

Life After Death by Annie Besant

A lecture delivered in Australia in 1908

Published in 1919

Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai [Madras] India
The Theosophist Office, Adyar, Madras. India

[Page 1] ONE of the quaintest things in the great play of Hamlet is the fact that in a very early part of it the statement is made as to death that it is the "bourne from which no traveller returns", and then the whole of the play is built up towards the final demonstration of a murder of which the ghost, returning from that same bourne, was originally the revealer. That sort of inconsistency as regards belief in a life after death, the possibility of communicating with other worlds, the general doubtfulness and vagueness of men's opinions on the subject, seems to spread through the whole of our modern life. Despite the fact that it is sometimes alleged that Christianity has made the after-death life more certain than any other religion, you find a far greater vagueness amongst Christian nations than you do among the non-Christian people, either of ancient or of modern times. In Rome, as many of you know, people were quite willing to lend money on security which was valid on the other side of death, and I suppose the absolute belief in the persistence of human personality could hardly be given a more definite proof than that. You find among many nations of the world an utter contempt of death. You find the Hindû wife who will not remarry as a widow because she does not regard death as in any sense severing the marriage tie. From her standpoint the marriage of a widow is simply a case [Page 2] of bigamy. And so in other nations also, you find this definite realisation of a superphysical life, and of the fact that men and women on the other side of death remain the same persons that they were on this side, with the same emotions and the same affections, the same ties, the same obligations to each other.

Now, why is it that in modern days, among the most civilised peoples, who boast so much of their religion as giving certainty of life on the other side of death, why is it that among ourselves the practical belief in that after-death life has become so little potent on conduct? Why is it so vague and so indeterminate? Why — testing it by what is the fairest test, that the proof, of the reality of a belief is its effect on conduct — is it, that the belief in an after-death life has become so very feeble among ourselves? I think that the chief reason for this has been the want of reason in the views taken of the after-death life through many a century of Christian teaching. The idea that the endless ages of everlasting life were determined once for all by the passing, and often trivial, events of the brief life between cradle and grave, I think, has had much to do towards making the vision of the other life unreal in our minds. It was not so some centuries ago. Many of you will remember when the preachers of Christendom, dilating on the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell, used many a metaphor and many a description that would be rejected either with disgust or laughter now, according to the minds of the people who happened to hear it. Recall as an instance of what I am putting a famous description in one of the most eloquent of the great writers, or rather preachers, of the Calvinists. He traced out his idea of the everlasting nature of hell, and he described a huge mountain made up of grains of sand, vast, immense. He bade his hearers imagine that if a bird [Page 3] once in a thousand years came and carried away one grain of sand in its bill, that then, in the immeasurable ages which it would take to exhaust that mountain grain by grain, during the whole of that time the misery of hell would have been continuing, and would be no nearer to its ending than when the first grain of sand was carried away. Now one cannot wonder that against a doctrine so horrible the reason and the conscience of men rose up in revolt; and the very fact that it is so, the very fact that no

such sermon would be preached now, to a congregation of educated people, at least, shows you that the old teaching has lost its hold, and men have been left, vague and indeterminate, knowing not how to replace the teaching they were unable to believe. The whole thing was out of relation. No man felt himself bad enough for an everlasting hell; none good enough for an everlasting heaven. Hence the feeling that it was not rational has gradually weakened any idea of the after-death life in men's minds, and many, perhaps most, men of the world will now say: "Well, we cannot know anything about it. We must do our best here, and hope that it will be all right on the other side". That is the common thing that you hear now from men and women, decent living, thoughtful men and women, but unable to substitute for a belief they had rejected any rational conception of a life on the other side of death.

