraction. That family life should be a state of mutual helpfulness made possible by natural affection, is the scheme on which it is based. When deep hatred or cold dislike exist among blood relations the law of Karma has been imposed upon the original scheme, and repulsion has compelled souls to come together instead of separating, in order that they shall make straight that which they have rendered crooked in a former incarnation together. When we see the inborn hatred, or dislike, die out in time, then we may know that these two have become ready for a better state, in which mutual toleration has become possible. When we see one of the two deliberately put aside the painful feeling caused by the other, and not allow it to interfere with the affairs of life, we may recognise one who is ready to take a great step forward, and who will either be born next time into a family bound together by pure love, or be free to take a long rest from re-birth. It is the laying down of personal desire and passion which is a chief agent in giving such freedom. The second part of the experience related in the last chapter illustrates how personal desire, which seems like love to the soul which feels it, draws that soul back to the

earth. This soul, having in past incarnations learned the help of an advanced teacher, is given the chance of immediate re-birth in order to live out this personal desire, instead of becoming an earth-bound soul, a haunting ghost. Her relations with her parents show in what way the unborn become known.

THE SECOND PART OF THE EXPERIENCE.

When I went out into the soft air of that long-past summer night, guided and led by the Egyptian spirit, I suddenly sank away and left him. I returned into the normal consciousness of this present incarnation, and at first my only feeling was that of great exhaustion and fatigue. The vividness of the recollection overpowered the consciousness of the present, and for some time I believed that this was a new experience into which I had been suddenly taken, and that I was now going into a new incarnation, but by degrees I understood, and I realized that I had been sent back into my present body in order to understand. The object of the memory of this experience between the incarnations being so clearly recalled to me was that I might be able to remove from my material mind the illusions that man is imprisoned in his

body, and that the unborn are unknown. When I had thoroughly grasped the fact, a new one to me, that man is continually freeing himself from his body, as had been shown to me, I was again called completely out of mine and found myself close beside the Egyptian spirit. He had brought me into another large country house, but a much more beautiful one than that in which I had lived. This was a splendid old English mansion, and I recognised art and the spirit of art on every side. I knew the house ; it was one I had visited ; but I had not appreciated its beauty then as I could now, when I recognised the spiritual power and meaning of the architecture and carvings. The brooding spirit of love overhung the whole house ; no discord had ever entered here—it had always been a house of love. I felt that it was now more deeply that than ever before. The Egyptian led me up the stately stairway to a great room. It was unfamiliar to me, I had never been into it before. He led the way, drawing me in through the beautifully carved door. I saw a splendid room flooded with moonlight which streamed in through a great window. The window was wide open and two persons stood beside it looking out. We went across the room and stood close beside

them. A very fair young woman, in a soft white gown, leaned her white arms upon the window sill.

"This is more beautiful than anything we have seen abroad," she said, in a low voice, almost like a whisper. She seemed awed at the beauty that lay before her.

"And this is home," said the man who stood beside her. "All that you see is mine and yours."

She gave a long, low sigh as of ecstasy, and I saw her spirit pass from her body and float away a little in the moonlight, as she leaned forward in absorbed contemplation.

"Enter her body quickly," said the Egyptian.

I did so, and through her eyes the scene was all strange to me and very wonderful. I looked upon a great garden, a wide green lawn, and a rosery at the side of it. The roses were trained upon arches and all the arches were covered with masses and clusters and wreaths of flowers, and the scent of them came to me so rich and strong in the still summer night that I almost fainted with the sense of the sweetness and the joy of it. And beyond the garden was a wide park—and then great woods—and a gleam of water shining in the monlight in the far distance. And all this was his—and mine—I was his wife, his bride ; my brain burned with

the wonder of it. My heart throbbed with the joy of it.

I stood back by the Egyptian, pushed out by the spirit of this lovely woman—she returned to look with love at her husband. She was a complete stranger to me, both spirit and body. I had never known her before.

“This is your opportunity,” said the Egyptian. “She will be your mother. You must speak to her spirit when next it comes out of her body. But now look at this man, who is your father. You know him.”

