

Gone West - 2

A Subaltern in Spirit Land

J.S.M. Ward



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A Sequel to Gone West Part One

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A SUBALTERN IN SPIRIT LAND

A Sequel to “Gone West”

By

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PART ONE

(1916)

PSYCHIC BOOK CLUB LTD
144, High Holborn, London, W.C.1

DEDICATION

IN THE NAME OF THE DEAD, UNDYING,
OF THE CORPSES SILENT LYING
MID THE THUNDEROUS, BATTLE'S ROAR,
IN THE NAME OF THE MOTHER WHO BORE ME,
AND THE BROTHER WHO PASSED BEFORE ME,
I OPEN THE GUARDED DOOR.

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INTRODUCTION

In *Gone West* I have explained at some length the manner in which that work was obtained. In this sequel I have abandoned automatic writing, and utilized solely the power I had developed of passing in the trance state to the next plane of existence. The death of my brother created a new link with the Unseen World which is all around us. As he had passed; not to the spirit plane, but to the astral plane, I concentrated my attention on the latter. I did this the more readily as it is to this plane that the great bulk of our soldiers have passed. Naturally, conditions there were abnormal during the war, but these very conditions were the more interesting to all of us whom they have left behind.

Having myself suffered such a loss by the death within the same year of three close relations, I can realise how terribly many another has suffered during these last five years. I have had an advantage denied to most of my readers that of being able to go out there and communicate face to face with those who have passed over. Yet despite this, I felt most bitterly their loss. How much more, then, those who cannot do so!

In giving this narrative to the general public, I have been actuated by the desire to bring comfort to others in a similar position of loss. I knew that the Dead die not long before my brother died, but of the manner in which they live I knew only a little. Except for the brief account of the astral plane by W. A., and another rather specialized account by the Officer, my knowledge related mainly to the spirit plane. Of the astral plane under war conditions I knew nothing.

The interest *Gone West* aroused has been shown not merely by its sales, considerable as these have been, but by the large number of letters I have received, which have been of the greatest encouragement. Those of us who are endeavoring to spread the true knowledge of life beyond the grave, are doing so in the face of opposition alike from the ordinary man of the world and from the ministers of established religions. Sometimes we are laughed at, whilst at other times we are called necromancers. Some of our opponents even go so far as to hint that we are not quite sane but this has always been the way in which new truths are received at first. Nevertheless, it may be of interest to my readers to know that I am a perfectly normal man, one who is earning his living in business and who has every day to deal with complex mundane matters. The fluctuations in the rate of exchange, source of the raw materials of industry, the German methods of trade penetration, and trade statistics are a few of the subjects with which I am concerned, and on all of which I have written articles and issued reports which are readily taken by the trade journals.

I assure my readers that, from the financial point of view, it pays far better for me to write two or three articles on Openings for British Trade in, say, South America, than it does to write such a book as this. I am not a medium, plying for hire, as the daily papers would call it. And if you met me at dinner, unless I spoke of these things, you would find me no different from a hundred other busy men of affairs. Why, then, should the critics suppose that my ordinary clear business mind fails me when I turn to investigate psychical phenomena, or think I should waste my time practicing a heartless fraud on my readers? After all, those are the alternatives. If I did not feel that the message these pages contain was not merely true, but of vital importance to our sorrow-laden world, be assured that I would not thus publicly reveal much which is absolutely sacred to my personal life.

And, after all, is the picture of life beyond the grave so unnatural? For my part, I consider it absolutely rational and reasonable, and on its own account much more

intrinsically probable than the misty and unconvincing stories of Heaven and Hell on which our early years were nurtured. Is the average man at death in a state to appreciate the Heaven as depicted? The Churches can give us no rational account of life beyond the grave. The best attempt is that made by the Roman Catholic Church, and it will be noticed that many of the statements made by that body are borne out by the narratives we are now obtaining. But not all she says is correct. It would appear to the impartial observer as if at one time the Roman Catholic Church at least had kept the doorway open; but at a later date closed it, and since then much which her seers had learned became distorted or misunderstood by a later generation.

For the most part, however, the Churches have utterly failed to answer the agonized question, 'Whither go we?' Long years ago a Christian missionary stood before an Anglo-Saxon king and pleaded his cause. Then arose a priest of Woden, and said, 'O King, the life of man is like a sparrow which flutters into the lighted hall out of the dark and stormy night. For a moment it flies round our hall, lit by the cheerful light of the fire, and then it vanishes once more out into the sleet mid the rain. Such are we. We come out of the dark and into it return, but whence we come, and whither we go, we know not. If these men can tell us ought, then let us follow them, and leave the old gods behind.'

Have the Churches really answered the great question? I, for one, say No! And there are tens of thousands in England to-day who will agree with me. Then let others endeavor to do so. Let us direct the same scientific minds, as have won from Nature her hidden secrets, to demand of Death the greatest secret of all. Let us direct the scientific mind to study the soul and the spirit of man, as it has already studied his body. And this is being done. Each day the number of careful students grows greater. Each day new discoveries are being made and if the Churches will not co-operate, regret it though we may, then we who do know the truth must go on alone.

A new dawn is breaking, and the most priceless kind of knowledge is attainable, and that is not the belief but the certainty of life beyond the grave.

One objection which is often raised to works similar to this is that the life they depict varies in every different work. As a matter of fact, if the critic would read enough other books he would find that certain essential points were in agreement, and that it was only the details which varied.

When one realizes the vastness of the "Unseen World" one can expect no less. After all, if the men of Mars dispatched six messengers to Earth, and instructed them to wireless back a detailed account of its inhabitants, the Martian papers would probably make the same sort of comment.

One article might reasonably begin thus: "The messages purporting to come from the misguided fanatics who set out to reach the Earth are too absurd for words. They absolutely contradict each other in almost every detail. We are told that the world is a sandy desert, with no water; and then that it is a dense and swampy jungle. This is followed by the statement that it is a frozen land, whose inhabitants cover themselves with skins.

"We are told that people are black savages who live in miserable huts; and then we receive a fanciful story of a mighty city, with machinery and mechanical transport. We are told they can fly, yet the next message says that the people are yellow, and though they have cities and some civilisation, yet they have practically no machinery at all. What can we make of it but either fraud or the dreams of madmen?"

And, after all, the explanation would merely be that the messengers had landed in such widely separated areas as the Sahara, London, the Congo, Chicago, and Greenland.

The real introduction to this book is written by R.L.W. himself, whom I asked to dictate to me what he would like to put as a foreword. So closes my share of this talk, only hoping that this true account of the trials and triumphs of a young subaltern will bring hope and peace to many.

J. W.

R.L.W. speaks: "They say, 'They died that we might live', and having said so, straightaway they forget us, save the few lonely souls who mourn in secret and find no comfort. As for the others, they turn to quarrelling amongst themselves, as if sufficient ill had not been wrought already upon the groaning earth. Such men as these even pay lip-service to 'our heroic dead', and use the catchword to advance their own particular ambitions or social theories.

"But all of these are wrong; those who mourn, and those who have forgotten. We died that Justice, Truth, and Liberty might live. We died, at least I died, that England might be free. For these things we died, and, having died, we live. This is our great reward, and nothing ye earth folk can do can take it from us. Filled with this new-found knowledge, is it strange we burn to tell those we have left behind? Not Death, but the fear of Death appalls. Remove this fear, and life on Earth becomes a life worth living. Nay, more than that, it takes its proper place, and ye will see it as it is, but one short step in the endless chain of life on many different planes.

"To those who mourn us I would say: 'Rather be glad, for having met the Dweller Of the Threshold, we have found him to be a friend, and not a foe - a bold knight who comes to break our chains, and not the grim warder who would bind us in his prison. From countless petty toils and ills, at one swift stroke he sets us free, and we are grateful.

"This life, compared with yours, is as the life of some soft June day compared with dark November night, and yet I know that it is but a shadow of that life which lies before us. If I had any fear, it would be that, at some long-distant day, I might be doomed to return once more to Earth and dwell as mortal man. 'Nay', ye will say, 'but parting sure is sad, and we who still remain must grieve for those we loved who now have passed away.' Yea, parting sure is sad, yet do ye break your hearts when the son leaves England's shores and settles in some far-distant land? 'But still he writes to us,' ye answer, 'but these, the dead, write unto us no more.'

"Why, every day we write to you, nay, even call upon you. Do we not come to you in your so called 'dreams'? Can ye not find means by which ye can receive our messages if ye choose? Ye know ye can. Each day the news of our tidings are bruited about. Men speak of strange messages even in the trains by which ye travel to your daily task.

"Rejoice and be glad, for we are free, as ye can never be. The greatest tyrant of all is dead, that tyrant who, with sycophantic gesture, ye laud and worship. For no longer are we slaves unto our physical bodies. No longer are we compelled to toil and struggle at uncongenial tasks that we may earn our dally bread. No man can deprive us of our work, and no man lord it over us. Freer are we than the birds of the air, for even they must seek their daily food and live in fear of man.

"But above all this, we are free of the fleshly habits which warred against the soul.

"All that was best in earthly life we have, only the worst is lost, and in their place are far more wondrous days.

"Here is set forth some little part of what we know as life. Take comfort, burdened souls, and know that half has not been told. Would ye, then, wish us back on Earth; if

so, is this not selfish? Do ye then, find the world so good and pleasant? Is it so happy, and so full of peace?

“Nay, had I one enemy, as I have none, I could wish him no greater ill than that he should live for ever in the world.

“Not so. He hath been very gracious in that He ordained that we should be on Earth so short a time. For we lived long enough to know the pettiness of earthly life, and then were transferred to a happier world.

“Mourn not for us. Mourn, if mourn ye must, for those who, having passed through the searing fires of war, return to England to find their high hopes dashed, or even, maybe return so altered by the war that they no longer are the quiet, pleasant boy they were.

“I tell you I am happy, and so are all of us who chose the upward path. Life is full of interest, and the future holds no hidden terror to oppress our waking hours. For, with the passing of the King of Terrors, all fears have passed, and we dwell in perfect confidence, knowing that the future lies before us like a broad, golden path of light, along whose shining path choice flowers of everlasting beauty grow, and every bend revealing some glorious landscape more enchanting than the last. So, onward journeying, we leave behind us the dark gloomy forests of the world, till soon they will appear no more than from an ill dream but half-remembered, and though we do not claim that our joy is perfect, for perfection is still far hence yet, fearing nothing, we press on, find pause but for an instant to send to Earth our message. Follow after, we have blazed the way, and we will receive you all as our friends. For the love that was kindled on Earth burns more brightly here, and the hatreds die away. All that was best we have with us forever and only the worst is left behind.

“We did our work on Earth, and we are striving to do it here.

“Think of us as we are, not of us on Earth as we were. Rejoice with us in our freedom, and till we meet, follow the light that ye have till it shines forth in glory as the Gateway of Death closes firmly behind you.”

R.L.W.

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Part I

First Impressions of the Astral Plane

Chapter I

How I Found My Brother

April 29th, 1916.

Dark mists rolling by. Flashes of fire. In the distance a continuous roar as of the thunder of many guns. Hosts of spirits rushing to and fro, chaos and gloom. Then I found Rex. He was seated on a bank by the roadside, clad in his uniform, but though I could see his face distinctly, yet his figure seemed rather indistinct.

He was delighted to see me, and said: "I have waited long for you."

"How did you die?" I asked.

"I do not know," he replied; "everything seemed to be in a nightmare state. There seemed to be a blank, and then I went on again, and it was not for some time that I realised that I was among unfamiliar surroundings. Even now I can't arrange things at all in any order, they seem jumbled up together."

J. W.: "Did you see the Requiem we held for you to-day?"

R.L.W.: "Yes, I did. I was jolly glad of it. I seemed to be drawn across this land towards a distant spot, and there saw a beam of light coming up through the ground, and as I stood in front of it, it grew wider and wider, and the ground became transparent, and I looked down into St. Mary's and saw the chapel and father putting my sword on the altar behind the cross, and I perceived then the whole service, I saw father and you and quite a number of others. You who are still of this earth saw, as it were, embedded in a shadowy form, and you yourselves often looked rather different. Do you know what the shadow is?"

J. W.: "Yes, our bodies. Being on the astral plane you see our astral forms, which are often different from our bodies; but our bodies, if you see them at all, you see as a shadow surrounding our astral forms."

R.L.W.: "Well, beside them, the whole church was full of strangers. Some were like you, but without the shadow. These would be people from here, while others again looked different. I can't describe how."

J. W.: "Doubtless they came from the spirit plane."

R.L.W.: "While I was watching all this, several strangers up here drifted up and watched what was going on, but did not speak. The service seemed to soothe me. I felt as though I were hopelessly distraught, and it acted like soothing music might on a person suffering from mental worry, on earth."

J. W.: "Well, old chap, tell me about life here. How do you find it?"

R.L.W.: "Fearfully lonely. As you see, there are heaps of people, but no one I know. I feel lost in a strange land."

J. W.: "I'll ask H.J.L. to come and help you a bit. I feel sure he will. He does not reside on this plane, but on the spirit plane, and he can come down here sometimes and help you. At any rate, he would be a companion."

R.L.W.: "I wish to goodness you would."

J. W.: "I shall doubtless see him on Monday."

R.L.W.: "I wonder how long that will be."

J. W.: "To-day is Friday."

R.L.W.: "That conveys nothing here. All time is different. If, indeed, there is such a thing as time."

J. W.: "Well, it won't be long, I hope. How did you know that I was ready to do automatic writing on Wednesday?"

R.L.W.: "Don't know. First my promise came back strongly to me, and then I felt drawn in a certain direction, where I found myself in a shadowy sort a bedroom. I saw you, and heard you speaking to me, and somehow the pencil began to move."

J. W.: "I must be going now. Good-bye, old chap. You may depend on me to do all I can."

R.L.W.: "Why must you go?"

J. W.: "I feel it, but I'll come again next week."

Even as I spoke, he sprang up and rushed wildly away. The chaos grew greater all around. Clouds of smoke seemed to engulf us all. The earth shook and dissolved. I felt myself falling, falling, falling, while around me thunder and lightning played. These grew more distant. Silence-then, after a pause, I awoke in my bedroom. It was 2:30 on Saturday morning and I could not sleep again till 8 a.m.

J. W.

Saturday April 29th 1916.

Chapter II

H.J.L. Answers the Call

May 2nd, 1916.