Now, is it possible that we should know anything about that other life ? Is it possible to discover the facts which we shall all have to face, for the one thing that is absolutely certain for everyone of us is the fact of death ? It is the one thing we cannot escape from, the one destiny of which we are absolutely sure. In these modern days, as in the older days, it is reasserted that some knowledge *is* possible — knowledge [Page 4] of those worlds which may be gained as we gain knowledge of foreign lands, by travelling therein and observing what there may be seen. There are two ways, especially, offered to the modern world; one easy, but not very satisfactory; the other difficult, but growing more and more satisfactory the more we know of it; the way which is put forward by our friends who are called the Spiritualists, and that which is put forward by those who call themselves Theosophists.

Now let us look at those two ways and see, just for a moment, how they differ, before I go on to try and explain to you clearly the methods of Theosophical investigation and the results that have come by the use of those methods.

The Spiritualistic way, I said, was comparatively easy. It does not demand from those who would learn about it any special way of living, any special kind of study. It is done *for* people, not *by* them, and done by a certain class of people, who, by a peculiarity of their physical constitution, are able to act as links between this world and the world beyond, being what are called mediums, mediums of communication. The method of communication lies either in a person leaving his body and allowing someone else to occupy it, or by the definite materialisation of this discarnate entity reappearing in the world that he has left. Now as to the first of those methods, the stepping out of the body and the occupation of the body by someone else, there is an enormous amount of evidence, not only spiritualistic, but scientific also, to show that more than one personality can utilise a human body. The cases of multiple personality, which are now being so much studied by psychologists form a remarkable and interesting contribution to the knowledge as to the [Page 5] ways in which the human body may be tenanted, and the fact that not one entity only may possibly occupy one human body. But even taking that for granted and accepting it, there is so much spiritualistic evidence for such possession by discarnate entities, that no one who has gone carefully into it can pretend that *all* the phenomena can be fraudulent, even though some of them have been so; those who have studied the subject carefully and long, know that, when you have made every possible allowance for fraud, there is an irreducible minimum of phenomena which nothing can possibly destroy. I am not myself a Spiritualist, but I deem it right to bear witness to the work that has been done by that large body, in establishing the survival of human personality on the other side of death, against ridicule and threat, against police prosecution, and every other weapon, that ignorance could use. That body of men and women has gone on steadily accumulating evidence, until numbers of the leading scientists of the world now admit what for so many years they denied. To their courage these proofs are due. Still, if a man be an utter Materialist who cannot be convinced, save by an appeal to the senses,

then I know of no better evidence than can be gained by a careful and scientific investigation into spiritualistic phenomena. My objection to them does not lie then on the ground that they are always unreliable, but rather on this ground, that the people from the other side with whom you come into touch along these lines are very rarely those who can give a full and reliable statement. They are mostly those who are nearest to the earth that they have left. Not quite always, but in the great majority of cases they do not show signs of high intelligence nor of a wide knowledge of the conditions of life on the other side of death. Their statements, while sometimes interesting, are [Page 6] not full and detailed, save in one or two cases which stand out from the rest of the teachings. I look on the contributions of Spiritualism to a knowledge of the after-death life as very limited in their character, although convincing as to the fact of survival on the other side. Our objections also lie partly along the lines of the depletion of human vitality, the injury to the mediums themselves, which so constantly accompanies these investigations. Were there none other, then I think we should be justified in following them, but if there be a better and a surer way, that is the way that I would rather commend to your attention, and I believe that there is. It is the way in which man may utilise his own spiritual nature in coming into touch with those who have cast off the burden of the flesh. If on the other side of death you are spirits, you are spirits quite as much on this side also. If your spiritual nature is capable of communicating from that world to this, the same spiritual nature is capable of going out from this world and investigating the other, while still we can return to this. That is the line which the great teachers of the past have followed. That is the line which the religions of the past and present have recognised in their own greatest teachers, in those who have come as the teachers of religion to men. Based as it is on the same spiritual nature in all of us, it rests with us to utilise it and to make investigations for ourselves. It turns on the fact that you are spirits encased in bodies, that those bodies are now in touch with other worlds as well as with the physical, as I was pointing out to you the other night, and that it is possible so to train your physical and your psychical bodies as to work as a living intelligence in the psychical body as well as in the physical, and so for yourselves to investigate the worlds that lie on the other side of death. Now it is along that [Page 7] line that Theosophical investigation has gone. A person, being a living spiritual intelligence, need not wait to know what is on the other side until death strikes away his body and releases him from the present house of the physical frame. This body of ours is meant to be a dwelling, but not a prison, and the key of it should be in our own hands and not only in the hands of death. That is the face that has been so often proclaimed, so often verified, and in what I am going to lay before you now, it is on those investigations that I shall entirely base all that I say. I do not propose to go beyond the facts that I can myself say I have verified as being true, for it is our habit amongst ourselves to verify over and over again what anyone may have observed and so gradually to bring a consensus of testimony to establish the facts as to the other worlds.