Yes, I knew him well. He had long been one of my friends. I did not know of his marriage because I had been lying ill when he met and married this woman, who had suddenly taken possession of his heart. I seemed to remember vaguely some talk of it in the first days of my illness. And now he had brought her home.

As we stood watching them he turned towards her, and the depth of his love acted like a drug upon him so that his spirit withdrew completely from his body, and drew much nearer to hers than it ever could while within the body. They mingled like two flames. His body stood upright, immoveable, his eyes fixed on her. I passed into

it and became aware of the thoughts which had been in his brain. He wanted a son, an heir, to inherit this great estate and lovely house. It was only natural. I recognised, as I paused within his mental sphere, that it was both natural and right. But again I felt the intolerable pressure and the fierceness of the man's physical body ; and I stepped back, again crying out to my guide and teacher that I must be born again as a woman.

“Be it so,” he said. “You must stay here now with these two, and dwell with them, and you must talk to them when they are in the spiritual state. Your choice will clash with your father's wish. The decision will depend on which of you has the strongest will power. I leave you to this task. Farewell.”

He was gone—I had not said farewell, for I was going to entreat him to stay—but when I looked round to speak he was gone. I soon forgot that I had no longer a guide at hand—I was drawn by the irresistible power of the forces which had been set in motion. I returned to the two to whom I now belonged, and passed continually within their bodies when they left them, becoming aware of all their thoughts and feelings. I entered into their love idyl as though it were my own. The love and

passion beat upon my heart, rousing its deepest feelings and memories. The heavy fragrance from the rosery in that garden spoke of love, and for ever the scent of roses speaks to me of love.

At last I learned how to speak to them, spirit to spirit. I accomplished this first when both were asleep, before their spirits went too far away. For a long while we talked there, and they accepted me as the one sent to them. But my choice of a woman's shape brought a faint cloud upon their happiness. I would not, could not yield in this ; and my will power proved to be the strongest. I was full of power and the determination to accomplish what I desired. It seemed to me a trifling thing that this man should be without an heir. When he had his love and perfect happiness to make life beautiful for him what could such a detail matter ? I was starving, without love—without happiness. It might seem that this being so I could have yielded on such a point as in what shape I was to have the opportunity of seeking them. But to me that did not seem to be so. I felt that it was I, I myself, who would suffer if compelled to enter upon a physical life in a body entirely unsuitable to me ; whereas of my friend and father I only demanded a surrender of ambition, something

which would not affect him hourly and momentarily as the mode of incarnation would affect me.

So it ended by my will being the conquering one. A change resulted from this—my father seemed to draw a little away from me when our spirits met; while my beautiful mother clung the closer. I began to love her very much, and the feeling grew so intense as time went on that it became almost painful. To her I know it was truly so—it became a delicious agony for her to think of me with her physical brain or to clasp me close with her spiritual arms.

When I opened my new physical eyes and looked round the beautiful room in which I and my mother lay, I recognised that room in which I had first seen her, when the moonlight streamed in and the air was heavy with the scent of roses. And I recognised her and saw that she was more lovely than ever. And when we both fell into a deep sleep of happiness we were together as equals, as close and dear friends in the spirit.

My father came and stood beside us, his face transfigured by love. His spirit stood out from his body while he looked upon us, and our spirits came close to his and spoke. But he did not hear us distinctly, for he was much absorbed in the

affairs of the material world just then. He longed for the time when my mother would be well enough for him to talk to her and consult her ; and deep down in his heart, unexpressed and kept very quiet, was still the great wish that I had been born a boy. His desire had been overmastered, but it was still there.

ILLUSION III.

THAT THERE IS ANY SECRET IN THE MIND OR MEMORY OF MAN.

It is only in the moments of complete embodiment that men have the idea of secrecy. It is one of the ideas which belong exclusively to the state of physical limitation. Outside the human brain and its narrowness the notion is inconceivable.

