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Love in Christ by His Grace
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WITHIN HEAVEN'S GATES

BY: REBECCA SPRINGER

INDEX

CHAPTER 1 - THE JOURNEY BEGINS

A VISION
LEAVING THE EARTH-LIFE
ENTERING PARADISE
THE RIVER OF LIFE

CHAPTER 2 - MY CELESTIAL HOME

REBECCA'S MANSION IN HEAVEN
DIVINE ARTISTRY
BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

CHAPTER 3 - THE PARADISE LIFE

REBECCA'S SPECIAL ROOM
DEVINE FRUIT
REUNITED WITH HER FAMILY

CHAPTER 4 - MEETING LOVED ONES

ANOTHER REUNION
A TRIP TO THE LAKE
HEAVEN'S GOLDEN GLORY
CELESTIAL MUSIC
NO ANXIETY!

CHAPTER 5 - MEETING THE MASTER

A DELIGHTFUL VISIT
IN THE MASTER'S PRESENCE
GLORIOUS SOLITUDE
HEAVENLY PRAISES

CHAPTER 6 - A CHILD'S HOMECOMING

COMFORT FOR THOSE WHO MOURN
THE GLORY OF HIS PRESENCE
HIS DIVINE COMPASSION

CHAPTER 7 - A DIVINE SPEECH

MARTIN LUTHER LECTURES
THE GLORY OF THE LORD
THE SAVIOR SPEAKS

CHAPTER 8 - REBECCA MEETS HER SISTER

A SPECIAL REUNION
A SISTER COMES HOME
A PRECIOUS MOMENT
A HEAVENLY YOUTHFULNESS

CHAPTER 9 - A VISIT WITH A SPECIAL FRIEND

A JOURNEY TO THE FAR SHORE
LEARNING A DIVINE ART

CHAPTER 10 - A VISIT TO THE HEAVENLY CITY

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM
A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE
ENTERING THE CITY
ALL WORSHIP IN HARMONY
MORE HEAVENLY JOY

CHAPTER 11 - THE TEMPLE

THE THRONE OF GLORY
ENTERING THE TEMPLE
THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING
THE JOURNEY HOME

CHAPTER 12 - MEETING SPECIAL FRIENDS

RENEWING OLD TIES
ANOTHER REUNION

CHAPTER 13 - A REUNION OF MOTHER AND SON

A WAYWARD SON
MOTHER LOVE

CHAPTER 14 - THE BEST REUNION OF ALL

GOOD NEWS
A COMFORTING VISIT
THE SECRET OF MARRIAGE
A GLAD SONG
A FAMILY REUNION

CHAPTER 15 - THE CELESTIAL SEA

THE GLORY OF IT ALL!
WONDERFUL REUNIONS

CHAPTER 16 - THE VISION ENDS

CHAPTER 17 - REFLECTIONS

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE VISION
A STRANGE JOURNEY
MISSIONARIES IN HEAVEN
THE MEANING OF THE VISION
OVERFLOWING WITH PURE WATER

This volume is not a fancy sketch, written to while away the hours. Rather, it is the true, though greatly condensed, record of an experience when my life hung in the balance between time and eternity, with the scales leaning toward the eternity side.

I am painfully aware of the fact that I can never paint the scenes as they appeared to me during those wonderful days. If I can only dimly show the close the two lives - the mortal and the divine - as they appeared to me then, I may be able to partially tear the veil from the death we so dread. Thus I can show it to be an open door into a new and beautiful phase of the life we now live.

I must state that this glorious vision of heaven is not necessarily a definitive or exact revelation of what heaven will be like. As I learned, heaven partially consists of those things which make us happiest on earth - wonderfully glorified by the presence of the Mater. In this respect, my vision is not everyone's vision.

If any of the scenes depicted seem irreverent in view of our Christian training here, I can only say, "I give it as it came to me." In those strange, happy hours, the close bending of the two lives, so wrapped about with the Father's watchful care and tender love, filled me with unspeakable joy. The reunion of friends, the satisfied desires, and the glad surprises - all intensified and illuminated by the reverence, love, and adoration that all hearts gave to the blessed Trinity - appeared to me as a most perfect glimpse of that "Blessed life" of which we so fondly dream. I submit this imperfect sketch of a most perfect vision with the hope that it may comfort and uplift those who read it.

R.R.S.

CHAPTER 1 - THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Several hundred miles away from home and friends, I had been very ill for many weeks. I was entirely among strangers, and my only attendant, though a kind person; know nothing about caring for the ill. As a result, I had none of the many delicate attentions which maintain an invalid's failing strength. I have received no nourishment of any kind for nearly three weeks, scarcely even water, and was greatly reduced in both flesh and strength. Consciousness seemed to wholly desert me at times.

I had an unutterable longing for the presence of my distant loved ones. I needed the gentle touch of their beloved hands and their whispered words of love and courage. But, they never came - they could not. Responsible duties, that I felt must not be neglected, kept these loved ones away, and would not recall them.

I lay in a large, comfortable room, on the second floor of a house in Kentville, Canada. The bed stood in an alcove at one end of the apartment and faced a large, stained-glass window which opened upon a veranda overlooking the street. During much of my illness I lay with my face to this window and my back to the room. I remember thinking how easy it would be to pass through the window to the veranda, if one so desire.

When the longing for the loved faces and voices became more than I could bear, I prayed that the dear Christ would help me to realize His blessed presence. Since the beloved ones of earth could not minister to me, I longed to be comforted by other dear ones who are "all ministering spirits."

I especially asked to be sustained should I indeed be called to pass through the dark waters alone. It was no idle prayer, and the presence came swiftly, speedily. All anxieties and care slipped away from me, as a worn-out garment, and peace, Christ's peace, enfolded me. I was willing to wait God's time for the coming of those so dear to me and often said to myself, "If not here, it will be there. There is no fear of disappointment there."

In those wonderful days of agonized suffering and great peace, I felt that I had truly found, as never before, the refuge of "the Everlasting Arms." They lifted me; they upheld me; they enfolded me. I rested in them as a tired child upon its mother's bosom.

One dark, cold, and stormy morning, after a day and night of intense suffering, I seemed to be standing on the floor by the bed, in front of the stained-glass window. Someone was standing beside me. When I looked up, I saw it was my husband's favorite brother who had "crossed the flood" many year ago.

"My dear brother-in-law Frank!" I cried out joyously, "how good of you to come!"

"It was a great joy to me that I could do so, little sister", he said gently. "Shall we go now?" and he drew me toward the window.

LEAVING THE EARTH-LIFE

I turned my head and looked back into the room that I felt I was about to leave forever. It was in its usual good order; a cheery, pretty room. The attendant sat by the stove at the farther end, comfortably reading a newspaper. On the bed, turned toward the window, lay a white, still form with the shadow of a smile on the poor, worn face. Frank drew me gently, and I yielded. I went with him through the window, out onto the veranda, and from there, in some unaccountable way, down to the street. There I paused and said earnestly, "I cannot leave Will and our dear boy."

"They are not here, dear, but hundreds of miles away," he answered.

"Yes, I know, but they will be here. Oh, Frank, they will need me - let me stay!"

"Would it not be better if I brought you back a little later - after they come?"

"Would you surely do so?"

"Most certainly, if you desire it. You are worn out with the long suffering, and a little rest will give you new strength."

I felt that he was right, so we started slowly up the street. He had drawn my hand within his arm and tried to distract me as we walked. But my heart clung to the dear ones whom I felt I was not to see again on earth. Several times I stopped and looked wistfully back the way we had come. He was very patient and gentle with me, always waiting until I was ready to proceed again. At last my hesitation became so great that he said pleasantly, "You are so weak I think I had better carry you."

Without waiting for a reply, he stooped and lifted me in his arms as though I were a little child. And, like a child, I yielded, resting my head on his shoulder and laying my arm around his neck. I felt so safe, so content, to be in his care. It seemed so sweet, after the long, lonely struggle, to have someone assume the responsibility of caring this tenderly for me

He walked on with firm, swift steps. I think I must have slept, for the next I know, I was sitting in a sheltered nook, made by flowering shrubs. I was resting upon the softest and most beautiful turf of grass, thickly studded with fragrant flowers. Many of them were flower I had known and loved on earth. I remember noticing heliotrope, violets, lilies of the valley, and mignonette, with many similar species wholly unfamiliar to me.

But, even in that first moment, I observed how perfect each plant and flower was. For instance, the heliotrope, which on earth often runs into long, ragged sprays, there grew upon short, smooth stems. Each leaf was perfect and smooth and glossy, instead of being rough and coarse-looking. The flowers peeped up from the deep grass, so like velvet, with sweet, happy faces, as though inviting the admiration one would not withhold.

What a scene I beheld as I rested upon this soft, fragrant cushion, secluded and yet not hidden! Away, away - far beyond the limit of my vision - stretched this wonderful field of perfect grass and flowers. Out of it grew equally wonderful trees, whose drooping branches were laden with exquisite blossoms and fruits of many kinds. I found myself thinking of John's vision in the Isle of Patmos and "the tree of life" that grew in the midst of the garden, bearing "twelve manner of fruits... and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2).

Beneath the trees, in many happy groups, little children were laughing and playing. They were running around filled with joy and catching bright-winged birds that flitted in and out among them, as though sharing in their sports. All through the grounds, older people were walking with an air of peacefulness and happiness that made itself felt even by me, a stranger. All were clothed in spotless white, though many wore or carried clusters of beautiful flowers. As I looked at their happy faces and their spotless robes, again I thought, "These are they... which have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

Everywhere I looked, I saw, half-hidden by the trees, elegant and beautiful houses of strangely attractive architecture. I felt these must be the homes of the happy inhabitants of this enchanted place. I caught glimpses of sparkling fountains in many directions, and close to me a placid River flowed with water clear as crystal. The walks that ran in many directions through the grounds appeared to be made of pearl, spotless, and pure, bordered on either side by narrow streams of clear water, running over stones of gold.

The one thought that fastened itself upon me as I looked, breathless and speechless, upon this scene was, "Purity, purity!" There was no shadow of dust, no taint of decay on fruit or flower. Everything was perfect: everything was pure. The grass and flowers looked as though they were freshly washed by summer showers, and not a single blade was any color but the brightest green. The air was soft and balmy, though invigorating. Instead of sunlight there was a golden and rosy glory everywhere. It resembled the afterglow of a southern sunset in midsummer.

As I drew in my breath with a short, quick gasp of delight, I heard my brother-in-law, who was standing beside me, say softly. "Well?" Looking up, I discovered that he was watching me with keen enjoyment. I had, in my great surprise and delight, wholly forgotten his presence.

Recalled to myself by his question, I faltered, "Oh, Frank, that I - : when such an overpowering sense of God's goodness and my own unworthiness swept over me. I dropped my face into my hand and burst into uncontrollable and very human weeping.

"Ah!" said my brother-in-law, in a tone of self-reproach, "I am inconsiderate." He lifted me gently to my feet. "Come, I want to show you the River."

When we reached the brink of the River, a few steps away, I found that the lovely field ran even to the water's edge. In some places I saw the flowers blooming placidly down in the depths, among the many-colored pebbles with which the entire bed of the River was lined.

"I want you to see these beautiful stones," said Frank, stepping into the water and urging me to do the same.

I drew back timidly, "I fear it is cold."

"Not in the least," he said, with a reassuring smile. "Come."

"Just as I am?" I said, glancing down at my lovely robe, which, to my great joy, I found was similar to those of the dwellers in that happy place.

"Just as you are," with another reassuring smile.

Thus encouraged, I, too, stepped into the gently flowing River. To my great surprise I found the water, in both temperature and density, almost identical to the air. Deeper and deeper grew the stream as we passed on, until I felt the soft, sweet ripples playing about my through. As I stopped, Frank said, "A little farther still."

"It will be over my head," I reasoned.

"Well, and what then?"

"I cannot breath under the water - I will suffocate."

An amused twinkle came into his eyes, though he said soberly enough, "We do not do those things here."

I realized the absurdity of my position and with a happy laugh said, "All right: Then I plunged headlong into the bright water, which soon bubbled and rippled several feet above my head. To my surprise and delight, I found I could breath, laugh, talk, see, and hear as naturally under the water as above it. I sat down in the midst of the many-colored pebbles and filled my hands with them as a child would have done. My brother-in-law lay down upon them, as he would have done on the green field, and laughed and talked joyously with me.

"Do this," he said, rubbing his hands over his face and running his fingers through his dark hair.

I did as he told me, and the sensation was delightful. I threw back my loose sleeves and rubbed my arms, then my throat. Again I thrust my fingers through my long, loose hair, thinking at the time how tangled it would be when I left the water. Then the thought came, as we at last arose to return, "What are we to do for towels?" for the earth-thoughts still clung to me. I also wondered if the lovely robe was entirely spoiled. But, as we neared the shore and emerged from the water, the moment the air struck my face and hair I realized that I would not need a towel or brush. My flesh, my hair, and even my beautiful garments were soft and dry as before the water touched them.

The material out of which my robe was fashioned was unlike anything I had ever seen. It was soft and light and shone with a faint luster, reminding me more of silk crepe than anything I could recall, only infinitely more beautiful. It fell about me in soft, graceful holds, which the water seemed to have rendered even more lustrous than before.

"What marvelous water! What wonderful air!" I said to Frank, as we again stepped upon the flowery field. "Are all the rivers here life this one?"

"Not exactly the same, but similar," he replied.

We walked on a few steps, and then I turned and looked back at the shining River flowing on tranquilly. "Frank, what has that water done for me? I feel as though I could fly."

He looked at me with earnest, tender eyes, as he answered gently, "IT has washed away the last of the earth-life and prepared you for the new life upon which you have entered."

"It is divine!" I whispered.

"Yes, it is divine," he said.

CHAPTER 2 - MY CELESTIAL HOME

We walked on for some distance in silence, my heart wrestling with the thoughts of the new, strange life, my eyes drinking in fresh beauty at every step. The house, as we approached and passed them, seemed wondrously beautiful to me. They were built of the finest marbles and were encircled by broad verandas. The roofs or domes were supported by either massive or delicate columns.

Winding steps led down to pearl and golden walks. The style of the architecture was unlike anything I had ever seen. The flowers and vines that luxuriously grew everywhere surpassed in beauty even those of my brightest dreams. Happy faces looked out from these columned walls, and happy voices rang through the clear air from many a celestial home.

"Frank, where are we going?" I asked.

"Home, little sister," he answered tenderly.

