

"Suppose I *had* wanted to enter, even then?" I asked, at last; and one of my companions, as usual swiftly understanding me, said, "You would have been allowed to enter if you desired. Some do enter, even with robes more stained than yours, but then the Holy Ones are only partially discerned, as though clothed in many veils, for purity is the only perfect vision there is. Gradually, these come to realise their blindness, and then, making enquiries of the guides, they learn the cause. It is not long before they, too, want to leave the gates."

"And what of those who have many desires when they come here? You mentioned the Hall of Wishes."

"Each desire has its own Hall. Those who have always longed for children go to the Hall of Children, often doing most useful work in the educating of the little ones, or in organising their games. Those who have been deprived of the friendship of animals, and still feel they cannot be happy without them, go to the Hall of Animals, where the little creatures live after their earth-life. Some find here the pets that they have lost, and everyone is allowed to take an animal with them in their journey through the lower Heaven-planes. Those who have valued books go to the Hall of Books, if they will, and spend their time in reading and studying, or writing, and it is the same with artists and musicians."

"How long do people remain in these Halls?"

→ "Until their desire is fully satisfied and fulfilled." ←

"But suppose, after being there for a long time, and leaving, they afterwards wished to return?"

"Once a man has donned his robe and entered the gates, he may come and go as he wills among the Halls. These are Halls, first of learning, and then of recreation." At this mention of the gates, my heart was wounded afresh. "Is there no place for me at all?" I groaned.

"Of course there is! Would you not like to work on the cleansing of your robe?"

Could this be true? I searched their faces eagerly. Almost breathless with joy, I gasped out, "Can I? Is it possible after all those terrible stains?"

"With God, nothing is impossible." They said this in unison, very solemnly, and at once all doubt left me. I felt only an eager desire to begin! "Tell me," I begged.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONFERENCE

Then began a long, long conference! First my companions laid out upon the ground a copy, as it were, of my stained and pitiful cloak. Each phase of my past life was divided into sections like the great pages of a loose-leaf file and, bending over them, starting from the end of my life and working back, we began a close study. How

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impossible it was to feel any false humiliation in this! My two guides were so gentle, so matter-of-fact and yet so searching that every sin?? (or fault) was discussed as though it belonged to one whom I had never seen.

"It *does* belong to one whom you have never seen," said my guide, as usual instantly replying to my thought. "These stains are not *deliberate* sins, but are sins that you did not recognise at the time, for you have long since made acts of contrition within your heart for all the conscious ones. Those who come here with sins unconfessed (or not faced), and who had carried them consciously through life have a very hard task indeed, and much sorrow."

"But if I did not recognise these sins how is it I am held responsible?"

"A child who scrawls over the newly-papered walls of an earth-house is instantly forgiven by a loving parent, for it is recognised that the child was unconscious of committing a fault," I was told; and then my companion added significantly, "but the mark on the wall remains. . . . That is why people on earth should desire humility so ardently. As they grow in humility they are able to bear the sight of their unremembered or unrecognised sins. If, when these are shown to them, they make an act of contrition instantly, and try to make what reparation they can, the mark is then washed away; but if they look the other way or try to make excuses for themselves, the mark becomes yet deeper, for they have added a conscious to an unconscious sin. See, then, the value of humility! Oh, if men would strive for more and more humility, accepting humiliations and trials willingly for their sins, how happy would be their entry into Heaven! But often men do not want to see," he added sadly.

Our conference seemed to take a very long time, but this may not have been so. Time passes so peacefully that it seems not to pass at all, here in this glorious Heaven. In one sense it does pass, since we are able to atone for sins and see it erased from the mystic robe, and in another sense it does not pass, as all past things are present to us. . . . At last we smiled at one another, we three, for the surveying of our work was done.

"Now for the action!" I cried eagerly. "May we set to work at once?"

"If you will," said he who appeared to be a man. "Will you send me to earth now?"

"Send you to *earth*?" I echoed, astonished. "Surely there is no link between earth and *this* place?"

"Of course there is! Where would our work be if there were not? And how could you restore and repair your robe?" ←

"Is that how it is to be done?"