Many persons are aware of this as a broad statement, and believe it to mean that while a secret can be retained so long as the physical life lasts, it must be surrendered on the other side of the grave ; and some determine therefore, to keep their secrets the more safely so long as the power to do so is theirs. Herein is the illusion. There is no such power. If the spirit was imprisoned in the body there would be, and the one illusion is based upon the other. No materialist is able to imprison himself in matter, though his belief in such imprisonment be never so profound. His spirit passes in and out of its physical instrument according to the

universal law. The materialist is unaware of this, in the same way that all men are unaware of laws which govern both spiritual and physical life. We unconsciously maintain our equilibrium upon the earth, and we unconsciously maintain our position in the spiritual sphere to which we belong. Matter is opaque to the physical vision, and a secret can be hidden within the brain of a man as a body can be hidden within the ground. But spirit is translucent and luminous, dwelling in light and visibility, and the spiritual being possesses sight which penetrates through all opaqueness; or, rather, to express it more correctly from the spiritual point of view, for which opaqueness does not exist. The veil of matter is an illusion; thus it is that even materialists who keep the secrets of their lives close hidden find themselves in dream consciousness to be discussing them quite openly with their acquaintances, sometimes with friends, and sometimes with the enemies from whom they would most wish to hide all facts concerning themselves. This occurrence in dream life is one of the things which gives men the idea that dreams are the opposite of reality, and the sheer topsy-turvydom of an exhausted or excited brain. The truth is that the brain has recorded something of what

has happened while the spirit was free from its physical limitations in sleep. But during the waking hours the same condition exists, only it is perpetually checked and kept from manifestation by the action of the physical brain. Two men will sit in diplomatic conversation, each possessed of facts which must be kept secret from the other, and this secrecy will be apparently preserved fully. But later on, when something has been revealed, one of these men will say, "I always thought so. I felt it that day when I was talking to him, and all the time that he denied it so absolutely I felt sure he was not telling the truth." Such feelings and convictions are often expressed, and sometimes the convictions are so strong that they are acted upon. Then the man who has so acted is credited with great acumen, or with intuition, or even with the power of thought-reading. The idea of thought-reading is a clumsy one—there is no need to read thoughts. When the spirits of men stand out from their bodies, they naturally interchange thought. Such interchange is a part of the common condition of the spiritual being, which knows nothing of separation or secrecy, darkness or opaqueness, time or space, death or decay, or of any of the illusions which belong to man's

material mental state and exist only within its limitations. The facts of which each spirit is aware are the property also of the others, when outstanding and communicating, and those facts are vital things, such as the motives for action and the direction in which each spirit is going, whether towards good or ill, love or hatred. These spiritual facts, affecting the spiritual life of each being, are attached to the details of material life, and the thought about these details is visible and superficial and instantaneously interchanged.

“I was certain he never meant what he said,” one human being will say of another ; from the spiritual standpoint it would be correct to say, “His spirit told mine that he did not mean what he said to me in the physical state.”

The complicated web of human living is in truth a game, and all the men and women only players ; their spirits are behind the bodily instruments, and use them in much the same way that players at cards use the cards. The great men, the men who lead and rule, know this well, though they might not be able to put it into words. They use the language of the eye in preference to that of the tongue, because it is less material and confusing. The spirit looks out through a physical window,

it is true, but it is the actual spirit which looks out. It is hampered and limited by the narrowness of the physical vision which is entirely baffled by the physical illusion of opaqueness, but it speaks directly to another spirit when the communication is from eye to eye. And the spirit reveals itself of necessity through these narrow windows when it looks forth from them. No liar and no person who is hiding secrets has a straightforward glance, as everyone knows ; and that is for the very simple reason that they do not wish to reveal themselves.

The memory of man is a great storehouse, filled to overflowing with the wonderful experiences of incarnated life, of life between the incarnations and of the thoughts and feelings brought both from above and below—from that depth of material life to which passion and desire take us, and from the Great White Throne before which we do obeisance in our high moments of inspiration and adoration. Nothing is lost or forgotten, or passed by. The inexorable record is made under all conditions, and persists as ceaselessly as does our consciousness of existence. It is the working of a spiritual law which cannot be evaded or altered. With every breath a man draws he unconsciously writes down an indelible record of his action and thought during

the second of time. He cannot exist, as man or as spirit, without making this record. These records, both of the immediate past and the far past, are continually spread out for the survey of the angels and powers which guide and help the race ; their glances pass over them as the glances of generals pass over maps of countries and of battlefields, to see what has been done and what can be done.