"Home? Do we have a home? Is it anything like these?" I asked, with a great desire in my heart to cry out for joy.

REBECCA'S MANSION IN HEAVEN

"come and see," was his only answer, as he turned onto a side path leading toward an exquisitely beautiful house whose columns of very light gray marble shone through the green of the over-hanging trees with most inviting beauty. Before I could join him, I heard a familiar voice saying, "I just had to be the first to bid you welcome!" Looking around, I saw the beloved face of my dear friend, Mrs. Wickham.

"Oh! Oh!" I cried, as we met in a warm embrace.

"You will forgive me, Colonel Springer," she said a moment later, giving her hand cordially to my brother-in-law. "It seems unpardonable to intercept you thus, in almost the first hour. But I heard that she was coming, and I could not wait. Now that I have looked upon her face and heard her dear voice, I will be patient until I can have her for a long, long talk,"

"You must come in and see her new," said Frank cordially.

"Do, do come!" I urged.

"No, dear friends, not now. You know, dear little Blossom" (the old pet name for me years ago), "we have all eternity before us! But you will bring her to me soon, Colonel Springer?" she said.

"Just as soon as I may, dear madam," he replied with an expressive look into her eyes.

"Yes, I understand," she said softly. Then with a warm hand-clasp and the parting injunction, "come very soon," she passed swiftly out of my sight.

"Blessed woman!" I said, "what a joy to meet her again!"

"Her home is not far way. You can see her often. She is indeed a lovely woman. Now, come, little sister, I long to welcome you to our home." He took my hand and led me up the low steps onto the broad veranda. Its beautiful inlaid floor was of rare and costly marble, and its massive columns were silver-gray. Between the columns were vines covered with rich, glossy leaves of green intermingled with flowers of

exquisite color and delicate perfume hanging in heavy garlands. We paused a moment here, that I might see the charming view visible on every side.

"It is heavenly!" I said.

"It is heavenly," He answered. "It could not be otherwise."

I smiled my acknowledgment of this truth - my heart was too full for words.

"The entire house, both below and above, is surrounded by these broad verandas. But, come within."

DIVINE ARTISTRY

He led me through a doorway, between the marble columns, into a large reception hall whose inlaid floor, mullioned window, and broad, low stairway captivated me at once. Before I could speak, Frank turned to me and, taking both my hand, said, "Welcome, a thousand welcomes, dearest Rebecca, to your heavenly home!"

"Is this beautiful place indeed to be my home?" I asked.

"Yes, dear," he replied. "I built it for you and my brother, and I assure you it has been a labor of love."

"It is your home, and I am to stay with you?" I asked, a little confused.

"No, it is your home, and I am to stay with you until my brother comes."

"Always, dear Frank, always!" I cried, clinging to his arm.

He smiled and said, "We will enjoy the present. We never will be far apart again. Come, I am eager to show you all."

Turning to the left, he led me through the beautiful marble columns that substituted for doorways into a large, oblong room. I stopped in wondering delight upon the threshold. The entire walls and floor of the room were still made of that exquisite light gray marble, polished to the greatest luster. But over the walls and floors were strewn gorgeous, long-stemmed roses, of every variety and color, from the deepest crimson to the most delicate shades of pink and yellow.

"Come inside," said Frank.

"I do not wish to crush those perfect flowers," I answered.

"Well, then, suppose we gather some of them." I stooped to take one from the floor close to my feet. When I found it was embedded in the marble. I tried another with the same astonishing result. Then turning to Frank, I said, "What does it mean? You surely do not mean that none of these are natural flowers?"

He nodded his head with a pleased smile, then said, "This room has a history. Come in and sit with me here upon this window-seat, where you can see the whole room, and let me tell you about it." I did as he desired. He continued, "One day as I was busily working on the house, a company of young people, boys and girls, came to the door and asked if they might enter. I gladly consented. Then one of them said: "Is this house really for Mr. and Mrs. Springer?"

"It is," I answered.

"We used to know and love them. They are our friends and the friends of our parents. May we do something to help you make it beautiful?"

"Indeed you may," I said, touched by the request. "What can you do?"

"At once the girls, all of whom had immense bouquets of roses in their hands, began to toss the flowers over the floor and against the walls. Wherever they struck the walls, they, to even my surprise, remained, as though in some way permanently attached. When the roses had all been scattered, the room looked just as it does now, only then the flowers were fresh-gathered roses.

"Then the boys each produced a small case of delicate tools. In a moment they were all down upon the marble floor, busy at work. How they did it I do not know - it is one of the celestial arts, taught to those of highly artistic tastes - but they embedded each lignin flower just as it had fallen. They preserved it in the marble as you see before you. They came several times before the work was completed, for the flowers do not wither or fade here, but are always fresh and perfect.

"I never saw such a merry, happy company of young people. They laughed and chatted and sang as they worked. I could not help wishing more than once that the friends whom they had left mourning for them might look in on this happy group and see how little cause they had for sorrow.

"At last, when all was complete, they called me to see their work. And I was not sparse in my praises either for the beauty of the work or for their skill in performing it. Then, saying they would be sure to return when either of you came, they went away together to do similar work."

Happy tears had been streaming down my cheeks during much of this narrative. I asked, overcome with emotion for I was greatly touched, "Who are these lovely people, Frank? Do you know them?"

"Of course, I know them now. But they were all strangers to me until they came here that first morning, except Lulu Springer."

"Who were they?"

"There were three Marys - Mary Green, Mary Bates, and Mary Chalmers - Lulu Springer and Mae Camden. These were the girls, each lovely and beautiful. The boys, all manly, fine fellows, were Carroll Ashland and Stanley and David Chalmers."

BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

"Precious children!" I said. "How little I thought my earthly love for them would ever bring me this added happiness here! How little we know of the links binding the two worlds!"

"Ah, yes!" said Frank, "that is just it. How little we know! If only we realized while we are mortals that day by day we are building for eternity. How different our lives in many ways would be! Every gentle word, every generous thought, every unselfish deed will become a pillar of eternal beauty in the life to come. We cannot be selfish and unloving in one life and generous and loving in the next. The two lives are too closely blended - one is but a continuation of the other. But come now to the library."

Rising, we walked through the room that, from this moment on, was to hold for me such tender associations, and then we entered the library. It was a glorious room - the walls lined from ceiling to floor with rare and costly books. A large, stained-glass window opened upon the front veranda. A semicircular row of shelves, supported by very delicate pillars of gray marble, about six feet high, extend some fifteen feet into the spacious main room and cut it into two sections lengthwise. The concave side of the semicircle of shelves was toward the entrance of the room. Close to it stood a beautiful writing desk, with everything ready for use. There was a chaste golden bowl filled with scarlet carnations whose spicy odor I had been dimly conscious of for some time.

"My brother's desk," said Frank.

"And his favorite flowers," I added.

"Yes, that follows. Here we never forget the tastes and preferences of those we love."

I did not notice these details at once, but they unfolded to me gradually as we lingered, talking together. My first sensation upon entering the room was genuine surprise at the sight of the books.

"Why do we have books in heaven?" I asked.

"Why not?" asked my brother-in-law. "What strange ideas we mortals have of the pleasures and duties of this blessed life! We seem to think that death of the body means an entire change to the soul. But that is not the case, by any means. We bring to this life the same tastes, the same desires, and the same knowledge we had before death. If these were not sufficiently pure and good to form a part of this life, then we ourselves may not enter.

"What would be the use of our long lives, given to the pursuit of certain worthy and legitimate knowledge, if at death it all counts as nothing, and we begin this life on a wholly different line of thought and study? No, no.

"If only we all could understand, as I said before, that we are building for eternity during our earthly life! The purer the thoughts, the nobler the ambitious, the loftier the aspirations the higher the rank we take among the host of heaven. The more earnestly we follow the studies and duties in our life of probation, the better prepared we will be to carry them forward, on and on to completion and perfection here."

"But the books - who writes them? Are any of them books we knew and loved below?"

"Undoubtedly, many of them; all, indeed, that in any way helped to elevate the human mind or immortal soul. Many of the rarest minds in the earth-life, upon entering this higher life, gain such elevated and extended views that, pursuing them with zest, they write for the benefit of those less gifted. They express the higher, stronger views they have themselves acquired, thus remaining leaders and teachers in this rarer life, as they were while yet in the world.

"Is it to be expected that the great souls of those who have so recently joined our ranks, and who uplifted so many lives while on earth, should lay aside their pens? Not so. When they have learned their lessons well, they will write them out for the benefit of others, less gifted, who must follow. Leaders there must always be, in this divine life as in the former life, leaders and teachers in many varied lines of thought. But all this knowledge will come to you simply and naturally as you grow into this new life."

CHAPTER 3 - THE PARADISE LIFE

After a short rest in this lovely room among the books, Frank took me through all the remaining rooms of the house. Each was perfect and beautiful in its own way, and each was distinctly and imperishably etched in my memory. I will only speak of one other room at this time. As he drew aside the gauzy, gray draperies, lined with the most delicate shade of amber, which hung before the columned doorway of a lovely room on the second floor of the house, he said? "Your own special place for rest and study."

REBECCA'S SPECIAL ROOM

The entire second story of the house indoors, instead of being finished in gray marble like the first floor, was finished with inlaid woods of fine, satiny texture and rare polish. The room we now entered was exquisite both in design and finish. It was oblong in shape, with a large bowed window at one end, similar to those in the library, a portion of which was directly beneath this room.

Within this window, on one side, stood a writing desk of solid ivory, with silver ornaments. Opposite this was a case of well-filled bookshelves of the same material. Among the books I found many of my favorite authors.

Rich rugs, silver -gray in color, lay scattered over the floor, and all the hangings in the room were of the same delicate hue and texture as those at the entrance.

The framework of the furniture was made of ivory. The upholstering of chairs and ottomans was made of silver-gray cloth, with the finish made of finest satin. And the pillows and covering of the dainty couch were made of the same.

A large bowl of wrought silver stood upon the table near the front window, filled with pink and yellow roses. Their fragrance filled the air. There were also several rare, delicate vases filled with roses.

The entire room was beautiful beyond description. I had seen it many times before I fully comprehended its perfect completeness. My whole being was full of adoration and thanksgiving for the great love that had guided me into this haven of rest, this wonderful home of peace and joy.

DEVINE FRUIT

After visiting the delightful place, we passed through the open window onto the marble terrace. A stairway of artistically-finished marble wound gracefully down from this terrace to the lawn beneath the trees. There was no pathway of any kind approaching at its foot - only the flowery turf.

The fruit-laden branches of the trees hung within easy reach from the terrace, and I noticed seven different types of fruit as I stood there that morning. One kind resembled our fine Bartlett pear, only much larger and infinitely more delicious to the taste, as I soon found. Another variety was in clusters. Its fruit was also pear-shaped but smaller than the former and of a consistency and flavor similar to the finest frozen cream. A third, something like a banana in shape, they called bread-fruit. Its taste was similar to our dainty finger - rolls.

It seemed to me, and really proved to be so, that food for the most elegant feast was provided here without labor or care. Frank gathered some of the different varieties and invited me to try them. I did so with much relish and refreshment. Once the rich juice from the pear like fruit (whose distinctive name I have forgotten, if indeed I ever knew it) ran out profusely over my hands and down the front of my dress. "Oh!" I cried, "I have ruined my dress!"

Frank laughed as he said, "Show me the stains."

To my amazement not a spot could be found.

"Look at your hands," he said.

I found them clean and fresh, as though just from the bath.

"What does it mean? My hands were covered with the thick juice of the fruit."

"Simply," he answered, "that no impurity can remain for an instant in this air. Nothing decays, nothing tarnishes, or in any way disfigures or mars the universal purity or beauty of this place. As fast as the fruit ripens and falls, all that is not immediately gathered at once evaporates, not even the seed remaining."

I had noticed that no fruit lay beneath the trees - this, then, was the reason for it.

"And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth," I quoted thoughtfully (revelations 21:27).

"Yes, even so," he answered. "Even so."

REUNITED WITH HER FAMILY

We descended the steps and again entered the "flower-room." As I stood once more admiring the inlaid roses, Frank asked, "Whom, of all the friends you have in heaven, do you most wish to see?"

"My mother and father," I answered quickly.

He smiled so significantly that I hastily turned. There, advancing up the long room to meet me, I saw my dear father and mother and with them my youngest sister. With a cry of joy, I flew into my father's outstretched arms and heard his dear, familiar, "My precious little daughter!"

"At last! At last!" I cried, clinging to him. "At last I have you again!"

"At last!" he echoed, with a deep-drawn breath of joy. Then he resigned me to my dear mother, and we were soon clasped in each other's embrace.

"My precious mother!" "My dear, dear child!" we cried simultaneously. My sister, enfolding us both in her arms, exclaimed with a happy laugh, "I cannot wait! I will not be left out!" Disengaging one arm, I threw it about her into the happy circle of our united love.

Oh, what joy that was! I did not dream that even heaven could hold such joy. Eventually, Frank, who had shared our joy, said, "Now, I will leave you to this blessed reunion, for I have other work before me."

"Yes," said my father, "you must go. We will with joy take charge of our dear child."

"Then, good-bye," said Frank kindly. "Do not forget that rest, especially to one who recently entered this new life, is not only one of the pleasures, but one of the duties of heaven."

"Yes, we will see that she does not forget that," said my father, with a kindly smile and glance.

CHAPTER 4 - MEETING LOVED ONES

As I grew more accustomed to the heavenly life around me, I found its loveliness unfolded to me like the slow opening of a rare flower. Delightful surprises met me at every turn. A dear friend, from whom I had parted years ago in the earth-life, would come upon me unexpectedly, offering a cordial greeting. Another - perhaps greatly admired on earth, but one I had avoided from the fear of unwelcome intrusion - would approach me, showing their lovely soul so full of kindness that I felt a pang of regret for what I had lost.

Then the clear revelation of some truth, only partly understood in life, though eagerly sought for, would stand out clear and strong before me. It would overwhelm me with its luster and perhaps reveal the close tie linking the earth-life with the divine.

But the most wonderful surprise was the occasional meeting with someone whom I had never hoped to meet "over there." Someone who, with eager handclasp and tearful eyes, would pour forth his earnest thanks for some helpful word, solemn warning, or even a stern rebuke that had turned him, all unknown to myself, from the paths of sin into the "life everlasting." Oh, the joy of such a revelation! O h, the regret that my earth-life had not been more full of such work for eternity!