I passed into the spirit plane as I had done so often before. Saw the well-known landscape, passed through the park to the college, and so into the room of H.J.L.

“Boss,” I said, “I want you to help my brother Rex. He was killed in action on Good Friday, April 21st, in France. Did you know it?” The Boss held out his hand to me. .No, I did not. As you know by now, we do not know all, and of late I have rather lost touch with the earth plane. For your sake, I am very sorry; but for my own, rejoice that one of my relations has given up his life for the cause of our country. You, I know, my boy; must miss him terribly, nor will I attempt the usual line of consolation. You know yourself the truth of the axiom that he has but moved from one land to another. Tell me all you can, and as to my help, you may rely on it.”

J. W.: “He was killed by a shell. Around him the trenches were captured by the Germans, but he and his men held on firmly to their piece, so the Germans poured high explosives on it and he was killed instantaneously. His Captain and Adjutant speak highly of his bravery, and say he died holding on in a tight corner, encouraging his men to the last. They buried his body on Easter Day.”

H.J.L.: “Well done, Rex. Fancy that tubby little boy, who used to eat too many sweets, ending so well, Brave lad! What a strange fatality that it should fall out so on Good Friday. If it must be so, I am glad that it should have been on Good Friday. It will comfort his father, for, with all his training in such matters, he cannot fail to read the message of hope therein. To us here that is not a hope but a known reality. For those who have not seen as we have seen, it must still be in part a matter of faith. All is well, and his burial on Easter Day is well, also.

“Come, let us be up and doing. Now I see it plain. I have been waiting for sometime, wondering what my duty was. My course of probation finished some short time back, and I have been waiting, waiting. But always my spirit guide has held me back, saying, ‘Not yet.’ But now I know. See! See, where he stands?!”

As he spoke the golden spirit of light who was ever with him, but veiled as a rule, from my weak eyes, became manifest. All else faded into insignificance. We seemed almost ourselves to be absorbed into him as he spoke.

“Take up thy task. Fear not, neither be disheartened. Cease not thy labours till he has climbed hither. Swift to thy labour, and rejoice therein. For this hast thou laboured here in preparation.”

He covered himself as with a mantle of darkness, and the familiar objects once more appeared before our eyes.

H.J.L.: “Come, Jack, we must assume our astral bodies. At least, you must re-enter yours, and I must build up one for myself.”

As he spoke a head appeared from under the sofa, a fawn-coloured poodle’s head, and Mollie came out and behaved as if most excited.

H.J.L.: “Bless me, how excited she is.”

J. W.: “Mollie was rather fond of Rex, and he buried her.”

H.J.L.: “Ah, that will certainly form a connecting link. I wish I knew how she could assume an astral body. I’d take her with me. But perhaps, at first at any rate, it is best to leave her here.”

The dog seemed very dejected at this, but made no attempt to follow us as we passed out.

Once in the country I parted from H.J.L. and returned to my body. There I saw hanging listlessly on to it a double of myself, but thin and vaporous. Next moment it had vanished, and I felt hampered as one does when, after bathing, one begins to clothe one's naked body. Yet my real body lay there still, and as I gazed at it I thought, "Some day I shall gaze on you thus, and be able to re-enter you no more."

"Well," said *H.J.L.*: "and then you will be quit of a great many worries, temptations, and trials."

I looked at H.J. L., who had thus made his presence known to me. His astral seemed almost as if it did not truly fit him.

"No, it doesn't," he replied, "but it's the best I can do. It's not a natural astral form. My old one dissolved ages ago.

"Let us be going. I know this is not going to be a pleasant business. I've never been on these lower circles of the astral plane before. I know what they are like, though. However, all the better; the more merit, as your Buddhists would say.

"Now, then. Let us *will* together."

Walls fell away. Darkness enveloped us. A distant rumble grew and grew till it swelled into an awful roar. Lightning flashed around us.

"That's not thunder and lightning," said *H.J.L.*: "It's the echo on this plane of what's going on on earth."

J. W.: "Do you mean the fighting in France?"

H.J.L.: "Exactly. You should have guessed if you didn't recognise it at once."

J. W.: "I half suspected."

Great clouds of vapour, and black night lit by the constant flashes. Screams of pain and anger, and then vast crowds of spirits. Tens of thousands rushing wildly to and fro. Through these we sped, tossing them aside as a steamer tosses from its prow the waves of an angry sea. Here and there some tried to bar our paths, and others to catch hold of us, but H. J. L., who led the way, hurled them aside. At one spot we passed through a crowd of elementals, hideous and foul, who made a determined rush at me, but I struck angrily at them and several seemed to burst in pieces. For the most part these were bloated things, shapeless abortions, with nightmare faces and long arms, but no distinct bodies. Some, however, were like animals, including fabulous beasts, griffins, and so forth; while others were curious composite creatures, partly animal, partly human. Most were dull grey in colour but a few were angry red or ugly green. We left these behind, and for a moment of time saw a long and desolate country, with broken trees and houses, wire entanglements, trenches, and hosts of men who fought desperately, while the guns rolled and flashed. A battle on the astral plane, true to life, so far as we could judge.

Soon this was left behind, and at last, among a crowd of wanderers, we found Rex.

At once I introduced him to H.J.L., who said: "Do you remember, when you were a naughty boy at Kingston, I threatened to give you in charge of a policeman, and how, after many years, when I asked you if you remembered about it you said. "Yes. I remember somebody bullied me."

R.L.W.: "Yes, perfectly."

H.J.L.: "Well, now, you must let me act as the policeman to help and protect you from your enemies here rather than to arrest you. I'm sure everything seems a fearful muddle, and it can help you to get things clear and ultimately to get to a quieter and more comfortable place."

R.L.W.: "Well, anyway, it is something to meet someone I knew on earth, and if you'll stay with me a bit it would be awfully decent of you. I'm afraid this isn't much of a place, though."

J. W.: “We’ve heard from the Adjutant and Captain, and they speak very highly, old man, of the way you held on in a tight corner, and of your bravery in general, and of how they could always depend on you.”

R.L.W.: “That’s jolly decent of them. I just did my best. Yes, it was a tight corner, the worst I was ever in. What happened after I died? Did the last piece fall also?”

J. W.: “We can’t be sure; but if it did it was recovered, for they recovered your body and buried it behind the lines two days later.”

R.L.W.: “Yes, I’ve some vague recollection of that. Hello! Why are you going?”

J. W.: “My body is calling me back. I leave you with a good friend. Trust him. Good-bye for awhile.”

The ground broke under my feet. I fell - presently I awoke.

Chapter III

A Journey through The Ages

May 6th, 1916.

I found H.J.L. and R.L.W. almost on the same spot as that on which I had left them.

H.J.L. spoke: "Rex is still in rather a disturbed condition of spirit, and I am, therefore, going to take him away into the Land of Utter Silence, so that his troubled spirit may recover its equilibrium."

J.W.: "What is this Land of Utter Silence?"

H.J.L.: "On the astral plane are to be found all the different stages through which the earth has passed. Thus here one can find the Ice Age, the Carboniferous Age, and so forth. The earliest age of all, the period corresponding geologically with the Achaean Rocks is an age practically devoid of all life. Not even mollusks are to be found there, and to this waste, barren land I propose to take your brother. There, away from all sight or sound of the Great War, away from every other astral being, he can rest in absolute silence till at length his condition has become normal.

"Would you like to accompany us a part of the way?"

I agreed, and we started off together. For my part I tried to cheer Rex up for he seemed rather depressed, and also at times his mind seemed to wander vaguely from one subject to another.

After a time we entered a country which closely resembled earth at the present day. Here we skirted several cities, but H.J.L. kept to the country roads as far as possible. Some of these cities and towns had evidently come there recently, and Rex declared he recognised several of the smaller ones as towns and villages from north-east France and Flanders. He particularly pointed out Yprés, with its great cathedral and town hall, the roofs standing out above those of the houses which clustered round them.

After a time we left this region and came to a tract of country which more nearly resembled England. As we still progressed I recalled that most of the buildings we saw belonged to the eighteenth century, and H.J.L. remarked. "Yes, we are back to the time of the Georges. Look at those men over there."

As he spoke, a group of men and women in the costume of about 1770 passed us. They stared curiously at our little party, but said nothing.

J. W.: "How is it that they have not passed to the Spirit Plane?"

H.J.L.: "Probably because they have never attempted to progress, and on the other hand, have never obsessed, and so have not been pushed down below. It is a curious fact, which I have not yet completely fathomed, that while most astrals remain on this plane for only so long, roughly as they might have lived on earth, in each generation there are a few exceptions, and these seem to hang about for an indefinite period. There are men here who came from the great Ice Age.

"Of course, they are but a very small percentage of the vast hordes which have passed through these regions, but even one per cent would make a considerable number here when you remember that a man dies every minute.

"Some men remain earth-bound for centuries, and continue to haunt their former homes on earth, but every ghost who haunts 'the moated Grange' is not a real astral being; often it is but the empty shell which still hangs round its old haunts, although the spirit has departed long since."

We continued on our journey, and soon entered the Jacobean period, and passed a fine old manor-house in its own grounds. Here we noticed several men and women in the costume of 1630 walking along the avenues.

And so we passed from one period of history to another, till we entered the Classic period.

H. J. L., who had commented on the various eras through which we had passed, remarked of this one:

“Of course, we are still in England, as you might say, and therefore do not see the Roman period at its finest. Britain was always rather a distant province of the Empire, and retained much of its pre-Roman characteristics. The Romans proper regarded it somewhat as a place of exile to be left as soon as their term of service was completed. Still, that temple is quite a fine one.”

So saying, he pointed to a temple, the portico of which could be seen among the trees on the right.

Just at that moment a man in a Roman toga stopped in front of us, and spoke: “Whence come you, strangers, and whither going?”

I presume he spoke in Latin, but we understood him perfectly.

He was the first denizen of the past who had spoken to us.

H.J.L. replied: “We come from the twentieth century, from the battlefields of Gaul, and are taking this young soldier to a place of Utter Silence, that he may rest. But who are you?”

The Stranger: “I am Claudius, a centurion of the Tenth Legion. Is there then, fighting in Gaul? Have the Gauls risen again, or is it an incursion of the Germans?”

H.J.L.: “The Germans have invaded Gaul, and the men of Britain, of Gaul, and of Italy are holding them back with a wall of steel.”

The Stranger: “Good! And who is now Emperor of Rome? It is long since I had news of earth.”

H.J.L.: “There is no Emperor of Rome to-day.”

The Stranger: “Mock me not! Because I have left the world these many years it ill becomes you to mock at my ignorance. Who is Emperor of Rome?”

H.J.L.: “I speak the truth. There has been no Emperor of Rome for over a hundred years, and even he who was called Emperor of Rome before that time for many hundreds of years had been a German and had no real power. No, not even in Rome itself. For he reigned on the Danube.”

The Stranger: “By the gods! You amaze me. The last Emperors – Germans- and to-day no Emperor at all. Sir, if truth you speak, and I see now you do speak the truth, then mark my words. It was prophesied that when Rome fell the world would fall. If then, there is no Emperor of Rome, then the days of the world are numbered. But who reigns at Rome?”

H.J.L.: “There is a King of Italy, and of course, the Pope ruled in Rome, and although he no longer rules it, he still dwells there, and is a most important personage.”

The Stranger: “Sir, I thank you for your news. Much is strange to me, but, indeed, men who entered these regions long after I died have spoken of a Pope, but this is the first time I have heard there was no Emperor.

“But of this war, how goes it?”

H.J.L.: “A fierce and bitter war, in which the Germans have wasted many cities and killed many people, both men and women and little children, without mercy and contrary to all the laws of war.”

The Stranger: “The Germans were ever a cruel and treacherous race. False of heart are they, and, when beaten, will swear to a treaty and next summer break it. May the gods smite them down. Farewell!”

So saying, he turned up the road which led to the temple, and we continued our journey.

But ever on we went, and soon all civilisation was left behind. The country became a series of tangled forests with here and there villages of huts, in which we noticed men and women clad in skins.

Rex, who till now had remained very silent, suddenly said :

“This is the era of the Britons, I suppose, and thence we shall pass to the Neolithic Age. This journey is quite interesting. I am learning more real history in thus one journey than I ever learnt from books on earth.”

But now I (J. W.) began to feel tired and knew that the earth was calling me, so at length I stopped in a glade in the forest and spoke:

J. W.: “I must return; where shall I find you next time?”

H.J.L.: “You will find us if you simply concentrate your mind on us. As a matter of fact, we shall be in the Land of Utter Silence.”

So I said good-bye, and turned back into the jungle, but I was hardly alone when it began to shiver and grow misty. Soon I could see nothing but clouds, and then lost consciousness.

J. W.

Chapter IV

The Utter Silence

May 9th. 1916.

I went out seeking R.L.W. and found him without any difficulty. He was seated in a bare, rocky valley, in which there was no sign of vegetation: all around the earth was a barren waste, broken into hummocks, and with here and there sheer cliffs rising from sand or gravel, and overhead the sky seemed overcast and misty.

H.J.L. was seated near him, and rose to greet me, but R.L.W. hardly moved.

J. W.: "How are you feeling now, Rex?"

R.L.W.: "I am glad you have come, but I am feeling very miserable."

J. W.: "Why?"

R.L.W.: "I can't get away from the memory of my past misdeeds."

J. W.: "So you are seeing the visions of your past life. I suppose?"

H.J.L.: "Not exactly. It is more akin to earthly memory; here they are not pure spirits, and therefore do not as a rule see the forms of their thoughts as we do in the spirit plane. But the memory is strung up to a far higher pitch than it is on earth, and so their past lives pass once more through the brain till it becomes almost overpowered by the mass of details which it has accumulated. Poor boy, he is having rather a bad time but it will pass soon, I hope."

R.L.W.: "The worst of it is, I seem to remember my misdeeds almost to the exclusion of my good ones. I'm sure I did more good deeds than I can remember, but every fault seems to stand out with startling vividness. What is more, some of them seem to appear before my eyes; not all I admit, but the worst often do."

H.J.L. patted his arm. "It will pass, Rex, it will pass. I have been through it all. Don't forget the Bible's words, 'though your sins be as scarlet,' etc. And, after all, you have not lived long enough to pile up a very heavy weight of sin. Fancy what you would have had to face if you had lived to my age."

R.L.W.: "Then thank God I didn't, but I might have got better as years went on.