I start, then, with the statement that it is possible to leave the body and return to it. You may say: "But that sounds very curious", and yet you are doing it every night of your lives. Whenever you go to sleep, you, as a living intelligence, leave your body; and that leaving of the body in sleep, at least, is a fact that is being more and more recognised by scientific investigators who utilise what is called trance, which is only a form of sleep, a form of sleep in which for the time the physical body is insensitive to stimulus, but fundamentally the same as the sleep state. Now it is proved beyond possibility of contradiction that such leaving of the body is possible, that under these conditions, as I was pointing out to you the other night, the living intelligence is very much more active and potent than when it is within the normal physical conditions. And it is on those facts that we start in our investigations, the possibility of leaving the physical body without loss [Page 8] of intelligence. It is not, however, on the ordinary dream state that we depend, but on the deliberate leaving of the body that comes by training yourself, in the sleep state as well as in the waking, until you have bridged the loss of consciousness between the two — can leave the body without loss of consciousness, and bring back and imprint on the brain that which outside the body you have observed. Then, when you have accomplished that, you can go a step further, opening up

these inner psychical senses. It becomes, after a time, unnecessary to leave the physical body while you are exercising the higher senses. You learn gradually to unfold these so that they are under your control, so that you can observe the next world while living in the waking consciousness here. You must remember the next world is not far away. It is around you all the time. Your friends who have thrown off the body do not travel far away to some distant country, but remain near those they love, and are visible to the opened eyes which can see the finer matter in which then the intelligence is clothed. I say then, that you all have bodies of that finer matter, and in those bodies the senses whereby these bodies may also be seen; and if that line be followed and practised, then, while wide awake to the things of this world, you can examine also the things of the world that we call the other side of death, but which is really the world that is around us all the time, the world whose inhabitants are with us wherever we may be, the world which thus becomes a world of knowledge, and not only a world in whose reality we hope.

Now let us see what is happening when a person is throwing off the physical body, at the moment of death. Exactly the same thing happens then as happens to everyone of you each night as you all asleep. There **[Page 9]** is no pain in the moment of death, no agony in the passing out of the body, even where signs of physical suffering are. The suffering is over, although there may be some touch of action in the physical body which simulates the suffering no longer felt. The intelligence, passing out, does not feel the last contortions of the dying body, but is turned in, as it were, within its own immortal existence, conscious of the world that is opening around it, and conscious of the world it is leaving for the last time. Hence those who gather round a deathbed should be careful that, in the wrench of the parting to them, the friend who is going onwards is not disturbed by any noisy demonstrations of sorrow which may check his peaceful passing and recall his thought for a moment to the pain on earth. Most religions have wisely appointed prayers for the dying, more for the sake of the calm of the living than for the sake of the intelligence passing on into the next world. It is true that these prayers for the dying, as prayers for the dead, are the messages of love to the passing one; that ought never to be forgotten nor omitted. For there is really no death; nothing that is a ceasing of life is possible; and there is no reason why you should not love and pray for your friends on the other side of death as much as you have done while they were still with you, for, though invisible, they have not passed out of reach. Now for about six and thirty hours after the actual moment of death a man stays in a condition of happy but dreamy consciousness. I mean by that, he is not conscious of anything around him, neither in this world nor on the other side, wrapped rather in what you would call dreams — the weariness of the sickness over, perfectly comfortable, happy and content. There is that pause between this world and the next, lasting for this brief space of mortal hours. After that, different, **[Page 10]** will be the experiences of the one who has passed on, according to the life which has closed upon earth. The easiest way to make this clear is to classify, however roughly, those who pass on. Take the lowest human type, the savage, the congenital criminal, the man of very violent, uncontrolled passions, the man whose only enjoyments here have been in the gratification of the appetites of the body. You have there a great class of human beings whose experiences — and there is no object in hiding it — are of a painful and distressing kind. It could not be otherwise, if you think for a moment, in a world where law is changeless and where the effect follows the cause in inviolable sequence. What could happen to a man, all of whose pleasures are connected with the physical world, when the physical body is struck away from him by death, when all the passions remain, but gratification is no longer possible? What can happen save a painful craving for the banished pleasures, a suffering from the desires that no longer can be gratified, a passionate desire again to feel the feelings which on earth represented the only form of happiness he knew, and an equally great disappointment and frustration when he finds that those pleasures are now beyond his grasp? That is what all the stories of the different hells of different religions have been built upon, but by their exaggeration they have destroyed their utility. Law is law. The drunkard and the profligate, victims of insatiable desires, must inevitably suffer on the other side of death until those desires are worn out by