"Partly." They smiled at my puzzlement, and then the man-guide drew nearer and began. "Let me explain! In order to make reparation for your sins (and if you are not willing to make good each wrong, how can you be truly sorry? The very instincts of earth are those of 'making up for it' when once a fault is seen and contrition felt) each one whom you have wronged must be sought out and some good given in place of the evil. This is true reparation and no sin is crased until this is accomplished. In the sins that are forgiven on earth," he added quickly, already sensing my train of thought, "angels are sent to make reparation for the wrong in place of the contrite one. Thus a man may be inconsolable if he thinks that one has died whom he has injured, and so he cannot 'make it good'; but it is never too late while his earth-life lasts! If he is truly and perfectly sorry—that is, not to escape punishment, but for the fact of the sin—an angel is at once sent to make good his wrong in Heaven. He seeks out the wronged one, explains the motive, the circumstances and the sorrow of the wrongdoer (if this is practicable) and then conveys to him a special blessing as a recompense."

"What kind of blessing?"

"An angelic benediction. These are in the form of rays which, pouring out from the angel in response to his will, give a measure of strengthening life-force to the recipient. Many a man, striving hard against some temptation or weakness on earth, has suddenly become conscious of a new power which has enabled him to conquer. . . ."

"What!" I interrupted, "is the angelic benediction carried to earth too?"

"Yes."

"What a wonderful plan! You mean that the angels carry their benediction from the penitent sinner on earth to Heaven, and from Heaven to earth? How marvellous!"

"God is very good. We, who are of the lowest orders, even to the highest order of angels, praise Him night and day."

"Are you of the lowest order?" I asked incredulously. "But how noble you are, how tall, how graceful, how radiant!"

"Yet we are indeed of the lowest, though our work is very important, for it concerns man's first entry into Heaven."

"It gives us great joy to welcome, comfort and guide the newcomers," my woman-guide said warmly. "Angels in Heaven are very similar to men on earth in this respect. There are the active ones who do the most important ground-work in the world, as you know, and then from them on a rising scale come the thinkers and leaders and the makers of plans. Then, also, the administrators of the law.

"Then, of course, there are those who live close to Heaven's realm, to the source of power, and pray that power down into the hearts of men. It is very like this in Heaven."

"How good God is, indeed! Tell me more of the wonderful plan."

"Yes, we have wandered away from it a little. But there is so much to tell you and show you of the wonderful world of God! Why, you have not even met a single soul yet, which is a very rare occurrence! Usually, a great deal of time is spent in looking-up friends before any teaching can be given at all."

"Why, do you mean . . ." I began.

"Let us hurry on with our subject," said my guide, "or you will be complaining soon that Eternity is passing! Now how far had we come?" he mused. "Oh yes, the Angelic Benediction! Now, as we have a record of all the debts of reparation you owe on earth, and you have shown your sorrow for them by humbly considering them, I can go at once, in your stead, and give the strengthening ray to all your creditors. Of course, it will take time," he warned, "for I must wait, in some cases, for a special need to arise, when the help will be of most value. When the recipients come here and learn of your help, how grateful they will be!"

"They will indeed," I agreed. "When do you go?"

"Now. Come, let us say farewell until all your earth-debts are paid!" He clasped my shoulder with his right hand and I clasped his, and then he left me with my woman-guide.

"What a burden is rolling off my heart! To think that I ever wounded anyone on earth. . . . It seems so trivial, so little now. I suppose it is the greatness of this Heaven. . . . God be with him, and God bless all to whom I owe a debt of reparation. May God forgive me and they also!"

"Amen," said the angel. There was a pause, and then she added briskly, "But we must not 'waste Eternity' either!"

"Do we begin now?"

"Yes—at once."

"Tell me!" I begged. She drew a little nearer so that I too could read the record of debts upon the large "pages" on the ground between us.

"First, we must visit the Halls of Wishes," she explained, "where you will yourself be able to seek out those you have wronged while they were on earth. To each you must offer your services in reparation, and in some cases express your sorrow for the circumstances."