H.J.L.: "You might, or you might not. God only knows. But, anyway, it is ended. Here, if you stick to me, and follow my advice, you need sin no more. Soon this stage will pass."

We relapsed into silence, till at length I spoke.

J. W.: "There is, then, a marked difference in this matter also between your plane and the astral?"

H.J.L.: "Yes, memory plays its little part here, but not so vividly as on the next plane, where we see in very truth our past life."

J. W.: "When a soul passes from the astral to the spirit plane, will it once more go through this stage?"

H.J.L.: "To a slight extent, but remember it will see also its life on the astral plane, and if that life has been a good one, it will more than counterbalance the evil that it sees which belonged to its life on earth. W. A. did not pass through this stage on the astral plane and so felt it acutely on the spirit plane. Indeed, even now he feels it at times. But you must remember he was not long on the astral plane, whereas Rex will settle down to a lengthy stay here, at least so I expect."

Again silence; fell on us, and I felt that it was almost painful. It seemed to eat into my brain.

R.L.W. suddenly spoke: "Yes, it affects me in the same way, but I think it is doing me good."

Then he relapsed into silence.

I made a movement to return after a while, and he spoke again: "How are father and mother?"

J. W.: "Well, I am glad to say, at least so far as mother can ever be said to be well."

R.L.W.: "And C.? And little B., does she still remember me?"

J. W.: "Yes, both are well. B. often speaks of you. She was very unhappy when she heard you were killed. She always remembers you in her prayers."

R.L.W.: "Yes, I know she does. She is a dear little child." Then he relapsed into silence once more, and I turned and left him with a cheery "Good-bye!"

H.J.L. followed me, and said: "I will go a short way with you. Rex will be all right by himself for a short time."

As we walked along, he said: "This is just the worst period. But already I can see an improvement beginning. His mind is becoming clearer, growing attuned to the new conditions."

J. W.: "Well, I must hurry back now. Good-bye!"

So, concentrating my mind on returning to earth, I seemed caught up in a whirlwind, and the landscape vanished. Soon I lost consciousness.

Chapter V

H.J.L. Describes the Rest of the Journey

May 13th, 1916.

Again I found H.J. L. and R.W.L. in the same spot as that on which I had left them on my last visit. R.L.W. Was evidently much happier now, and greeted me with pleasure.

R.L.W.: "I am much better now. Uncle's treatment is doing me a lot of good."

J. W.: "How are the memories now?"

R.L.W.: "Not so bad. A great peace has entered in, and though every now and then they break out again, each spell seems shorter than the last. I can't undo what I have done, but I can stop now, and shall stop. How goes the war?"

I told him briefly the news, and then H.J.L. spoke:

"Rex is certainly much better, but we shall stay here a little longer. By the next time you come here he will be ready to return."

J.W.: "After leaving the ancient British area, did any other adventure befall you?"

H.J.L.: "When we entered the Neolithic Age and passed through without any trouble, but while passing through the Paleolithic Age an attack was made on us by a group of savages. We drove them off simply by our will-power. Rex said he wished he had a revolver, so I told him to imagine he was firing one. There was a noise like a sharp report, and one of the savages fell down. The rest bolted. The 'wounded' man made a great fuss, but we went on and left him where he was, and when we had gone a short distance we saw him get up and slink off.

"Then we came to a region of sub-tropical vegetation. Here we saw many strange animals, and once or twice creatures which seemed to be half human and half ape. I suppose they were primitive men, but they were evidently very nervous, and kept out of our way. For the most part they seemed to move among the trees.

"Gradually we worked through this age, and so through all the various geological ages. We saw some strange monsters in the Carboniferous Age. Lots of Pterodactyls, some of which attacked us; but we simply willed that they should stop, and they did.

"Some of the earlier animals were very strange indeed. Particularly some of the creatures which lived in a huge marsh. We had considerable difficulty in getting over this. Of course, I could have managed all right. Will is stronger than astral matter, you know, and I would have walked straight over the slime, but Rex had not enough faith and began to flounder. Moreover, he began to get very nervous at the sight of the strange Saurians we saw. Somehow we managed to find a track across which we ventured to go, and ultimately found ourselves on the edge of a vast sea.

"This sea swarmed with strange monsters, the whole place seemed alive with them, Ichthyosaurus, and the old sea-serpent even turned up once. He was being closely pursued by some fierce denizen of the sea.

"Any number of queer shell fish were on the beach and rocks which jutted into the sea and the beach was strewn with empty shells. Many of these vanished into dust as soon as we touched them. Evidently they were worn-out 'shells' in the occult sense.

"We did not know how to get across the sea. Of course there were no boats, and I did not know what to do.

"So we worked round to the left for a long time, till at length we came to the mouth of a huge river. Still we could not get across. We went along the bank of the river for a long way, till finally I came across the log of a tree which was floating in the water. We got on this and paddled the blessed thing across the river, and after a

considerable time were caught in a current which carried us across to a strip of land. We grounded some way out, and had to wade. We felt drenched when we got ashore, but we soon seemed to dry up and continued our journey. But time is getting short. We were on a hack of land which had but little vegetation; mostly moss and lichen, and the only animals we saw were some curious creatures rather like frogs. I daresay there were other beasts somewhere, but we did not see them. There were no flowers, and we saw no flying creatures.

“The land became more and more desolate, till at length, after passing through several tracts of country, we came to this land. Here I can trace no sign of life beyond an occasional worm. There are no signs of vegetation, not even moss; no insects, no fish even, so far as I can see. Here the silence is profound and eternal.

“Now, that gives you a brief summary of our journey. I have left out sundry unimportant details.”

J. W.: “Did you see .the hairy mammoth.?”

H.J.L.: “Yes, plenty of them. In herds crossing a frozen marsh, and also some of the earlier members of the elephant family.”

R.L.W.: “We saw a herd of jolly little horses being pursued by Paleolithic men. They did not seem to catch any of them, however. By jove, those horses went a fearful pace.”

J. W.: “You have not seen anything of the officer?”

H.J.L.: “No, you see, I have never left Rex.”

So, after a little more conversation on private matters, I left them. I did not attempt to pass through the different ages, and so willed that I should return direct, but even as I was doing so and the darkness was enfolding me, a remembrance of the battlefield floated into my mind. This evidently diverted my course, for I found myself among a mass of warring spirits and heard the roar of the guns. A khaki-Clad soldier seized my arm and said. “Where are we?”

J. W.: “On the astral plane.”

The Soldier: “And where the blazes is that?”

J. W.: “The place where the dead go first of all.”

The Soldier: “Then are we all dead?”

J. W.: “Most of you. I am not; but you are dead.”

The Soldier: “Good God!”

Before I could detain him he sprang away and vanished amid the throng. But by now I could feel the “earth pull” growing stronger, and again, concentrating my mind on my body, found myself next moment in my room, saw my body waiting for me, and lost consciousness.

J.W.

TRANCE VISION,
May 16TH, 1916.

I again found *H.J.L.* and *R.L.W.* in the barren land, and after we had greeted each other, I said, “How are you now, Rex?”

R.L.W.: “Much calmer, and no longer miserable. I have had rather a rotten time, but feel ever so much better now. My mind is quite clear, and the haunting memories no longer trouble me. I don’t mean that I have forgotten them, but they have sorted themselves out into an ordered sequence, and among them I remember the decent things I did, and these counterbalance memories which would otherwise depress me.

“Uncle is now explaining fully the life on the astral plane, and, incidentally, rubbing in the danger of obsession. He has given me such a harrowing narrative of its evil effects that you may be sure I shall keep clear of that sort of thing.”

H.J.L. smiled and said, “I thought we should be ready to return to the astral world of today when you came this time, but I think we had better defer it till your next visit. If you don’t mind, I will proceed with what I was telling Rex just now.”

So I sat down and listened while H.J.L. described the various laws of the astral world and the purpose of life on that plane. At length I rose to go, and after replying to the questions which H.J.L. and R.L.W. put to me about friends still on the earth, and about the war, I left them and returned to earth.

J.W.

Chapter VI

The Return Journey

May 26th, 1916.

I saw my body lying fast asleep, and then was whirled away into space. Amid the welts of clouds a new landscape grew into being. Barren hills, stony valleys; here and there a bare precipice. At length I found Rex and H.J.L.

R.L.W. jumped up, delighted to see me, and said, "I was just beginning to wonder when you would arrive."

H.J.L. then spoke: "Rex is at length ready to start on the return journey, but we thought we would wait till you came before we set out."

I agreed, and at once we started. After a while, the hill country gave way to a more level stretch. Here were swamps and morasses filled with strange trees, and H.J.L. said: "These are the astral forms of the coal-measure trees. Here we shall probably see some of the monsters that formerly inhabited the earth."

Even as he spoke, I heard a splashing and gurgling sound, and out of the slime rose a huge beast. It somewhat resembled a crocodile, though not exactly, but hardly had I noticed it when it vanished again beneath the slime. Then a small creature, shaped like a lizard, but with bat-like wings, rushed by with a scream, pursued by a great, ugly thing like the dragon of fable. The latter had huge teeth which it kept gnashing. "A Pterodactyl", I cried, and H.J.L. nodded.

The jungle on our left parted, and a huge creature standing on its back legs, with a great lizard head, peered out hungrily. As soon as it saw us it dashed forward, and both R.L.W. and I felt rather frightened, but H.J.L. made a movement as if striking or throwing something at it, and cried out angrily, "Go, or I shall kill you."

Immediately it vanished amid the jungle.

Slowly on we passed, and in due course reached more solid ground.

After passing for some time among tall grasses we came to a rocky valley, and in due course this debauched into a level plain.

And so, through limitless plains, over mountains and valleys, skirting lakes and fording rivers, we journey. We passed in time through various ages of the earth's geological history, till all sense of time was lost. At length we entered another plain. Very different was this, however, from those we had previously crossed. Here were short tussocks of grass, powdered over with snow, and here and there frozen puddles. Further off were large expanses of frozen marsh and lake. In the distance was a frozen river, and across it moved a herd of mammoths. Nearer to us were reindeer feeding, and I could see a pack of wolves lurking among some boulders a short way out in the plain.

As we were crossing this plain a band of skin-clad savages suddenly sprang out from among some boulders where they had been hiding and rushed at us.

H.J.L. at once called out to Rex: "Remember what happened last time we were attacked by these savages."

Rex called out, "Charge!" and we went for them as hard as we could, but they did not wait for us to reach them, but fled screaming. Their screams startled some reindeer who, in their turn, stampeded.

We seemed to journey on over this vast frozen marsh for an age, and came at length to more mountains, and amid these sat down for a while.

"Here you will have to leave us, said H.J.L. "We shall press on though the civilized belts towards modern times, but you must now return to earth."

J. W.: “What will be your next plan of action?”

H.J.L.: “Now that Rex’s shattered astral nerves have recovered, we are returning, step by step, to present-day conditions. There he must learn to root out earthly passions and strive to do good, so that he may progress, and above all, that his spirit may develop, lest, when the time comes for him to leave this plane, he finds that he has but an immature spiritual body.”

J. W.: “Just one little point which puzzles me. Why was that Roman centurion who stopped us clad in civilian dress and not in the robes of a Roman soldier?”

H.J.L.: “I can’t tell you, my boy but, after all, why shouldn’t he be? I have seen lots of British officers in civilian attire. Perhaps he had so dressed before he died. Perhaps he preferred that costume here. No, you are not going to lead me into a discussion as to whether a centurion corresponds with a sergeant or a sub-lieutenant. It’s time you were getting back. Good bye!”

So I began to will that I should return, and clouds enveloped me. The astral plane vanished, and I rushed through space at a tremendous speed till I reached my sleeping body and entering it, awoke on earth.

Chapter VII

R.L.W. Describes his Death

June 9th, 1916.

I found Rex in what looked rather like a French house on a street. It had nothing very striking about it, being such as one sees in Belgium or North France. It had a garden at the back surrounded by a wall and the front of the house came practically straight on to the street.

Inside the furniture was modern and though not ugly nor in bad taste, was not very interesting. There were pictures on the walls, including one or two paintings of scenes in Bruges which interested me, and several large photographs of groups, which did not. Rex and H.J.L. were seated on either side of a table when I entered.

J. W.: "Do you know that your adjutant fell in battle about three weeks after you did?"

R.L.W.: "No. I say, don't you think we could get hold of him? He was rather a decent sort, and I know how rotten one feels when one comes over here, at first, anyway."

H.J.L.: "Yes, Rex, we will. I think that it is the work we've been waiting for, but I think you ought to get in touch with the Officer. He knows these spheres so much better than I, and has already done a good deal of useful work here since the war began."

J. W.: "Rex, can you give me a coherent and connected account yet of your life and adventures here!"

R.L.W.: "Well, we had been shelled for some time, and gradually the bombardment increased in intensity. Then, as you know, they battered in the trenches near us on either side, and finally rushed them. However, we drove them back, and barricaded the ends of our trenches. Then the Boche seemed to get mad, and rained heavy stuff on us. I don't know how long this went on, but our parapets went all to pieces. Suddenly I felt an awful blow and seemed to be falling, falling, falling. I found myself in utter darkness, and my first thought was that the dugout had been blown in and I was entombed alive. I found, however, that I could move about and soon realised that there was something strange in the matter, for I seemed to be able to go about much further than I could have in a dug-out.

"It did not occur to me that I was dead, but I felt dazed and as if everything around me were unreal. I thought, perhaps I was wounded and felt all over my body, but could find no damage. All the while I heard the roar and crash of the guns. I groped around and then began to call. No one came. I thought, 'Of course, they can't get here during the bombardment, they will have to wait till it's over.'"

"Then I thought 'I'll have a smoke,' but somehow, could not find my things. All the while I felt strangely dazed. Time seemed to drag slowly along. By degrees I began to distinguish new sounds and to perceive things in the darkness.

"I heard voices, and called, but got no answer. Then I distinctly heard German spoken, and kept jolly quiet. I thought perhaps the trenches had been taken at last.

"Soon I heard a savage shout, and it was in English. Then a whirling mass of struggling men, dark and shadowy, swept past me. Then more and more. To and fro the conflict rolled.

"Next moment the tide of battle rolled up and engulfed me. I fired my revolver full into the face of a German, but it seemed to make not the slightest difference.