literal starvation, by the lack of the food which in the physical body could be supplied. It is no punishment inflicted, it is an inevitable sequence; no arbitrary penalty of an angry God, but the working out of that most merciful, though just, law of nature, that a man shall reap according to his sowing, and, by the reaping of the [Page 11] harvest, shall learn the wisdom or unwisdom of the planting of the seed.

There comes out the difference between the endless and the temporary hell, for I do not mind if you choose to use the word. Suffering in a world of law is remedial. By suffering, nature teaches us the things that we ought not to do. The things that injure us, physically, morally, mentally, they are all accompanied by suffering, whether in this world or any other. The profligate, though he may gain pleasure for a time, pays the price of that pleasure in his ruined nerves, in his shattered body, even in this life, and on this side of the grave. So, on the other side, he reaps the similar penalty of continuing desires that he cannot gratify. But the moment that the desires are exhausted, he passes onwards free from the suffering that he made for himself, and the scourge of his vices, created by himself, ceases to give him pain when the vice is exhausted by disuse. There it is that the man learns the lesson that it is an evil thing to lead the passion-life of the brute when grown into human form. There he learns his earliest lessons, that it is not worth while to be the slave of his vices, of his passions. He is forced to conquer them by the conditions around him, and he grows in knowledge by the inevitable sequence of pain. Others you may find there also of brutal and violent character, always learning a lesson which on earth they refused to learn; and you find in some of the old religions, where these facts were well known, that the ordering of the man's life here was made so that he might not suffer there; and in the ordering of the man's life, men were always recommended and commanded to give up, after they reach old age, the ordinary pleasures of the world, to turn more to thought than to physical pleasures, more to study, meditation, and [Page 12] prayer than to worldly interests, preparing for themselves, deliberately, things that, they can carry on to the other side, so that, passing through death, they might have left their passions behind them, and have carried on pure emotions and noble thoughts.

