

Chapter 17

The Order of the Universe

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE
CHEVALIER DE B _____ CONTINUED—RETROSPECT—
SCENES AND INCIDENTS IN THE LAND OF THE FAKIR

Twenty years—what a mere breath in time! A turning of the sand-glass, a sweeping over the sky of a summer cloud, a sigh, a sob, a tear, such a period seems, when we look back upon it and try to apprehend the nature of time by retrospection; yet when we gauge it by the events which have crowded its onward course, what an epoch of momentous interest may not twenty years become!

To traverse many lands, sound the heart-throbs, listen to the inner revealings, and learn the life mysteries of many a strange people; to trace out the panoramas of a mighty past, whose swift, silent footsteps leave no echoes in eternity, yet whose march has left imprints which strike the beholders dumb with awe and self-abasement as they contemplate the littleness of the one compared to the immensity of which that one is a part; to plunge into the fields of carnage, steel the heart to the temper of the sword, slay and stand to be slain, drown the pleadings of humanity, pity, mercy, and fraternal love in the thunder of artillery and the reverberations of deadly musketry; to lie amidst heaps of slain, matching glory against mutilation, and hearing the vain boasts of patriotism answered by the shrieks of agony and the groans of torn and bleeding humanity; to pine in the loathsome dungeon, and risk life, name and fame on hairbreadth escapes; to bask in the sunlight of royal favor, and hear the breath of the fickle multitude shouting hosannas to a popular name one day, and the next to skulk in the shadows of political disgrace, and wander without home or land, without where to lay a houseless head; to muster all the fires of life upon the altar of a vain love, and see them quenched into dust and ashes; to heap up fame and glory, knowledge and renown, love and triumph; pierce the mysteries of space—even to the unknowable—and command its legionaries, climb up to heaven and steal thence the Promethean fire, plunge into the abyss and master its hidden secrets—to do all this, and then see the piled-up treasures fade, sink, burn, consume, grow dim, cold—nothing—or at last melt away into a vague memory!

This may be the sum of twenty years—the twenty years which, to recall in the aggregate, is but a breath in time, a turning of the sand-glass, but which to live, minute by minute, is all this and more; for all this and more, formed the sum of my twenty years of life after I parted from the kindest, best of friends, John Cavendish Dudley, on a London wharf, to sail away for the burning land of Hindostan.

Such retrospects taken in detail are of little use to humanity, save as sources of amusement. One will listen shudderingly, and, turning away from the stormy picture, sigh for the rest which human life never grants. Some "Desdemonas" may weave out ideal heroes from the narrative, but still more will divide their interest in it with a tale from the New York Ledger or a London melodrama. None can know, or ought to know, the worth of a single life's experience to any but the actor therein, unless that life has a specialty in which all mankind can share, and in which the immediate interests of humanity are concerned. It is because I have such a specialty to offer that I now write.

I have something that has followed me, or rather infilled my soul, through every changing scene, in every wild mutation of fortune—on the battle-field, in the dungeon, in the cabinet of princes, in the but of the charcoal-burner, in the deep crypts of Central India, and amidst the awful rites of Oriental mysticism, in the paradises of love, and the shipwreck of every hope—something which has never forsaken or left me alone; something which stands by me now, as I write in my sea-girt island dwelling, on the shores of the blue Mediterranean; something which has spoken peace to my soul when the storm raged the fiercest and the fever burned the highest; something that promises me, not a dwelling-place merely, but a sweet home, a long rest, and a happy awakening in eternal sunlight, amidst friends and love and blossoms that never fade, "when life's fitful fever is burnt out" and all is done with earth, and that something is the voice of an ever-faithful spirit friend, murmuring in my ear, "There is another and a better world."