.A Boche drove his bayonet into my chest and I felt the pain for a moment, but still went on fighting, and forgot all about it. I seized a man by the throat and he seized me, and we rolled to the ground together, and were separated by the press of the battle.

“To and fro, up and down in a nightmare struggle, neither side gaining the upper hand, we fought and battled and raged. Age after age, time had no meaning to us. There was nothing even consecutive. Ever and ever doing the same thing. Overhead lightning played and thunder tolled, blended with the flash and roar of the guns. Around us pitch night, moonless and starless. Like a fog it encompassed us, weighed us down and shut us in.

“Amid this ceaseless strife I heard, afar off, the words of the burial service, and the sound of spades digging, digging, digging. But it had no meaning for me. Only I knew I was dreadfully weary of the ceaseless struggle which seemed to lead nowhere, which appeared to have no result, and I longed to shake off the dazed sensation which made everything appear unreal.

“At last I cried to a Boche: ‘Why the devil don’t you die? I’ve shot you dead three times!’ And he laughed, and though he spoke in German I know, yet I understood his words as if they had been in English.

“You fool! How can I? Don’t you yet realise that we are all dead here? Yes, and are in Hell, and forever must go on fighting without rest, for ever and ever,.

“Lies!” I answered. He sprang towards me and drove his bayonet clean through my body. “If you’re alive why don’t you die now?” he asked, and I knew he spoke the truth.

“So I burst through the mob, and tried to find someplace where I could sit down and rest and think things over. But though I wandered through the murky air for ages and tried spot after spot, it was no use. Wherever I sat came crowds of straggling spirits, and I was caught up in the conflict.”

“At length, however, I found a stony knoll and sat down there, and suddenly heard you (J. W.) calling and I followed your voice through the black night. Then I saw you faintly in a familiar room and heard you ask me for a sign, and after struggling desperately for a time, seemed to write something. Told you I was here, and then you faded away, and once more I was surrounded by a raging host of fiercely fighting men, and broke from them and fled. Fled wildly across endless stony wastes, over sand-dunes, and across sodden, muddy, heavy fields. Stumbled and fell into pools and quagmires, and sunk down at last by the wayside.

“And again I heard you calling, and rushed blindly through the darkness seeking an old friend through the nightmare, new surroundings, and again I tried to give you a message of cheer, though, God knows, I wanted one myself!”

“Again you faded, and once more I found myself wandering through the darkness, but though the guns played all around, the fighting, struggling spirits were further on.

“I sat down, and painfully tried to piece it all together. Where was I? Dead?

Where was I? What was this wild, chaotic nightmare land? And I seemed to remember something that you had told me. The astral plane, that was it! Or was I in Hell? The Boche had said we were, but I remembered you had said that the young, and especially those cut off suddenly passed, at any rate, to the astral plane.

“And then you came. I was aware of a friendly presence stealing slowly through the darkness. How slowly it seemed to come! Then, at length I saw you. You seemed different from the others. Less substantial in some ways, or was it more substantial? I can’t say. One thing I did notice, that from you there trailed away a silver cord thin as a hair, but going clean out of sight. None of the others I had seen had that.

“How glad I was to see you, you know, and when you promised to bring H. J. L., I was thankful.

“If, as you doubtless know, the Englishman in the East feels his heart leap up when he hears his mother tongue, how much more so I, when I met at last, after all that age, someone I knew, and heard from him that, for a time at least, I should have a companion to help me on my way.

“When you had gone I felt an awful void, but still, I felt also a new hope and when, after long waiting, you arrived once more with H.J. L., no words can say how thankful I was.”

“Let me tell you that he, too, looks different from us, and also from you. I know that his astral body, which is assumed by him, is only kept together with considerable difficulty, and often he has to go away for a short time to renew it.

“His being here has made an enormous difference to me already. The dazed feeling has gone, and now I understand both what has happened and also the laws of this new world where, I suppose, I must make up my mind to dwell.”

H.J.L.: “I think we must stop now, for it is time Jack was returning. We can go on again next time.”

So we parted, and I went whirling through space till I found myself looking at my body, and then lost consciousness.

Chapter VIII

R.L.W. Continues his Narrative

June 12th, 1916.

When I came to the house where I had last seen H.J. L. and R.L.W. , I found R.L.W. there but not H. J. L., and asked him where the latter was.

R.L.W.: “He is trying to get into touch with the Officer, but has not, as yet found him. He left just after you did, and has not yet returned. I’ve been fearfully lonely without him, and hope he will soon return.”

J. W.: “I hope he will. You might go on with your narrative, and perhaps he’ll come. He has never yet failed to turn up for the interview with me on Monday.”

So R.L.W. began:

“After H.J.L. arrived, and you had gone, he started, ‘Now, Rex, you are on the astral plane. You are still partly material, though, as it were, refined matter the same as gas is compared to solid matter. The astral plane impinges on the earth plane, and partakes of its nature far more than the plane of the spirits in which I properly dwell.

“‘The astral plane corresponds fairly well to the idea of purgation, but the spirit plane contains what you know as Hell, and also part of the lower Heavens, but not the real high Heavens.

“‘In the astral plane you will find that you are still subject to earth influences. It is usual to speak as if earth influences are all to the bad, but this is not so. Here you can redeem past failings by doing good on the earth plane, and cleanse your spirit of earthly lusts and faults, but also, of course, you can hanker after forbidden earthly pleasures and, in a dim mockery of a way, can enjoy them, but to your bane. Here you can commit further sins, and finally cause your soul to drop down into that part of the spirit plane which is properly called Hell, and from thence it is far harder to climb than from this plane to the happy planes above.

“‘I said “properly called Hell,” for there are parts of this astral plane which, to the superficial observer, appear very much like Hell. Still, this will hardly surprise you, seeing even on earth itself are to be found very close imitations of Hell. It is natural that where evil people congregate, there a condition will be found which approximates to Hell.

“‘The thing you have to do is to shun such districts carefully and especially avoid people of an obviously evil nature. Those who suggest obsession and so forth are to be avoided at all costs. You know what obsession is, I perceive?”

“‘I replied: ‘Yes, Jack explained that to me once rather fully.’

“‘H.J.L. continued, ‘Unfortunately your guide seems to have drifted rather far from you, but, doubtless, we shall rectify that in time.

“‘The first thing to do is to give you a chance of settling down among the new surroundings, and above all, to get your thoughts off the battlefield and such-like scenes.

“‘So now, I’m going to isolate you from all this. Indeed from the present world itself.’

“‘Then we rose and started on a long and seemingly endless journey, amid a thick fog, and over shadowed by tumult and fear.

“‘Every now and then I caught a fleeting glimpse of the landscape, which steadily grew wilder and stranger. I passed over what appeared to be great ice-fields and then through primeval forests, across tropic swamps, and on and on till life failed, till even

the strange monsters of prehistoric times ceased, and a great Silence settled on all.
(But you know this part quite well.)

“Slowly this silence ate into my brain. At times it was almost painful, and acted like a

cauteriser, burning away the hideous tangle of shattered nerves.

“After a while this stage passed, and it began to act like a soothing balm. Gradually my whole being seemed to expand and drink it in, and my surroundings grew clearer and plainer. I realised that I was seated in the midst of a stony waste, where perpetual silence reigned.

“But look, here he comes.”

Chapter IX

The Officer once More

As R.L.W. spoke, the door opened and H.J.L. entered followed by the Officer. I greeted H.J.L. with delight, but when I saw the Officer I could hardly recognise him. He was so changed. The hard cruel lines round the mouth had almost vanished. His eyes had a new expression, a tender one almost, one might say, but there was no sign of weakness about the strong face.

We shook hands warmly, and he began: "Well, since first we met I have been hard at work, and not without good results. Congenial work it is in a way, but we'll speak of that another time. Now to business. I am delighted to meet your brother and help him find his Adjutant. I have no doubt we'll do it, and may as well start at once.

"What do you say to coming with us?"

H.J.L.: "Yes, I think I may as well. I don't want to leave R. just yet, after all, though I know he'd be in good hands, yet he'd feel a bit lonely. I don't pretend I'm very keen on the job, but that's all the better for me. Good-bye, Jack! I've hardly seen you this time, but the officer's always boiling over with energy..

J. W.: "Shall I see you next Friday?"

H.J.L.: "Yes, one of us, though I can't as yet say which. Probably, in any case, R. will be there."

R.L.W.: "Well, good-bye, Jack! What are you doing now, by the way?"

I told him.

R.L.W.: "Good ! Cheer up! You can tell the Pater, if you like that I'm getting on splendidly and...(private).

J. W.: "Good-bye, all of you," And they passed out through the door. I was left alone in the empty house, and suddenly felt very tired, so I lay down on a sofa and fell asleep and awoke on earth.

Chapter X

Rex Completes his Narrative

June 16th, 1916.

I felt myself whirling through space, amid clouds and mists, which gradually took the form of a landscape. Here I found myself on solid ground, and passed along a long, straight road running between fields which had no hedges on either side, but here and there a stray tree, generally a poplar, but not always.

The road led me into a small French or Belgian town, and, passing along the high street, I stopped in front of the houses where I had met R.L.W. before.

On entering the house I found it empty and felt rather lost. After waiting some time, as it seemed, I was just about to go out again when R.L.W. came in.

“So you are here,” he said; “I felt sure you were, and therefore returned. We have found the Adjutant, but he is in rather a bad way just now, but soon, I expect, he’ll be better. The Officer and H.J.L. are with him.”

J. W.: “You might resume your narrative where you left off on Monday..

R.L.W. : “Very well but I’ll be quick over it. I told you how, after you had left me, H. J. L. resumed his explanations about this region - life here, or whatever words you choose to employ.

“He went on thus: ‘As you are a young man, you will probably find that your astral form is a strong one, and will last for a considerable time. Therefore, you must prepare to stay here for a considerable period and, as it were, make it your home. Further, you will find that the “earth pull” is very strong, and you must resist it. Above all, you must resist any temptations to obtain the old pleasures by obsessing, and so forth. You will come across a fair number of beings who will try to lead you astray in this matter, just as on earth there are always plenty of people ready to show a man the shortest path to destruction; so be wary.

“Again, you have separated your Guardian Spirit from you by a wan of misdeeds, and so forth, and your first work must be to dissolve that barrier by doing good deeds, and especially by helping people both on earth and here on this plane of existence.

“Not that I mean to imply that you have not any good deeds to your account. I know you have a great many, but what we want are more and especially unselfish deeds. I mean that you should do things that you don’t like for the sake of helping others; not merely doing things that your nature inclines you to do. Thus, you are by nature fond of children, and have many meritorious acts recorded on that score in your favour. What you need to do is to make a special effort, as it were, to level up that score in other directions.”

“I (R.L.W.) then asked him (H. J. L.) to explain the geography of the place.

“He replied, ‘All things that have material form have an astral form. To this plane come the astral forms.’

“*R.L.W. :* ‘What, do you mean that if I made a toy, and it was destroyed, I should find its astral form here?’

“*H.J.L.:* ‘Yes, and when you came on to the plane of pure form in the spirit plane you might find it there also unless, indeed, it was so ugly or so badly made that it had gone to Hell.’

“*R.L.W. :* ‘Then we are like God, who is said to create things?’

“*H.J.L.:* ‘Certainly, to create is Godlike. Thus buildings which perish come here, and so to the plane above. Here come animals, and trees and flowers, rocks and landscapes, and so forth.’

“R. L.W.: ‘But what is the difference of the forms or bodies, on the two planes?’

“H.J.L.: ‘It is easy for me to know the difference, but not so easy to explain it, especially in the case of inanimate objects.

“Roughly, the form remains entangled in the astral body for some time after the astral body escapes from the material. This latter process on earth we call death.

“Here, in the astral plane, the astral body goes on, and is inhabited for some time by the soul which is enclosed in the spiritual body or form.

“In time; sooner or later, we “shed our astral body.” That is the best phrase to describe this second death.

“Then, freed from the astral body, the soul rises to the spirit plane, either to enter one of the three divisions of light, or sink to the realms of darkness called Hell.

“From the divisions of light it passes through the “great wall of fire,” and there loses its mixed form. What happens after that I know not, but that is a long way off for both you and me.

“Now, when the “form” leaves the astral body the latter continues to last often for a while, just as a corpse does. In some cases it breaks up almost at once, particularly in the cases of old men, whose astral bodies have become worn out like their physical ones. I am a case in point. I hardly realised I was on the astral plane before my astral body dissolved and I had passed on to the spirit plane.

“But often, in the case of a young man, he cannot get clear of his astral body.

“If he goes in for obsessing, however, his spiritual body seems to become too gross to remain in the astral body, and shatters it, and he drops down to Hell. On the other hand, if he does a lot of good his spirit form will shake itself clear of the astral body and rise to our plane. Then that astral body, now an empty .shell. may dissolve or may drift about aimlessly. I have known cases where a .shell. has hung around some old haunt of its earth life for several centuries. Many of the famous ghosts which haunt the country houses of Great Britain are of this nature, though not all by any means. But most of those aimless, purposeless ghosts, who simply turn up on certain anniversaries and do nothing in particular, belong to this group.

“As to animals, the highest types of animals, those closely associated with man, often attain to our realms, but the less human ones, as it were; seem to remain more or less permanent on the astral plane, e.g. lions and wolves, and most of the prehistoric creatures.

“I have carefully said “more or less permanently,” as I have not yet solved the problem as to whether, after a while, they return to earth by the road of reincarnation, and so progress. I rather think some of them do, but that was one of the subjects I was studying when I broke it off to come and help you.

“As to the inanimate, as we call it on earth, it is well to realise that everything has life, even to the tiniest atom; taking a house as an example: as soon as destroyed but not before, it comes to the astral plane. Here it remains for a long time, as a rule. So long as there are any astral beings on the astral plane who knew it on earth, and recognise it, there it will remain. When there are no longer any such left, it fades away, and breaks up into astral elements, just as its material elements on earth break up and fall back into the general mass of matter. From these astral elements new astral forms are always being built up.

“This remark would naturally lead me to speak of those astral beings who were never on earth, but I’ve already told Jack about that, and I’ll tell you at another time.

“The form of a building on the other hand, go straight to the realm of form, and from there, so far as I can discover remains for ever. According to its beauty, it will go to the realms of light and to the various divisions of them, or to Hell.

“Even a building partly built will come too that realm. Thus, Westminster Abbey may be seen in the various stages of its development. Thus also on the astral plane and on the spirit plane, one may see the same building to all appearances; all the astral form is temporary, and the spirit form is fixed and permanent.’