Now after that stage of the after-death life, a stage which is a stage of suffering, there is one possibility that might well be avoided, which sometimes causes suffering at the present time. Thought on that side is much more powerful than it is here, and the things that you believe on this side, are forms and forces that you meet with on the next. That is the real mischief now of the preaching, in some of the narrower forms of Christianity, of that old doctrine of everlasting suffering. It causes terror on the other side. It creates occasionally for those victims some hours or days of suffering, partly due to terror, partly due to the manufacture of the very horrors that they dread. One of the experiences that some of us have had in going about among the people on the other side has been the finding occasionally of some unlearned but earnest Christian who has believed in that terrible doctrine of hell, while still he was living here. We have found him in a state of terror, afraid of a doom that he has believed to be possible. Let me give you one case which will show you how vivid it may be — not the case of believing in hell, but a very practical case of a woman who was burnt to death in the cabin of a ship. You can imagine what such a person would endure in the moments before death, as it was coming upon her before she knew she could not escape, a horror, a terror. With the flames gathering around her in that lonely cabin, fighting as she did for life — as could be seen by her body when it was discovered too late to save — she went out of the body in a [Page 13] passion of terror, an agony of fear. Two of us found her on the other side surrounded by flames that her own imagination had created, suffering under that imagination, and still in the terror of death. So profound was that terror, so frantic her agony, that it was some hours before it was possible to comfort her and to persuade her to look round and see that there was nothing around her which could injure or terrify. I mention that particular case in order to make you see, as it were, for a moment the harm that may be done by lurid descriptions of terrors of what may happen on the other side of death. People who

go out of the world with those in their mind do for a time suffer the very terrors that they fear; not for long, happily, for there are many on the other side whose work it is continually to help those who have passed on, to make them know that there is no fear, no terror, which need thus torture them when the body has been left behind. But I would urge upon every one who uses the power of the tongue to teach religion, not to use those terrors against the sinner, for they are creating the hell that for a brief while may torture, until the baseless imagination has been shown to be the nullity that it is. So much trouble is caused there, so much unnecessary suffering, that you cannot wonder if some of us who have to undo the mischief on the other side, try as far as we can to argue against it here.

Those who go into the other world by sudden death — by suicide, by accident — are the people who need most, on the other side, the care of those who help; and the great intelligences, whom you speak of as angels, have, as part of their work, the helping and the comforting of those who, flung suddenly out of the one life into another, find themselves as strangers [Page 14] on the other side of death. It is because of the shock of such a sudden departure that you find in the Litany of the Church of England the prayer to be saved from sudden death. I have often heard people nowadays say that they cannot use that prayer with any reality of feeling, that they think it would be better to pass out suddenly and have no warning of the approach of the death hour. Not so is the opinion of all those who know the conditions on the other side. Far better the illness, in which the clinging to life is gradually loosened, than the sudden shock of the flinging of the intelligence out of the body into that other world with all the suddenness which stuns and bewilders, and the marvel that sometimes terrifies the unprepared newcomer to that world. Sudden death is a thing not desirable from the standpoint of all who know, and that old Christian prayer is based on occult knowledge.

I have often been asked what is the fate of the suicide. There is no answer you can give to that, because the fate depends on the life that has gone before, and not simply on the sudden act that has closed that life on earth. Where a man who has wronged others tries by suicide to escape from the results of the wrong that he has done, kills himself to, say, escape prosecution for embezzlement or anything of that sort, his life on the other side is certainly unhappy, but rather for the wrong that preceded than, for the act that slew the body. Where a man has caused much misery, wretchedness, by any form of human fraud or trickery, and then strikes away the body because he cannot face the results of what he has done, he escapes nothing. Helpless on the other side, he sees the misery that he has wrought. Unable to assist, tormented by the sight of the harm he has done, he has only injured himself by the hasty [Page 15] striking away of the body. He finds himself face to face with all the pain he has caused, with the sin and the misery of the victims he may have reduced to poverty, and who surround him by angry thoughts. It is the most foolish of actions to strike away the body, for he thereby only renders himself more helpless. Nothing is escaped thereby. There is only greater intensification of the sorrow. But in the case of a suicide who by bitter suffering or despair has practically lost control over his mind, who acts not with thought, but thoughtlessly, whirled away perhaps by a wave of despair that he is unable to breast, there the result of the action is naturally not so terrible, for it is suffering and not crime which has led up to the rash act of suicide. But in every case where the body is struck away, be it by self-inflicted death or accident, the man is not dead in the ordinary sense of the term—I mean as he would be if he had lived out his cycle of years upon earth. He has to live that out on the other side. Only, the conditions are less favourable there than here. It is the life on earth without a physical body, tied, as it were, to earth, and unable to leave it until the hour comes for which the body was built, the natural time of death. Hence in all cases suicide is an act of folly, the putting oneself at a greater disadvantage rather than the getting away from difficulty and suffering, and the only cases in which there is merely a peaceful sleep upon the other side in the case of suicide is where the mind has really been unhinged by pain, and no moral

responsibility can attach itself to the rash act that ends the life.