Love and truth! These are the fruits which the bruised hands of humanity can gather from the tree of spiritual life which grows in the midst of earth-life's barren wilderness. Were it not so, I never would have written these pages; never have opened the vest of the careless cosmopolitan to expose to view the scarred breast that throbs beneath it; but knowing as I do that mortal life with all its tremendous pains and penalties becomes not only endurable, but a boon and a blessing, when heaven is the goal, and rest and glory beckon us on, so I have determined to pause in the midst of my wild career, and give such scattered rays of light as I have gathered up to the world that suffers as I have done, and that perishes as I should have done amidst life's storms and tempests, had I not felt the grasp of a spirit hand upon my sinking form, and heard the precious whisper of assurance staying me in the deepest trough of the stormiest sea.

Hitherto I have been compelled to make personal adventures the vehicle in which strange spiritual experiences were to be given to the world. The mysterious processes of animal magnetism and their silent but formative effects for good and evil were, I know, more potentially illustrated in my own case than any other that I could have cited.

The "life transfer" which the fanaticism of affection, unlighted by the knowledge of immortality, induced, and the absolute, personal obsession of a human body by a foreign spirit, are items of such a rare and exceptional character, that I have ventured far out of the track which I had laid down for myself in dealing with the world when I communicate them. Even now, whilst I am writing these peculiar experiences, and tearing open unhealed wounds for the guidance of future explorers, I can see with prophetic clairvoyance the curl of many a scornful lip over my narrative, rude disbelief and reckless denial, some doubt and still less acceptance—acceptance from those who know the writer and his unflinching fidelity to truth, acceptance from some few others who will remember passages of kindred marvel in their own history; these will make up the different phases of mind that are destined to speculate over a testimony so painful to give, so shocking to see trampled beneath the feet of coarse, unspiritual misunderstanding. Yet I did not dare grieve the Paraclete of life, who makes me and all creatures that have a truth to tell, his messengers, by withholding my strange experi-

ences. From this point, however, I have but little more to write of myself except as an instrument for illustrating the truths my life conserves. Henceforth I shall write only of that ghost land which I shall soon enter, and to whose stern inquisition I shall have to account for every talent committed to my charge. Heaven help me to answer, "I have done thy bidding."

Looking back upon a single life, or the life of the race as revealed by ethnological science, we cannot perceive a foot of land trodden by humanity without a circle of luminous haze encompassing it. This haze is not the reflection of a dark body intercepting the rays of light, but is a light per se, a radiance which proceeds from some luminous body, a beam cast from some world or inhabitant of a world in which the ordinary rule of lights and shadows is reversed. History, tradition, prose and poetry, religion and even stern, dogmatic science itself, all unite to record the fact of these luminous interventions pervading human history; and as we can no more have an idea without a name, or a name without some idea of what it is the signification, so we have given to the ideas which these world-wide, ages-long, luminous interventions suggest, the names of magic, religion, supernaturalism, and spiritism.

The last is the only truly comprehensive term that has ever been applied in this direction, for magic is the science by which spiritism can be reduced to an art and has been peculiar to a few epochs of time, whilst it is measurably lost in others; religion signifies only the ideas which a special people entertain on this universal realm of luminosity; supernaturalism implies something outside of nature, which this thing is not; hence, spiritism alone defines what it is, because spiritism implies the science of spirit, which is what we claim for the phenomena under consideration. Spiritualism applies to a condition of mind and refers to spiritually-minded people; hence, to my apprehension, the word "Spiritualism," though much more commonly used in this connection, is a misnomer. Spiritism, or the science of spirit, can exist without spiritists being spiritual; hence when I write of the science which treats of spirits, I ask my readers to understand me in the term spiritism. Heaven speed the day when all spiritists may merit the cognomen of Spiritualists now so much abused and perverted!

Spiritism alone can explain the phenomena of life and death, as well as all the extramundane sounds, sights, monitions, antipathies, and attractions which are not explicable on human hypotheses, but which have accompanied the race in all time, varying in character and proportion at different periods and also under different external influences.