“It’s wonderfully interesting,’ I (R.L.W.) said, ‘and I can see I have a vast deal to learn.’”

Then R.L.W. broke off. “See Jack, here’s H.J.L.!”

H.J.L. entered and said: “Rex, I think you had better come back with me now and see what can be done with your Adjutant.”

“Before you go, Rex,” I cried “I want to ask you one or two things about father’s dream. He says he saw you with two women, and he asked mother (in the dream) if she saw you, but she said she didn’t. He described the chairs and furniture pretty accurately, but I can’t square the rest with what I’ve seen here.”

R.L.W. : “Neither can I. He told me he was glad to have found me at last, and would tell mother. What is more, he went and tried to bring mother’s astral body here to see me, but could not, because it was too entangled with her physical body. But he came back and said he thought she understood, though he did not suppose she would remember anything when she awoke. As to the two women, H.J.L. was there and spoke to him, but he was so excited at seeing me that he hardly noticed him (H. J. L.)”

H.J.L.: “People carry away fearfully distorted ideas. But now good-bye, Jack.” And they faded away in the distance.

J.W.

Chapter XI

My Journey through the Storm

June 19th, 1916.

I saw my body lying fast asleep, and then the room faded, and around me swept chaos. Clouds of darkness seemed to break over me like great, black waves from a stormy sea. I heard the roar of the wind, the crash of the thunder. All around me the lightning played in lurid sheets of flame.

I felt like a piece of thistle-down, tossed to and fro, wither and thither.

At times I thought I should never cease falling. At others I was thrown up, up, an immeasurable height. At length I seemed to be cast upon something solid, as it were, and struggled away from the waves of darkness into a district more sheltered, between bare hills.

As I penetrated further into the country, the storm seemed to grow less. My own pace increased. I ceased to walk and began to fly. Gradually the landscape became less forbidding, and the storm ceased altogether. Soon I saw the village, and then entered the house where Rex dwelt. This time he was there waiting for me.

“What an awful storm, Rex,” I said, “I’ve never been through so bad a one before, never experienced anything like it before on my journeys here. What’s the cause of it?”

H. J. L., who was sitting near Rex, answered for him.

“All the outer edge of the astral plane is in that state now, owing to the fierce fighting that’s going on, especially on the Eastern front. The passions thereby aroused are visible here, and affect the astral fluids and elements among which we are dwelling, just as the winds on earth are caused by fluctuations of heat and cold, and by electric discharges.

“I wonder you haven’t noticed it before.”

J.W.: “Well, of course, when I first came seeking Rex I experienced a kind of storm, but it was rather like a thunder-storm on land, whereas this was like being in a storm at sea and in the water too.”

H.J.L.: “The ‘storm on land,’ as you call it, as I explained was really, in the main, the astral form of the actual fighting which is going on between the astral or if you like, ghostly armies here. The flashes of light were from the astral cannon and the thunder the roar of that cannon; but what you experienced just now were the effects of the fierce storm of hate now raging upon the subtle elements of which the astral plane is composed.

“The thing that puzzles one, though, is why you have never experienced it before.”

H.J.L. remained silent for a moment, as if turning the matter over in his mind. I turned to Rex.

Chapter XII

The Requiem

J.W.: “Can you give me any more of your narrative?”

R.L.W. : “There’s not much more to tell. I told you before that I saw, amid the very battle itself; I mean the astral battle first, a great light like a searchlight coming right up through the ground. It seemed to dissolve the fighting horde and the very ground itself: as if a great funnel had opened down which I could look.

“There I saw the service, you and father, and the people in the church, and also a great crowd of spirit forms, many of them very beautiful, and as if made of light. Strangely enough, the idea that immediately struck me was that here I saw ‘The Communion of Saints.’ Anyway, the service did me more good than any other service I’ve ever attended. It soothed my troubled spirit and gave me hope.

“I wonder how many services ever have any effect anywhere, I mean, how far till they reach even to this plane, much less on to the spirit planes. What do you think, Uncle?”

H.J.L. replied: “Very few, in my opinion get any further than the church they are in. It all turns on the mental efforts of the worshippers, and how far they unite with one common object. Moreover, a short prayer will get through, though the full service does not. I have seen examples of that but I’ve seen very few of such services coming through even as far as us.

“The most usual type is a service for the dead, generally for some special person. See, there’s one coming through now.”

As I watched I saw a beam of light some distance off. It grew and expanded into a great glory! It was of an exquisite golden colour.

“I’m going to investigate,” I cried, and shot through the door. I soon reached the end of the village, and out into the country. Then I stood at the edge of a pit, up which the light came and floating in the mouth of the pit was a French soldier. Beneath him I could see the roof of a church, and in the church a Requiem was being celebrated. Just a priest, a few old folks, that was all, but the spirits of light were there in a great number.

I suddenly felt that I was intruding, and hurried back to *H.J.L.* and *Rex*.

Rex continued, quietly. “Well, besides that, I’ve little to tell. You know of our journey back and how we’ve taken up our residence here. *H.J.L.* has explained and amplified what he had already told me.

“Since we started on our search for my Adjutant, we’ve had little time for talking.

“We found him still fighting fiercely, and you should have seen the look of astonishment on his face when he saw me. It made me laugh for the first time since I died.

“Amid the turmoil, it was impossible to go into things, but after some little difficulty I got him out of the fighting line.

“He thought, at first he would be running away from the battle, and it was only my presence which made him realise that he must be dead. He said, ‘Well, if I can talk with you, I must be dead, for I know quite well you are. But it all seems a fearful jumble up!’

“Somehow, we got him away, and the Officer took him firmly in hand and I and *H.J. L.* went with him. We took him way behind the fighting line, and there he is now, and we three are doing for him the work that *H.J.L.* did for me, only we have not, as

yet, taken him into the great solitude. I don't know whether it will be necessary in his case.

"The Officer has a tremendous personality. He simply says a thing, and you feel at once that he's right; without troubling to analyse it. But we've been away long enough and must go back to him.

"Give my love to Pater and B—. Was she upset when she heard I'd been killed?"

J. W.: "Very." And I told him what she had said.

R.L.W.: "Dear little B! Remember me to C."

H.J.L.: "In which I join. Now we must be off."

We passed out together, but whereas they turned one way, I felt drawn in another.

Again I found myself dropping down, down, through raging storm clouds or waves, until at length I touched ground, and hurrying along, as it were on the bed of the sea, found myself passing along a road near London, and so down the empty Finchly Road, up Willifield Way, straight through, the door of my house. Upstairs I went through the door of the bedroom, stood gazing at my sleeping form, and then lost consciousness.

Chapter XIII

The Adjutant

June 23rd, 1916.

On reaching the now familiar house, I found quite a large party. Besides Rex I found H.J.L., the Officer, and a stranger whom Rex introduced as his Adjutant. The latter at once said:

“Adj. ‘Well; this is another surprise. I’m getting them every hour now. To be able to talk to a living man in this land of shadows! How goes the war? Do you know anything of the old Regiment? Has our offensive started?’

J. W.: “The Russians have completely shattered the southern half of the Austro-German line. They claim to have captured 200,000 prisoners. Czenovitz has fallen. A place called Luck, and practically all Bukovina has been conquered. The Germans to the north made a counterattack to save the situation, but it seems to have failed.”

I gave him further details of the position of affairs.

Adj.: “How on earth did they do it?”

J. W.: “They’ve got a tremendous amount of heavy guns mostly, I believe, from Japan. She’s been putting all her energies in to supply Russia with that sort of help.”

Adj.: “Excellent! I say, this has cheered me up a lot. When you come back next time, you’ll bring me some more news, won’t you?”

J. W.: “Of course, I shall be delighted. But while you naturally want to know how England’s doing, don’t concentrate on that idea too much, or you will become hopelessly earth-bound.”

Adj.: “What does that mean?”

I explained briefly, and then went on to Rex. .How have you been getting on since last I saw you?”

R.L.W. : “Famously. The Officer took the Adjutant away for some time into the place of ‘Utter Silence’. How long you would reckon it I don’t know. Time is measured differently here.

Indeed, if it were not for your periodic visits, I should have by now quite forgotten about earth time. Reckoning by that, I should think he was away for about three days. I called your visits periodic. I do that because you have explained to me that you visit me every Monday and Friday, but the intervals between seem to vary in length enormously.

“While the Officer was away with the Adjutant, H.J.L. went on instructing me. He has been trying to make my mouth water by telling me about the fine plays and splendid concerts they have in his sphere. Also he has explained about the great art and all the rest of it. It all sounds very attractive, but unfortunately, rather a long way off. He does not seem very hopeful about my finding such things here, and is very emphatic that I shan’t find them in the place below. (By this he meant Hell.)

“One thing I don’t much care about is, there don’t seem to be many children in his part.”

Chapter XIV

The Fate of the Children

H.J.L. (interrupting) .That is because, being an old man, I have not been associated with children much just before I died. But, all the same, I've come across a good number in my division. Furthermore, you must bear in mind that there were children not according to our years but according to our spiritual development. I was quite a small boy when first I started there.

“On the other hand many half-grown children would appear there to be as old, or older, than I did then. A man, if he does not grow, shrinks in spiritual stature.

“If you arrived there now, you would not be a man amusing children, as you imagine, but a very small child yourself, who would have to go to school, and would, I fancy be found a very backward and stupid pupil.

“Then, again, those who are fond of very small children go to the school in Hell and help them there. As Jack has told you, there are two sets of schools in Hell: (A) those for the evil souls who are striving to climb out of Hell, and (B) for the premature children, the tiny infants and neglected children who never had any chance of learning about God or a future life. Since they have no faith they cannot dwell in any division where faith is a necessary condition, any more than a fish could live on dry land. Hence, both these types of schools are in the seventh division - i.e. the highest - of Hell, but, otherwise, they have nothing in common.”

R.L.W. : “But what of the terrible darkness? It seems very unfair that these innocent children should be plunged into that.”

H.J.L.: “Who said they were in darkness? They have as strong light as they can possibly bear. It is given off by their teachers in the buildings, in which they live, but Jack can explain all this just as well as I, or I could do that another time which is more to the point. If you waste much more of Jack's time, he'll have to go before you have told him other matters.”

R.L.W. : “Yes, of course, but couldn't I do that sort of work? I love children.”

H.J.L.: “Certainly, my boy, and I don't doubt that will be a most splendid work for you to do, but first you must learn before you can teach. Now, tell Jack about your guide.”

Chapter XV

R.L.W. 's Guide

R.L.W. : “Oh, yes. After we’d sent the Adjutant off, H.J.L. said, ‘Look over there.’ Then the wall of this room, opposite where I was sitting, began to grow indistinct. It became like darkened glass, and as I still gazed I realized that I could see nothing else but that great void. H.J.L. and the room itself had vanished.

“Then, far away in the distance, I saw a faint speck of light. It grew brighter and brighter, as if it were approaching, but I could see no form. Yet I knew at once there was a form, only distant from me an immeasurable space.

“As when seated on a river’s bank some dark night, one gazes down into the black waters and sees just one star reflected there, and the dark waters reflect not only the lone star, but also, in some mysterious way, the vast space which lies between our world and it - so it was now between me and my Guide.

“Then, across the limitless space, came a sound and a voice - like the note of a mighty organ far, far away. It swelled and swelled as it grew nearer, and finally it burst like a tempest upon me. Its music was superb and yet awful. In some such way I could imagine the angels trump will sound at the last day. If, indeed, there is a last day. Or is it, that for me this was the ‘last day’, and this the trump of the archangel calling me to judgment?

“I know not. But in that manner I can best describe the effect of that mighty cadence. The music was exquisite, yet the pain was intense.

“It burst on me and over me. It overwhelmed me and shattered me. It beat me to the dust. Yet it was articulate, and the words it spoke were words of comfort and good cheer.

“My son, you have started on the right path. You have broken down the outer darkness which shuts me away from you. Go on and prosper little by little. I shall draw nearer and remember though you may drive me away from you, yet will I never desert you. I cannot draw any nearer than this lest I overwhelm you utterly. I see how even this first vision of me has shattered and dazed you.

“Grow strong in good works, in loving acts, in unselfish thoughts, and so as you grow more able to bear the sight of the Glory, it shall be revealed to you.’

“Slowly the cadence receded, and a great silence took its place. I gazed on the lone star, and it changed from white to blue and blue to green, and green to orange, and orange to red; and red to purple. The purple grew pale and became like lavender, and the lavender was diffused with pink which flashed into an extraordinary colour which melted into silver.

“Then waves of darkness rolled over my star, fold by fold, I could see it no more. Slowly the wall of the house became visible and then I saw H.J.L.”

He ceased then and after a time, said, “it is impossible to describe that beautiful colour, is it not?” and H.J.L. replied: “Yes, there is no such colour on earth. It cannot be described.”

Again there was a great silence, broken at length by the Adjutant, who said in an awestruck whisper, “Youngster, that was the most wonderful description I’ve ever heard. I felt that I was actually witnessing the episode.”

“So did I,” I cried.

H.J.L. smiled. “So did we all, we saw the forms or his thoughts. It is not so easy here as in the sixth plane, where it is the normal thing, yet here it can be done. Indeed,

even on earth it is occasionally done, so it is not surprising that it should be possible here.

“Yes, Jack. Rex, by helping the Adjutant, has helped himself, just as W.A. did. He has drawn a little nearer to his guide. A good start, a good beginning - but there is a long journey - yet and as you also have a long journey, Jack, you’d better start.”

“A nice inhospitable way to treat a visitor from a far land,” I grumbled, but half in jest.

H.J.L.: “All right, stay here. We shall be delighted, but in that case, we shall not get the latest news from the battle front next Monday.”

J. W.: “Good-bye, Boss! Good-bye, Rex! Good-bye, Officer!” The room swayed, grew pale, and vanished, and I lost consciousness.

Chapter XVI

Astral Phantoms

June 26th, 1916.

I again found myself in the house inhabited by R.L.W. and H.J.L.

The Adjutant at once questioned me further about the war. I told him how the Greeks had been blockaded and had given in, also that the Russians were still driving the Austrians before them, and that there were signs that we were beginning to bombard the German lines heavily.

He was much excited, and pressed me for as much news as possible.

Rex then began: "I've been having some experience with these astral beings. I mean the non-human ones.