The experiences on the other side, again, bear directly on the infliction of capital punishment here. No greater folly, as well as crime, than to send the criminal out of this world into the next by the act of **[Page 16]** law. It is not only that you throw away the chance of helping, the chance of training, the chance of reforming, but you do the maddest of all mad things — you set free a malignant intelligence that here you could, keep from doing harm to his fellows. Your criminal who has committed a murder is helpless while you hold him under restraint, but if you strike away the body, how can you control him on the other side ? It is men of that sort who have given rise to the ideas of devils tempting and urging others to sin. Those men, furious at the act that has ended their lives, hating society, and longing for revenge, they it is who only too often push weaker criminals into similar crimes. Often the bad harvest of the gallows is a number of similar crimes taking place in the community that sends the murderer to his doom. It is not without significance that the countries that have abolished the death penalty are those where murder takes place the least often. Switzerland is such a country, but murder is the rarest of crimes thereof. Where you hang for murder, you practically *make* temptation and instigation to murder, round the place where the murderer's body was struck off. Hence, from the study of other-world conditions we learn a lesson for the improvement of our treatment of criminals here.

But pass from that worst side of human life, and take the average human being, man or woman — not a high type for a moment, a low but not a sinful type the type that you get by hundreds and thousands among yourselves — the men whose only pleasures outside the work by which they win a livelihood are the pleasures of the race-course, the pleasures of the music-hall, the pleasures which can only be enjoyed in the body, and which do nothing to stimulate the mind nor to gratify the loftier emotions, those **[Page 17]** whose amusements are trivial, childish, depending for their interest on the mere changing of money. Or take the women whose lives are as trivial as those of the men, who find their greatest pleasure in fashion or in idling. What can you do with those people on the other side of death, when you come to think how much of them is left ? All their life has gone into their bodies. All their interests have to do with physical things. They have no intellectual pleasures, no artistic pleasures nor pleasure of the higher emotions. Clothes, fashion, games, these are the things alone in which they take a lively interest, and these things do not go on to the other side of death. Now, those people do not suffer in the sense of any keenness of suffering. It is a dull, grey, unhappy life for the time until the higher side of them awakens and begins to show activity in that other world. To put it colloquially, they are very much bored. There is no word that expresses their condition better. You meet them wandering about discontented, grumbling, fretful, complaining — not actually suffering, as I said before, but finding life so grey as to be almost intolerable. Now, there is a certain value in knowing that beforehand. It is no good knowing it only when you get there. If you know it beforehand you can provide against it and the provision against it is simple enough. Measure your amusements as well as your work, and let some of them at least be of a nature that death is unable to destroy. I am not speaking against the taking of pleasure. All human beings need some pleasure and some amusement, and most of all those whose work is laborious and of the nature of drudgery. They do need pleasure in order to brighten their lives here. But is it necessary that the pleasure should be of such an unspeakably stupid character ? That is the point that you want to think **[Page 18]** about. Take music. Music is a thing which stirs emotions that you can carry on to the other side of death, that you may utilise there in many of the forms of noblest pleasure. Then why not here have the music that raises a little, rather than the music that degrades ? It need not be of too difficult a kind; it need not be what would be called classical music, interesting only to the musician; it may be a noble ballad; it may be a song carrying with it some high sentiment or pure emotion, something better than the miserable patter which is what you may hear in many of the music-hall songs, drivel which is not fit for

rational people to listen to at all. Now that is one of the practical points that come out of the study of the other-world conditions. Make part of your amusements at least form that portion of your nature which you carry on to the other side. Have some taste, some hobby, if you will, which you find interesting, something that cultivates and refines, without being too much of a strain upon the brain that may be already tired with the day's toil, but something which appeals to the real human part of you, and not only to the mere physical part. And that will be something to carry on to the other side, and to make you on that other side contented and happy by the resources that you have within yourself.

