

Chapter 9

The Letter–The Life Transfer– The Bereavement

PERCEPTION THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL SENSES OF TOUCH
AND SMELL–THE PHOTOSPHERE OF THE HUMAN LIFE–
THE UNIVERSE OF SHINING TRUTHS AND SPIRITUAL ENTITIES.

Time sped on, oh, how swiftly! The changing seasons with all their succession of varied beauty, alone reminded us how protracted had been our intended holiday, and how weeks had lengthened into months since we had determined to live—for a brief period at least—for ourselves alone and revel in scenes of enjoyment which we each secretly believed were means of restoration to the health and well-being of the other.

I love to recall these wanderings, for they constituted the happiest period of my life, and they form, even now, the oasis in a stormy wilderness, around which the most cherished memories linger.

Nature was to me an ever new, ever wonderful page of revelation. At the wave of my powerful master's hand, my external senses would become closed, suffering my liberated soul to go free and my spiritual senses to explore that wonderful arcanum of life locked up in forms, colors, odors, and sounds, of which the external world gives but the faintest reflected shadow. With clairvoyant perception I beheld on every side, the myriad tongues of many-colored fire which played around or shot up from rocks, stones, gems, crystals, shells, grasses, flowers—in short, from every form of mineral or vegetable life. Under the wondrous achromatic glass of spiritual sight, the life of the universe became revealed to me, and I found there was not a blade of grass or a grain of sand, any more than a crawling worm or mighty man, that was not vitalized by an element which to the sense of sight resembled flame, and which in operation was life, with its varied graduations of power, eliminating motion and vital heat. How gloriously beautiful creation appeared to me under the transfiguring light of clairvoyance! I ceased to wonder that the ancient seer was a fire-worshiper, beholding in all luminous bodies the deific principle, and in the sun, as the center of life, light, and heat, the god of earth, to which his knowledge of the universe was limited.

In addition to the marvelous powers of discernment which clairvoyant sight afforded me, I also realized special faculties of perception through the spiritual senses of touch and smell. Every thing in being I found to be endowed with an individual character of its own, and it soon became apparent to me that, either by sight, smell, or touch, the human soul could come into contact with the soul of things, and thus recognize its special individuality.

As sound could only be produced by the collision of two bodies in space, so the sense of hearing afforded a mixed revelation of two or more characteristics hence I observed that sound represented the harmonious relations of things to each other; sight, smell, or touch, the individual character of the thing itself, and its grade in the scale of creation.

I could at that time have readily made charts in which the universe of created forms, organic and inorganic, each in its place in the scale of being, could have been ranged under their distinctive shades of color, their corresponding odors, and the density or rarity of each substance as defined by touch. Let me add that touch, like sound, was often composite in its impressions, all things in creation being so liable to come into contact, and all things that collide leaving upon each other an appreciable taint of each one's peculiar qualities. It is thus that the psychometrist is able to realize so correctly the characteristics which have surrounded or come into contact with any object under examination. The airs which sweep over the face of the rock, charge it with the characteristics of all the elements that are in the atmosphere, but organic life, and human life in particular, as the highest, most potential, and comprehensive of all elements, inheres most powerfully to the inanimate objects it comes in contact with, hence, after some weeks devoted to the culture of my sense of touch, I found I could correctly analyze the characteristics of every human being that had recently passed through any room or scene I chose to examine, determine to a certainty the mental, moral, and physical status of any individual whose glove, handkerchief, etc., was presented to me, in a word, "psychometrize" all things in nature, and by the sense of touch alone realize their hidden qualities or most secret potencies.

I cannot commend these occult studies to any one in pursuit of happiness or contentment. The knowledge I enjoyed was often ecstatic, wonderful, startling, and suggestive; but where it concerned the revelation of human character, and dug up from the mine of inner consciousness the secrets which were wisely hidden from ordinary view, the revelation was nearly always painful, serving to expose to my wounded sight, petty meannesses and interior stains, which lowered human nature in my eyes and rendered me so painfully sensitive to the spheres and atmospheres of every place I entered that I was obliged to put a strong guard upon myself, ere I could endure the revelations which public rooms, conveyances, or streets impressed me with. Yet in the midst of the pain, sorrow and desolation which these revealments brought me, there were hours of unspeakable recompense. I often beheld such sweet stores of natural beauty and goodness hid away under unlovely exteriors that whilst I was on the one hand, shocked and discouraged, I would be on the other transported with the discovery of the brightest mental gems.