ANOTHER REUNION

My first impulse on arousing from happy, blissful rest was to rush to the "River of Life" and plunge into its wonderful waters, so refreshing, so invigorating, so inspiring. With a heart full of thanksgiving and lips full of joyful praise, I went there. I always returned to our home full of new life and hope and purpose.

Once, as I was on my way to the River, I saw a lovely young girl approaching me swiftly, with outstretched arms.

"Dear, dear Aunt Rebecca!" she called, as she drew near, "do you not know me?"

"My little Mae!" I cried, gathering the dainty creature into my arms. "Where did you spring from so suddenly, dear? Let me look at you again!" Holding her a moment at arm's length, I then drew her tenderly to me.

"You have grown very beautiful, my child. I may say this to you here without fear, I'm sure. You were always lovely. But you are simply radiant now. Is it this divine life?"

"Yes," she said modestly and sweetly. "But most of all it's being near the Savior so much."

"Ah, yes, that is it - being near Him! That will make any being radiant and beautiful," I said.

"He is so good to me - so generous, so tender! He seems to forget how little I have done to deserve His care."

"He knows you love Him, dear heart. That means everything to Him."

"Love Him? Oh, if loving Him deserves reward, I am sure I ought to have every wish of my heart, for I love Him more than anything in earth or heaven!"

The sweet face grew surpassingly radiant and beautiful as she talked, and I began to dimly understand the wonderful power of Christ among the redeemed in heaven. This dear child, so lovely in all mortal graces, so full of earth's keenest enjoyments during the whole of her brief life, now loved Christ more than anything else. Pure and good, as we count goodness below, yet she was seemingly too absorbed in life's gaieties to think deeply of the things she yet in her heart revered and honored. In this blessed life, she now esteemed the privilege of loving Christ, of being near Him, beyond every other joy!

How that love refined and beautified the giver! As a great earthy love always shines through the face and elevates the whole character of the one who loves, so this divine love uplifts and glorifies the giver. Then not only the face but the entire person radiates the glory that fills the heart.

A TRIP TO THE LAKE

"Come with me to the River, Mae," I said presently, after we had talked together. "Come with me for a delightful plunge."

"Gladly," she said, "but have you ever been to the lake or the sea?"

"The lake or the sea? No indeed. Are there a lake and sea here?"

"Certainly there are," said Mae, with a little pardonable pride that she should know more of the heavenly surroundings than I. "Shall we go to the lake and leave the sea for another time? Which will it be?"

"Let it be the lake," I said.

So, turning in an entirely different direction from the path that led to the River, we walked joyously on, still talking as we went. So much to ask, so much to recall, so much to look forward to with joy!

Once she turned to me and asked quickly, "When is my Uncle Will coming?"

My hand closed tightly over hers, and a sob almost rose in my throat though I answered calmly, "That is in God's hand alone. We may not question."

"Yes, I know. His will is always right. But I so long to see my dear uncle again. And to long is not to be discontent."

She had grown so womanly, so wise, this child of tender years, since we parted. It was truly a joy to talk with her. I told her of my journey from earth and the sorrow of the dear ones I had left.

"Yes, yes, I know it all!" she whispered, with her soft arms about me. "But it will not be long to wait. They will come soon. It never seems long to wait for anything here. There is always so much to keep one busy; there are so many pleasant duties so many joys - oh, it will not be long!"

HEAVEN'S GOLDEN GLORY

Thus she cheered and comforted me as we walked through the ever-varying and always-perfect landscape. At length she cried, lifting her arm and pointing with her rosy finger, "Behold! Is it not divinely beautiful?"

I caught my breath, then stopped abruptly and covered my face with my hands to shield my eyes from the glorified scene. No wonder Frank had not brought me to this place sooner. I was scarcely yet spiritually strong enough to look upon it. What I again slowly lifted my head, Mae was standing like one entranced. The golden light rested upon her face and, mingling with the radiance from within almost transfigured her. Even she, so long an inhabitant here, had not yet grown accustomed to its glory.

"Look, darling Auntie! It is God's will that you should see," she softly whispered, not once turning her eyes away from the scene before here. "He let me be the one to show you the glory of this place!"

I turned and looked, like one only half aware. Before us spread a lake as smooth as glass, but flooded with a golden glory caught from the heavens. It was like a sea of molten gold. The blossom and fruit-bearing trees grew down to its very border in many places. Far, far away, across its shining waters, arose the domes and spires of what seemed to be a might city.

Many people were resting upon its flowery banks, and on the surface of the water were boats of wonderful structure, filled with happy souls and propelled by an unseen power. Little children, as well as grown persons, were floating upon or swimming in the water. As we looked, a band of singing cherubs, floating high overhead, drifted across the lake, their sweet voices borne to us where we stood, in notes of joyful praise.

"Come," said Mae, seizing my hand, "let us join them." We hastened onward.

"Glory and honor!" sang the child voices. "Dominion and power!" caught up and answered the voices of the vast multitude together. And I found that Mae and I were joining in the refrain. The cherub band floated onward. Away in the distance we caught the faint melody of their sweet voices and the stronger cadence of the response from those waiting below.

We stood upon the bank of the lake. My cheeks were tear-stained and my eyes dim with emotion. I felt weak as a little child. But oh, what rapture, what joy unspeakable filled and overmastered me! Was I dreaming? Or was this indeed but another phase of the immortal life?

Mae slipped her arm about my neck and whispered, "Dearest, come. After the rapture - rest."

I yielded to her passively; I could not do otherwise. She led me into the water, down, down into its crystal depths. When it seemed to me we must be hundreds of feet beneath the surface, she threw herself prostrate and bade me do the same. I did so, and immediately we began to slowly rise. Presently I found that we no longer rose, but were slowly floating in mid-current still many feet beneath the surface.

Then a marvel appeared to me. Wherever I looked, perfect, prismatic rays surrounded me. I seemed to be resting in the heart of a prism. And such vivid yet delicate coloring, mortal

eyes never rested upon. Instead of the seven colors, as we see them on earth, the colors blended in such a rare graduation of shades as to make the rays seem almost infinite. Or else they really were infinite. I could not decide which.

CELESTIAL MUSIC

As I lay watching this marvelous panorama, the colors deepened and faded like the lights of the aurora borealis. Although Mae and I no longer clung together, we did not drift apart, as one would naturally suppose we might. Instead, we lay within easy speaking distance of each other, although few words were spoken by either of us, for the silence seemed too sacred to be lightly broken. We lay upon, or rather within, the water, as upon the softest couch. It required no effort whatever to keep ourselves afloat. The gentle undulation of the waves soothed and rested us.

I was also attracted by the sound of distant music. As it arrested my attention, I turned and looked at Mae. She smiled back at me but did not speak. Presently I caught the words, "Glory and honor, dominion and power," and I know it was still the cherub choir, although they must now be many miles away. Then the soft tones of a bell - a silver bell with silver tongue - fell on my ear. As the last notes died away, I whispered, "Tell me, Mae."

"Yes, dear, I will. The waters of this lake catch the light in a most marvelous manner, as you have seen. A wiser person than I must tell you why. They also transmit musical sounds - only musical sounds - for a great distance. The song was evidently from the distant shore of the lake."

"And the bell?"

"That is the bell which is in the city across the lake. It calls us to certain heavenly duties."

"There never was a sweeter call to duty," I said.

"Yes, its notes are beautiful. Hark! Now it rings a chime."

We lay and listened. As we listened, a sweet peace wrapped around me, and I rested as peacefully as a child on its mother's bosom. I awoke with a strange sense of invigoration and strength. It was a feeling wholly dissimilar to that experienced during a bath in the River, yet I could not explain how.

Mae said, "The River takes away the last of the earth-life and prepares us for the life upon which we enter. The lake fills us to overflowing with a shower from the Celestial Life itself."

And I think the child was right.

NO ANXIETY!

When we emerged from the water we found the banks of the lake almost deserted, everyone having gone to their happy duties. Groups of children still played around in joyous freedom. Some climbed the trees that overhung the water with the agility of squirrels and dropped with happy shouts of laughter into the lake, floating upon its surface like immense and beautiful water-lilies or lotus flowers.

"No fear of harm or danger! No dread of ill or anxiety that a mishap might occur! Security! Security and joy and peace! This is indeed the blessed life." I said, as we stood watching the happy children.

"I often think how we were taught to believe that heaven was where we would wear crowns of gold and stand with harps always in our hands! Our crowns of gold are the halos His blessed presence casts about us. And we do not need harps to accentuate our songs of praise. We do see the crowns, and we do hear the angelic harps, when and as God

will it, but our best worship is to do His blessed will," said Mae as we turned to go.

"You are wise in the life of heaven, my child," I answered. "How happy I am to learn from one so dear! Tell me all about your life here."

So as we walked she told me the history of her time in heaven - her duties, her joys, her friends, and her home. I found her home was distant from our own - far beyond the spires of the great city across the lake - but she added, "What is distance in heaven? We come and go at will. We feel no fatigue, no haste, and experience no delays. It is blessed, blessed!"

"When will I behold the Savior? When will I meet, face to face, Him whom my soul so loves?" my hungry heart began to cry out in its depths.

Mae, as though understanding the silent cry, placed both arms about my neck, looked tenderly into my eyes, and whispered, "You, too, dearest, will see Him soon. He never delays when the time is ripe for His coming. It will not be long. You, too, will see Him soon."

So we parted, each to our own duties.

CHAPTER 5 - MEETING THE MASTER

Finally, Frank said to me, "Shall we go for the promised visit to Mrs. Wickham now?"

"Indeed, yes!" I answered eagerly. So we at once were on our way.

We soon reached her lovely home and found her waiting at the entrance as though expecting us. After a cordial greeting to our friend, Frank said, "I will leave you together for that long talk for which I know you are both eager. I must go my way to other duties. I will see you at home, dear sister."

"All right," I answered. "I am familiar with the way now and need no assistance."

A DELIGHTFUL VISIT

After he had gone, my friend took me all over her lovely home, showing me with great pleasure the rooms prepared for each beloved member of her earthly household still to come. One very large room was evidently under her special care. She whispered to me, "Douglass always did like a large room. I am sure he will like this one." And I was also sure.

Returning down the broad stairway, we entered into a very large music room with broad galleries supported by marble columns running across three sides of it. In this gallery there were numerous musical instruments - harps, viols, and instruments unlike any I had ever seen. The room itself was filled with easy-chairs, couches, and window-seats where listeners could rest and hear the sweet harmonies from the galleries.

"My daughter," my friend explained, "who left us in early childhood, has received a fine musical training here. She is fond of gathering in her young friends and giving us quite a musical treat. You know our old home of Springville has furnished some rare voices for the heavenly choirs. Mary Allis, Will Griggs, and many others you will often hear in this room, I trust."

We entered, from this room, the dainty reception hall opening upon the front veranda and outer steps. Here Mrs. Wickham drew me to a seat beside her and said, "Now, tell me everything of the dear home and all its blessed inhabitant."

Holding each other's hands as we talked, she questioning, I answering, things too sacred to be repeated here were dwelt

upon and cherished. At last she said, rising hastily, "I will leave you for a little while - no, you must not go," as I would have risen, "there is much yet to be said. Wait here, I will return."

I had already learned not to question the judgment of these wiser friends, so I yielded to her will. As she passed through the doorway to the inner house, I saw a stranger at the front entrance and arose to meet him. He was tall and commanding in form, with a face of ineffable sweetness and beauty. Where had I seen him before? Surely, surely I had met him since I came. "Ah, now I know!" I thought. "It must be John, the beloved disciple." He had been pointed out to me one morning by the Riverside.

"Peace be unto this house," was his salutation as he entered.

How his voice stirred and thrilled me!

"Enter. You are a welcome guest. Enter and I will call the mistress," I said, as I approached to bid him welcome.

"No, do not call her. She knows that I am here. She will return," he said. "Sit beside me awhile," he continued, as he saw that I still stood after I had seen him seated. He arose and led me to a seat near him. Like a child I did as I was bidden - still watching, always watching, the wonderful face before me.

"You have only recently come?" he said.

"Yes, I have been here but a short time. So short that I do not know now to refer to time as you have it here," I answered.

"Ah, that matters little," he said with a gentle smile. "Many cling to the old earth language. It is a link between the two lives. We would not have it otherwise. How does the change impress you? How do you find life here?"

"Ah," I said, "if they could only know! I never fully understood until now the meaning of that sublime passage, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them the love Him? (I Corinthians 2:9). It is indeed beyond human conception. I spoke with deep feeling.

"For them that love Him? Do you believe that all Christian truly love Him?" he asked. "Do you think they love the Father for the gift of the Son and the Son because of the Father's love and mercy? Or is their worship often that of duty rather than love?" He spoke reflectively and gently.

"Oh," I said, "you who so well know the beloved Master - who were so loved by Him - how can you doubt the love He inspires in all hearts who seek to know Him?"

IN THE MASTER'S PRESENCE

A radiant glow overspread the wonderful face, which He lifted, looking directly at me. The mist rolled away from before my eyes, and I knew Him! With a low cry of joy and adoration, I threw myself at His feet, bathing them with happy years. He gently stroked my bowed head for a moment then, rising, lifted me to His side.

"My Savior - my King!" I whispered, clinging closely to Him.

"Yes, and Elder Brother and Friend," He added, tenderly wiping away the tears stealing from beneath my closed eyelids.

"Yes, yes, the chiefest among ten thousand, and the One altogether lovely!" again I whispered.

"Ah, now you begin to meet the conditions of the new life! Like many others, the changing of faith to sight with you has engendered a little shrinking, a little fear. That is all wrong. Have you forgotten the promise, "I go to prepare a place for you... that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3)? If you loved Me when you could not see Me except by faith, love Me more now when we have really become co-heirs of the

Father. Come to Me with all that perplexes of gladdens. Come to the Elder Brother always waiting to receive you with joy."

Then He drew me to a seat and conversed with me long and earnestly, unfolding many of the mysteries of the divine life. I hung upon His words. I drank in every tone of His voice. I watched eagerly every line of the beloved face. And I was exalted, uplifted, upborne, beyond the power of words to express. At length, with a divine smile, He arose.

"We will often meet," He said. And I, bending over, pressed my lips reverently to the hand still clasping my own. Then laying His hands a moment in blessing upon my bowed head, He passed noiselessly and swiftly from the house.

As I stood watching the Savior's fast-receding figure passing beneath the flower-laden trees, I saw two beautiful young girls approaching the way He went. With arms intertwining they came happily conversing together, sweet Mary Bates and Mae Camden. When they saw the Mater, they flew to meet Him with a glad cry. He joyously extended a hand to each. They turned, and, each clinging to His hand, one upon either side, they accompanied Him on His way.