You find many of those who have passed onwards who are still in the higher regions of the intermediate world with which I have been dealing, many a man whose interests are large, those who love their community, who love their town, or love their country. These men carry on into the intermediate world subjects of interest and powers of usefulness as well. A statesman, or the politician who has been honourable and serviceable, the man who has loved the people and tried to serve them — his utility is not ended [Page 19] when death strikes away the body. In that higher world he can still work for the causes that he loved, still inspire others with the enthusiasm that moved him here. He carries on his interests and his powers, and is able to work for others on the other side of death.

So in making up your life here, have some larger interests, some care for the common good, some thought for the common welfare, some larger self than the self that is limited by the body, and then, as you pass onwards, life will grow wider not narrower, richer not poorer, fuller of happy activity instead of being deprived of it, for you build here your life on the other side and carry with you the materials for it.

Let us leave the intermediate world and pass on into the heavenly, that heavenly world which is the world of growth, which is the world of swifter evolution. And all men pass on into that heavenly world, even the poorest in virtue, the lowest in intelligence. That lowest class of which I spoke at first, who inevitably pass through the experience of suffering, grow out of it and pass on into the heavenly world, for only a short stay, I grant, for the material they take with them is small. Never a seed of good, either in emotion or in thought, that is lost to the soul that experienced it, that does not find its flowering-place on the other side of death. Now, in that heavenly world we also find lives differing according to the lives which here were led — all happy, but happy in different measures, according to the greatness of the capacity for happiness. None but is as happy as he can be, through all the days of his heaven-life, his capacity to receive always full, but the amount of the capacity varying from one to another. And first you find in [Page 20] the heaven-world a perfect satisfaction for all the loves and the affections of the world you are in today. Never a tie of love that is broken by death, never a tie of affection that does not find in the heaven-world its realisation. Love on earth is sometimes frustrated, but in heaven it finds the crown which here it failed to win. People ask sometimes: " Shall we know each other in heaven ? Shall we there meet our dear ones ? " What would heaven be unless the loved ones of earth found there their reuniting, or if one who was beloved here was left outside? The circle of love must be complete, and so we find it is. None are missing whom here we loved, none are away from us whom here we cherished. If you think for a moment, you will see how reasonable that is. For you do not love only the bodies; you love the immortal spirits of those who are dear to you. A mother loves her son. But he changes from the babe that she nursed in her arms to the man who, in her old age, is her support and consolation. The babe and the man are very different in body, but always the son is there, and it is the son, and not the body, that the mother loves, though the body may be dear for the son's sake; and her son is ever with her in that heavenly world. So again with all others, with every tie that here on earth might seem to be broken. Have you a friend from whom misunderstanding has parted you ? Have you a friend who has turned against

you, though once he loved you ? Have you some friend who has forgotten you, or, worse than that, has returned your love with coldness and your helpfulness with ingratitude ? Never mind. Keep on loving, though he has ceased to love. Pour out love unstintingly, though he has turned his back upon you. For in the heavenly world you will re-win the friend whom here you seemed to lose. Keep the love tie unbroken, and it will knit you each to each again in the heavenly world. [Page 21]

All, then, of our higher emotions find in heaven their intensification and their bliss. But not love only which unites heart to heart, as friend or relative; the love of mankind, that nobler, grander love which spreads itself out in service and endeavours to lift and help the race, that great love of man, often frustrated here on earth for lack of power and lack of opportunity, that love comes back to you in heaven and grows into the power of service that in this life you lacked. That is the wonderful alchemy of heaven. Every hope and every affection, every thought and every aspiration, these are the materials of the heaven-world out of which you build your nature and gradually evolve it towards perfection.