"Will that not take a long time?" I asked doubtfully.

"Very long!" she smiled, "but remember, you have all eternity."

"But," I objected again, "I thought only one who had been through the gates could come and go at will in the Halls."

"Can come and go *alone*," she corrected. "Those who are on the 'Term of Reparation', as it is called, can come and go at the will of the angel-guide. That is why I am here—you see, you could not do without me!"

"I am sorry," I said humbly. "I did not understand."

"Of course not! Those to whom you owe reparation are not all in the Halls of Wishes. Some are far away on much higher planes. There I will have to travel alone."

"You know," I said thoughtfully, "I once thought Heaven was just a place of rest!" We laughed together.

"Come!" she invited.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HALL OF ANIMALS

In just a moment, it seemed, we were standing on a level, grassy field. It was gently lit, but the atmosphere was cool and fresh. Here and there were clumps of long grasses, and away to my right I glimpsed a swiftly-running stream. To the left, was a wood and the whole scene was one of peaceful beauty. I took a great breath of the sparkling air.

"Where are we?"

"In the Hall of Animals." At this I looked round in keen enjoyment.

"Why, it is the very place I should have chosen to see first—and I thought the 'Term of Reparation' was a kind of punishment."

"How little you earth-people know of *Love*. The ways of the Mighty God are all Love. It is when men oppose His ways that sorrow comes upon them. Why should one who is sorry for sin, and wishes to make reparation be made more unhappy? There are only two kinds of misery here."

"And they are——?"

"The misery of unrepented fault and sin, when man, though wishing to have forgiveness for himself, still cannot bring himself to make amends. Thus he lives in opposition to the Laws of Love, wandering from place to place with no right of admission to any of the Halls, no guides, no friends. Ah, it is a great misery! And the second," she added sadly, "is the misery of remorse."

"Yes," I mourned, "I know that misery even now."

"But you have a consolation," she said quickly. "One of your guides has already started on the earth-reparation and we are just starting here. You see, in Heaven, motives count so very much. To desire to make reparation immediately links a man to all who have made it, and are free."

"That is a great thought." I was much relieved. For a moment we remained in silence, and then she said, "Come now! There is a woman here whom you have to meet. Once you did her a great wrong—quite unconsciously. I will tell you the circumstances as we go to her." Rapidly she gave me the details, and I was amazed to see how easily we can misjudge our fellowmen. We may appear to see every point, every fact, every motive, and it does not even occur to us that we are "judging" for to us it appears that we are "seeing"; but how often we are wrong! My guide showed me that beneath every known fact of earth-life there is so much hidden that even the actors themselves are often unaware of it. At times they are inwardly urged to certain actions, at times an instinct almost compels them. My guide gave me an instance of this. She said that, on earth, a man may suddenly collect as much money as he can and give it away to a beggar, leaving impoverished his wife and children. This, she explained, had happened many times. "Now the world, seeing these facts only, is loud in its blame. Some say, 'The man is mad', others that he is being 'put upon' by one who is stronger than himself. Some say 'he is cruel' and others that he hates his wife and children. Even the man may be able to give no clear account of his actions. Now what has happened is this. In the depths of this man's mind is a confused memory. Once he refused help to a brother-man in need! The stain of that memory remained though the details were blurred. This prompts his action which has been inspired by his hidden desire to be rid of the stain. In this case his action has been most unwise, for in trying to make amends he has robbed those who are dependent upon him and thus incurred further debts. But all the same, no man on earth knew his hidden motive though it is duly noted and recorded in Heaven. Thus, despite his foolishness the debt is not a serious one for his motive is good."

"Yes, I *am* beginning to understand," I said. "In the case of this woman I knew all the facts; there was no chance of mistake; I saw that she was harming somebody else. Yet, you say, it was a sin to judge her, to blame her in my heart?"

"Yes," agreed my guide. "You see, although she *was* bringing harm to another, yet she did not fully realise it. Her main thought was an effort to be friendly to others because she had a hidden stain of unfriendliness within. This prompted her action and, wrong though it was, she thought he was doing well. You see, motives are very important and, although the actions on earth are often wrong, the reason"

"Now, first of all, suppose you take him from me," suggested my new friend. "If you are going to be his master you had better become acquainted at once."