It was this interior perception which made me admire, yet resolute to shrink away from the poor gypsy girl. It was this which one day wafted to my sense of smell such a perfume as is exhaled from a bed of the choicest clove carnations. Looking about me to discover in what human form this glorious emanation originated, one which my interior perceptions assured me must proceed from a generous and unselfish nature, I traced its source to a poor, old, threadbare street porter, who stood waiting for employment at the corner of the square I was passing through, and whose appearance was about as unattractive as any which the motley city could have offered. Determined to verify or dissipate my fancy, if such it was, I entered into conversation with this person, and subsequently made many inquiries concerning him. Generosity, benevolence, and unselfishness were the characteristics wafted to my spiritual sense from this poor bundle of rags and wretchedness. Take the following description rendered me of this old man by a tradesman of the neighborhood who knew him well.

"You would scarcely believe, sir, that yon forlorn old man was once a gentleman, and quite wealthy. He had a large family of extravagant sons and nephews, upon whom he spent

his means so liberally that he reduced himself to abject poverty on their account. He was so good to the poor, too, sir—ay, and he is so still—that when he gets a shilling he cannot keep it. He runs errands now for many a gentleman who has sat at his table, and who would provide better for him if he did not lavish all that is given him on others. He should not be in rags, for he often has decent clothes given him, but he will strip them off his back to give to a poor neighbor, and go in rags that he may still help his dissipated and profligate family.

How many sweet airs from the unknown paradises of the human soul have swept across my spiritual senses in this manner, bringing to light hidden virtues the world knows not of, and—alas for the percontra!—how many foul and noisome exhalations have warned me from the sphere of perfumed fops and jeweled dames, whose attractive exteriors concealed the rank weeds of vice and base passions! I have met in my career with several persons who partook of this faculty of discovering character by the sense of smell—one dear friend in particular, who suffered so keenly from the involuntary revelations this subtle gift occasioned, that she besought her spirit guides to quench the power, and remove from her a source of interior perception that rendered her daily intercourse with her fellow-mortals at times unendurable.

When we are known for what we are, not for what we seem, in the realm of spiritual truth and revelation, we shall find the number of every living creature, and in that mysterious figure we shall discover the peculiar color, sound, smell, and touch which appertains to each, and recognize that all and each are revelations which contain the whole in the part; also we shall learn that the color of the odic light which lingers in the photosphere of every human being, the perfume which the soul exhales, the mystery of the impression conveyed by the touch of the hand, and the tone which vibrates through the air in which we move or breathe, are all exact revelations of what we are and who we are; that all these things are known to the angels, and can measurably be felt, if not clearly defined, by every sensitive whose spiritual perceptions are more or less unfolded.

Oh, wondrous revelation, world of fairy lore, angelic teaching, heavenly inspiration! How blest and happy I was when living in this unseen realm—this universe of shining truths and spiritual entities! Will these pages ever fall beneath the piercing eye of spiritual lucidity? If so, it will discover how I fence about the dividing line which separates me from this period of unmixed happiness and the bitter, bitter to-morrow that awaited me. One there is who will read these lines understandingly, and to her deep, pitying sympathies I appeal, with the agonizing cry of "Not yet! not yet! Let me linger a while ere the flaming sword drives me forth from the paradise of my vanished youth and early gleams of life-rest."

Wandering with my much-loved father in woody dell or over moorland wastes, sometimes encamping for the livelong night beneath the canopy of glittering stars and solemn queenly moon, within the shelter of some ruined fane, through whose green, ivy-mantled towers and sculptured arches the celestial lamps looked in with soft and holy lustre; sometimes reposing on grassy banks in deep communion with the soul of Nature, or stretched on yellow sands beneath the beetling rocks that overhung the ever-sounding sea, we lived for a few brief months on earth, yet not of it. Sometimes we sat for hours, our open books unnoticed, listening in deep, abstracted mood to the tinkling stream or hoarse cascade, but ever recognizing in every sound, in every voice of Nature, from the sighing breeze to the crashing thunder-peal, the story of creation sung by unseen intelligence.