"I went out by myself and walked out into the country. Suddenly I saw some delightful-looking little elves, just like the fairies of our nursery stories. I was astonished, and stood and watched them gamboling and skipping about. Some had wings like those of a butterfly, and others like those of dragonflies and bats. I even saw one little fellow riding through the air on a broom.

"I was enjoying myself immensely when a huge monster suddenly appeared, and the 'Little People' vanished at once.

"The newcomer was a most repellent creature; it was the sort of thing I imagine drunkards see in D. T. It seemed about ten feet high, and looked like a huge green crocodile in its upper part, but its lower part was that of a naked man. The lower-half was not green, but dark brown.

.As soon as it saw me it made straight for me. I had nothing in the shape of a weapon, and I fled. Of course, it was very cowardly of me, but really, the sight of the brute had thrown me completely off my guard.

"I hadn't run far before I saw H.J.L. hurrying towards me. On seeing how the situation was, he rose in the air and shot towards me at a great pace.

"Seizing my arm, he turned me round and said, 'Face it. The creature is less to be feared than the prehistoric monsters you have already seen. They have real souls in them, and this has not. Now, attack it.'

"Even as we rushed at the monster its form began to shake, and suddenly it broke in pieces, and these appeared to be caught in some current of wind, for they floated off in various directions.

"What was it?' I enquired of H. J. L., who replied: 'These are astral phantoms. They are a common phenomenon here. It is difficult for me to make you understand what exactly they are. The astral plane is full of masses of astral atoms, and any thought form which comes here might attract these astral forms to itself and clothe itself with them. There are numerous other ways in which these creatures come into existence, but I do not claim to be an expert, nor even very interested in such matters. The thing to remember however is that though, as a rule, these have a very transitory existence, yet there are some which succeed in obtaining a form of life by battenning on real men. They attach themselves to some weak-minded person who is living on earth, and suck up his vitality in a similar way in which an evil person who is on the astral plane may obsess a living man.

"Again, an evil soul which has lost its astral form may seize on one of the astral phantoms and use it for a time as an astral body. It cannot, as a rule, hold it for long, but while it can it may do a great deal of real mischief.'

R.L.W. : “How can one tell the difference between (a) an astral phantom, (b) a phantom which is battering on men, and (c) a phantom which is inhabited by a real soul which is not its owner?”

H.H.L. : “Largely by intuition. You would recognise at once there was a difference between them if you saw them, though you might find it harder to describe where the difference lay. Briefly, (c) behave very much in the same way as men in the astral state do, but the astral form is rather obviously a borrowed garment and is always trying to break up and decay. But while it is held this (c) group shows an intellect at work.

“(a) and (b) are both lacking in this, and act by instinct. In the case of (b), however, at times this instinct has developed so far that it most appears to be on a par with the low-cunning of a madman on earth. (a) just drift round aimlessly, act on the slightest impulse, and have no settled purposes. By this latter characteristic they may be distinguished from the empty astral shells of dead men from which the souls of men have passed out. These, so long as they continue to exist alone, tend to repeat over and over certain acts of the former earth life of the spirit which have become firmly imprinted into their very beings. Thus, many so-called family ghosts are merely empty astral shells which continue to act in ‘the haunted chamber’, repeating again and again the murder they there committed, or perhaps the task they used to do there. There is nothing in them by which they can know. That is why, when spoken to, they do not reply. A ghost which can answer is not an empty shell. What it is is another matter, and one we will not now go into.”

R.L.W. : “What were the fairies?”

H.H.L. : “There are many kinds of fairies, but the kind you saw then were the thought forms or dreams of children, which here had clothed themselves with astral atoms. Your monster was of a very different stock; and was essentially evil. It was the wreck of the astral shell of a negro and of a crocodile, which were casually brought together by the astral tides, and, being both still very material, they re-united to form the shape you saw, but, of course, could not survive for long.”

He ceased. Rex turned to me. “Well, you see, I’ve been learning a lot. But don’t you think the Adjutant looks a lot better?”

J. W.: “I do. I hope it will continue, but I feel I must be going.. So, having bidden good-bye to all, I walked through the door, and, as it closed behind me I grew dizzy, and lost consciousness.

Chapter XVII

The Officer's Work

June 30th, 1916.

As soon as I saw them, Rex began: "Well, what's the latest news?"

I told them various items, and added: "Have I told you about the revolt in Arabia?"

"No!" they replied together.

So I told them about the revolt of the Sheikh of Mecca, and the capture by him of Medina.

The Adjutant seemed especially pleased about it.

I then turned to the Officer. "I have not spoken much to you recently. How are you going on?"

The Officer.: "Well. Very well. Very busy and very happy. Two years ago I would never have thought it possible. In those two years I personally have helped over a hundred souls, all old soldiers. All were men who were far from being saints, yet, of them all, I have lost only six. Not bad, 94 per cent brought safely through the dangerous period when men first start on the astral plane. These numbers don't include the large number with whom my organisation has dealt."

J. W.: "What has happened to them? Surely they can't all have reasons, passed on to the spirit plane?"

The Officer.: "No. Thirty-two have so passed on. Of these, only five were under forty, however. In each of these five, there were special reasons, and only one was below thirty-five."

J. W.: "What sort of reasons cause men below the age of thirty-five to leave the astral plane?"

The Officer.: "This man was thirty-two when he died. He was terribly anxious to pass on to the next plane, because he longed to find his mother, who was there. As it chanced, I knew her well. To get clear of his astral body he did all sorts of self-sacrificing things. Even went to the length of helping dead Germans, including several who had ill-treated him when he lay dying.

"Finally, a strange thing happened. His guide brought him in contact with a man who had been over here rather a long time. This man was living here with his wife, who was a good deal younger. His time to quit the astral plane had come, but not yet his wife's time. The pair were both deeply distressed at the prospect of having to part, and terribly afraid lest they should never meet again. So the soldier and this man made an agreement that the soldier should give the latter his astral body. I don't quite understand how it was done, for, usually, it is not an easy matter to slip out of your astral body before the time has come, but, as the two guides concurred; it *was* done. So his astral is here, and inhabited, but his soul has passed on to the plane above and joined his mother."

J. W.: "What is your usual modus operandi when helping those who have, fallen in the fight?"

The Officer.: "Very much the same as the methods we used first for your brother and afterwards for his Adjutant.

"Occasionally we don't have to take them away into the great solitude. Sometimes we find they have already fallen into evil hands and are being led astray. This latter has caused us to set pickets round the drink dens and similar resorts. Of course, we do not always succeed in preventing men going to them. Some men are so set on it that it

is impossible. When I came over I was that sort. Still, we prevent a good many from being led into them.

“Then, too, we have some spirits set aside to shadow those evil creatures who try to tempt men to obsess. As soon as one of these harpies gets hold of a young fellow, and begins to suggest that he should obtain earthly pleasures by obsessing, our spirit warns him against doing so.

“Then a great part of the work of helping the newly slain is by getting them to help others, like your brother is doing with the Adjutant. So we have an ever-increasing band at work, and by Jove, we need it!”

H.J.L. then spoke. “Yes, we are always sending up requests for more helpers, but, even in the sixth plane, they are hard put to it. Never have so many countless thousands been coming over before. Old habitués tell me that the Franco-Prussian war hardly made any difference, but that this is quite another matter.”

R. L. W.: “I have not had any very striking adventures since I saw you last. The Adjutant and I have been out and about several times, but nothing very exciting has occurred.

“I expect soon I shall have to start trying to help..

The Officer.: “Yes, but all in due season. You must learn a little more first.”

H.J.L.: “I can feel that the dawn is breaking. So good-bye, Jack.”

And, having said good-bye to everyone, I passed through the door into the street. I noticed it was full of visitors, those who were dreaming of those they had lost. They were all hastening away in one direction. I joined the throng. Several were crying out, .Hasten! Hasten! The dawn is breaking. Quickly! Quickly! Or we shall be too late.”

We seemed to flow out into a plain and across it like a river. We came to what seemed like a cliff, and passed into a cavern. I heard a roar like the falling of mighty waters. Then I saw why. The cavern broke off, and over its edge the dreamers poured like a river would fall over a waterfall. Down, down they fell, into a vast and limitless darkness.

I perceived that everyone’s eyes were shut. So far as I could judge, mine were the only ones that were not.

Now I was poised on the edge. Now I was falling, falling. Hundreds of others were falling around me and over me. Still falling. Then I lost consciousness.

Chapter XVIII

The Recruiting Rally

July 3rd, 1916.

As I approached the town in which R.L.W. now dwelt, I perceived that something unusual was in progress. People were standing at the doors of their houses waiting for something.

Then I heard it, the skirl of the bagpipes. There was no mistaking it. I hurried towards the house, and as I did so, the music grew clearer every minute. I found them all standing in the doorway.

“What is it?” I inquired.

The Officer.: “A recruiting march. The idea has spread like wildfire. It’s partly due to the news of the great advance, which has already reached us by the path of the newly dead. Someone declared that Englishmen here ought to thrash the Germans as their comrades were doing on earth. He declared that there were thousands who had gone out of the fight, and should be brought back into it, and further, that there were large numbers of men who had never yet taken a hand, but with little training would make useful soldiers.

“As if it makes any difference here who wins a battle on this plane. If we could help our men on earth it would be a different matter. As it is, it will throw back the spiritual progress of thousands. Look at this fellow. See how all my good work is being undone.” (And he looked at the Adjutant in no very friendly manner.)

To tell the truth, the Adjutant was evidently becoming very excited. As the notes of the bagpipes drew nearer and nearer; he became more and more excited. Then they came. Rank after rank, company after company, great lusty fellows. Highland regiment after regiment, thousands and thousands. As they passed they chanted in chorus, ‘Fall in, fall in! Come on, you slackers, come out!’ And as they cried, from every house and street men came hurrying up. They fell in behind the various regiments. Seaforth with Seaforth, Black Watch with Black Watch. On and on with the skirl of the pipes. Then came cavalry and artillery. Then the sound of a drum and fife band.

“Here come the English regiments!” cried the Adjutant.

“No, they are the Welsh Fusiliers,” cried a soldier in the street, and he was right. Still on they streamed. Soon the Irish regiments were passing, and ever from houses and streets old soldiers came hurrying up. Yes, and recruits began to fall in at the rear, and were promptly taken in hand by busy sergeants, who made them form up in columns of route.

Now some of the Colonial contingents were passing, and, amid ceaseless cheering, some of the Canadians and Anzacs went by. Then the bands swelled into a deeper note and the English regiments of the line began to pass, interspersed with artillery and cavalry.

“Here come the Royal Fusiliers!” cried Rex, and began to get almost as excited as the Adjutant.

H.J.L. placed his hand on his shoulder.

H.J.L.: “Keep calm, my boy. You can do no good now. All this is mere glamour, an empty show. It will be of no help to our country, and will only undo all the good we have done for you. Keep calm.”

The Officer was saying something on the same lines to the Adjutant, but he seemed not to hear him.

Then one of the battalions began to sing, "It's a long way to Tipperary," and it went thundering down the line. A belated Scotch regiment began "Scots wha hae wi Wallace bled."

More regiments passed, among them the Grenadiers. Suddenly the Adjutant cried, "My God! It's them."

As he spoke the York and Lancasters came in sight. What a number they were. It made my heart bleed to think that never more would those fine fellows tread the earth. As they passed a great shout went up, "The Adjutant!"

The Adjutant.: "I'm coming, boys. Come on, W___!. and he rushed down the steps and joined up.

For a moment Rex hesitated. Then he saw something in H.J.L.'s eyes, and turned away, murmuring, "I suppose it is nonsense, but I feel a bit rotten not going with the others."

Again the Adjutant cried, "Come on, W___." but R.L.W. went inside

"Quick march!" cried the officer in command, "We've no time to wait while he makes up his mind," and the column swung down the road and was soon out of sight. On and on they came. There were more than thirty thousand, as near as the Officer could judge. It seemed as if it took hours and hours to pass, and every minute it was growing.

Every regiment had its tail of new recruits now, all in civilian dress. Then came R.A.M.C. and nurses. More men, and still more men.

At last it was finished. "The pity of it" .. murmured the Officer. "If it were only of the slightest help, but it is not.

"Soon they will be at it again, and no one on earth will be one jot the better for it, and countless souls here will be dragged back again into the whirlpool of passion and retard their progress for years. And yet I cannot help admiring them. After all, though they are wrong and do it from ignorance, the spirit is right.

"I wish I had fallen on the field of battle in this war among my old companions.

"Let us go in. We shall have to work hard to-night to save your brother. He's been in our hands longer than the other fellow, or he'd have gone in too. I wonder if I shall be able to get the Adjutant back again."

I found H.J.L. had already started talking to Rex, proving to him that no good would come of this most recent development. Rex admitted that, but was inclined to argue that, nevertheless, he ought to have gone when his senior officer called him - that they would now think ill of him in his own regiment, possibly even say he was a coward.

H.J.L. replied that it did not matter a scrap what foolish people in their ignorance said. They who had been here longer were wiser and knew different. Finally, that his duty was now to make progress, and that he was now doing, whereas the other line of conduct was actually wrong, because it would throw him back and added, "If, by so doing you could really help your country, we would be the last to oppose it, even although that was the price you must pay, but you will not do the slightest good. There are spirits who can and do help on the war, but they do it by inspiring our generals and organisers with new ideas, not by fighting on the astral plane."

At length he was a little more satisfied. Then I left.

Chapter XIX

Shops on the Astral Plane

July 7th, 1916.

On arriving at the house in which R.L.W. and H.J.L. now lived, I found them there, but no one else. On inquiring where the Adjutant and the Officer were they replied that the Officer had gone to try and bring back the Adjutant, but had not succeeded as yet, and had only once returned, and then only for a short time.

H.J.L.: "There are an enormous number of men coming over just now, but for the most part they are still full of the battle fury and go on fighting. It will take some time for that to wear off."

R.L.W.: "I wanted to go and help try and persuade these men to leave off fighting now that they are dead, and, in short, do the same for them that H.J.L. and the Officer have done for me. But H.J.L. says I'm not strong enough and if I do shall probably relapse under the influence of the excitement and throw away all I've gained."

H.J.L.: "Yes, Rex. But in a little time you will be strong enough to do that work, and then you certainly shall. Indeed, you will hardly be able to make much more progress until you do."