When these records are opened for the enlightenment of the man himself the experience is a very severe one, until he is so advanced as to be superior to suffering. Because in recalling the past he literally lives it over again in all its keenness, and often he is aware that his actions of the past time were wrong and inexcusable, according to his present knowledge, yet he is carried away by the force of recollection into all the fever of the passions which misled him. He feels the temptation again, but he pities himself in ignorantly succumbing to it, as the angels and guiding powers pitied him at the time. And not only is the record of his error indelibly written in the spiritual sphere to which he belongs, but the mark of it is upon his own nature and character. He may superimpose other marks, but he cannot eradicate this one. Acts

disintegrate with the passage of time, as forms do, but the mark made by them upon the spiritual nature has helped to shape it and must, therefore, of necessity remain. At the end of the incarnations, when the spirit is freed from embodiment and all material conditions, it stands forth finally in the shape which has been gradually evolved by the acts and thoughts done during embodiment and in material conditions. Not any one of these is eliminated or omitted; by the very nature of man's spiritual life each thing done and every thought which has inspired action has its share in the formation of the spiritual shape. Those thoughts and actions which are definitely non-spiritual hamper the growth of the spirit and lessen its power, so that a human being who is strong upon this plane will find himself a child, a helpless infant, in the spirit. This fact destroys the possibility of a man's life being really a secret one. There are men and women who wear masks throughout their whole physical lives, and who believe all their evil deeds are hidden. This is an illusion. There may be no physical proof, or mental knowledge, of the actions of these persons, but the spirits of other men and women know them for what they are. They are seen, in the spiritual state, (which

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they are in during the continual moments of outstanding from the body as completely as when the body is dead), to be helpless infants becoming more helpless as they persist in materiality of life. It is because the spirits of other men and women perceive the spiritual helplessness of evil men that they are often regarded with indifference, or at all events, without fear, in spite of their apparent possession of power. For the spirit of man knows the truth, and cannot be deceived; to a spirit no secrets exist. This illustrates the supreme fact that good is stronger than evil. What we know as evil is materiality, and can only exist in a material condition. The man who has been a monster of cruelty and wickedness and who has, perhaps, had power over human life, has created no spiritual shape and has no power in the spirit. He is like a plant which has chosen to remain under the ground instead of growing up out of it into the air and sunshine. His infant shape, the spiritual seedling sown in the earth-world, is still all that he has outside matter. The victims of a tyrant in the earth-world may very naturally regard him with pity and contempt, if they are growing spirits and he is a mere embryo. Evil is the negation of spirit and the absence of spiritual life;

therefore, it will all pass away with the material illusion to which it belongs and of which it is a part. Therefore is it so necessary that all souls shall be given enough time and help to enable them to grow into spiritual beings and enter upon real life when the race is freed and matter has disappeared. Therefore is it that the growing spirit, the one who has entered upon the open road, is fearless and strong under all circumstances, however adverse. Physical conditions are adverse because adversity is essential for growth; and outside physical conditions no harm can befall him. If he is injured by an evil enemy that enemy can only act within the earth-world. If the evil man has obtained power to create an evil shape which will exist after his physical death and work evil to successive generations, as is sometimes the case, that evil shape can only affect the material brain of those it injures, can only destroy their physical

- bodies, and can never itself pass beyond the boundary of the earth-world. It is essentially a material thing. And it can only affect those whose own tendency is earthward. When the spiritual sun shines upon it, black magic, with all other evil, disappears like the morning mists before the physical sun. Black magic consists solely in

obtaining increased physical power, and in securing the help of beings who live within the earth world, but who are invisible to man's physical vision. Some of these beings are malignant and opposed to the spiritual growth of man. But many more are willing and glad to help him on in his progress, and all who are growing are sure of their aid, and obtain it constantly without making any of the efforts necessary for the evil soul which requires the aid of evil powers. The invisible hordes of non-human beings, who are associated in the affairs of the earth world, are thus associated for his benefit, the whole effort being made that he may grow; therefore, it is evident that in their ranks good is stronger than evil, and that it must be so.