I have said to you elsewhere that thought creates, but the creative power of thought is at its highest and its greatest in the heavenly world. Not one noble aspiration, not one pure and lofty thought, not one passing flash of longing to help and serve, but in the, heaven-world you shall find it again, to weave it into the garment, of the spirit with which you shall be reborn again to serve on earth. Heaven is the growing-place for all the seeds which here we are planting. The harvest of the heaven-world depends on the richness and the nature of the seeds which here you sow, and if you would have your heaven full and rich, if there you would evolve more rapidly than here, then, think nobly and highly, love purely and largely, and all that experience here upon earth shall turn into power and faculty in heaven.

That is the bearing of the knowledge of the life after death on life here. It is no idle folly, no useless, pleasant imagining. You work out here that which, in the other worlds, you shall enjoy and utilise. When you understand that, or begin to understand it, you change your life here and make it more a [Page 22] preparation for a long life of heaven for remember that life here is but like the dip of the diving bird into the sea, out of the free air of heaven down into the ocean. It dives for a moment to catch the food it requires. So each of you, heaven-born, not earth-born, plunges from the heavenly life down into the earthly to carry back the experience you gather to your heavenly home. That is the use of the earthly life, to give the experience that in heaven you will build into character and power, to gather the seeds of the harvest that there you will reap, to make possible here the richness and the glory of a long heavenly life. When you know it, you will not let a day go by that does not sow some seed for the heavenly reaping. A little reading of great books, a little coming into touch with the great minds of the race, the communing with those who have left behind them the mighty literature of the past, these are the affinities that in the heavenly world realise themselves. Here you may have small chance of going among the greatest and the most thoughtful of your race. Never mind, you can pick here the company that in the heavenly world you will enjoy, and if you study here the writings of a Plato, the writings of any great thinker of the past, the writings of the great authors of our own time — Emerson, Ruskin, take whom you will — these studies of yours make links, which, in the heaven-world, will reassert themselves, and you shall know as teachers there the souls whose writings you have studied as loving pupils here. That is the way in which heaven and earth are linked together, that the vision in which the knowledge of the future enables us to make that future what here we determine that it shall be. Creators of your own destiny, you can make it as you will. On that side you cannot begin. You must begin here what there you shall continue. [Page 23] As these facts gradually become real to us, as by reiterated investigation and constant study we find out more and more that these worlds are all linked together, parts of a single life, continued, unbroken, life

here becomes irradiated with the light of that fuller life, and earth becomes more beautifully illumined by the light of heaven. You are really in your higher spiritual nature living in heaven all the time, only earth's noises deafen you to the subtler music of the heavenly worlds. It is round you always. Heaven's inhabitants mingle with your grosser earthly life, heaven's music breathes around you, heaven's light shines about you, you who are natives and citizens of heaven, deaf and blind to your own country, and to the messages it is breathing to your souls. Your lives might be so much fuller, so much richer, so much happier, if only you would open the higher senses and not cling so passionately to the grosser forms of earth, but realise those belonging to your birthplace, which is really your true home.

An old teacher once said, when he was asked by his heavenly comrades what he thought of earth: "A happy land for those who can forget their birthplace"; but there is a happier land for those who remember their birthplace; a stronger, higher happiness for those who realise more lives than one. All the prophets who have known heaven and talked on earth, all the Divine revealers who have lifted a little corner of the veil and taught their followers the realities of the greater life, bear witness to the reality of the life on the other side of death, to its being a continuance of the life that here we are leading. If you study your lives here, mark your faculties, judge your amusements and your business here, you can forecast what your life shall be upon the other side. Make it what **[Page 24]** it should be, full of the power of evolution, full of the certainty of growth, full of the splendour of the divine potentialities within you. Then earth shall also become heaven, and the two shall mingle in your lives, and those around you who know not of that glory, those around you who still are blinded by the earth, shall catch from the beauty of your lives something of the promise of the life immortal, and you shall bring to the deafened ears of earth some of those melodies of heaven which shall have become the music of your own lives.