Soon after this our conversation turned on domestic matters, and time, if I can use that phrase, passed so quickly that I was quite astonished when H.J.L. told me it was time to go. I then said, "We have had a pleasant but not a very instructive time."

He replied: "Still, a respite is rather good sometimes and indeed to-day, owing to the set-back caused by the return to the front of the Officer, has left us with little fresh to tell you. Still, we have learned a lot from you about the war, private affairs, and so forth, which has greatly interested us."

Then we parted, and I walked out of the town into the countryside when, lo, a great fog seemed to overwhelm me, and after groping amid the darkness, I lost consciousness.

July 10th, 1916.

On entering the house I met the Officer hurrying out! "Hello" I cried, "won't you stay?"

The Officer.: "No, I must get back to my work, though just now it's rather a thankless task, and he disappeared. I went inside and found H.J.L. and R.L.W. there, as usual.

H.J.L.: "I'm teaching Rex chess. He knew a just very little more than the moves, but he's getting on."

J. W.: "Do you know Burmese chess?"

H.J.L.: "No."

J. W.: "Would you like to learn?" So there and then I sat down and showed them the game. I noticed the pieces were a rather fine Indian set of carved ivory, and said, "Where did these come from?"

H.J.L.: "Oh, some that have been destroyed lately."

J. W.: "Yes, but how do you get such things here?"

H.J.L.: "There are places here; you might call them shops, to which the astral forms of destroyed things come. Thus, there are some shops where chessmen come because there are other chessmen there. These I found in a shop full of carved ivory goods. Such a collection of stuff you never saw in your life. There were dozens of incomplete sets, the rest being still on earth. There were all kinds of ivory work and curios of all sorts, some beautiful others positively ugly. An old man was there who,

when on earth, had been a curio dealer. When he died he came here and seeing this old curio shop without an owner, took up his abode there as we have here.”

“He says it is very strange the way all sorts of things suddenly appear there. He never sees them arrive, but just finds them there. But next time, if we are not better employed, I’ll take you round to him, and he shall tell you more about it. You’d find him rather a congenial companion.”

J. W.: “But do you buy things here as on earth?”

H.J.L.: “I didn’t buy these things. I just told the old man I wanted a set, and he showed me several lots and let me choose this set. He said he felt sure he would be having some more in soon, and in any case he had plenty of other sets.

“I believe there are a few people who run shops for the joy of selling and even try to cheat their customers as they used to do on earth. They are preparing themselves thereby for the upper divisions of Hell, into which the materials drift. I’ve never bought anything, however, so don’t know a great deal about it. I’ve never bothered about getting money here, so I should be out of it anyway.”

J. W.: “But can you get money here?”

H.J.L.: “I suppose you can get its astral form just as you can that of other things. Yes, I remember seeing a miser once, sitting in a scrubby little villa, although there were plenty of fine houses standing empty close by. He was counting and recounting his money. I expect he’ll stay there doing that till he falls out of his astral body into Hell.

“I have never hunted for money, but I imagine that by searching round one could find hoards here and there, but you must remember that, when on earth you can melt down a gold pot and turn it into coin, you can’t do that here. Here we have not yet reached the stage of pure form as in the spirit plane, but we have left matter proper behind. Do you follow me?”

J. W.: “Yes, perfectly. Now, when I was in Burma, I often saw the Chinese in their temples burning paper money, clothes, etc., to send to the spirits in the next world. Do you think it would work?”

H.J.L.: “Yes to a limited extent. If the person concentrated his mind sufficiently on the dead person the goods would go to him, but you must distinguish between their astral form and spirit form. The latter, which is form only, would go on to the spirit plane, but, at the same time, would be of little real use except as evidence to the dead man that he was still remembered on earth. That idea would benefit him. For the rest, he would create thought forms of clothes, etc., which would do the work just as well.

“On the other hand, on the astral plane only the astral form of a paper coat or paper money would appear. I doubt if the latter would be recognised by those who keep the shops for business here, except, of course, real paper money, i.e. bank notes. In any case, however, it’s merely playing at things, or else repeating year’s custom from habit. We have no real needs such as food or new clothes, and things like these chessmen we can always get without giving money for them if only we look around a bit. Yes, the use of money, buying and selling, are merely earth habits which are best shaken off as soon as possible, otherwise they draw men down to the division of the materialists in Hell.

“But you must be off. It’s day in England. See how the dreamers are hurrying back.”

He was right, and I hurried off.

Chapter XX

A Visit to the Battlefield

July 14th, 1916.

I found Rex and H.J.L. together, and with them several other officers and men.

R.L.W. said, "We've got the Adjutant back and the Officer is here."

J. W.: "How did you get hold of the Adjutant again?"

The Officer.: "Oh, by hard work. I kept following him about till I was able to persuade him what a complete delusion the whole of the battle was and then he came away. I brought back several others as well."

Rex then came up and said, "We are going to start on our first expedition. Would you like to come with us?"

J. W.: "Yes, decidedly."

So H. J. L. and R.L.W., the Officer, and four others beside myself started off together. We seemed to travel swiftly, indeed almost to float over the soil, till presently the noise of the artillery could be heard. It rapidly grew in volume, and the air grew murky and dark. Soon we could see little for the darkness, and a wild tempest seemed to be raging. The wind blew in our faces and beat against us more fiercely every step we took.

The Officer.: "These are the waves of hate and passion set in motion by the struggle. Look, here come some of the dead!"

As he ceased I saw shadows passing, not by ones or twos, but whole companies a couple of hundred strong. Some seemed red, but most were dark grey. Here and there one shone brightly, and these separated themselves quickly from the others and rose faster and faster till they vanished.

The Officer.: "The white ones are very exceptional. They are those whose lives have been remarkably pure, and generally they have given their lives to save another.

"The red are thoroughly evil, or at least dominated by hate. The grey are ordinary folk, neither very good nor very bad.

"See how, even in death, they follow each other like sheep.

"See the battle-line on this plane."

Now, amid the murk, I perceived lines of wild figures rushing across the broken ground, and these were met by others - Germans. They fought and fell and rose and fought again.

J. W.: "Do you help the Germans?"

The Officer.: "I don't. Not yet far enough advanced, I suppose, but I can't forgive the brutes for all they have done. Of course, a lot of their own folk do the work, and spirits who were formerly from neither group of nations.

"There are, too, a fair number of quite advanced spirits from the spirit planes who are directing the work, and to these nationality seems to make no difference. But on the astral plane, and even in the lower division of the spirit plane, it still does influence our feelings, so we should be useless. You can't act a part here, you know.

"We will draw even nearer to the earth plane, if you like."

Down we dropped, and seemed to pass through the ground itself. The darkness grew less, and in its place a shadow world arose. Unsubstantial it seemed, very different from the firm landscape to be seen in the astral plane we had just left.

"What is this?" I inquired.

The Officer.: "The world as seen by an astral. Look, there is the river Somme, and those shadows are a line of hills."

The storm still raged fiercely, but the few trees that I could see appeared to be but little affected.

Of course, these winds were generated by the passions of the combatants and did not affect merely material things.

Small figures advanced and fell, and as they fell the shadows became more substantial and swept past us. Great streams of men seemed to be rising into the dark clouds that hung just above our head.

Gradually, the landscape was blotted out by these clouds which descended and engulfed us, or perhaps, we rose up into them.

We were again back on the astral plane proper.

I sighed. "A curious spot this meeting-place of the world and the astral plane. The effect is rather different from the effect I get when I find myself returning."

H.J.L. replied: "Yes, but you are abnormal in that you know how to employ your spiritual, astral, and corporeal faculties, and remember experiences in all three. Very few can do that. Further, the condition just now is abnormal owing to the excessive amount of passion being generated at the time of death, and by the great number of vigorous young men who are passing over every moment."

With this I had to be content, for the Officer now said, "You had better be off, as you are rather in the way, and we want to begin business."

So, having said good-bye, I withdrew a short way and watched them go up to various groups of soldiers who were looking on at the fighting and began to talk to them. I noticed Rex talking to a tall young officer who was wearing the badge of the York and Lancasters.

Then I concentrated my thoughts on getting back. Everything faded - then I lost consciousness.

Chapter XXI

A Curio Shop

July 17th, 1916.

When I arrived in the street where Rex lived, I guessed that their efforts must have been fairly successful, as I noticed that several empty houses were now full of soldiers. I also noticed that a great many new houses had appeared.

I even saw one rising slowly before my eyes. It was evidently being destroyed by gunfire. The roof and upper stories began to appear first, suspended as it were in the air, but whether it waited till all the base was destroyed before that appeared, I can't say, but think not for it took shape so rapidly. Anyway there it was.

I entered Rex's house, and H.J.L. said at once:

"You can come round with me to some of the shops, if you like."

Rex came along with us, and we talked about domestic matters till at length we stopped in front of a shop.

"I thought it would interest you, H.J.L. said: "Its owner was an old curio dealer in Yprés. He lived a good many years ago, and has here a most marvelous collection of all sorts of curios."

We entered, and I found a funny, wizened old man. (The spirit in the astral plane inhabits an astral body which is largely molded on the condition of its physical body at death, therein differing very markedly from those on the spiritual plane, whose forms are largely molded by the development of their spiritual faculties.)

The owner of the shop at once spoke to me, but whether in French I didn't know, but I understood him perfectly and replied in English, as it seemed, and he too understood.

"You are, I can see," he cried, "a lover of the antique and curious. Good; follow me."

Truly, he had the most marvelous collection of all sorts of stuff. Furniture of every period and country, weapons, armour, china, old glass, Roman gods and Indian idols; there seemed to be no end to the things he had.

When I told him I had recently returned from the East, and told him some of the things I had obtained there he was greatly interested. He seemed to know a great deal about the East, and this led me to inquire whether he had traveled there when on earth.

"No, alas!" he replied, but since I died I have often been there, and now I know it well. Is this not a splendid Buddha? I have some very fine ones, but I think this fine figure of Shiva is one of my finest works of art. Choice, is it not?"

J. W.: "And how do you get all these things?"

He: "Oh, they seem to come to me. I sometimes think inanimate objects are not inanimate, but have a queer kind of intelligence of their own. I have once or twice picked up something by the roadside, or in an empty house, but not often. They just appear in the shop. Why, look, there's a fresh grandfather clock!"

He hurried off to look at it and at that moment H.J.L. told me I must be off, and I obeyed.

Chapter XXII

A Lecture by The Officer

July 21st, 1916.

On entering the room where Rex and H.J.L. were, I found the Officer giving a sort of lecture to a large number of soldiers. He was explaining to them what life on the astral plane was like, and why a man must try to shake off the influence of earth passions, especially the desire to continue fighting here. He wore the full dress uniform of a certain famous regiment, but I will not describe it.

“One of the great dangers that besets the new-comer,” he said, “is the desire to continue exactly what he was doing when he died. In the case of a man who has died simply on a sick bed, earth desires and habits have grown weaker, but when a man is cut off in the very act of doing something, his whole mind being fixed on it, a strong tendency arises to continue doing the same thing over here. Often, if this desire is indulged in, the newcomer keeps on repeating it again and again, and even after his spirit has departed from his astral body, this astral body, now nothing but an astral shell, continues mechanically to repeat his former actions. Hence, many ghosts which are seen hunting for something in the haunted room of some old manor-house or aimlessly wandering to and fro, are really the empty astrals of some earth-bound spirit, who continued doing this sort of thing for a long time after death before going on to the next plane of existence. For, remember, that is merely a place of transition. Here you may save your souls or damn them for many an age. Here make amends for your past misdeeds, or add to your sum of evil till you sink under it to Hell!”

A man interrupted here. “I suppose you are one of the ‘pi’ sort who has been saved here. Done all sorts of good deeds here and so got quit of all your former sins.”

Another broke in with a sneer: “Oh, no. He is one of those ‘stained-glass window saints’ who have never done anything wrong.”

This seemed to nettle the Officer, who replied sharply, “You talk like a fool of things you know nothing about. It’s just because I lived an evil life, died in sin, piled up more evil here, sank into Hell, and, still driven on by evil, sought the lowest depths of Hell, that I now urge you strongly not to do those things which may cause you to suffer as I have suffered.”

He then began to relate the course of his life, which has been given elsewhere (Gone West), and as he went on, a great silence fell on any who listened. Rex, I noticed, sat there spellbound as the awful story unfolded itself.

On and on he went, sparing himself in no detail. Step by step he traced his downward path through three worlds, and, as I left he was still continuing.

No one except H.J.L. rose as I slipped out, not even Rex; all were too wrapped up in what was being told to them.

For a moment H.J.L. stood on the doorway bidding me good-bye. “Did I not do well in getting him to give us his life story?” he asked. “Indeed you did,” I replied, and we both stood silent for a while.

Then I turned away, and began the return journey.

Chapter XXIII

The Real War

July 24th, 1916.

When I began to approach the astral plane on this occasion, I realised at once that something unusual was happening.

The whole atmosphere seemed blood red, and at times it tossed in waves like a sea of fire. It was almost impossible for a while to see anything. For a moment I hesitated to plunge into this seething mass, but an unseen force seemed to whirl me on, and, even as I hesitated, I had passed into it.

Gradually I began to perceive things, and what I saw filled me with dismay. On every side I saw hideous shapes, evil and loathsome. They seemed to stretch in endless phalanx after phalanx, hateful, abhorrent.

I looked round wildly for H.J.L. but could not see him, and suddenly one of them sprang towards me. It was like nothing human nor animal. Its eyes were set obliquely in its face, and were narrow, yellow, and hateful. It constantly changed in colour from grey to brown, and so through a peculiar orange brown to red. It appeared to have countless arms, or, rather, suckers, like those of an octopus. It was huge in size, as large as a house, bloated, and repulsive, and glided towards me with the evident intention of attacking me.

I tried to run away, but it cast out one of its long-arms, which caught me up and held me for an instant, and then I spoke. Up to then I had regarded the creature as the astral of some prehistoric monster, but I now realised it must be an elemental, partaking of the nature of man and beast, and something which was neither.

The thoughts it uttered were these. "Fool I have you. You came here into our realm before your time. You are not even an astral being. In your conceit you have come into a part of this realm which even those who have a right here shun. Here we rule, and destroy all who once lived on earth. Here we make them our slaves. We drain their astral life from them and so strengthen our own. I hate you. I hate all men and all animals. All creatures that have ever had a body or claim to have a soul. I have neither."