As an illustration of how a merely worldly life affects the spirit of a man the following experience is given.

AN EXPERIENCE.

In dream-consciousness I was shown the passing of a relation, a man who had led an entirely worldly life. He had not done evil, but neither had he done good, being aware only of the physical existence. His mother had come to the earth world to help him pass out from it, and it was she who showed me

his passing. With the help of some of the friendly beings who are invisible to man's physical sight, she had carried him up into the ethereal world. I saw that his body lay upon the bed on which he had died, and was not yet put into its coffin ; and his spirit, wearing all the appearance of the man as he had been upon earth, was gazing in amazement and with delight upon a scene of great activity. A procession was passing down a wide road, amid the most beautiful surroundings, and many were seated in gardens and balconies by the roadside looking at it as it passed. Among these was the spirit of this man newly come from earth ; he looked incongruous in the crowd of bright and lovely shapes, wearing exquisite draperies and jewels. But he was entirely happy, pleased beyond words to find that he was in a place so full of life and activity. His feeling, as he looked, was " I never thought it would be like this ! "

His mother said to me, " When this is over I shall take him away into a safe place, and then he will have to begin to move about without my help."

Some time later she came to me and said, " Would you like to see how he is getting on ? Will you come with me ? "

I went with her and found him in a wild woodland place trying to walk about. I understood that his mother was constantly near him and guarded him from harm. He had lost the appearance of the man I had known upon earth. He was a young boy, full of desire of life and movement. His whole consciousness was filled with a sense of great perplexity because he found himself unable to use his limbs. He was without power. He could only walk a few steps, he could not lift his arms, when he sank to the ground he had the greatest difficulty in lifting himself up again. He had entirely neglected the development of the spiritual life during the incarnation which was just over, and consequently he was without any strength or power. His mother told me that some of his previous incarnations had been less earthly in character, and that during them he had grown this shape, which was full of promise though powerless. He did not suffer, except from perplexity and disappointment. His efforts to move were continual ; he knew that he was in a place and condition in which life was most desirable ; yet it was impossible for him to enter into that life. He paced a few yards up and down, with difficulty, looking the while longingly at the exquisite landscape which

stretched on every side, and at the gleaming spires and roofs of a distant city. But his life was limited by his powers. He was guarded, and watched by the spirit that loved him ; but more than this she could not do without infringing the immutable laws.

“ What will happen to him next ? ” I asked her.

“ He will remain like this,” she said, “ sometimes falling into unconsciousness here. Then he will revisit the earth, and be among his children and his friends, although invisible to their physical senses. The desire to return to earth life will awake and grow until at last he will be strong enough to seek for the opportunity for rebirth. His next incarnation will, alas, be an obscure and unfortunate one ; he has not the power to secure anything else. I can only hope adversity may teach him what he has not learned from success and prosperity.”

This experience shows very clearly how impossible it is for the memory of man to hold any secret of his past or to hide any fact of his earth life from the knowledge of others. In the period between the incarnations the spirit is seen in the shape and state produced by those facts, and on reincarnating the conditions and circumstances of his incarnation

are all ordered by them. It is the past which makes the present, and the present which makes the future.

The following experience gives some idea of what effects are produced upon the spirit of man by evil deeds, and how the marks of these deeds are easily seen and recognised.

AN EXPERIENCE.

The vision I am about to relate came to me at night, but I was not asleep, for I had not the time to fall asleep naturally. The instant that I put out the light I became aware of a presence beside me, and saw a face close to mine. It was an Oriental face, thin, eager, with the most piercing, commanding eyes looking into mine. A slender hand beckoned to me, and I rose instantly and went forth from my body into another state of consciousness. Immediately I was horrified by a dreadful spectacle. I found myself by a roadside, and all around were beautiful things I wished to look at, but I could not because of the awful thing which came into view and which I was compelled to look at steadfastly, though I longed to turn away or close my eyes. A vehicle passed by, coming along the road by which I stood. It was drawn by a stumbling horse which continually fell

and rose again and went stumbling on. The man who was driving it seemed in great distress—in greater distress than was the horse itself—and yet I saw in a flash of horror that one of the horse's legs was quite short, cut off, a bleeding stump—most shocking to see. How it could run at all was the amazing thing.