"Steady," I warned, taking the quivering bundle into my arms, "who said I was to be his master? I only agreed to look after him for a while!"

"You won't be able to resist keeping him always once you get to know the little darling." I looked down and met the wide gaze, felt the pink tongue curl on my palm.

"No. I think you must be right!" Beside me Bimbo thumped his tail hard.

"I think he must be hungry and thirsty, don't you?" said my friend. "Carry him down to the stream, Bernard."

"Hallo," I exclaimed, stopping to stare at her. "How did you know my name? Did my guide——?" For the first time I began to look searchingly about me but there was no one else to be seen. My companion laughed.

"Have I been here such a short time and yet know so much more than you?"

"I suppose so," I admitted humbly. "You do seem to have acquired a lot of information——"

"Well, what is *my* name?"

"How can I know if——" I began, and then stopped suddenly. She laughed at my astonished face.

"There, you do know, you see." She was right. In that moment a name seemed to press lightly on my mind.

"Is it Marie?"

"Yes."

"But how did I know?" (I could not resist a quick thought of the usefulness of such a gift on earth!)

"You knew in the same way as I knew your name," she explained.

"You see, knowledge comes to us here as soon as we desire it—that is, if we are able to bear it. As we become conscious of a desire to know something, our desire-thought goes out and seeks the knowledge that is there already and can be shared by all. That is how I have learned so much already. When you want to know anything, just pause a moment and the truth will come into your mind."

"I say, this is great." Always I had wondered about so many things that puzzled me; to have the answers to my questions seemed a heaven in itself! As we talked, we had been walking swiftly over the springing grass; it was amazing how quickly one could cover the ground at will, or just how slowly one could linger. All the way I had

carried the puppy in my arms while Bimbo ran ahead, occasionally giving a short bark or darting into some bushes so that his wagging tail was all that we could see. I looked down at my little charge. He was curled into a brown and white ball, his silky coat curling slightly and gleaming in the mellow light.

"He's gone to sleep," I whispered. "Dear little Rainbow!"

CHAPTER SIX

MY FIRST LESSON

"Is that his name?" Marie asked gravely. "How do you know?" I looked up to reply and then saw the twinkle in her eyes. "Go on," she laughed, "you tell me this time."

"Well," I began, feeling a trifle embarrassed at my first advance knowledge, "when he has had some water and something to eat, he will want to run about and play with Bimbo. Then, when he hears you calling and sees Bimbo running to you, he will follow, thinking that is his name too; so if I call him 'Rainbow' it will sound very much the same and he will not have to unlearn one name and learn another."

"Bravo," she cried. "As you saw it in your mind, I saw it in mine—just like that!"

"It is pretty useful," I agreed, grinning proudly.

"It is one of the Laws of Love." she answered. We were silent as we knelt beside the stream cupping some cool water in our hands for Rainbow. He did not know what to do with it at first until Bimbo slid down the shallow bank and drank noisily as though to show off! Immediately the puppy put out his little red tongue and dipped it into the water in my hand.

"You know," said Bimbo, "he wants some other young ones to play with. I'll go and find them."

"All right," I agreed; and then I nearly dropped my burden as I stared after Bimbo's swiftly-retreating form. "He . . . he spoke." I gasped. "Did you hear him?"

"Spoke?" Marie answered unconcernedly. "No, I didn't hear anything."

"But you must have done," I protested, beginning to feel foolish, and then I saw the twinkle in her eyes again! "You tell me this time," I suggested.

"Well," she began, sitting down by the water's edge and taking Rainbow into her lap, where he instantly fell asleep, "when men and women talk together here they can do it in two ways. If they like, they can just think their conversations and it presses on the other's mind. But because we are accustomed to speak with words on earth, we usually do so here——"

"Feel it," Stephen invited. His tone held the awe of one who saw for the first time and yet I knew that this was not so. I fell on my knees and plunged my hand into a drift piled at the root of a tree. My hand went right through it and yet it softly caressed my fingers, dripping from them like water, yet it was not water; clinging to them like thistledown, yet it was not that either. Neither was it snow or fire or spider's web or silk or cloud! I sprang to my feet.