Happy days, and hours of divine entrancement! How I love to roll the misty veil of fading memory back, and gaze again on your sunlit pictures, the bright realities of which are fled, all fled forever!

Professor von Marx had been summoned to London on business, and as he did not expect to be absent more than a few days it was agreed that I should remain in our quiet north-country inn, from whence we had projected a tour into Wales. I insisted that he should take with him our only attendant, and leave me to the enjoyment of that deep, undisturbed repose which I prophetically felt was to be the last moment of hush and stillness I should ever know again on earth.

A few days after his departure my dear father wrote me word that he wished me to join him in London, as he was likely to be detained longer than he had anticipated, and could not endure to have me absent from him. I was staying at a very remote village, distant many miles from the railroad, which there was no means of reaching except by a stage or private conveyance.

Having secured my place in a coach which was to leave at night and connect with the train which started for London the next morning, I proceeded to beguile the hours that must intervene before I could leave, by a final ramble in the beautiful scenery of the neighborhood.

Towards evening, some three hours before that fixed for my departure, I sat down on the banks of a winding stream, broken by rapids and miniature cascades, to watch the glory of the approaching sunset.

On the opposite side of the river was a high bluff of rocks which shut out the land view in that direction, but away to the west, hill and plain, valley and moorland, were beginning to be bathed in a flood of crimson and purple radiance reflected from the glowing sky. Whilst my whole soul was imbued with the soothing tranquillity of this lovely scene, there suddenly crept over me a shuddering chill, an indefinable sense of dread, which completely obscured the surrounding landscape and impressed me with sensations of unaccountable fear and loneliness.

I closed my eyes and leaned back against the trunk of the tree beneath which I was sitting, when a whirr as of rushing wings sounded in the air, and the hag whom I had so often beheld as the precursor of evil tidings, flashed before my eyes, and with a mocking, gibing expression, terrible, hateful, fearful to behold, swooped close against my face, and then as suddenly swept on and was gone. In a few moments this well-accustomed yet ever-terrible apparition was succeeded by a thought which pressed upon me with overpowering urgency. The letter which Professor von Marx had given me some months before, seemed to rise up to my mind in a form so vivid that the impulse became irresistible to draw it forth from the lining of my vest, where I had placed it for special safety, and, holding it in my hand, turn it over and over again, with a sentiment of deep and newly-born interest. At this moment it seemed to me that I heard a chorus of voices in every imaginable tone, crying: "Read your letter! Read—your—letter—letter! Read! Read! Read!" I knew it was imagination, and yet those voices sounded very real in my ears. Some of them were hoarse and rough, others shrill and piercing, faint, near, distant yet close. I was under the influence of a spell, and determined I would break it. I was about to replace the letter in my vest when, in the midst of those weird voices so uncertain in their origin, one I never could mistake, one whose tones were the echo of my life's deepest meaning, even the voice of my dear adopted father, repeated my name, calling to me evidently from the high bluff on the opposite side of the river.

Raising my eyes in amazement to this point of view, and in answer to his again reiterated sharp cry of "Louis, Louis! Look up!" I beheld Professor von Marx standing on the very edge

of the rock, and leaning over its rugged sides towards me. In equal astonishment and delight I responded: "Dearest father! is that you? Have you then come to fetch me?" Then rising hurriedly I looked about to see in what part of the narrow river I could find a ford so as to cross and join him, but again I was arrested by the voice of the professor distinctly pronouncing these words: "Open and read your letter! The voice most authoritative to you on earth commands you. At once! Now."