My guide's voice said to me very emphatically—

“We *are* the things we make.” He then stood beside me, and as the strange, jolting, halting vehicle passed out of sight, he explained the meaning of it. I found it so difficult to retain this in such a way as to bring it into my physical consciousness that I clung to him and he returned with me. As I awoke from the trance in which I had lain I found him standing beside me, and he endeavoured to place some of what he had told me in my physical brain.

He said that the man who drove the vehicle I had seen and who was trying to get from one place to another with such inadequate help, had been a vivisector, and that by his misuse of animal life he had created this bad servant which he had to use. He could have no better horse than this because of his deeds in earth life—this I understood, but what seemed so strange to me was that it

appeared that the vivisector *was* the horse, as well as the man. It was a limitation of power which was a limitation in himself. The maimed animal was not the soul of any animal he had tortured on earth. My guide told me that those who love animals and would give them freedom find, on other planes of consciousness, free animals who are their glad and willing friends and servants, ready to use powers for them—birds which are messengers, horses and great eagles able to carry the spirit through space from sphere to sphere.

To the vivisector only maimed and inadequate help of this order is possible ; and he is hampered and limited by this until he has outlived his evil deeds and they have disintegrated. And he can never hide from any other spirit that he is the evil thing he is because it is apparent whenever his spirit has need of the help of the friendly beings which encompass the spirits of men.

ILLUSION IV.

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THAT THE EARTH EXISTS APART FROM MAN.

When the subject of this chapter was given to me I heard a voice speaking as I awoke from a deep sleep. And it said

“Any space, of any size, is limited and small, directly you begin to walk up and down in it. But a knife edge is wide enough to progress upon.”

I wondered what kind of space could be referred to, and immediately the answer came. “I speak now of the earth. The soul of the race has called the earth into existence, as the individual man gets a house built to live in. It was necessary for human experience that there should be a material centre. But the man who gets a house built for himself knows he will only live in it for a time ; that others will follow him, and that in due course the house will become old and eventually crumble away. So it is with the earth. Limit yourself to it and it becomes a prison. But that prison must of itself, in the nature of things, cease to be. Man must

learn to walk from it, not up and down in it, before that day comes."

Much more was said to me, which I must put into my own words, for I cannot recollect exactly those which were used. It was shown to me that the kind of house which a man requires to live in suits himself, as a man, and no other being. Other animals may live in it, but they only use some portions of its construction. Man alone appreciates the special arrangement which is known to him as a dwelling place. And the two chief purposes served by such a dwelling place, are, first the keeping of the human body at the desired state of equilibrium between heat and cold and, secondly, the supplying it with specially prepared food. This secondary purpose is a mere matter of supplying an engine with suitable fuel; the engine is only constructed to last for a certain length of time, and when that time comes to an end the need of fuel evidently ceases. This, of course, occurs at death, and the need is non-existent between the incarnations; but the spirit is often during the periods between the incarnations fully within the sphere of desire and under the influence of the pairs of opposites. The sensations of heat and cold are the most material form taken by the pairs of opposites, and necessitate

a material dwelling place for each man, in which he may keep each of these enemies at bay in turn. Good and evil, love and hate, attack the spirit of man as cold and heat attack his body ; and when the spirit of the race submitted itself to the fierce ordeal of encountering the pairs of opposites, it became necessary for a dwelling place to be formed in which the great struggle might take place under protection and with help on all sides.

The illusion is not that the earth exists, but that it exists apart from man and his need of it. Were the whole race capable of lifting itself suddenly in an instant of time, above the sphere of desire, the earth would crumble to pieces and vanish away. The forces and beings which are engaged in serving the desire of man by keeping it together for him would be released from their task and immediately all that which is visible to our physical sight would change its character permanently. The solidity and hardness of matter which appear to the physical man among the most absolutely certain factors that present themselves to his consciousness, are complete illusions produced by the influence of invisible beings on the brain of the man himself. The qualities of solidity, hardness and straightness are less easily apprehended by a

psychic who is accustomed to consciously leave his body, than by the man who believes himself to be imprisoned.