The intense eagerness with which the archives of the past have been ransacked leaves this age in very wide-spread enjoyment of the most popular Spiritualistic testimony, ancient, classical, medieval, and modern, concerning the nature of apparitions, spiritual powers, gifts, and forces. It might with justice be asked what any fresh writer can have to say on subjects so exhaustively considered already, and almost the first criticism which now greets the issue of a new Spiritualistic work is, "Pshaw! there is nothing new here. I have known and seen all that before." In some instances, especially in my own life experiences, there may be this variation in the popular cry: "Pshaw! that cannot be true, because I have not seen it all before." But for both classes of readers there exists a necessity, which is, that we should become more exact in defining, cataloguing, and labelling the truths we have, and placing them in more appropriate niches than the memory or disjointed entries of any single generation can afford; hence my present task. Follow me who will, in my attempts to execute it.

Evidently, to me spiritual existence is the Alpha and Omega of being. Matter is only one of the forms in which spiritual existence becomes demonstrated; perhaps I should more correctly say, it is the formative element through which spirit becomes individualized, * but as whole libraries of theories are now before the world on these subjects, and every theory is

supported by lists of authorities, whose very names alone would fill volumes, let me confine my basic statements to the present moment, and sum up what my searches have revealed to me in the to-day, and that without attempting to erect my column of belief upon the foundation of other men's opinions.

My facts, and the facts open to all industrious explorers, have shown me that the universe visible to man is vitalized and permeated with animated beings, which correspond in all degrees and grades of existence to the varieties of matter, from the lowest inorganic atom— if such a finality as an atom exists—to the most perfected of organisms, which are globes in space, every one of which I believe to be as much a living creature as man himself is. The link of connection between spirit and matter is force, and the exhibition of force is motion in all its infinite varieties. To sum up briefly the order of existence as it has been shown to me, I commence with realms of pure spiritual life, endless in number, infinite in extent, where spiritual essences dwell—beings without passions, vices, or virtues, the Adams and Eves of inconceivable paradises, whose genius is innocence. Incapable of growth or progress until, they have become incarnated in matter and individualized by experience, these spiritual essences are attracted to material earths, where they become the germ-seed of human souls by running an embryotic race through the elements and all the different grades of matter.

* For a full analysis of the order of being, a definition of God, the scheme of creation, the nature of spirit forces, the fall of man or spirit, the origin, progress, and destiny of soul, etc., read the first part and earlier sections of the author's work on "Art Magic."—Ed. GHOST LAND.

Thus the seed of soul existence is planted in that diffused state of matter known as gas or air; in that condition of combustion known as fire; in the fluidic state recognized as water; in the solids called generically the earth. It also assimilates to the separate parts of earth, such as rocks, stones, crystals, gems, plants, herbs, flowers, trees, and all grades of the animal kingdom; in short, through all tonal varieties of nature. In these successive states spirits are born through the mould of a rudimental form of matter; they grow, die, become spirits, are again attracted to earths, where they are incarnated, by virtue of a previous progress, into a higher state of being than they formerly occupied. Their bodies are composed of matter, it is true, but matter in conditions so embryotic and unparticled as to be invisible to mortal eyes, except through occasional clairvoyance; and yet they occupy space, and live in grades of being appropriate to their stage of progress.

These grades of being are realms which inhere in matter, permeating its every space and particle; in fact, the life of the elementaries, as these embryotic spirits are called, is the life principle of matter, the cause of motion, and that force which scientists affirm to be an attribute of matter. In hundreds of clairvoyant visits made by my spirit to the country of the elementaries, it was given me to perceive that their collective life principle, that which clothes their spirits, and forms their rudimental bodies, is in the aggregate the life principle of the earth and all that composes it, or that mysterious realm of force, which, as above stated, is erroneously supposed to be a mere attribute of matter. Again and again it has been shown me how the germ of soul, through an infinite succession of births, lives, deaths, and incarnations in elementary existence, at last attains to that final spiritual state from whence it becomes for the last time attracted to matter, and is born into the climax of material existence, manhood.