Looking up trustingly into His face as He talked with them, they were apparently conversing with Him with happy freedom. I saw His face from time to time in profile, as He turned and looked down lovingly, first upon one, then the other lovely, upturned face. I thought, "That is the way He would have us be with Him - really as children with a beloved elder brother."

I watched them until the trees hid them from my sight, longing to gather the dear girls to my heart, but knowing His presence was, at that moment, more important than anything else. Then I turned and passed softly through the house to the beautiful entrance at the rear. Just before I reached the door, I met my friend Mrs. Wickham. Before I could speak, she said, "I know all about it. Do not try to speak. I know your heart is full. I will see you very soon - there, go!" She pushed me gently to the door.

How my heart blessed her - for it indeed seemed sacrilege to try to talk about ordinary topics after this blessed experience. I did not follow the walkway, but went across toe flowery turf, beneath the trees until I reached home. I found Frank sitting on the veranda, and, as I ascended the steps, he rose to meet me. When he looked into my face, he took both hands into his for an instant and simply said, very gently, "Ah, I see. You have been with the Master!" and stepped aside almost reverently for me to enter the house.

GLORIOUS SOLITUDE

I hastened to my room, and I threw myself upon the couch. With my eyes closed, I relived every instant I had spent in that hallowed Presence. I recalled every word and tone of the Savior's voice and fastened the instructions He had given me indelibly upon my memory. I seem to have been lifted to a higher plane of existence, to have drunk deeper truths from the fountain of all good, since I had met "Him whom my soul loveth" (Song of Solomon 3:1).

It was a long, blessed communion that I held thus with my soul. I wondered why I had not at once recognized Christ. But I concluded that for some wise purpose my "eyes were clouded" Until it was His pleasure that I should see Him as He is.

When I arose, the soft, golden light was about me. I knelt by my couch to offer my first prayer in heaven. As I knelt, all I could utter over and over was, "I thank Thee, blessed Father, I thank Thee, I thank Thee!"

When I at last descended the stairs, I found my brother-in-law standing in the great "flower-room." Going to him, I said softly, "Frank, what do you do in heaven when you want to pray?"

"We praise!" he answered.

"Then let us praise now," I said.

HEAVENLY PRAISES

And standing there with clasped hands, we lifted up our hearts and voices in a hymn of praise to God. Frank with his clear, strong voice was leading. I following. As the first notes sounded, I thought the roof echoed them. But I soon found that other voices blended with our, until the whole house seemed filled with unseen singers. Such a grand hymn of praise, earth never heard. As the hymn went on, I recognized many dear voices from the past - Will Griggs' distinct tenor, Mary Allis' exquisite soprano, and many other voices that wakened memories of long ago. Then as I heard sweet child-voices and looked up, I saw above us such a cloud of radiant cherub faces that my heart was flooded with joy. The room seemed filled with them.

"Oh, what a life- what a divine life!" I whispered as Frank and I returned to the veranda and sat in the golden light.

"You are only in the first pages of its unfolding," he said.

"Its blessedness must be gradually revealed to us, or we could not, even here, bear its dazzling glory."

Then followed hallowed fellowship when Frank led my soul still deeper into the mysteries of the glorious life upon which I had now entered. He taught me; I listened. Sometimes I questioned, but rarely. I was content to take in the heavenly manna as it was given me, with a heart full of gratitude and love.

CHAPTER 6 - A CHILD'S HOMECOMING

Once, when my brother-in-law was away on an important mission, I started out alone to see if I could find my dear, young friends I had seen previously. I know that all things were ordered aright in that happy world, and that sooner or later I would find them again. Yet, I could not help hoping it might be very soon. I recalled the happy light upon their fresh young faces as they had met the beloved Master, and I longed to talk with them. From thinking of them, I began again to think of my blessed interview with Him. I became so absorbed in these thoughts that I was even oblivious to the beautiful world around me.

Suddenly I heard someone say, "Surely that is Mrs. Springer!" Looking up, I saw sweet little Mary Bates a few steps away regarding me intently.

I cried joyfully, "My precious Mamie!"

She flew to me and, folding me in her arms, drew my head to her shoulder in the old caressing way almost sobbing in her great joy.

"Dear, dear little muzzer!" - a pet name often used by her in the happy past - "How glad I am to have you here! I could scarcely wait to find you."

"How did you know I was here, Mamie?"

"The Master told me," she said softly. "Mae had already told me, and we were on the way to find you when we met Him. He told us He had just left you. Then we knew we must wait a little," she said reverently.

How my heart thrilled! He had thought about and had spoken of me after we parted! I longed to ask her what He had said, but dared not.

Seeming to read my thoughts, she continued, "He spoke so tenderly about you and said we must be with you often. Mae had work to do today, and, as she had already seen you once, I came alone. She may be here later on. May I stay a long time with you? There is so much to tell you, so much to ask about!"

"Indeed you may. I had started out to find you, when we met. Come, dear child, let us return home at once."

COMFORT FOR THOSE WHO MOURN

So, clinging to each other, we set out toward my home. "What shall I tell you first?" I asked.

"Everything about the dear ones - every individual member of our beloved household. Begin with my precious heart-broken mother." Here her voice broke a little, but she soon continued. "If only she could be with me here, could know God's wisdom and love as we know it, how the cloud would lift from her life! How she would see that the two lives, after all, are but one."

"Yes, dear," I answered, "I always urged her to think of it in that light and to trust implicitly in the Father's tender care and never-failing love. But it is difficult for us to see beyond the lonely fireside and the vacant chair."

"Ah, if she only knew that I need just that to complete my happiness," she said. "We cannot sorrow here as we did on earth, because we have learned to know that the will of the Father is always tender and wise. But even heaven can never be complete for me while I know that my precious mother is forgetful of her many rare blessings, simply because I may not be with her in the flesh to share them."

"There are my father and the boys - why, I am as truly hers still as they are! My dear little mother! Why must she see me to recognize this? But this is almost complaining, is it not? Some day she will know all - we must be patient."

THE GLORY OF HIS PRESENCE

We walked on slowly and conversed about the earth-life, still in many phases so dear to us, she asking eager questions, I answering as best I could. Then we saw a group of four persons, three women, and a man. They were standing under the trees a little to one side of the walkway. The man's back was toward us, but we at once recognized the Master. The women were all strangers, and one of them seemed to have just arrived. The Savior held her hand as He talked with her. All were intently listening to His words.

We regarded the group in silence as we slowly passed, not hoping for recognition from Him at such a time, but, just as we were opposite to them; He turned and looked upon us. He did not speak - but oh, that look! So full of tenderness and encouragement and benediction! It lifted us: it bore us upward: it enthralled and exalted us. And, as we passed onward, the clasp of our hands tightened and unspeakable rapture flooded our hearts.

We finished our walk in silence and sat down on the marble steps in the shadow of the overhanging trees. The dear child nestled close against my side and laid her head upon my shoulder, while I rested my cheek caressingly upon it. After a time I whispered, half to myself, "Was there ever such a look!"

Instantly she raised her head and said eagerly, "You think so m too? I was sure you would. It is always just so. If He is too engaged to speak to you, He just looks at you, and it is as though He had talked with you for a long time. Is He not wonderful! Why, why could we not know Him on earth as we know Him here?"

"How long were you here before you met Him?" I asked.

HIS DIVINE COMPASSION

"Oh, that is the wonderful part of it! His was the first face I looked upon after I left my body. I felt bewildered when I first realized that I was free, and I stood for a moment feeling uncertain. Then I saw Him standing beside me with the same, tender look on His face.

"At first I felt timid and half afraid. Then, He stretched forth His hand to me and said gently, "My child, I have come to take care of you: trust Me: do not be afraid." Then, I knew who He was, and instantly all fear left me. I clung to Him as I would have done to either of my brothers. He did not say much to me, but somehow I felt that He understood all of my thoughts.

"What a blessed life this is!"

I can only give this brief outline of our conversation. The remainder of our discussion is too sacred to be scanned by curious eyes.

We watched the little birds nestling in the vines, heard the solemnly joyous notes of the angel's choral song and joined our voices in the hymn of praise. Later, we went to my room and sat down upon my dainty couch for rest. The last words I heard before sinking into heaven's blissful rest were tenderly whispered, "Dear, dear Rebecca, I am so glad and happy that you are here!"

More than once the question has been asked, "Was there night there" Emphatically, no! What, for want of a better word, we call day was full of glorious radiance, a roseate golden light which was everywhere. There is no language known to mortals that can describe this marvelous glory. It flooded the sky; it was caught up and reflected in the waters; it filled all heaven with joy and all hearts with song. After a period much longer than our longest earthly day, this glory mellowed and softened until it became a glowing light full of peace. The children ceased their playing beneath the trees. The little birds nestled among the vines, and all who had been busy in various ways sought rest and quiet. But there was no darkness, no dusky shadows even - only a restful softening of the glory.

CHAPTER 7 - A DIVINE SPEECH

Not long after this, Frank said, "We will go to the grand auditorium. Martin Luther is speaking on "The Reformation: Its Causes and Effects." This will be supplemented by a talk from John Wesley. There may also be other speakers."

It was not the first time we had visited this great auditorium although I have not previously described it. It stood on a slight hill, and the mighty dome was supported by massive columns of alternate amethyst and jasper. There were no walls to the massive structure - only the great dome and supporting columns. A broad platform of precious, inlaid marbles arose from the center.

From this platform, seats ascended on three sides to form an immense amphitheater. The seats were made of highly polished cedar wood; behind the platform were heavenly hangings of royal purple. An altar of solid pearl stood near the center of the platform. The great dome was deep and dark in its immensity, so that only the golden carvings around its lower border were distinctly visible. I had noticed all this on former visits.

MARTIN LUTHER LECTURES

When we entered, we found the building filled with people eagerly waiting. We soon were seated. Soft strains of melody floated about us from an invisible choir. Before long, Martin

Luther, in the prime of a vigorous manhood, ascended the steps and stood before us. It is not my desire to dwell on his appearance, except to say that his great intellect and spiritual strength seemed to have added to his already powerful physique. It made him a capable leader even in heavenly places.

His discourse would of itself fill a volume and could not even be outlined in this brief sketch. He held us enthralled by the power of his will and his eloquence. When he eventually retired, John Wesley took his place. The saintly beauty of his face, intensified by the heavenly light upon it, was wonderful.

His theme was "God's Love." If on earth he preached on it with power, he now swept our souls with the fire of his exaltation until we were as wax in his hands. He showed us what that love had done and how an eternity of thanksgiving and praise could never repay it.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Silence, except for the faint, sweet melody of the unseen choir, rested on the vast audience after he left. All seemed lost in contemplation of the theme so tenderly presented. Then, the heavy curtains behind the platform parted, and a tall form, about whom all the glory of heaven seemed to center, emerged from their folds. He advanced toward the middle of the platform. Instantly, the vast gathering of souls rose to their feet and burst forth as with one voice into that great anthem in which we had so often joined on earth"

"All hail the power of Jesus" name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring for the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

Such a grand chorus of voices, such unity, such harmony, such volume was never heard on earth. It rose, swelled, and seemed to fill not only the great auditorium, but heaven itself. And still, above it all, we heard the voices of the angel choir, no longer breathing the soft, sweet melody, but bursting forth into hymns of triumphant praise. A flood of glory seemed to fill the place, and looking upward we beheld the great dome ablaze with golden light, and the angelic forms of the choir in its midst. Their heavenly harps, viols, and their faces were only less radiant than that of Him in whose praise they sang. And He, before whom all heaven bowed in adoration, stood with uplifted face and kingly expression - the very God of earth and heaven. He was the center of all light, and a divine radiance surrounded Him that was beyond compare.

As the hymn of praise and adoration ceased, all sank slowly to their knees, and every head was bowed and every face covered as the angel choir chanted again the familiar words, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen!"

Slowly the voices died away, and a holy silence fell on us. Presently, slowly and reverently, all arose and resumed their places. No, not all. Sweet Mary Bates had accompanied us to the sanctuary, and I now noticed that she alone still knelt in our midst. With clasped hands and radiant, uplifted face, her lovely eyes were fixed on the Savior. As He stood waiting before us, her look of selfless adoration and love made her appear truly divine. She was so captivated I dared not disturb her.

But, in a moment, the Master turned and met her adoring eyes with a look of loving recognition. With a deep sigh of satisfied desire, as He turned away, she quietly resumed her

seat beside me. She slipped her little hand into mine with all the confidence of a child who feels sure it is completely understood.

As I looked upon the glorious form before us, clothed in all the majesty of the Godhead, my heart asked, "Can this truly be Christ, whom Pilate condemned to die a disgraceful death upon the cross?" I could not accept it. It seemed impossible that any man, however vile, could be blind to the divinity so plainly revealed in Him.

THE SAVIOR SPEAKS

Then, the Savior began to speak, and the sweetness of His voice was far beyond the melody of the heavenly choir. And His gracious words! If only I could, if only I dared, transcribe them as they fell from His lips. Earth has no language by which I could convey their lofty meaning. He touched lightly on the earth-life and wonderfully showed the link of light uniting the two lives - the past with the present. Then, He revealed some of the earlier mysteries of the blessed life and pointed out the joyous duties just before us.

When He ceased, we sat with bowed heads as He withdrew. Our hearts were so enfolded, our souls so uplifted, our spirits so exalted, our whole being so permeated with His divinity, that when we arose we left silently and reverently. Our hearts were filled with higher, more divine aspirations and clearer views of the blessed life upon which we were permitted to enter.

I can only lightly touch upon these heavenly joys. There is a depth, a mystery to all that pertains to the divine life, which I dare not try to describe. I could not if I wanted to; I would not if I could. A sacredness enfolds it, and curious eyes should not look upon it. Suffice it to say that no joy we know on earth, however rare, however sacred, can be more than the faintest shadow of the joy we find there. No dreams of rapture, unrealized on earth, approach the bliss of one moment in that divine world. No sorrow, no pain, no sickness, no death, no parting, no disappointments, no tears but those of joy, no broken hopes, no mislaid plans, no night, nor storm, nor shadows even. There is only light and joy and love and peace and rest forever and forever. "Amen," and again my hearts says reverently, "Amen."

CHAPTER 8 - REBECCA MEETS HER SISTER

Often, I found myself drawn to the sacred lake, sometimes alone, sometimes with one or more of my own family circle. It was always an inspiration to me. I never grew so familiar with it that I overcame the great awe with which it inspired me. On the contrary, I found that the more I bathed or floated in its clear water, the stronger I grew in spirit. I was able to more clearly comprehend the mysteries of the word about me.