Once, on returning from a long absence from the body I stood beside it perplexed because the bed on which it lay did not appear to me to be there. And I heard a voice say, "Wait—and I will make the iron and wood hard for you." And then I became aware of solidity and firmness, even before entering my body ; and I knew that the change effected was not in the iron and wood, but in me. I had been so far from the material sphere that the illusions which belong to it and which must be accepted while the spirit is acting within a physical body, had faded away from me. It was necessary that I should resume them before I entered the physical body or else I should not be able to act like a sane human being when within it. All the sane actions of a spirit in the body are based upon these illusions and the consistent acceptance of them.

Practice in obtaining temporary release from these illusions, while the body is in a state of deep quiescence, or trance, is a mode of rapid development known to all occultists. The link with the body, and the control over it, must be preserved intact

throughout the trance, otherwise the value of the experience is lost. It is common for all persons, whether conscious psychics or not, to pass far beyond the sphere of illusions during the sleep of the body. But very rarely is any knowledge of this brought back into the physical brain, the veil of oblivion falling between the consciousnesses as the spirit passes from the one to the other. The falling of this veil can be seen and felt by the spirit which is acquiring knowledge ; it resembles the quick closing of a door. The sensation of passing from the one full life to the other full life and of the one being absolutely shut off from the other in a fraction of an instant of time, is one of the most wonderful experiences in the early stages of development. But the great wonder is when the falling of the veil can be arrested ever so little, and the spirit can look back across the threshold and bring even a faint memory of that which it is leaving into the consciousness to which it is entering. Illusions then begin to lose their power over the spirit even while in the body, and become its tools. From the moment when the man has glanced across the threshold and retained the memory of so doing he loses all fear of the pairs of opposites, that fear which lies like a pall upon the race. The

words life and death as used by men in ordinary life, have no longer any meaning for him, because he has caught sight for himself of that which is beyond the threshold of physical consciousness. As he gains power the other illusions pass away from him, and he recognises them to be as much a part of the purely physical state as life and death, heat and cold. When he becomes fit to pass away into states of spiritual being and in returning to arrest the fall of the veil long enough to bring back a clear memory of what he has seen and experienced, he is able to force upon his physical brain a recognition of the fact that the evil in a man destroys his psychic powers and limits his capacity for growth, so that it drives him back into the material life where the good in him has again its opportunity to become strong. In the same way he becomes aware that hatred has no place in the spiritual spheres, and that the man who has hated finds himself without the power of emotion in any spiritual sphere he may enter, and therefore sinks back to physical surroundings in order to feel once more. When he compels his physical brain to accept this from his spiritual self, the advanced psychic can regard the material world with equanimity. For he perceives that hatred is only a temporary emotion,

arising out of the temporary condition of evil. Rebirth perpetually gives to all men the opportunity of growth, if they have become so deeply imbedded in material conditions that the spiritual seedling cannot spring up during the lifetime in which evil and hatred have crushed it down. These conditions cannot create, and have nothing to do with life. So soon as the spirit begins to live, and grow and expand, the man casts them from him naturally. That evil and hatred have any permanent power is an absolute illusion. They have to be ceaselessly encountered and fought against in the physical life because they clog over the spirit till it becomes convinced that it is literally imprisoned, and remains within the material state as a creature embedded in a rock would remain in the same place, without any attempt to free itself. And this profound illusion must be dispelled because it is that which is hindering the progress of the race and keeps the spirit of mankind from attaining its due growth and approaching its complete freedom. Each one who commences the work of attaining his own freedom is helping the whole race by so doing. And it is inevitable and of necessity that he will help others towards freedom ; to give help is a natural action of the growing and

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developing spirit. The black magic born of selfishness, which leads a man to look for power for himself and to hide it from others is only possible within the earth sphere. And the giant weed of spiritual ambition can grow only within the state ruled by desire. All that is evil will be outgrown, as a man outgrows childish things. The terrible dangers which beset the path cause delay and suffering ; but freedom is the heritage of man's spirit and eventually he must enter into it. When once his physical brain has recognised that the earth and its powers and pleasures exist purely as an illusion in that brain, he will without pause or hesitation cease to walk up and down within such an imaginary limitation and will enter upon the open road of progress. This will lead him over the threshold of physical consciousness, and over successive thresholds, till he is able to pass beyond the rule of desire. Then he will become a helper of the race, dispassionate, all-loving.