With such a quick, imperative wave of the hand as I had never disobeyed, the professor turned away, and I saw his retreating form pass over the heights and melt away into the gray horizon. Perceiving that he was going around the hill in order to cross the river at a rustic bridge some half a mile below the spot where I then stood, and would soon join me, I, who had never yet questioned or resisted the commands of that potential voice, resumed my seat against the tree, and opening the letter, read the contents, which were as follows:

"It is now some months, my Louis, since the vague, unsatisfactory character of the researches to which I have devoted my span of life have begun to pall upon me, and strike like ice-bolts into my tired spirit, freezing up its energies and palsying its powers. The realm of being which alone responds to my piercing inquisition is too embryotic, and too far beneath the perfected intelligence of man, to feed his yearning aspirations or furnish his higher nature with healthful communion. Dragged down to merely rudimental states, and groping amidst the chaotic spheres of twilight intelligence, I am weary, life-sick, baffled! When I would reach higher and ascend beyond myself, my soul only stretches away into the ocean of the unfathomable, where I find no compass to steer by, no pilot to guide me, and whether I stand in the gray mists of a coming morning, whose sunny light shall yet dispel all mystery, or linger on the edge of a vanishing day, whose evening shades will deepen into a rayless, never-ending night, I know not. I wander on in the midst of fog-banks which skirt a shoreless sea, and the future has now become for me a problem too urgent and too terrible to wait for longer.

I must solve it or perish eternally. But whilst my soul trembles on the verge of the unknown, the sharpest pang it feels is not for myself but for you, child of my love, being upon whom my all of heart-love or human affection is anchored! For you, darling companion, whom I have led into the same unfathomable abyss of mystery and unrest which destroys my own peace and almost wrecks my senses. To think that I have guided your young feet into the wild and awful solitudes of unlighted gloom in which I am lost myself is now my bitterest thought, my keenest pang of self-reproach. But Louis, spark of sunlight! the only one that now sheds warmth or light upon a starved and imprisoned nature, to you at least, I can and will make reparation. Even whilst I write I know that the end is for me fast approaching. Louis, I am dying; and whether death be the sleep that knows no waking, no return, the worm of slow decay, or something I cannot comprehend of continued life and consciousness, know it soon I must and will. Think not I shall hasten the time of this tremendous enfoldment by the coward's act of rushing from this life, or shaking off the mortal coil so hard to bear. No, I scorn self-murder, nor will I commit any act of rash impatience.

"In one sense alone can I speed the great denouement, and that is in acting out to you my intended reparation. Louis, I will give my life to you. I am now engaged in constantly projecting, by the power of my will, the life and force by which I am, in magnetic tides upon you.

"I know it is in the power of the adept to part with these living waves and send them ebbing to the shores of another's life at will.

"In this mysterious transfer my life can become yours, my being can incorporate itself with yours, and the effects will be seen and felt when I am gone, in the increased power and prime of your noble manhood and the enlarged capacity of your unfolded spiritual nature. My strength shall supplement your gentleness; my powerful manhood shall uphold your dependent youth; my commanding force shall inspire your attractive beauty; and this great and wonderful work is on the very eve of accomplishment. The woof of destiny is nearly spun. Day by day I keep the force of my will so exercised upon you that you cannot, shall not see the fading process of my life's transfer to you, or note how thin and attenuated the cord becomes which binds the waning spirit to the dying form.

"In the hour when the last process of transfer is to be made my body will be far away from you. I shall leave you a while alone, so that your glance of tender pleading may not recall me to the life I loathe, or stay my fluttering spirit on the shores of the mystic ocean in whose silent waves it must sink forever or rise to swell thy young life's barque with the freight of my new-born soul and its resurrected powers.

"I shall leave thee during the process of the mighty wrench, my darling; then shall I gather up the broken threads of life, weave them into one mighty chain of purpose, and throw the last links around thy neck, my Louis, to anchor there my liberated soul. Louis, I die that you may live. To you I give the fires of parting life, to you dispense the spirit's mystic breathings. If I live again, or the essence of my soul is not all dissipated into viewless ether, it will be as a part of you. I will my life to you, whilst yet I can send it forth in living fires to illuminate the temple of your spirit. I will to you whatever may be left of the smouldering flame when the breath of the destroyer shall have put it out for me. Perchance that dying flame may yet retain some spark of consciousness, which, added to your own, shall vitalize your frame, give double manhood to your character, clear from your spirit's, eyes the scales of earth, lift up your soul to loftier heights than mortal ever reached before, and raise you above those groveling elementary spheres in which we have been doomed to wander, to the shining realms of sunlike nature, in which the cause of causes must inhere. On earth farewell, my loved one! When these lines have met thine eyes thy father will be no more. Either thy soul or mine must be united in the mystic bonds of a dual life, or else the fires of mine will be extinguished in eternal darkness. One with thee or nothing! FELIX VON MARX."