My fellowship with the dear loved ones from home served to restore the greatest solace of my mortal life. I began to realize that this was indeed the true life, instead of that probationary life which we had always regarded as such.

A SPECIAL REUNION

Once, as I started to cross the lawn between my father's house and our own, I heard my name called in an affectionate manner. I turned and saw a tall, fine-looking man approaching me. His uncovered head was silvery white, and his deep blue eyes looked happily and tenderly into mine, as he drew near.

"Oliver!" I cried with outstretched hands of welcome, "dear, dear Oliver!" It was the husband of my eldest sister, whom I had always loved dearly.

"I did not know that you had come, until a few moments ago. It is delightful to have you here. It seems more like the old days to see you. We were together so much during the last years of my stay," he said as he grasped my hands warmly. "Where are you going now? Can you come with me awhile? I was thinking how much I wished you could be here before Lu came - you know her tastes so well. And now, here you are! So often our unspoken wishes are thus gratified in heaven!"

"Is my sister coming soon?" I asked a little later.

"That I cannot say for sure. But the years of her earth-life are passing, and her coming cannot be delayed much longer. Can you come with me now?"

"Gladly," I said, turning to walk with him.

"It is only a little way from here," he said. "Just where the River bends. Lu loves the water, so I chose that spot in preference to one even nearer your home."

"I want you to see the River from the window in her room," he said. "I know you will enjoy it."

We entered the truly beautiful house, built of the purest white granite, so embedded in the foliage of the flower-laden trees that from some points only glimpses of its fine proportions could be seen.

"She loves flowers so much - will she not enjoy these trees?" He asked with almost boyish delight.

"Beyond everything," I answered.

We passed through several delightful rooms on the lower floor. Then, ascending the stairway - which in itself was a dream of beauty - we entered the room he was so anxious for me to see. I stopped upon the threshold with an exclamation of delight, while he watched the expression on my face.

"It is the most delightful room I ever saw!" I cried enthusiastically.

The framework of couches, chairs, and desk was of pure and spotless pearl, upholstered in dim gold. Soft rugs and draperies were everywhere. And, through the low window opening upon the flower-wreathed balcony, there was such an enchanting view of the broad, smooth River that again I caught my breath in delight. A thousand exquisite tints from the heavens above were reflected upon the tranquil waters, and a boat floating on the current was perfectly mirrored in the opaline-tinted ripples.

The celestial hills of the city rose far across the shining waters. Their domes, pillared temples, and sparkling fountains were visible everywhere.

We descended the stairs without a word, then I could only falter, "Only heaven could give such perfection in everything!"

Oliver held my hand sympathetically and let me depart without a word.

A SISTER COMES HOME

Many times I visited that lovely home and held sweet conversation with Oliver, whom I loved so well. I could not think of anything that would add to the beauty of the place, but we talked about it together and planned for and anticipated the joy of her coming.

Once, Oliver was not home, and though I waited long for his return, he did not come. I had not seen him for a while and concluded that he had been sent on a mission by the Master. As I was on my way home, I met a group of happy young girls and boys, heading the way I had come, with their arms full of beautiful flowers. As they drew near, I realized that they were the grandchildren of my dear sister - Stanley and Mary and

David and Lee and little Ruth. As soon as they saw me, they all began to shout joyfully:

"Grandma is coming! Grandma is coming! We are taking flowers to scatter everywhere! We are so glad!"

"How do you know she is coming, children? I was just at the house - no one is there!"

"But she is coming," said little Lee. "We had a message from Grandpa, and he is to bring her."

"Then I will tell the others, and we will all come to welcome her," I said.

With great joy in my heart, I hurried to my father's house. I found them waiting for me, full of joyful expectation.

"Yes, we also have had word," my father said, "and were only awaiting your return that we might go together."

"Then, I will go get brother Frank, so he can also accompany us," I said.

"He is here!" said a genial voice. And, looking up, I saw him at the door.

"Colonel Springer is always present when he is needed," said my father cordially.

So we set forth to welcome this dearly loved one to her home - my father; my mother; my sister, Jodie; my brother the doctor; his two daughters; my Aunt Gray; her son, Martin; his wife and daughter; and Frank and I.

A PRECIOUS MOMENT

As we approached the house we heard the sound of joyous voices. Looking in, we saw my sister standing in the room with her husband's arm around her and the happy grandchildren crowded around them. But what was this? Could this radiant creature, with smooth brow and happy eyes, be the pale, wan woman I had last seen, so bowed with suffering and sorrow? I looked with eager eyes. Yes, it was my sister. But she looked as she did a full thirty years ago - the bloom of health on her face and the light of youth in her tender eyes.

I drew back into the shadows of the vines and let the others precede me, for my heart was full of a strange, triumphant joy. This truly was the "victory over death" So surely promised by our risen Lord. I watched the happy greetings and the way she took each beloved one into her tender arms.

When, one by one, she had greeted and embraced them all, I saw her turn and look wistfully around, then whisper to my father, "Is my little sister here?" I could wait no longer and, rushing to her side, cried, "Dearest, I am here! Welcome! Welcome!"

She folded me to her heart and held me fast in her warm arms. She showered me with kisses while I returned each loving caress. I laughed and cried with gladness that she had come at last. Oh, what a family reunion that was inside the walls of heaven! And how its bliss was heightened by the sure knowledge (not the hope) that there would be no parting for us forever!

My brother-in-law, Oliver, looked on with proud and happy eyes. The hour for which he had longed and waited had come to him at last. His eternal life would now be complete forever. I told him how I had waited for him that day. He said, "We saw you as you left the house, but we were too far away to call you. I had taken her into the River, and she had looked at and admired the house even before she knew it was ours."

"What did she do when she saw her lovely room?"

"She cried like a child. Clinging to me, she said, "This more than repays for the lost home of earth!" If the children had not come, I think she would have been at that window still!" he said laughing happily.

"I am glad you had her all to yourself at first," I whispered. "You deserved that happiness, dear, if any man ever did."

He smiled gratefully and looked over at his wife, where she stood at the center of a happy group.

A HEAVENLY YOUTHFULNESS

"Doesn't she look very young to you, Oliver?" I asked.

"The years rolled from her like a mask as we sat beneath the water in the River. Ah, truly in those life-giving waters we do all "renew our youth". But she at once became uncommonly fair and young."

"Her coming has also brought youth to you," I said, noting his fresh complexion and his sparkling eyes. "But I hope it will not change your silver hair for that is your crown of glory."

He looked at me a moment critically, then said, "I wonder if you realize the change that has like-wise come to you in this wonderful place?"

"I?" I said, a little startled at the thought. "I confess I have not once thought of my personal appearance. I realize, through the Father's mercy, what this life has done for me spiritually; but as for the other, I have never given it an instant's thought."

"The change is fully as great in your case as in Lu's, though with you the change has been more gradual," he said.

I felt a strange thrill of joy in knowing that when my dear husband would come to me, he would find me with the freshness and beauty of our earlier years. It was a sweet thought. My heart was full of gratitude to the Father for this further evidence of His loving care. So we talked together as the hours sped. Then my father said, "Come, children, we must not forget that this dear daughter of mine needs rest this first day in her new home. Let us leave her and her happy husband to their new-found bliss."

So with light hearts we went our way and left them to spend their first hours in heaven together.

CHAPTER 9 - A VISIT WITH A SPECIAL FRIEND

After we left my parents and friends, Frank hurried away on some mission, and I walked on alone toward the sacred lake. I felt the need for a rest in its soothing waters after all the excitement.

Only a few people lingered on the shore. The boats that sped across its calm surface seemed to be filled with messengers intent upon some duty rather than pleasure-seekers. I walked slowly down into the water and soon found myself floating in mid-current.

The wonderful prismatic rays blended into a golden glory, with different shades of rose and purple flashing their splendor. To me it seemed even more beautiful than the rainbow, just like the joys of our adult life caused the more frivolous pleasure of youth to fade.

I heard the chimes from the silver bell of the great city ringing an anthem as I lay there. Its notes seemed to chant, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty!" The waters took up the song, and a thousand waves about me responded, "Holy! Holy! Holy!"

Language fails me - I cannot hope to convey this experience to others. It was grand, wonderful, overpowering. I lay and listened until my whole being was filled with the divine melody, and I seemed to be a part of the great chorus. Then I, too, lifted up my voice and joined with full heart in the thrilling song of praise.

To my surprise, I found that I floated rapidly away from the shore where I had entered the water. After a time I was conscious that I was approaching a portion of the lake shore I had never yet visited. Refreshed and invigorated, I ascended the sloping banks to find myself in the midst of a lovely village, similar to the one where our own home was situated. There was some difference in the architecture or construction of the houses, though they were no less beautiful than others I had seen. Many were constructed of polished woods and somewhat resembled the finest chalets in Switzerland. Yet, they far surpassed them in artistic beauty.

As I wandered on, feasting my eyes upon the lovely views about me, I was particularly pleased by the appearance of an unusually attractive house. Its broad verandas almost overhung the waters of the lake, and the wide low steps along one side of the house met the water's edge. Several graceful swans leisurely drifted about with the current, and a delightful bird was singing and swinging in the low branches overhead. There were many larger and more imposing homes nearby, but none were as charming as this one.

I saw a woman sitting beneath one of the large flowering trees close by this cottage home. She was weaving, apparently without shuttle or needle, a snow-white, gossamer-like fabric that fell in a soft, fleecy heap at her side. She was so very small in stature that at first I thought she was a child. But a closer look showed her to be a mature woman, though the glow of youth was still on her smooth cheeks.

Something familiar in her gestures, rather than her appearance, caused me to feel that it was not the first time we had met. Growing accustomed to the delightful surprises in this world of rare delight, I drew near to her. Before I could speak, she looked up and the doubt was gone.

"Maggie!" "Mrs. Springer, dear!" we cried simultaneously. Dropping her work from her hands, she stood up to greet me.

Our greeting was warm and fervent, and her sweet face glowed with a welcome that reminded me of the happy days when we had met by the shore of a beautiful lake on earth.

"Now I know why I came this way today - to find you, dear," I said. We sat side by side; talking as we never had talked on earth. The sweet shyness of her mortal life had melted away in the refreshing air of heaven.

"What is this lovely fabric you are weaving?" I asked, lifting the silken, fleecy web in my fingers as I spoke.

LEARNING A DIVINE ART

"Some draperies for Nellie's room," she said. "You know we two have lived alone together so much, I thought it would seem more like home to her, to us both, if we did the same here. So this cottage is our special home, just a few minutes from Marie's," pointing to an imposing house a few yards distant, "and I am fixing it up as daintily as I can, especially her room."

"Oh, let me help you, Maggie dear!" I said. "It would be such a pleasure to me."

She hesitated a moment, then said, "That is so like you, dear Mrs. Springer. But I have my heart set on doing Nellie's room entirely myself - there is no hurry about it, you know. If you really would enjoy it, I would love to have you help me in the other rooms."

"And will you teach me how to weave these delicate hangings?"

"Yes, indeed."

Lifting the dainty thread, she showed me how to toss and wind it through my fingers until it fell in shining folds. It was very light and fascinating work, and I was soon weaving it almost as rapidly as she did.

"Now, I can help Frank!" was my happy thought, as I saw the shimmering fabric grow beneath my hands. "Tomorrow I will go and show him how beautifully we can drape the doors and windows."

In heaven our first thought is to give pleasure to others.

"You are a quick learner," said Maggie, laughing happily. "And what a charming visit you have given me!"

"What a charming visit you have given me, my dear!" I answered.

When we parted it was with the understanding that I would visit again.

CHAPTER 10 - A VISIT TO THE HEAVENLY CITY

On one of my walks, I happened upon a scene that reminded me of what Mae had said about the Savior's love for little children. I found Him sitting beneath one of the flowering trees upon the lake shore with about a dozen children of all ages clustered around Him.

One dainty little tot, not more than a year old, was nestled in His arms. Her sunny head rested confidently upon His bosom, and her tiny hands were filled with the lovely water-lilies that floated everywhere on the waters. She was too young to realize how great her privilege was, but she seemed to be enjoying His care to the utmost.

The others sat at His feet or leaned upon His knees. One dear little fellow, with earnest eyes, stood by Him leaning upon His shoulder, while the Master's right arm encircled him. Every eye was fixed eagerly upon Jesus, and each child listened to every word He said. He seemed to be telling them some very absorbing story, adapted to their childish tastes and capacities.

I sat down on the lawn among a group of people, a little removed from the children, and tried to hear what He was saying. But we were too far away to catch more than a sentence now and then, and in heaven one never intrudes upon another's privilege or pleasure. So we simply enjoyed the smiles and eager questions and exclamations of the children.

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM

"A little child lost in the dark woods of the lower world...? We heard the Master say, in response to the inquiring looks of the interested children.

"Lions and bears..." came later on.

"Where was his papa?" asked an anxious voice. We could not hear the reply, but soon a little fellow leaning upon the Savior's knee said confidently, "I am not afraid up here!"

"No," He replied, "nothing to harm or frighten My little children here!"

Then as the story deepened and grew in interest, the children pressed more closely about the Master. He turned with a sweet smile to the little fellow with the earnest eyes who leaned on His shoulder and said, "What, Leslie, would you have done, then?"

With a bright light in his eyes and a flush on his fair cheek, the child answered quickly and emphatically, "I would have prayed to You and asked You to 'shut the lion's mouth' as You did for Daniel, and You would have done it!" (See Daniel 6:2).

“Ah,” I thought, “If only his parents could see the look the beloved Master cast upon their boy as he made his brave reply. They would be comforted in the absence of their precious child.”

Lost in these thoughts, I heard no more that passed until an ecstatic shout from the children proclaimed how satisfactorily the story had ended. Looking up, I saw the Savior passing onward with the baby still in His arms and the children trooping about Him.

“Of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). How well He understood! How much He loved them!

A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE

I, too, arose and started homeward. I had not gone far before I met my brother-in-law, Frank, who greeted me with, “I am on my way to the city by the lake. Will you join me?”

“I have been hoping to visit the city. I only waited until you thought it wise for me to go,” I answered.