The progress of spirit through the conditions of elementary being has been explained to me as correspondential to the subsequent embryotic periods of human gestation. As an elementary it progresses through the matrix of nature. As a human being it is subject to a

much shorter but perfectly analogous progress through the matrix of human maternity. The one is necessary to the growth and individualization of an immortal spirit; the other to the growth and individualization of a mortal body, in which the spirit's final career through matter is effected. The two states are so perfectly analogous that when, after some years of clairvoyant practices amongst the Berlin Brotherhood, Professor von Marx subjected me to a course of study in anatomy and medicine, I was enabled to point out to him in the different stages of growth attained by the human foetus, the most perfect analogies with similar stages of being amongst the elementaries.

The moment the pilgrim spirit has passed through the embryotic life of human maternity, its incarnations through matter are accomplished, and it is born on earth with the new function of self-consciousness, or I should more properly say, conscious individuality. Let it ever be remembered that there is no realization known to man of the awkward and impossible word "annihilation." No particle of matter, no function of being can become the subject of annihilation. Self-consciousness is the function of the human soul, and individuality is the result of self-consciousness. Can this individuality be lost, this self-consciousness be ever quenched? Impossible! Quoting from a lecture by Emma Hardinge Britten on this subject, I re-echo her unanswerable argument for immortality—aye, eternal being—when she says: "Could you alter, change, or impinge upon that individualism which enables each human being to say I am, you find annihilation; for self-consciousness is individuality, and individuality is the distinguishing characteristic of human life; so when man has attained individuality he has attained immortality, for you can no more annihilate a function than you can an atom.

After the death of the mortal body the soul commences a fresh series of pilgrimages, starting from the exact grade of progress it has attained through its incarnations in matter; but its progress now is as a spirit, with the memory, individuality, and identity it has gained in its incarnations through the rudimental states of matter. Born at last as a soul, its new states or series of progressions commence in the spirit spheres, where every grade of spiritual unfoldment and future progress is amply provided for.

To my dim apprehension, and in view of my long years of wandering through spirit spheres, where teaching spirits and blessed angels guided my soul's ardent explorations, this brief summary of our pre-existent states explains all that the reincarnationists have labored so sedulously to theorize upon. I dare not touch those theories with the pen of satire or rude denial, for those who urge them command my deep respect for their sincerity, humanity, and love of justice; but whilst the scheme thus opened up to me explained my soul's origin, the universal and reiterated assurances of myriads of spirits in every stage of a progressive beyond, convinced me there was no return to mortal birth, no retrogression in the scale of cosmic being, as a return to material incarnations would undoubtedly be, and that all the demands of progress, justice, and advancement are supplied by the opportunities afforded the soul in the spheres of spiritual existence.

In my boyhood's years I had been taught to regard spirit as the Alpha only, not the Omega; taught that it was infinite and eternal in essence, but not in individuality; that it lived forever, progressed forever, but only on the earth; hence, the miserably narrow, almost infantile theories of materialistic science, to-wit, limiting life, the great, glorious, and eternal boon of immortal life, to a mere speck in infinity; to the sand-grain of time of which an earthly life is made up, and to the shadowy, vague, and transitory organism of matter! With what different views of human destiny have I lived since I became a spiritist! Night after night, whilst my body was sleeping on the cold dungeon floors of my prison at P_____, where I spent nearly a year; or as I lay for many a dreary hour on the battle-field amidst the dead and

dying, waiting for some trampling steed to crush me out of life, or some assassin's miserecorde to put an end to raging thirst and intolerable pain, spirit friends have come and waved their kind, white hands over me, liberated my struggling spirit, laid my weary form to peaceful rest, and carried me through space in every realm of spiritual existence to which a frail and sinful human soul could attain, until I have stood on the threshold of glorious lands, where my eyes could perceive the radiance of celestial spheres, the memory of whose brightness will warn and beckon me upwards forever.