

Chapter 11

The Awakening to Real Life

IN THE SPHERES—THE LIFE TRANSFER REVERSED—
METRON, THE SPIRIT OF THE NORTH—THE SPIRIT OF LOUIS
LONGING FOR ITS HOME—THE RETURN TO EARTH.

Oh, to awaken free from pain, from care and toil, and sordid strife for bread! To feel no grief, no cold or heat, no thirst or hunger! nevermore to weep or know what sorrow is; to look on all past life as an empty dream, whose gloomy shadows can nevermore return! No more bereavement, bitter separations, injustice, cruelty, or wrong! No more heart-ache, not even a sob or sigh!

To feel no sense of weight or bonds to earth; to float or wing on high in air; to speed like the lightning's flash through space, or sail like a bird on the buoyant waves of ether! To see the dull, round globe far, far below, with its canopy of clouds and its creeping myriads, insect-like, swarming upon its surface, all left behind! To look up through happy tears and melting fire-mists to the spangled heavens, so dim to earth, so gorgeously bright to you! To feel kind hands about you, tender arms enfolding you, and hear the tones of well-remembered friends, long-lost, almost forgotten, whispering sweet words of welcome in your ear; to gaze around and see a brilliant, happy circle of loved and loving friends, companions, kindred, beckoning you home, home, home forever!

No more parting, no more death or sadness! Oh, to be there! On, on through upper air! On, on, still higher, beyond the night and darkness, beyond the stars! Up higher yet! up through soft airs and sweet perfumes, up to the realms of never-setting sunlight, up above mountain heights, where glittering domes and towers and palaces are flashing in bright, prismatic, many-colored rays, and spanned by a thousand arching rainbows.

To look down far, far beneath, and see white cities and long bright roads, embowered in spicy groves and waving trees, and outstretched, flowery plains, all full of busy, happy, lovely beings, radiant with joy and life. Still to speed on, borne on in an airy car whose swift and rocking motion stirs the pulse, quickens the breath, and makes the wild heart leap for very gladness! On, till you reach the lovely, lovely land far higher than the highest thought can measure, far off in space, forever removed from earth and night and gloom; the land where home is, and home the spot you most desire to reach; the place you long for, wait for, where all you love wait for you. Oh, glorious ride! Oh, life of a thousand years pressed into one sweet hour! And such was my awakening, such my flight through space, such the rest a tired spirit and broken heart encountered. Vain would be the effort to speak

of things and scenes and modes of life for which earth has no language, mortal being no parallel. Some few points alone of this better land I may describe in human speech. Let me recall them. Music! Every motion there has its own sound, and when vast numbers of tones combine in harmony—and all is harmony there, no discord—that combination forms music. Hence music is speech and sound; but when it is designed to represent ideas, recite a history, tell a tale, or explain the marvels of creation, masses of symphonic music are performed; and as each tone is in itself an idea, every separate tone has a special meaning, and the whole combined form a language in which the highest glories of the universe can be revealed. There is no music in heaven without a real meaning; hence the listener or performer finds in music volumes of ideas.

As I listened to the sweet yet awful symphonies that greeted me when I paused, all glowing with life and joy and love at my radiant home, I heard the song of life with all its deep, inner meaning. I heard and understood that poor, weak, trembling mortals are never out of the hands of creative wisdom. The tones of Nature sang of her eternal Author, Finisher; an all-sustaining, all-protecting Providence; told of his goodness, wisdom, power; instructed us to trust and lean on him; spoke of the grand design in suffering; the beauty, symmetry, and order of creation when the finite being begins to understand the infinite. Home! Can I convey by that precious word any realization, however faint, of the rest and peace of a heavenly home? I fear me not. Home was the place where my loved ones clustered, to which all their divergent wanderings tended back again. Home was the place where all my special tastes found expression, where I might stay, rest, grow, exchange glad greetings with all who sought or loved me—a place to think in until I grew ready for another advance. Every spirit has a home, a center of love, rest, and ingathering of new powers and forces, a place where all one has loved, admired, most wished or longed for, takes shape, and becomes embodied in the soul's surroundings.

Sometimes the spirit gravitates, as mine did, to some lonely, church-like hall, a stately, silent place of inner rest and contemplation, and there the past resolved itself in shadowy pictures on the walls, and came and went like dissolving views, mapping out the minutest event or thought or word of my past earthly life, all which I found was fixed in the astral light, of which that temple was a Scripture page, forever. Oh, wonderful alchemy of spiritual existence! As I read again the panorama of my life, that ineffaceable record which every soul must read and read again, the past returned with its appropriate judgment. Many events which at their time of action I had felt regret for, even remorse, I now beheld as an inevitable sequence to other acts, stepping-stones, without which my life would have been incomplete. Deeds on which I had prided myself, now showed the littleness or petty egotism from which they sprang; sorrows which had wrung my spirit, appeared as blessings; and thoughts I had lamented once, I now perceived to have been effects inevitable. I saw and knew myself to be a chemical compound, made up of what I had been, or what had been done, said, and thought. All things appeared in judgment, and, stranger yet, all that I had, all that I possessed, enjoyed, or saw, nay, the very air I breathed, was tintured by myself, and I saw, felt, heard, and enjoyed only, as my inner nature colored my surroundings. All things were real around me, but my capacity to know and use them sprang from my inner self. O heaven, keep our earthly record fair, or woe betide us in the immutable procedures of the land of souls!