ILLUSION V.

THAT NATURE IS INDIFFERENT TO MAN.

That nature is indifferent to man is an illusion which could not have come into being without the other illusion that the earth exists apart from man. The spirit knows that nature is not indifferent; in moments of great agony or great exaltation it realizes the spirit of nature as a companion, and this companion has the power of speech and the power to help. The creative impulse throbs ceaselessly within the heart of our beautiful green mother, who carries us like helpless infants on her bosom so long as we are her children, and she gives to us out of her amazing abundance that we may breathe, and bathe, and eat, and drink, and be supported in the ways without number that we require and demand of her. She fits the gifts to the requirements unerringly. She is a careful giver, choosing that which is needed out of her vast storehouses, and giving to the one who needs. The waste of

nature, which is constantly brought up as a reproach against her, is entirely physical and superficial ; or, rather, it is apparent only and not real. The millions of seeds and of seedlings that come to nothing from a physical point of view are not failures or wasted. Physically the matter constituting them is merely rearranged, spiritually the impetus which drew them over the threshold of matter has reversed and drawn them back again. It is no loss to them, because they are not beings engaged upon a pilgrimage, to whom every step taken should be one of progress, and to whom every step backward is a hindrance of that progress. The beautiful green mother is man's friend, a sphere of gracious non-human entities who encompass and uphold him during his pilgrimage. The infinite variety of form and beauty contained in that which we call Nature is the expression of its spiritual loveliness, so far as that can be apprehended by man through his physical senses ; and these forms would never appear as solid or as capable of destruction but for the illusions in man's brain. Once freed from these illusions and the spirit of man recognises that while to him a birth or a death is of vital importance, to the nature spirits they are nothing but a part of the play of life. As a soap

bubble to the child that flings it on the air, so is a material incarnation to one of nature's seedlings. Nature is engaged in making a hearth and home for man so long as he needs it, and she passes in and out of the sphere of illusion without being affected by it and without any sense of the meaning put by man into the words birth and death.

Psychics who have learned to go far into spiritual life and to bring back memories across the threshold of physical consciousness, tell us of wonderfully beautiful forms of nature which they have seen. It is evident from the testimony of those who have explored in this manner that the nature spirits surround and uphold the spirits of men in the spiritual spheres. Where the spirits of men are seen as translucent forms having powers and possibilities unintelligible to men still embodied, translucent forms of flowers and trees are seen, with beauty in them which cannot be expressed in human language. It is seen there, also, that there is attraction and communication between the spirits of men and the spirits of nature, in a manner unknown to us now. In the ethereal world it is perceived that the flowers which form garlands in places of worship do so because they

desire to do so, as the souls which come there to worship do so because they desire to do so. In the purely spiritual states this is even more plainly seen to be the law of life, love governing all things. In the earth life man takes, and holds ; when his spirit advances into spiritual states it finds that there can be no taking and holding. All that surrounds the spirit and glorifies its life comes willingly, of its own volition, in the action of love.

A great crisis in the life of a man, which frees him temporarily from his physical body, will sometimes make him aware that nature is his friend and companion. Men go to the fields and woods for the silent society they find there, and return to their work and struggle among other men strengthened and calmed by it. But in times of spiritual agony the silence is sometimes broken by a seeming miracle. One who has suffered greatly has told of an incident which was a turning point in the life ; when lying at the foot of a tree in the last hopeless despair of grief the silence of nature became speech—the spirit of the tree bent over the prostrate form and touched it, saying, in a voice of intense pity, “ Poor human being ! ” The touch and the voice roused the human spirit

from its blind torpor of pain. Rising slowly, in amazement and wonder, the man leaned against the tree, and found strength and healing in its pitiful and beautiful companionship; and so took up his pilgrimage again.

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