"What is it?"

"Stuff"

"Stuff?" I echoed. "But it is too wonderful to have a name like that."

"It is too wonderful to have any name at all," he said soberly. "Look at the colours!" He seemed in danger of going into a prowl again, so I said quickly, "But you haven't yet told me what it is."

"No one knows what it is."

"Oh!" For a moment I was silent. Of course, how could anyone know the nature of such a substance? "But what is its use?" I queried suddenly. "Surely it does not just stay here—"

"It is used for everything." He linked his hand in my arm again. "Come, let us walk awhile, and while we have our fill of the sight of it I will tell you as much as I can. But mind," he warned, "nobody knows all except the Father."

"What did you mean when you said it was used for everything?" I knew quite well that I could find the answer to all my questions alone, but it was so pleasant to walk and talk with my new friend that I gave myself to the enjoyment of it. For a while we walked on silently while I watched the ridge of a hedge glow as though it were a morning horizon, and then change to a score of pastel tones, which gradually deepened into the green of the sea when a shadow lies upon it.

"This stuff is the creative substance of the Father," Stephen said at last. "It is a reflection of the light which first came forth from Him." His tone was hushed and I held my breath at the wonder of it all. "All things are made from this substance, as it takes many forms and colours, as you see. On earth, plunging as it does into such a low plane, it becomes hardened. This accounts for the apparent solidity of earth-things. Everything without exception is made originally from this one substance." I digested this silently for a while and then a further problem occurred to me.

"Is it in its natural state here in Heaven?"

"Yes. This is a creative stuff with which we work for the Father." There was another long pause. The depth of the subject and the glory of the "stuff" around me, constantly changing as it was, necessitated this. "On earth," Stephen continued at last, "I was a chef. I loved to prepare food; it was a kind of art with me. The subtle odours,

colours, flavours . . . they fascinated me. Here it is not the preparation of the food that is my joy; it is the building of it. . . . Just now I am working on a peach. At least, I call it that for it is very like a peach on earth." He shut his eyes as though blissfully building up his mental picture. "It has the same texture but it is as large as a pineapple and at its centre is a little skin vessel holding additional juice like the milk in a coconut."

"Do you mean," I asked in amazement, "that you are creating this fruit?"

"Ah, not creating it," he said quickly, "that is for the Father alone. No, it is like this. Those who have had creative instincts on earth—and the preparation of food is a creative instinct—are given a mental picture by the Father. That is how the picture of the peach came to me. Since then I have searched among the 'stuff' for the exact colour and texture, and when I have found it I have begun to build"

"Have you succeeded?" I asked.

"Not yet. When the result is imperfect the form just dissolves away, but when it is perfect—"

"Yes?"

"The father fills it with life and then it lives eternally. One day, if I succeed, that fruit will be giving delight to children when they first come here—especially the little ones who die suddenly and who might be frightened if we did not welcome them with smiles and treats." We walked for a long time after that without a word or an exchange of thought. Each of us had drawn his "mental veil" and that veil was worship of the loving kindness of the Father. When at last Stephen spoke he appeared to be summing up as though he had been discussing it all the time. "So you see, even in the Hall of Food life is a praise of the Glory of the Father, and a prayer to Him."

After a while I thought it time to tell Stephen my errand. We were sitting at the foot of a great tree where the glorious "stuff" shimmered above us like a million blossoms. I began at the very beginning, describing my side of the matter and what I knew of his. Not sparing myself, I admitted my guilt and humbly begged him to let me repay him in any way he chose.

To my amazement he broke into a throaty chuckle which gradually deepened into a great sonorous laugh. His face was all crumpled up in its laughter-wrinkles and I could not help smiling in sympathy although I could not see the joke.

"What fools men are," he gasped at last. "What fools! They spend half their lives in trying to get as much money as possible for as

she explained, answering my last question first. "Did you not see that Stephen was wearing purple?"