The letter dropped from my palsied hand. Grief, fear, doubt, and confusion filled my distracted brain.

The sudden perception of my beloved friend's failing health, that glimpse of his real condition which a moment of abstraction on his part had permitted me to catch when we were last in London, that glimpse of a possibility too dreadful for me even to dwell upon, yet that which had induced me to urge this country tour—all this recurred to my mind like a torrent overleaping its barriers and rushing in upon an overwhelmed plain with resistless force. At length stole over me the stupendous reality that this beloved friend, this more than father, the master of my life and being, was no more. By this time, even at the moment when I held that awful letter in my hand, he must be dead—or rather gone, gone forever! and oh, for what cause! Dead that I might live! What new and horrible mystery was involved in this confused and wild idea of a life transfer? At another time this one thought alone would have swallowed up all others, and compelled me to turn upon myself with loathing and aversion—living whilst he was dead! living because he was dead!—but now all my visions of the occult were swallowed up in one tremendous reality of my irreparable loss. Struck, stunned, helpless as I felt, I buried my face in my hands, cast myself frantically down on the grass, and gave vent to the anguish of a breaking heart in choking sobs and scalding tears. In the midst

of my frenzied grief it was no surprise to me to feel a gentle touch on my shoulder and a caressing arm thrown around my neck.

The capacity for new emotion was dead within me, and the heavens might have been shaken down to earth without awakening one sentiment of surprise or adding to the intensity of my feelings. Yet I heard again his voice, the voice dearest to me in creation; I felt again his touch, the touch of those lips through which my own life breathings seemed to have exhaled. That touch was surely on my cheek, and I heard him murmur in such accents as recalled his hours of deepest tenderness: "One with thee forever! Weep no more, my Louis. There is no death!" Mechanically I raised my streaming eyes to gaze upon the speaker. A flash, a radiant stream of light, the vision of those dark, lustrous eyes fixed for a second only on me, looking into my soul; then a radiant fire-mist seemed to hover around me; a blazing star shot up from the earth on which I knelt, sped meteor-like through the sunlit air, paling the glory of the western sky, then vanished in the heavens and left me—alone!

Upspringing from the cold, dark earth, the sunlight gone, and a rayless night now closing fast around me, I sped to our empty cottage. I knew he was not there. He had not been there—I knew that, too. He would never come again, there or anywhere.

A moment's pause to think out where I was, and then I was on the road to London. Oh, that weary road, that endless night, and the next long, weary day! Changes there were to make and hours to be sped away—oh! would they never end?

Somewhere upon that endless desert road I left my youth and boyhood—left them behind forever, and as once more I entered gray old London, I returned a man, matured in a few short hours of anguish into untimely manhood.

The streets were cold and empty, the night had begun to fall, and the dim, pale lights served only, as it seemed, to show me what a strange and sickening void had overspread the once gay city.

I made my way to what had once been our home, but the familiar faces of the domestics who admitted me had grown strange and altered in my eyes. I asked no questions, spoke no words, and none addressed me. I think now, though I scarcely knew it then, that some one said, in a low and pitying tone: "It is the poor young Chevalier. How could he have known it?"

Mechanically I ran up the stairs, stood before the door of our common sitting-room, and turned the lock; but I retreated without entering, for I knew he was not there. I moved on to another door, and now with throbbing heart and finger pressed on my hushed lip, softly, softly I trod. Stealthily I entered—entered like one who feared to disturb a sleeper. I knew my step would never wake him more; he slept the sleep that knows no waking. Something like a prayer stole through my bewildered brain, "Would God I were sleeping with him!" Professor von Marx was dead. He lay all cold and white, with burning lamps at the marble brow and stirless feet, pale white flowers on the paler hands, and a frozen stillness everywhere. Professor von Marx was dead; and yet a still small voice, in the well-remembered accents of the speechless dead, rung through the hush and gloom of that solemn place, and seemed to murmur: "One with thee forever! Weep no more, my Louis. There is no death!"