In another scene I may not fully speak of, I learned that our souls and all their faculties are magnetic tractors, drawing to themselves only such corresponding things and persons as assimilate with them. If the faculties are all engrossed by unselfish love, loving friends will answer. If the spirit reaches out for beauty, light, or special knowledge, the answer comes in kind, and surrounds the soul with beings and associations kindred with its yearnings. Base passions, vicious habits, and criminal propensities find no responding satisfaction in

spirit land. They are all outgrowths of earth and earthy things, and cast the soul down to those lower depths that permeate the earth and chain it to the scene of its affections. In spirit land, ideas are all incarnate, and become realities and living things. Nothing is lost in the universe. All that ever has been, can be, shall be, are garnered up in the ever-present laboratories of being. Glorious privilege it is to roam through the endless corridors of time, and still to find an eternity beyond to grow in! The spheres! what may they mean? What mortal tongue or pen can fitly speak of them? Ideas are spheres. There are ten thousand million spheres, all rounded into complete worlds, and all are the habitations of those who cherish the special idea which rules the sphere.

The spheres are not permanent, but the temporary homes of those who pass through them. They are the garnerers into which are gathered up the sheaves of earth, there to rest and gain experience, until they become distributed and amalgamated into the bread of eternal life. There are spheres of love, where tender natures cling to one another, until they are drawn by higher, broader aspirations, into broader planes of thought. There are spheres of every shade of mental light, ideality, thought, and knowledge; spheres of special grades of goodness, intellect, and wisdom. In all and each is a special meed of happiness, but also in all and each are prevailing impulses to branch out farther, press on, and grow, so that every soul partaking of the special characteristics of every sphere in turn, may glean and gather in at last the good of all, and thus become a perfected spirit.

Worlds in space, yes, worlds—thousands, millions of them; world within world, the finer permeating the grosser, the grosser filling up the space of the still more dense, until at last I saw no finite lines, no end to the infinitely fine, the infinitely dense.

I saw the concentrated scheme of the whole solar system with earth and its zones and belts of spirit spheres, countless in number, various in attribute. Myriads of rare and splendid beings sped through the spaces, piercing the grosser spheres invisibly to all but their own grade of being. Myriads of duller, grosser beings lived in these spheres, unconscious that they were permeated by radiant worlds, all thronged with glorious life, too fine for them to view. Each living creature was surrounded and enclosed by the atmosphere to which lie belonged, and this restrained his vision to the special sphere in which he dwelt. Yet the finer realms of being could view at will the grosser; for now I found the secret of will: 'Tis knowledge put into practice, and the knowledge of the highest is power, and power is will. Thus is supreme will resident alone with the Unknowable, the Being who knows all. In these spheres that so lock and interlace with another, I saw that the lowest and nearest earth were dull, coarse, barren spheres, dreary and unlovely, where dark and unlovely beings wandered to and fro, seeking the rest and satisfaction earth alone could give them. No homes were there, no flowers, no bloom, no friendly gatherings, no songs or music; the hard, cold natures of the wretched dwellers gave off no light, no beauty, harmony, or love; yet all felt impelled, obliged to toil. Toil was the genius of the place, yet whatever labors were performed, became instrumental in digging up the spirit, and breaking the clods of hard and wicked natures.

Every occupation seemed to come perforce and must be done, yet all seemed destined to help re-make the nature, open up new ideas, new sources of thought, and impel the hapless laborers to aspire after better things and higher states. I saw the flitting lamps of spirit hearts, bright missionary angels, who filled these leaden spheres with their gracious influence, and yet though often felt, were unseen by the dull-eyed inhabitants, except as stars or gleams of shimmering radiance. Ah me! I fain would linger on the awful, grand, and wise economy of being, but the seal of mortal life is on my lips and on the minds of those I write for; who but the death-angel can break it? I hasten to the conclusion of my own brief pilgrimage. My

noble father, my gentle, loving Constance, and hosts of the dead of earth, the angels of a better life, were around me.

At length, in the midst of my great egotism of joy, a fearful pang shot through my mind as a dim remembrance came of one who was not there. Stronger and stronger grew the thought, till again he filled my being, and I loathed myself because for a season I had forgotten him—my more than friend and adopted father; but oh! where was he now, and why not with me? Where was that dearest one of all, for whom I had given my life? The pitying angels who thronged around me showed how their wish that I should rest and gain strength and life and light in the land of souls had intercepted thoughts of him before, but now the answer came, and all too soon.