"When a man has made all his reparation, has been clothed in the mystic robe, and has entered through the gates; when a man has met the Master Christ, his heavenly Brother, then he comes forth clad in the Purple Gown."

"Is it known how he comes by it?"

"Yes, the Christ Himself clothes His younger brother. . . ."

"Ah, no wonder the mystic robe must first be cleansed," I cried, my heart beating with joy. For a while we mused together on the wonder that was to come. Then I asked, "Why is it called a 'mystic' robe?"

"Because it is a robe of mystery. Its fabric is that of the creative substance. . . ."

"Then that is why I saw all the colours vibrating and changing when first I saw the veil before the gates?"

"Yes. And that is why the 'stuff' has a name in the Heavenly Language which means, 'The Robe of the Great Mother'."

CHAPTER TEN

ANXIETY FOR THE ANGEL

Suddenly my musings were interrupted by excited barking, and there was Rainbow, tearing down the last slope towards me! He did not pause in his headlong dash but leapt high in my arms where he wriggled ecstatically, washing every available inch of skin with his moist tongue.

"How you have grown, Rainbow!" I cried at last, lifting him to the level of my eyes for inspection.

"Bark! Bark!" he continued shrilly. He was in fine condition, plump and silky, and I turned to my companion gratefully.

"You have looked after him well!"

"I gave him a caress from you every time I fed him," she smiled. After that we finished our journey with Rainbow carried in my arms, but when my guide told me that I was nearly at my next visiting place he jumped down and gambolled on ahead, giving shrill little cries as though he were calling to friends.

"That is just what he is doing!" My angel answered my thoughts. "Some of those he played with were coming here, so they told him all about it and arranged a meeting."

"Well, he will be happy enough! Where are we going now?"

"We have arrived—at the Hall of Books."

"Oh good! Books have always fascinated me."

"I know. Your Earth-Guide has often brought back to me a picture of you with a book in your hand, or kneeling before your

6
bookshelves making a choice. Often he has helped you by indicating which one to read for the day."

"Really? I had no idea that angels were as near to men as that!"

"That is a secret hidden from the majority of men! Now come," she added, "for you have to meet a man in here to whom you owe a debt of kindness."

"Of kindness!" I echoed. "Always I tried to be kind."

"But man cannot always see what is the kind thing to do or how great is another's need. In this case the man was longing for one with whom to share a Heavenly 'pattern'—or, as it is called on earth, an 'inspiration'. He was a writer and his brain was crowded with a wonderful idea. For many years he had toiled, and failed. The world seemed indifferent to the creations of his brain. At last, he had almost given up, and then this idea flashed into his mind. If only he could get it clear by discussing it with somebody! Then he met you—and you failed him."

"How?" I queried sorrowfully.

"You would not listen to his explanations. Oh, you were not exactly rude, but you brushed his words aside and let him see that you were in a hurry to be gone. In that moment you represented to him the opinion of the world; if you were indifferent, so also would be the world. When you had gone, his hopes died; he gave up."

"How terrible. If only I had known."

"Ah," said my guide, "how many men say that when they come here and see. But men do not have to know! They have only to care about their fellow-men as they care about themselves, to be interested, sympathetic, kindly. They do not need to know the circumstances; only to be kind. Men *have* been taught, but they will not heed."

"Love thy neighbour as thyself," I quoted.

"Yes," she agreed, "the Master Christ taught men what to do to please the Father. They do not need to know the details. It is no excuse to moan afterwards, 'If only I had known,' for they did know what the Master had taught—and that should have been sufficient."

"It was sufficient. Mine the fault entirely. Tell me how I can make amends."

"He is working on his idea now," she explained. "That was the desire that most of all he yearned to have fulfilled; and it was a good desire for it was a 'pattern' from the Father. Go to him and ask him to tell you about it but do not describe the circumstances that have brought you, for he is still clothed in white. Offer to help him. His name is Arthur." In a moment she was gone and I walked on in solemn thought.

Then I saw him! He was sitting with a group of men and women on the grass, and before them a meadow sloped down into the sunlit