“You are growing so fast in the knowledge of heavenly ways,” he said, “that I think I could take you almost anywhere with me now. You acquire the knowledge because you love it, not because you feel bound to know what we want you to learn. Your eagerness to understand all truth, and at the same time wait in patient submission, has won you much praise and love from our dear Master. He eagerly watches the progress of us all in the divine life. I think it only right that you should know this. We need encouragement here as well as in the earth-life, though in a different way. I tell you this by divine permission. I think it will not be long before He trusts you with a mission. But I say this of myself, not by His command.”

It would be impossible for me to convey, in the language of earth, the impression these words of commendation left on me. They were so unexpected, so unforeseen. I had gone on, as Frank said, eagerly gathering the knowledge imparted to me with a genuine love for the study of all things pertaining to the blessed life. I had not thought that I in any way deserved commendation for so doing. And now I had won the approval of the Mater Himself! The happiness seemed almost more than I had strength to bear.

“My dear Frank!” was all I could say, in my deep joy, stopping suddenly and looking up into his face with grateful tears.

“I am so glad for you, little sister!” he said, warmly clasping my hand. “There are, you see, rewards in heaven. It does my soul good that you have unconsciously won one of these so soon.”

I wish I could record in detail the precious words of wisdom that fell from his lips. I wish I could recount minutely the events of that wonderful life as it was unfolded to me. But I can only say, “I may not.”

When I decided to record that never-to-be-forgotten time, I did not realize how many serious difficulties I would have to encounter. I did not consider how often I would have to pause and think if I might really reveal this truth or paint that scene as it appeared to me. The very heart has often been left out of some wonderful scene, because I dared not reveal its sacred secret.

I realize painfully that the narrative, as I am forced to give it, falls infinitely short of what I hoped to make it when I began. But bear with me. It is no fancy sketch I am drawing, but the veritable life beyond as it appeared to me when the exalted spirit rose triumphant over the impoverished flesh made subservient through suffering.

Frank and I walked slowly back to the margin of the lake where we stepped into a boat lying near the shore. At once we were transported to the farther shore of the lake and landed upon a marble terrace - the entrance to the city by the lake. I never knew what propelled these boats. There were no oarsman, no engine, and no sails, but it moved steadily until we landed safely at our destination.

Luxuriously cushioned seats were all around it, and upon one of them lay a musical instrument. It was something like a violin, although it had no bow, but seemed to be played by the fingers alone. Upon another seat lay a book. I picked it up and opened it. It seemed to be a continuation of the book that stirred and thrilled millions of hearts in the mortal life - “The Greatest Thing in the World.” As I glanced through it while we journeyed, I learned that this great mind had already grappled with the mighty things of eternity and had given food to immortals, even as he had done for those in mortal life in the years gone by.

ALL WORSHIP IN HARMONY

I was aroused from my thoughts by the boat touching the marble terrace and Frank waiting to assist me to the shore. Passing up a slight hill, we found ourselves in a broad street that led into the heart of the city. The streets were all very broad and smooth and paved with marble and precious stones of every kind. Though they were thronged with people intent on various duties, not a speck of debris or even dust was visible anywhere.

There seemed to be vast business offices of many kinds, though I saw nothing resembling our large commercial establishments. There were many colleges, schools, book and music stores, and publishing houses. There were several large factories where the fine silken threads used in the weaving of the draperies I have already mentioned were spun. There were art rooms, picture galleries, libraries, many lecture halls, and vast auditoriums.

But I saw no churches of any kind. At first this somewhat confused me, until I remembered that there are no creeds or denominations in heaven. All worship together in harmony and love - the children of one and the same loving Father.

“Ah,” I thought, “what a pity that this fact, if no other in the great economy of heaven, could not be proclaimed to the inhabitants of earth! How it would do away with the petty contentions, jealousies, and rivalries of the church militant! No creeds in heaven! No controverted points of doctrine! No charges of heresy brought by one professed Christian against another! No building up of one denomination upon the ruins or downfall of a different sect! But one great, universal brotherhood whose head is Christ and whose cornerstone is love.”

MORE HEAVENLY JOY

I thought of the day we had listened in the great auditorium at home to the divine message of our beloved Master. I remembered the bowed heads and uplifted voices of that vast multitude as every voice joined in the glorious anthem, “Crown Him Lord of All!” I could have wept to think of the faces that must someday be bowed in shame when they remember how often they have said to a fellow-Christian, “Stand by thyself, come not near to me’ I am holier than thou!” (Isaiah 65:5).

There were no homes anywhere in the midst of the city. They stood in the suburbs with great magnificence and splendor. But one pleasing fact was that every home had a

large garden full of trees and flowers and pleasant walks. Indeed, these gardens were everywhere, outside of the business center of the town, like one vast park dotted with lovely houses. There was much that charmed and surprised me in this great city. I may not describe all of it, but I will never forget its beauty.

We found a very large park with walks, drives, fountains, miniature lakes, and shaded seats. There were no dwellings or buildings of any kind, except for an immense, circular, open temple capable of seating many hundred. Frank told me that a seraph choir assembled here and rendered the oratorios written by the great musical composers of earth and heaven. It had just departed, and the crowd who had enjoyed its divine music still lingered as though unwilling to leave a spot so hallowed.

"We will come again," Frank said, "when we can hear them."

CHAPTER 11 - THE TEMPLE

"And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power" - Revelation 15:8

Still passing through the park, we came out upon the open country and walked some distance through flowery meadows and plains. After awhile, we entered a vast forest whose great trees towered above us like swaying giants.

Frank walked next to me, absorbed in silent thought, but with a touch beyond even his usual gentleness. I did not ask where we were going, so far from home, for fear and doubt and questionings no longer vexed the quiet of my soul. Although the forest was dense, the golden glow of the heavenly light rested beneath the trees and sifted down through the quivering branches over-head

THE THRONE OF GLORY

Eventually, we emerged from the forest onto a vast plain which stretched out into limitless space before us. Far way we heard the faint thunder of the breaking waves of that immortal sea of which I had heard so much but had not yet seen. Except for their faint and distant reverberation, the silence about us was intense.

We stood a moment upon the verge of the forest. As we advanced a few steps into the plain I became aware that immediately to our right the ground rose into quite and elevation.

As I turned, a sight broke upon my bewildered eyes that the eternal years of earth and heaven can never erase. Upon the summit of this gentle slope stood a Temple whose vast dome, massive pillars and solid walls were of flawless pearl. Through the great windows of the Temple shone a white radiance that swallowed up the golden glow of the heavenly light and made it its own. I did not cry aloud nor hide my face, as at former revelations.

Instead, I sank slowly to my knees and, with my hands crossed upon my breast, an uplifted face, a still heart, and silent lips, laid my whole being in worship at His feet. "who sitteth upon the throne" (Revelation 5:13). I don't know how long I knelt like this. Even immortal life seemed lost before that greatest of celestial mysteries.

Then Frank, who had been silently kneeling beside me, arose and, lifting me to my feet, whispered gently, "Come." I felt, rather than saw, that his face was colorless with the depth of his emotion, and I yielded to his guidance in silence.

A long flight of low, broad steps, in gradations, rose from where we stood to the door of the Temple. They, too, were of solid pearl, bordered on either side by channels paved with golden stones through which flowed crystal waters that met and mingled in one stream far out upon the plain. Ascending these steps, we entered the Temple and stood for a moment in silence.

I do not know why, but suddenly every detail of that wonderful interior was etched upon my memory as a scene is photographed and kept forever. Before this, it had taken repeated visits to a room to enable me to describe it correctly in detail. But this, in a lightning's flash, was stamped upon the tablet of my memory indelibly for all time - for eternity.

The immense dome, at that moment filled with a luminous cloud, was upheld by three rows of massive pillars of gold. The walls and floors were made of pearl, as was the great platform that took up at least one-third of the Temple on the eastern side. There were no seats of any kind. The great golden pillars stood like rows of sentinels on the shining floor.

A railing of gold ran entirely around the platform on three sides, so that it was inaccessible from the body of the Temple. Beneath this railing on the Temple-floor, a pearl kneeling-step encircled the platform, also made of pearl. In the center of the platform an immense altar of gold arose. It was supported by seraphs of gold with outspread wings, one at each corner.

Underneath it, in a great pearl basin, a fountain of sparkling water played, and I knew intuitively it was the source of the magical River that flowed through the gardens of heaven and cleansed us of the last stains of death and sin.

THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING

Two persons knelt with bowed head beside the altar-rail on the farther side of the Temple. By the altar stood four angels, one on either side, dressed in flowing garments of white. They had long, slim trumpets of gold lifted in their hands, as though waiting for the signal to sound their trumpet call. Long draperies of silvery gossamer hung in heavy folds behind the altar platform.

Suddenly, we saw the draperies tremble and glow until a radiance far beyond the splendor of the sun at midday shone through them. The whole Temple was "Filled with the glory of the Lord" (Exodus 40:34). We saw, in the midst of the luminous cloud that filled the dome, the forms of angelic harpers. As we dropped with bowed heads beside the altar-rail and hid our faces from the "brightness of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). We heard the trumpet-call of the four angels around the altar. The voices of the celestial harpers sang:

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name,
In earth, and sky, and sea,
Holy, Holy, Holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three persons - blessed Trinity. Amen!"

The voices softly died away, the last notes of the golden trumpets had sounded, "and there was silence in heaven" (Revelation 8:1). We knew that the visible glory of the Lord was, for the present, withdrawn from the Temple - His thrown. Still we knelt with bowed heads in silent worship before Him.

When we finally arose, I did not lift my eyes while I was with the Temple. I wanted it to remain in my memory as it appeared with His glory.

We walked in silence. I leaned upon Frank's arm, for I still trembled with emotion. I was surprised that we did not return into the forest, but went farther out onto the plain. But when I saw that we approached the confluence of the two streams which issued from the fountain beneath the altar, I understood that we would return by way of the River, instead of by forest and lake.

THE JOURNEY HOME

We reached the stream, and, stepping into a boat that lay by the shore, we were soon floating toward home. We passed through much beautiful scenery that I had not seen before. I decided to visit these places in the future when leisure from my duties would permit. Lovely villas, surrounded by beautiful grounds stretching directly up from the water's edge, lay on both sides of the River. They formed a panorama which the eye never tired of beholding. Toward the end of the journey, we passed my sister's lovely home. We could plainly see her and her husband drinking in the scene with enraptured eyes from the window of her room.

Frank and I were both silent during most of our journey homeward. However, we each noted the signs of happy, domestic life by which we were surrounded on every side. The verandas and steps of the homes we passed were full of their happy inhabitants. Glad voices could be heard constantly, and merry shouts of laughter came from the groups of little children playing on the flowery lawns.

Once I broke our silence by saying to Frank, "I have often been delightfully surprised to hear the familiar songs of earth reproduced in heaven, but never more so than I was today. That hymn has always been a favorite of mine."

"These happy surprises do not come by chance," he answered. "One of the delights of this rare life is that no occasion is ever overlooked for reproducing the pure enjoyments of our mortal life here in heaven. It is the Father's pleasure to make us realize that this existence is a continuation of the former life, only without its imperfections and its cares."

"Frank, I believe you are the only one of our friends here who has never questioned me about the dear ones left behind. Why is that?"

He smiled a peculiarly happy smile as he answered, "Perhaps it is because I already know more than you could tell me."

"I wondered if that was why," I said. I remembered well how my dear father had said, in speaking of my brother-in-law on my arrival, "He stands very near to the Master," and I knew how often he was sent on missions to the world below.

When we returned, I lay down on my couch with a heart overflowing with joy and gratitude and love.

CHAPTER 12 - MEETING SPECIAL FRIENDS

So much occurred, and so rapidly, since my entrance within the beautiful gates, that it is impossible for me to transcribe it all. I have only been able to record selected incidents. In so doing, many things I would gladly have related but have unconsciously omitted.

Of the many dear friends I met, only a very few have been mentioned. The reason being that such meetings are so similar

in many respects that the constant repetition, in detail, would become wearisome.

I have principally aimed to give such incidents which show the beautiful domestic life in that happy world. I have tried to illustrate the reverence and love all hearts feel toward the blessed Trinity for every good and perfect gift. I have tried to show the marvelous power of the Christ-love even in the life beyond the grave.

RENEWING OLD TIES

In heaven, many ties that were once severed in mortal life were renewed. I remember walking once near Mrs. Wickham's home, shortly after my first memorable visit there. I was attracted by an unpretentious but very beautiful house. It was almost hidden by luxurious, climbing rose vines whose creamy white flowers were beyond compare with any roses I had yet seen in earth or heaven. Meeting Mrs. Wickham, I pointed to the house and asked, "Who lives there?"

"Suppose you go over and see," she said.

"Is it anyone I know?" I asked.

"I think so. See, someone is standing at the door expecting you."

I crossed over the snowy walk and flowery turf, and, before I could ascend the steps, I found myself in the embrace of two loving arms.

"Rebecca Springer! I was sure it was you when I saw you go to Mrs. Wickham. Did she not tell you I was here?"

"She had no opportunity until now," I said

"But dear Aunt Ann, I would have found you eventually, I am sure you know that."

"Yes, I am sure you would."

Then I told her about my visit to Mrs. Wickham's. She listened with her dear face full of sympathy, then said, "There, dear, you need not tell me. When the Master comes to gladden my eyes, I also have no thought or care for anything! Oh, the joy and peace of knowing I am safe in the blessed haven! How far beyond all our earthly dreams is this divine life!"

She sat for a moment lost in thought, then said wistfully, "Now, tell me of my children - are they coming?"

I gladdened her heart with all the cheering news I could bring of her loved ones. We recalled many sweet memories of the earth-life, of friends and home and family ties. We expressed how we were looking forward to the future arrival of those whom even the joys of heaven could not banish from our hearts.

ANOTHER REUNION

Then, as many of our dear family circle were gathered with us in the great "flower-room," we heard a step upon the veranda. As Frank went to open the door, a gentle voice said, "Is Mrs. Springer really here?"

"She is really here. Come and see for yourself." And sweet Mary Green entered the room.

"I am so glad to welcome you home!" she said. She was coming to me with extended hands and looking at me with her tender, earnest eyes.

"My precious girl!" I cried, taking her to my heart in a warm embrace. "I have been asking about you and longing to see you."

"I could scarcely wait to reach here when I heard that you had come. Now, tell me everything - everything!" she said as I drew her to a seat close beside me.

After a long, close conversation, I took her to the library where the rest had gone to examine a new book received that

day. I introduced her to them all as the daughter of dear friends still on earth. Confident of the welcome she would receive. My youngest sister and she at once became interested in each other, finding similarities in many of their pursuits. I was glad to think they would see much of each other in many different ways.