The spheres I had seen were not the all of earth, though countless to me in number. Myriads there were within the earth itself, where lingered bound and captive, vicious spirits, the ignorant, dull, idle, and criminal, who had not done with earth and who must learn, perhaps for ages, all that belonged to their human duties, ere they could pass the threshold, and enter on the life of the upper spheres; and yet beyond again, below, beneath the earth, inhered an anti-state of mortal being, vast realms where dwelt the spirits of nature. Here were millions of ascending grades of life, ranging from the vital principle of growth in the rude stone, to the shining spirits of the fire and air, who only waited to pass through the last stages of progressive life and death ere they should gravitate to earth and inherit mortal bodies and immortal souls. Crowds of aspiring spirits filled these realms, who were not men, but who looked to man in inspirational dreams and trances as to the angel which led and called them upwards.

I had seen these elementary spheres through the films of earthly magnetism, and then they seemed bright, some resplendent as in the tales of fairy-land; but now, beholding them through the pure alchemy of spiritual truth, I saw that they were destitute of all the warmth and life and beauty that humanity confers. It was in the midst of the sad and barren realms of elemental spirit-life that I saw at length my beloved and imprisoned friend and adopted father. I knew it all at once and how it was. He had on earth sunk his bright intellect down to these elementals instead of drawing them up to him by his own aspirations for a higher life than man's. He had descended below man to seek for causation, instead of ascending above him; and now, oh hapless fate! he had gravitated to where he had chained his spirit. He could not look through the radiant realms of upper air and see me, but he felt the streams of pitying love I poured out upon him, and stretched his weary arms towards my spirit home in tender sympathy. Spirit-life, glory, peace, and happiness ended for me then. There was no more rest for me in heaven so long as I knew there was work to do for him. A strange and striking picture of life and what I could do was now unrolled before me.

I saw myself on earth again, once more in the midst of suffering and pain. I saw the soul of my dearest friend clinging around me like a tender parasite. For a brief period I saw my life and his commingle like two quivering flames or uniting rain-drops. For a season the spirit of my father, thus drawn back to the earth by the magnetism of one so very, very near to him, almost himself in fact, would be released from the lower elemental spheres, and resuming its life functions through my mortal body would shake off the old errors, strike out into new paths of light, rise to its natural home in spirit-life, and, looking through the windows of my soul's eyes perceive the glorious truth of spiritual immortality. My spirit should be the ladder on which his soul should rise from the elementary spheres through earth again to his home in the better land. This was to be my destiny and his.

I saw it all and cried: "Speed, angels, speed me back to earth again! Haste! help me to

release the imprisoned soul of him I love so dearly!" But this was not all. I learned that I, too, had been robbed of my soul's manhood that I had not lived my own life, but that of my erring friend. His spirit had usurped the rights of mine; his will had superseded mine and left my soul a mere nonentity.

I must return to live again on earth then—return for what seemed in earthly measure many long and weary years, but still I must undergo their pains and penalties, first for the sake of my dearest friend, and next for my own. My destiny was all laid out before me—the rugged paths my bleeding feet would tread, my heart's deep love, bereavement, desolation. The cold world's slights and sneers, the keen tooth of ingratitude, the harsh sting of injustice—all, all were mapped before me like a baleful battle-scene intruding on some lovely landscape whose peace and joy it ruined.

I felt an unbidden tear steal down my cheek whilst I bowed my head and murmured: "Thy will, not mine, be done." I knew that will was good. I had seen the glory, goodness, wisdom of the scheme, the perfect order in disorder, the good which sorrow brings, the triumph over evil, wrong, and death.

I knew God lived and reigned. I felt his bounteous hand and all-sustaining presence upholding every creature he has made, though their blind eyes cannot perceive his tracks. I knew that I could trust his eternal wisdom, and when the darkness should thicken around me, the thunders peal, and my blinded eyes could discover naught but ruin, he would be strong to save. The angels bade me take for my life's watchword, God understands, and I knew it was so. And now the fading lights of the spiritual sun receded from my view; the joy-bells rang more faintly; the crashing symphonies of heavenly music resounded in dim echoes; gray mists, descending thicker, faster, deepened into night, and closed around me. The stars came out above my head, as descending still, I floated down through the murky atmosphere of earth, upborne in the arms of loving spirit friends, and cheered by their whispered promise, "Ever with thee!" At length I reached this cold, dull, lonely orb; arrived at last on earth.

They bore me to the solitary wood, the dreadful dell of mortal agony. Torches flitted through the darkness of the night, and at length, half concealed by trees and underbrush, I saw a rigid, pale, distorted form, a scarcely living creature, on which some kind and tender beings lavished human cares, and gentle eyes were raining tears of pity. At first I turned from the spectacle with loathing, but even then a voice, though far and distant, reached my ear, whose appealing tones cried: "Help, Louis! Louis, help!" It was his unresting soul that pleaded. That cry broke forth from his imprisoned spirit and wailed through the sad night air in accents of wildest anguish. I paused no longer. I know not how, save that I acted by a mighty effort of resistless will, but in one instant I ceased to be a freed and rejoicing spirit. Minutes of dull forgetfulness succeeded, then keen pangs awoke me; the gates of life rolled back amidst my sobs and sighs, to let the spirit in, and gentle voices murmured: "He lives! Thank heaven, he lives! and we are yet in time to save him "