There was no measurement of time as we measure it here although many still spoke in the mortal language of months, and days and years. I have no way of describing it as it seemed to me then. There were times for happy duties, times for joyful pleasures, and times for holy praise. I only know it was all harmony, all joy, all peace, at all times and in all conditions.

CHAPTER 13 - A REUNION OF MOTHER AND SON

The current of my life flowed on in the heavenly ways, and my studies ascended higher in the scale of celestial mysteries. I never wearied of study, though much was taught and gained through the medium of observation in the journeys that I was permitted to take with Frank into different parts of the heavenly Kingdom.

I never lacked time for social pleasures and enjoyments, for there is no clashing of duties with inclinations, no unfulfilled desires, no vain strivings for the unattainable in that life, as in the life of earth.

Many precious moments of fellowship were spent in my dear father's home. Sometimes, on rare occasions, I was permitted to accompany him to his field of labor and assist him in instructing those who recently entered the new life. They had little or no preparation for its duties and responsibilities.

A WAYWARD SON

On one occasion he said to me, "I am faced with the most difficult problem I have yet had to deal with in this work. It is how to enlighten and help a man who suddenly plunged from an apparently honorable life into the very depths of crime. I have never been able to get him to accompany me to the River, where these earthly cobwebs would be wept from his poor brain. His excuse is always that God's mercy is so great in allowing him inside heaven's gates at all, that he is content to remain always in its lowest scale of enjoyment and life. No argument or teaching thus far has helped him alter his decision.

"He was led astray by infatuation for a strange woman and killed his aged mother in order to secure her jewels for this wretched creature. He was executed for the crime, of which in the end he sincerely repented, but he left life with all the horror of the deed clinging to his soul."

"Has he seen his mother since coming here" Does she know of his arrival?"

"No, she is entirely alone in this world. It was not thought wise to tell her of his coming until his soul was in a better condition to receive her. He was an only child and does not lack the elements of refinement, but he was completely under the control of this vile, though fascinating, woman. It is said she drugged his wine and caused him to do the dreadful deed while under its influence, because of her hatred for his mother. When he recovered from the influence of the wine, he was horrified at what he had done. His infatuation for the woman turned to loathing - but, alas, too late! He refused to see her during his entire incarceration."

"How long was he in prison?"

"Almost a year."

"Has he seen the Master?"

"No, he begs not to see Him. He is very repentant and grateful to be saved from the wrath he feels was his just punishment. Though he is conscious that his sin is forgiven, he does not feel that he can ever stand in the presence of the Holy One. And here, as on earth, each must be willing to receive Him. His presence is never given undesired. I have not yet appealed for higher help. My ambition is to lead these weak souls upward through the strength entrusted to me. Can you suggest anything that would probably reach him?"

"His mother. May I bring her?"

He thought a moment reflectively then said, "A woman's intuition. Yes, bring her."

MOTHER LOVE

I soon was on my way. I found the poor woman, laid the facts gently before her, and waited for her decision. There was no hesitancy on her part. In an instant she said, "My poor boy! Certainly I will go with you at once."

We found my father waiting for us and went immediately to the great house where these students stayed. It was a beautiful building in the midst of a park with shaded walks and fountains and flowers everywhere. To one just freed from earth it seemed a paradise indeed. But to those of us who had tasted heaven's rarer joys, something was lacking. We missed the lovely individual homes, the little children playing on the lawns, the music of the angel choir. It was tame, indeed, beside the pleasures we had tasted.

We found the young man seated beneath one of the flower-laden trees, intently studying a book my father had left with him. There was a peaceful look on his pale face, but it was rather the look of patient resignation than overwhelming joy. His mother approached him alone. My father and I remained in the background. After a while, he glanced up and saw his mother standing near him. A startled look came into his face, and he rose to his feet. She extended her arms toward him and cried out pathetically, "John, my dear boy, come home to me - I need you!" That was all.

With a low cry he knelt at her feet and clasped her knees, sobbing, "Mother! Mother!"

She stooped and put her tender arms around him. She drew his head gently to her breast and showered kisses on his bowed head. Oh, the warm mother-love, the same in earth and heaven! Only the Christ-love can exceed it. Here was this disheartened mother, sent into eternity by the hands of him who should have shielded and sustained her, bending above her repentant son with the mother-love. Her joy and love were shining on him from her gentle eyes.

I saw my father turn his head to conceal his emotion, and I knew that my own eyes were wet. My father had explained to the mother that the first thing to be accomplished was to get her son to the River. We now heard her say caressingly. "Come, John, my boy, take the first step upward, for your mother's sake, that in time I may have the joy of seeing you in our own home. Come, John, with mother."

She gently drew him, and to our great joy we saw him rise and go with her. Their steps led them to the River. They walked hand in hand, and as far as we could see them she seemed to be soothing and comforting him.

"There will be no further trouble now," said my father. "When they return, he will see with clearer vision." And so it was.

After this, by divine permission, I became a co-laborer with my father, and thus I enjoyed his company and his instructions more often than I might have done.

On one occasion, I sat resting on the upper veranda of our home. I had just returned from a somewhat strenuous journey to a distant city of the heavenly realm. From this part of the veranda we caught rare glimpses of the River through the overhanging branches of the trees. Just below us, at a little distance, we could see the happy children playing on the lawn.

Here Frank found me and, throwing himself on a soft veranda lounge, lay for a time motionless and silent. He looked as wearied as one can ever look in that life, but I felt no anxiety about him. He had been absent on some earth-mission. I knew that some of the fatigue and care of earth will cling to us on such occasion, until we are restored by heaven's soothing air and life-giving waters.

He had not told me, as he sometimes did, where his mission had led him. And I had not asked him, feeling sure that he would tell me what I should know. My own recent duties had been unusually responsible, leading me to a distant part of the heavenly kingdom. I had thrown all of my energies into the work assigned me by the Master.

GOOD NEWS

After a time of rest, Frank arose to a sitting posture and, regarding me for a moment in silence, said gently, "I have news for you, little sister."

A thrill like an electric shock passed through me, and in an instant I cried out joyously, "He is coming!"

He nodded his head, with a sympathetic smile, but did not at once reply.

"He was stricken suddenly in the midst of his work, while apparently in perfect health, and has not regained consciousness - nor will he ever on earth."

"When was this?"

"Three days ago. I have been with him almost constantly by day and night ever since."

"Oh, why did you not tell me sooner?"

"It was thought wise to spare you the unnecessary pain of knowing he was suffering when you could not minister to him."

"Will he know me as soon as the struggle is past?"

"Yes, but he will be bewildered and weak. He will need stronger help and guidance than you alone can give. You will miss the rapture of the meeting as it would be a little later on."

"What should I do? You know I will yield to your wiser judgment even against the pleadings of my heart."

A COMFORTING VISIT

"I will not say," 'do not go.' You may accompany me, if you wish. I only think that after the first bewilderment of the change has passed, after he has bathed in the waters of the River of Life, he will be better prepared for your delightful reunion. You remember what the waters did for you and how bewildered and oppressed in spirit you were until you went into the River. It is the same with all of us. Only where there has been serious trouble with the brain, it is even more necessary than on ordinary occasions. And that is the case with my brother. He will not be himself until the cleansing waters have swept the clouds from his brain."

"You are always right, Frank. I will yield to your wise advice, although my heart cries out to rush to his side. When will you return to him?"

"Immediately. There will be little time to wait. My brave-hearted, wise, little sister, the delay will be neither sorrowful nor long."

He arose and, bending over me, dropped a kiss lightly on my brow. In a moment, he passed from my sight.

"How strange," I thought, "that even in this matter, so near to my heart, I am able to yield unobtrusively! Father, I thank You! I thank You for the glad reunion so near at hand. But even more than that, I thank You for the sweet submission in all things that has grown into my life. I can yield to Your will even when You would permit it to be otherwise."

I bowed my head upon my hand and gave myself up to mingled sad and happy thoughts. Was he, this dearly loved one, indeed unaware of his suffering? Would the Father mercifully spare him even the pain of the parting? Oh, that the time of his arrival were here! How could I wait even that brief while for the sight of his beloved face!

Suddenly, a soft touch rested upon my bowed head. A Voice I had learned to recognize and love beyond all things in earth or heaven said, "Have I not said truly, 'Though he were dead, yet shall he live' (John 11:25). Of what importance are the years of separation, since the meeting again is at hand? Come, and let us reason a little together." The Master smiled down into my uplifted face. He took my extended hand into His own and, setting down beside me, continued, "Let us consider what being here has done for you. Do you not feel that you are infinitely better prepared to bring happiness than when you parted from him whom you love?"

I nodded in glad affirmation.

"Do you not realize that you stand on a higher plane with more exalted ideas of life and its duties? In the strength of the Father, you two will walk upward together."

Again, I gladly acquiesced.

"Is the life here less attractive than it was on earth?"

"No, no! A thousand times no!" I cried.

"Then there is nothing but joy in the reunion at hand?"

"Nothing but joy," I echoed.

THE SECRET OF MARRIAGE

Then the Savior led me on to talk of the one so soon to come. I opened my glad heart to Him and told Him of the noble life, the unselfish toil, the high aspirations, the unfaltering trust of him whom I loved. I spoke of his strength in misfortune, his courage in the face of sore trial and disappointment, his forgiveness of even malicious injury. I then concluded by saying, "He lived the Christianity many others only professed. He always surpassed me in that."

The face of the Master glowed in sympathy as I talked. When I ceased, He said, "I perceive that you have discovered the secret of marriage."

He led me on until my soul flew upward as a lark. He unfolded mysteries of the soul-life that filled my heart with rapture, but which I may not here reveal. At length, to my infinite surprise, I saw the rose glow deepening across the sky. The Master arose and, pointing to the radiance, said; "By the time you are ready to receive them they will be here." With a smile, and a touch that made a benediction, He departed.

A GLAD SONG

As I arose and stood, I heard the triumphant notes of the angels' choral song. As though in sympathy with my thought, they sang, "He is risen! Hear it, ye heavens, and you sons of earth! He is risen, and has become the first-fruits of them that slept!"

I lifted up my voice with joy and joined their thrilling song. As they swept onward, and the melody died away, I slowly descended the stairway, crossed the lawn whose flowers never crushed or withered beneath our feet, and sank beneath the pure waters of the River. I felt no haste, no unusual excitement, or unrest, though I knew that he was coming. The Master's presence had filled me with such calm and peace that no power could disturb it. He had prepared me for the great happiness lying just before me.

Uplifted with a new, strange delight, I re-crossed the lawn to gather a bouquet of cream-white roses, and I fastened them to my breast. Then I refilled the golden bowl in the library with the luscious scarlet carnations, laying one aside to fasten upon my husband's shoulder. I wanted to personally gather the flowers that would greet him on his coming. I twisted up my hair in the manner that he had most admired and fastened a creamy bud within the folds.

Soon I heard voices and steps. Listen! Yes, it is the same dear step which I had so often listened for in the old home-life. His steps had always brought gladness to my heart and sunshine in our home! His step in heaven! I flew to the open door-way and, in an instant, was held close to the loving throbbing heart of my dear husband.

Frank, with thoughtful care, passed on to the upper rooms of the house. For a while we were alone together - we whose lives had been so happy through the long years of our mortal life. I led him into the house, and, in the vestibule, he again took me in his arms and drew me to his heart.

"This is heaven indeed!" he said.

We passed into the "flower-room," and he stood a moment on its threshold, entranced with its beauty. But when I began to tell him its history, as Frank had given it to me, he said, "Not today, my dear."

So we sat and talked together. Our brother, Frank, had come to us, and together we had gone through the lovely house. We stood upon the broad verandas and ate of the heavenly fruit. Then we all sat together where I had spent the time waiting in the presence of the blessed Master. I told them much that He had said to me and how He turned my waiting into triumphant rejoicing. The eyes of my dear husband were tear-filled, and he held my hand in tender sympathy.

"Oh, darling, it is a blessed, blessed life!" I said.

"I already realize the blessedness," he replied

A FAMILY REUNION

I said to my husband and Frank, "We must go to father and mother Springer's."

"Yes, we will go at once," they both replied.

So together we all started. I had often and with much joy visited the home of my husband's parents. I found a warm place in their hearts. Now we were taking them a favorite son. I realized how his coming would bring gladness to their hearts and home. It was a joyful meeting, especially to our mother.

When we turned to go, we met, upon the threshold, an aunt who in the earth-life - blind and helpless - had been special to us all.

"My dear children," she exclaimed, "how good it is to see you all again!"

"Aunt Cynthia!" my husband said fondly.

"Yes, Aunt Cynthia, but no longer groping helpless in the darkness. 'whereas I was blind, now I see' " (John 9:25), she quoted, smiling happily.

And so it was - the Master's touch had rested on her sightless eyes, and, closing to the darkness of earth, they had

opened upon the glories of heaven. Marvelous transition! No wonder we left her singing:

*Glory to Him who this marvel hath wrought,
Filling my Spirit with joy and delight!
Lo, in my blindness I safely have walked
Out of the darkness into the light!*

CHAPTER 15 - THE CELESTIAL SEA

Our life was perfect, though we looked forward with joy to the future coming of our son and daughter to make its ties complete. We had often spoken of going together to the great celestial sea, but the time had never seemed quite ripe for so doing. We realized it was one of the great mysteries of heaven, although we did not know just what to expect. Once I said to Frank, "I have a strange desire to go to the sea, if you think it wise for us to do so."

"I am glad that it is your desire to go, as it is mine to have you. I was about to propose that you and my brother take this blessed journey together."

"Will you accompany us?"

"Not at this time. We will all go together another time. But it is best that you two go alone this time. You know the way. Go through the forest that leads to the Temple, until you are almost there. Then bear to the right and follow the golden path that takes you directly to the shore."

So we started. We were filled with a holy joy that we could take this special journey together. We walked through the great forest where the beautiful light fell through the quivering branches overhead. Gorgeous birds were darting everywhere. We heard the regular crashing of waves against the shore. And there were bursts of triumphant song and the harmony of many instruments of music. Eventually we emerged from the forest and stood mute and motionless before the overwhelming glory of the scene before us.

THE GLORY OF IT ALL!

Can I describe it as it appeared to me that day? Not until my lips can speak and your heart can understand the language of the royal courts above. From our very feet a golden beach sloped downward toward the shore. It was many hundred feet wide and extended on either side far beyond the limits of our vision. This beach caught and radiated the light until it glittered and glimmered like the dust of diamonds and other precious stones.

The waves, as they came and went in ceaseless motion, caught up this sparkling sand and carried it on their crests. And the sea! It spread out before us in a radiance that exceeds description in any language I have ever known. It was like the white glory that shone through the windows of the Temple. Beneath this shining glory we saw the blue tint of the waters of that sea which has no limit to its depths or bounds.

Upon its shining bosom we saw, in every direction, boats representing all nations. But their beauty far surpassed anything earth has ever known. They were like great, open pleasure-barges, and they were filled with people looking eagerly toward the shore. Many, in their eagerness, were standing erect and gazing with wistful, expectant eyes into the faces of those on the shore.

Ah, the people upon the shore! "Numberless as the sands of the sea," they stood, far as the eyes could reach, far as stretched the shore of that limitless sea, a great mass of beautiful souls clad in the spotless garments of the redeemed.

Many of them had golden harps and various instruments of music. When a boat touched the shore, its passengers were welcomed by the glad voices and tender embraces of their loved ones. Then the harps would be held aloft, all of the golden instruments would sound, and the vast multitude would break forth into the triumphant song of victory over death and the grave.

"Do these people always stand here, I wonder?" I said softly.

"Not the same people," said a radiant being near us who had heard my question. "But there is always a crowd of people here - those who are expecting friends from the other life, and those who assemble to share in their joy. Some of the heavenly choristers are always here, but not always the same ones. You will notice that most of those who arrive are led quietly away by their friends, and many others are constantly joining the multitude."

He passed onward toward the shore and left us enveloped in awe and wonder.

WONDERFUL REUNIONS

We soon became deeply interested in watching the reunions and found ourselves joining with rapture in the glad songs of rejoicing. Now and then a familiar face would be among the eager faces in the boats, but there were none that had been especially dear to us. Still it made us notice more closely and sympathize more heartily with those who welcomed beloved friends. Perhaps we would see a wife caught in the close embrace of a waiting husband, or a little child with a glad cry would spring into the outstretched arms of a happy mother. Friend would clasp friend in glad reunion, and an aged mother would be folded to the heart of a beloved child.

As one boat of extraordinary strength and beauty came riding gracefully over the waves, we observed the tall figure of a man standing near the front with his arms around a graceful woman who stood by his side. Each shaded their dazzled eyes from the rare splendor and scanned, wistful and searchingly, the faces of the crowd as the boat neared the shore. Suddenly, with a great thrill of joy surging through my being, I cried out, "It is our precious son and his dear wife! They have come together!"

In an instant we were swiftly moving through the crowd which parted in ready sympathy to let us pass. And, as the boat touched the shore, they were both beside us - the dear daughter already embracing her happy parents, who were waiting near the water's edge, and our beloved son enfolding us. Soon we were all in each other's embrace. Oh, what a rapturous moment that was! Our life in heaven was complete - no partings forever! As we stood with encircling arms, scarcely realizing the unexpected bliss, the heavenly choir broke into song. With uplifted faces radiant with joy, eyes filled with happy tears, and voices trembling with emotion, we all joined in a glad anthem of praise.

*Glory be unto the Father, and unto the Son!
Glory be unto the ever-blessed Three in one!*

*No more sorrow, no more parting, no more grief or pain;
Christ has broken death's strong fetters,
And we are free again!
Alleluia! Amen!*

The song rose and swelled triumphantly as the vast multitude caught it up. The surge of the waves made a deep undertone to the melody that increased its solemnity. With bowed heads and full hearts we passed onward hand in hand. The light that

fell about was purer, holier, and more divine than it had ever been before.

CHAPTER 16 - THE VISION ENDS

Then there came the time when I stood in my lovely room that had become a shrine to me. I walked to my couch, to lie down for a moment. But strange thoughts and ideas crept into my brain. I felt confused and bewildered. I got up, restlessly, from my pillow, only to fall back again in doubt - almost dread. What could it mean? Could the old unrest of earth enter this divine retreat?

Then I heard unfamiliar voices. Someone said, "I think her color is better than it has been for several days," "Yes, there is no doubt that she is better today. There is hope for her now, I am sure. But she came very near passing through the Gates."

"Very near passing through the Gates!" as though I had not passed through! In returning, I left heaven's gates so ajar that gleams of the heavenly radiance from beyond will fall about my life forever!

I have been in my Father's house.

"We shall know each other there!"

CHAPTER 17 - REFLECTIONS

Let me reassert what I have already stated: I have never claimed that this strange experience is either a revelation or an inspiration. It came to me during a period of great physical suffering, and I have always considered it compensation for that suffering. Be this as it may, it has been a great comfort and help to me. Through the letters received from others, I am led to believe it has been the same to many who have read it. I am extremely gratified by this.

I wish that I could have related the entire experience just as it came to me, but our present language is wholly inadequate. There were so many mysteries, so many teachings far beyond anything we have known in this life, that I find myself bewildered and lost when I attempt to convey the marvelous things I experienced during that time.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE VISION

The question has repeatedly been asked me, "Was this a real experience or merely a fanciful sketch?" What I have written above will answer that question. The preface and early pages are as nearly accurate as I can make them. Anything that I might add on that point would simply be superfluous.

Questions concerning the comparative distances in heaven, our power of passing from one point to another, and if in the other life we develop wings to aid us in passage have been asked. These matter-of-fact questions are sometimes quite difficult to answer. I believe that if I were really in the other life, as during this experience I seemed to be, my thought would be so far above such temporal matters that I would be unable to answer such inquiries satisfactorily on my return to this life.

Looking back upon it now, and trying to gather facts from the impressions that I then received, I would say that none who have ever passed through mortal life would in any way be changed from their present personal appearance, except to be etherealized and glorified.

When I seemed to stand in that wonderful Temple filled with the glory of God the Father, four angels with uplifted

trumpets stood beside the golden altar on the great platform of pearl. From their shoulders shadowy pinions unfolded them and touched the floor upon which they stood. And, in a moment of bewildering emotions, I lifted my eyes to the cloud-filled dome. There I saw shadowy pinions which half-concealed the harps and golden instruments of the heavenly choir.

Also, when I had first met the Savior, we heard the angel voices as we stood together in the great "flower-room." Looking upward, I saw the cherub faces in the golden light above us, and they, too, had delicate, shadowy wings, half-concealing their divine forms. Except for this, I have no recollection of having seen any of those glorious wings of which we so often read.

To me it seems these are given to the angels of God who have always lived in heaven. We appear to our friends when we meet them over there just as they saw us here, only purified and perfect. Still, we had powers of locomotion given us that carried us from point to point swiftly and securely, as though borne by a boat upon the waters.

A STRANGE JOURNEY

I do not know how I can better illustrate this point than by giving a little incident not mentioned before. I remember sitting once on the upper terrace in the house of my sister. She said to me, "I often look across the River to those lovely hills in the distance and wonder if it is all as beautiful there as here. I intend to go soon and see."

"Why not go now?" was my reply.

"Could you go with me now?" she asked as she turned her radiant face again toward the River and the lovely fields beyond.

"With pleasure," I replied. "I have often wished to go myself. There is something very inviting in the beautiful landscape beyond the River. Where is Frank?" I asked. "Will he accompany us?"

"No," she said, looking smilingly toward me, "he has gone on an important mission for the Master. But you and I, dear, can go and be home again before his return."

"Then let us do so," I replied, rising and giving her my hand.

She at once arose, and, instead of turning toward the stairway in the center of the building, we turned and walked deliberately toward the low, sloping wall that surrounded the upper veranda. Without a moment's hesitation, we stepped over this into the sweet air that lay about us. There was no more fear of falling than if our feet had been on solid ground. We had the power of passing through the air and water at will, just as we had the power of walking upon the crystal paths and lawn about us.

We ascended slightly until we were just above the treetops, and then - what shall I say? - we did not fly, we made no effort either with our hands or our feet. I can only think of the word, "drifting" to describe this wonderful experience. We went as a leaf or a feather floats through the air on a beautiful day, and the sensation was most delightful. Beneath us we saw, through the green branches of the trees, the little children playing and the people walking - some for pleasure, some for duty. As we neared the River, we looked down on the pleasure-boats and the people sitting or lying or walking on the pebbly bottom. We saw them with the same distinctness as we would if we were simply looking at them through the atmosphere.

Conversing as we drifted onward, we were soon over the tops of the hills which were our destiny. For some time, we exchanged no words. Our hearts were filled with sensations

that only the scenes of heaven can give. Then my sister said very softly, quoting from one of the old earth-hymns. "Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood. Stand dressed in living green."

And, in the same spirit, I answered, "It is, indeed, a rapturous scene - that rises to our sight. Sweet fields arrayed in living green, and rivers of delight."

MISSIONARIES IN HEAVEN

As we continued, we began to see many suburban villages similar to our own. Many of the buildings seemed quite different in architecture from our own. I suggested to my sister that we drop down a little. On doing so, we soon realized what caused this apparent difference in the architecture and surroundings. Where our homes were situated, we were surrounded by people we had known and loved on earth. And they were also of our own nationality.

Many of these villages over which we were now passing were formed from what, to us, would be termed foreign nations. Each village retained some of the peculiarities of its heritage on earth and were naturally unfamiliar. We recognized again the wisdom and goodness of the Father in thus allowing friends of the same nationality to be located near each other in heaven, as on earth.

As we drifted onward and passed over an exquisitely beautiful valley, we saw a group of people seated on the ground in a semi-circle. There seemed to be hundreds, and in their midst was a man who, apparently, was talking to them. Something familiar, and yet unfamiliar, attracted us, and I said, "Let's go nearer and hear what he is saying. Let's see who these people are."

Upon doing this, we found the people to slightly resemble our own Indian tribes. Their dress, in a manner, corresponded to that worn on earth, though so etherealized as to be surpassingly beautiful. But the dusky faces and the long black hair still remained. The faces, with intense interest, were turned toward the man who was talking to them. Looking at him, we saw that he belonged to the Anglo-Saxon race. In a whisper of surprise, I said to my sister, "Why, he is a missionary!"

As so often seemed to happen when a surprise or a difficulty presented itself, there was always someone near to answer and enlighten us. And so we found on this occasion that our instructor was beside us ready to answer any surprise or question that might be asked. He said at once, "Yes, you are right. This is a missionary who gave his life to what on earth were called the heathen. He spent many years working for them and enlightening those who sat in darkness, resulting, as you see before you, in hundreds being brought into the Kingdom of the Master. But, as you will naturally suppose, they have much to learn. He still gathers them about him and leads them higher and higher into the blessed life."

"Are there many doing this type of work in the beautiful realm?" I asked.

"Many hundreds," he said. "To these poor minds, unenlightened as they were when they first came, heaven is a beautiful and happy a place as it is to any who have ascended higher, simply because we can enjoy only in the capacity to which our souls can reach. All of us have much yet to learn of this wonderful country."

In several instances as we drifted above the villages, we heard songs of praise arising from the temples and from people collected in different ways. In many cases, to our surprise, the hymns and the words were familiar, and, although sung in a strange tongue, we understood them all.

That was another one of the wonderful surprises of heaven. There was no language there that we could not understand.

We passed on and on and on through wonderful scenes of beauty, finally returning to our own homes by a different way than we had come. It seemed that we almost made a circle in our pleasant journeyings. When I left my sister in her own home, she whispered to me as she said good-bye, "It has been a time of such wonderful rest and pleasure. We must do it again soon."

"Yes, dear, we will."

THE MEANING OF THE VISION

In answer to the question of whether I consider this experience a revelation, I can only say that I gave it as it came to me. Each person must draw his own conclusion concerning it. I can be the guide for no one.

Looking back, it seems to me to be more a series of instructions such as we give little children here in kindergarten. It does not strive to be a revelation of what has been or what will be, in the strict sense of the word. But, as I have already suggested, it is more like a lesson we would teach children in school.

I myself noticed, in transcribing this strange experience, the fact that the first lesson to be taught almost invariably came as an illustration. And, after my wonder and pleasure had taken in all that the picture itself would teach, then followed the revelation or a general application of its meaning.

For instance, that I may make my meaning more clear, when I myself first entered within the gates, I was shown the wonders of the celestial gardens and the beautiful River. Then came the reunions with the dear ones from whom I had been so long parted. And so I came to know the rapture of the spirit on its first entrance within heaven's gates.

Afterwards there were the instructions or first lessons concerning this life into which I seemed to have entered, until they formed one perfect lesson. And when I met and welcomed my dear sister, my husband, and my son, I knew the other side of the question - the joy that came even to the angels in heaven when they welcomed the beloved ones who came to them from the world below.

And so, all through the book, the instruction was invariably preceded by the illustration. Thus I can only think, if any meaning can be attached to this wonderful vision, that it is simply a general lesson of what we may expect and hope for when we reach the other shore.

OVERFLOWING WITH PURE WATER

Again, I am asked, "Does this experience retain its vividness as time passes, or does it grow unreal and dreamlike to you?" I can partially forget some of the happiest experiences of my earth-life, but time seems only to intensify the wonders of those days when my feet stood on the border of the two worlds. It seemed to me that, at every step we took in the divine life, our souls reached up toward something better. We had no inclination to look behind to that which had passed or to try to solve what in our mortal life had been intricate or perplexing questions or mysteries. Like the cup that is filled to overflowing at the fountain with pure and sparkling water, so our souls were filled - more than filled - with water from the fountain of all good. There was no longer room for anything else.

"How then," you asked, "could you reach out for more, when you had all that you could receive?" Because our souls grew and expanded and opened to receive fresh inflows of

divine instruction which constantly lifted us nearer to the source of all perfection.

Some of the letters that have come to me have been so pathetic in their inquiries, that they have called forth sympathetic tears. Thus, I have an intense longing to speak with authority on the question raised. However, God has not given me that privilege. I can only tell how it seemed to me in that blissful time when earth seemed remote and heaven very near and real.

To all who have lost loved ones, I would say, "Look up, dear friends, and see the loved ones, as I saw those so dear to me, happy and blessed beyond all human conception in the house of many mansions prepared for us by our loving Father." Oh, those wonderful mansions on which my longing heart looks back! Believe in them look forward to the, beloved friends, for we have the Savior's promise that they are there, "In My Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2). His promises never fail. And I am sure of one thing - they will not be any less beautiful than those I saw in my vision.

In conclusion, I can only reiterate that I am no prophet; I am no seer. But, in my innermost soul, I honestly believe that if the joys of heaven are greater, if the glories "within heaven's gates" are more radiant than I beheld them in my vision, I cannot understand how even the immortal spirit could bear to look upon them.

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