I called to R.J.L., but he came not. Instead, a bright white, light began to grow amid the red reek and mist. The monster seemed to shrivel, its arm loosened its grip of me, and still the light grew in strength.

It took form, and a huge figure made of fire appeared beside me and overshadowed me. Majestic, and full of solemn dignity, calm and noble of countenance, it far o'ertopped the monster.

Between the great protagonists I seemed the merest pigmy. No words were spoken, no thought passed that I could follow. Simply a silence, and swiftly beneath the weight of that silence the monster shriveled and wilted, till it vanished entirely.

I knew my rescuer. It was my guardian spirit, but even as I strove to thank him he slowly faded away. Suddenly I realized I was blind. I could see nothing.

Little by little my dazed eyes recovered, and again I saw the red mist all around me, and on every side grinning, mocking faces, which leered and jibbered and threatened me, but drew no nearer.

Amid them I passed, and seemed to get no nearer to my goal. The red waves began to increase their motion, and the elementals, in like manner, appeared to sway to and fro.

Then I perceived I was caught in the midst of a great battle compared to which the astral battle I had seen between the European hosts was nothing. These monstrous creatures were rushing in endless waves against a huge army of spirits of light, and the battle raged with unabating fury.

Sometimes one side, sometimes another, would appear to gain the upper hand, but never for long. I was tossed up and down, to and fro like wreckage on the waves of the sea.

It was not so much a struggle between individuals as between a wall of white fire and a wall of red mist and smoke. Backward and forward the great line swayed. High above and deep down below, it stretched, and far out of sight on every side.

Suddenly the white fire seemed to sweep forward at one spot and catch me in its grasp, and as it rolled back it carried me with it.

Now I was out of the hateful red mist, and, instead of the hideous monsters, saw noble figures made of fire.

These reminded me of my own guardian spirit, but they were neither so majestic nor so distant from me. They seemed nearer to men, but they were not astral beings.

They paid no heed to me. Indeed, they seemed to have no time to attend to anything but their task of holding back the powers of evil.

At length I left this dreadful battle-ground, and found myself in the village where H.J.L. lived.

As soon as I reached the house I found H.J.L., who was anxiously watching for me.

I told him what had happened, and H.J.L. said:

“The whole astral plane is in a very agitated state. The powers of evil are making a tremendous effort, and have engulfed large areas quite recently.

“Nor is the conflict confined to the earth and the astral planes, but the spirit plane is shaken also. They are pouring up out of Hell itself and trying to penetrate into the Realm of Half-Belief.

“You remember the great wall of darkness where I met the Officer? Well, one who came down here a short time ago told me it has poured forward over a large part of the stony waste and driven back the light. Moreover, some of the Houses of Rest in Hell itself have been stormed, and even some of the ministering spirits who work in Hell have fallen away.

“How far up and how far down the gigantic conflict rages, I do not know, but it shows no sign of abatement as yet. The powers of evil are certainly making a supreme effort. What you have told me about your guardian spirit’s appearance, however, has comforted me greatly. I see that you have advanced far enough to be safe amid these dangers.

“But you have been here long enough, and I hope you will find the way back easier.”

I went out, swept swiftly through the red mist - so swiftly that I hardly saw the elementals - and then found myself beside my own body on earth. Then I lost consciousness.

Chapter XXIV

The Dangers of this Lowest Division

July 28th, 1916.

On entering the astral plane I again found myself amid a thick, red atmosphere, and surrounded by evil-looking elementals.

Several of those creatures attempted to bar my path, and, as before, my guardian spirit had to intervene before I could get clear of them. As soon as he made himself visible they faded and vanished, but, even after this, it took me some time to get through the contending hosts of good and evil spirits into a comparatively tranquil area.

Comparatively, I said, for here the noise of the astral battle between the newly dead filled all surrounding space.

Amid this I struggled for a while and saw hosts of soldiers hurling themselves upon each other and a constant stream of newcomers pouring up from the earth itself as they leapt from their shattered bodies.

At length I had passed through this area and reached the calm and quiet of the house in which Rex and H.J.L. were.

After describing to them what I had experienced, I said: "What would have happened to me if my guide had not come to my aid?"

H.J.L.: "You would never have returned to earth or, in short, you would have died. Several persons have so perished. They came here ill-prepared, and fell victims to these evil elementals.

"Sometimes, however, the result of unwise wandering here is to enable some elemental to obtain an influence over the experimenter, which results in either moral degeneration or else mania.

"More usually, however, the effect is merely a temporary haunting of the experimenter which frightens him so severely that he gives up the experiments and alike avoids the danger and loses the reward of his efforts.

"Just now, conditions are particularly bad over here owing to the mass of evil passions which have been set in motion on the astral plane by the great world conflict, and which have strengthened the powers of evil.

J. W.: "But what of the constant dreamers who come? Are they also exposed to the same danger?"

H.J.L.: "Not to the same extent, though even so, the danger does exist. But still, as they are less conscious of their surroundings, so they seem to be less noticeable to the proper inhabitants of this sphere. Moreover, in some mysterious way which I myself cannot fathom, it does not seem to be always necessary to pass through the strata of evil passions where the great fight between the evil and good elementals is. You yourself have not always done so, and why you should just now be obliged to pass through that strata when you come here I cannot say. I think this has been done by the direction of your guardian spirit for your instruction. Surely, the guardian spirits of less experienced visitors doubtless take them by another route, or perhaps if that is not possible, bear them through these strata of conflict with their eyes closed, as it were. Certainly, this would be possible if a guardian spirit desired it.

"In that condition the astral would know nothing of these regions, and would be protected by its guardian spirit from all harm.

"But nevertheless, the fact must not be overlooked that the numbers of dreamers who come here has markedly decreased due, no doubt, partly to the fact that the

struggle between the forces of good and evil is attaining to a state of fury seldom before witnessed by any on this side of the grave.

“I think the Biblical account of ‘and there was war in Heaven,’ must be based on some such scene as you have now witnessed and not have been so much a prophecy of a future battle as the account of a conflict then raging on the astral plane. After all, it was written not so long before the fall of Jerusalem, and may have been connected with that event.

“Any other questions, for it’s about time you were off?”

J. W.: “Why! I’ve only just arrived.”

H.J.L.: “I’m sorry, but you now take a long time getting here and, in any case, if you must go, you must, and there’s an end of it.”

J. W.: “You seemed unable to explain fully one or two points just now. How was that? Usually you know all about things here.”

H.J.L.: “You must remember this is not my plane of existence. I belong to the spirit plane, and further, that conditions are far from normal. Indeed, one might almost say they were unprecedented. When I am not quite certain I think it far better to emphasise my uncertainty lest I should mislead you.”

R.L.W. then asked me a few questions about father, to which I gave suitable replies. I then inquired how the rescue work was going on.

R.L.W. : “Well, we have got quite a nice little band together, but of late, so terrific has been the struggle and storm on the strata nearest the earth that we have practically had to abandon our efforts and concentrate our attention on keeping those we have; not by any means an easy task.”

H.J.L.: ‘Really, Jack, you must return.’

As he spoke all went black, and I lost consciousness.

It should be noted that I knew nothing of my return journey, and this rather supports the theory of *H.J.L.* that my guardian spirit deliberately closed my consciousness as to what was happening in the planes through which I passed. Next time I shall inquire whether a similar unconsciousness can be induced on a man who has died, or whether it can only be induced in one still connected with the flesh.

Chapter XXV

The Antechamber Of Hell

July 31st, 1916.

Again, as before, J was aware of the hideous conflict of the good and the evil powers. I determined to try and note some of these strange beings, so unlike anything I had ever even dreamed of. I saw a good number of bloated, shapeless monstrosities, with slanting eyes and masses of feelers, more animal than human in shape, such creatures as the foul animal that had barred my path the first time.

There was a creature that looked like a serpent, save that its head was almost human but viler than the most depraved human could be. Another type was of the nature of an enormous bat, but the head was different. These creatures mostly had huge goggling eyes and beak-like mouths. There was quite a number of huge dragons, not unlike the fabled monsters of legend, together with strange creatures like griffins, huge spider-like monstrosities, and curious masses of fungous growth, which moved and floated amid the red waves.

The only thing they had in common was their eyes, which were either large, goggling, and globular in shape, or else narrow and slanting. All were yellow or red, and absolutely malevolent in expression.

Here and there I saw creatures which looked like men, and yet were not, and also strange composite creatures, half-human, half-animal.

One of these man-like monsters, huge, in stature, and apparently a leader, barred my path.

Enormous he was, and his shape, though blurred and indistinct, took the form of a naked man, with huge, distorted, and misshapen limbs. His face was black, save for the eyes; no nose and mouth at all, just two long, narrow, slit-like eyes, set at a curious angle, the top reaching towards the ears, the bottom almost joining just below where the mouth should have been.

Yet the thing could speak, or, rather, deliver its thoughts, for it cried out, "I have heard of your coming and going thus unmolested through our ranks, but this time they shall end. Stay!"

And I stayed. Cold dread seized hold of me. My heart seemed to stand still, but, of course, I had no such organ, yet such is the force of habit that I experienced just this feeling. I cried on my guide for help as the evil monster rushed on me; and my angelic guide came.

But though the other creatures fell away before the rays of blinding light which poured from him, yet the leader moved not. Instead, he seemed to pour forth in answer from his whole body clouds of dull brown smoke. A kind of darkness which beat up against the light and held it there, while from under the shadow of the darkness his followers gathered and shrieked defiance at my guide.

Fiercer and fiercer grew the light, and denser grew the mass of brown-black smoke.

Then I perceived that we were moving. I sensed it, as it were, for I could see nothing but a ring of darkness around the spot of intense light in which I stood, and which burnt me fiercely.

On we moved, and suddenly the wall of darkness shivered, and I perceived why. We had reached the spot where the powers of light came up against the powers of darkness, and their light had joined hands with that of my guardian spirit.

Then it faded away, and on I went through similar scenes to those described before till I came to H.J.L. and R.L.W. in their house. Here I told them of my adventures on the way, and inquired: .Do you think that this power of my guide's to make me unaware of what is happening would be effective if I were dead, or do all who die have to pass through that field of struggling spirits?.

R.L.W. : “Well, if it helps to elucidate that point, I've never passed through it, but I've seen quite a number of elementals on different occasions.”

H.J.L.: “Let us ask my guide.”

Slowly the great white figure appeared, and, as its whiteness grew in intensity, R.L.W. covered his eyes with his hand, and then sank to the ground. The sight of the majestic figure almost blinded me, but I was just able to bear it. Then the bell-like voice pealed out:

“Those who deserve to be hurled into such surroundings will see them, and, since they must be very evil to go there, their guides will long since have fled from them, therefore no help will reach them. This is the antechamber of Hell. Though it is on the astral plane, seldom, if ever, does a man escape there from. Thence the road lies, through the valleys of Hell, and so to the hill which leads to redemption.

“It is well that you should see these places, for they are springs from which flow so much that is evil both on earth and on this plane. As much as you can bear is revealed to you, and no more.

“The ordinary mortal passes through the earth plane even as your brother did, and there sees the newly slain still fighting as on earth, but the region where the evil powers well up is the antechamber of Hell, and only after a time does the hardened sinner sink there.

“Just as those who grow better weary of the strife between man and man and wander away into the regions where you now are, so those who grow more and more evil sink away from the conflict with men into the conflict of the powers of evil, where these destroy their astral bodies and hurl them into that part of the spirit plane which you call Hell.”

The voice ceased and he vanished, and after a while Rex recovered. Then I spoke to H.J.L.

“What of those who wander away from the fight, yet after a while fall into the sin of obsession and so sink to Hell?”

H.J.L.: “There are many roads to Hell, just as there are many roads to the realms above. The regions of hate are the planes where the conflict between the powers is raging. Most of the sins of obsession fall under other headings, and so to Hell, when the sinner has destroyed his astral body, but it would be quite possible to work back to that very strata via the road of obsession. There are many such cases where an astral obsesses a man to murder or worse. That astral will pass through the same red sea to Hell.

“Remember however, conditions are abnormal just now. Hate has seldom been so powerful or so active. Hence, though the Officer passed into Hell via that gateway, it left very little impression on his mind.

“But again we must separate after a few words of general conversation with Rex..

I told H.J.L. about Aunt. He expressed his concern and added, “I wonder where she will go? To the Realm of Belief without Acts, I expect. Probably she will join company with H.”

“I must try and help her on her way, but I don't suppose she'll remain any time on the astral plane, and I can't go to the plane above my own. I'm rather afraid; however, she'll vegetate in the division of Faith without Acts. That is the great difficulty there.

The besetting sin of our sphere is Ignorance; of the one above, Self-complacency. We do not suffer from self-complacency, so, once we are sufficiently developed to pass on, we go through the plane above fairly quickly. Belief, with acts, needs a lot of self-sacrifice.

Yes, I'm rather afraid she'll stagnate for a time, partly because she'll be quite content to remain there.

"Well, you really must be off!"

So I went, and as before, lost consciousness.

Chapter XXVI

Women on the Astral Plane

August 4th, 1916.

On entering the room where R.L.W. and H.J.L. were, the former asked me, "Did you see any of those horrors you saw last time?"

I replied I had not; I had merely passed through clouds and mists till I found myself in the street near the house in which they dwelt.

"What do you do all the time?" I asked Rex.

R.L.W. : "Well, at stated intervals, I attend a course of lectures by the Officer on 'Conditions of Life on this side.' After he's finished we usually have a debate and end up by asking him questions, some of which he answers, but not all. Often indeed, he says that we have not developed sufficiently to be able to understand him if he did.

"There is quite a large class, and we use a sort of Town Hall near by."

J. W.: "Are there no women here? Plenty must have died lately."

H.J.L.: "Oh, yes! On the whole, I think the sexes mingle more freely here than on my plane, but I try to keep Rex away from them. I don't think too much female companionship is good for him just yet.

"Come, we will go out and show you some of the fair sex."

We all three went out into the street, and in due course came to a kind of small park. Here we saw large numbers of women, with a fair sprinkling of children. For the most part they seemed to be behaving very much as they would have done on earth. The children played about at various earthly games such as "tick" and their mothers sat and chatted.

We noticed one woman who was seated by herself, hugging her child close to her. She seemed spell-bound and gazed vacantly into space. There was a look of terror frozen on her face.

H.J.L. and I both spoke to her, but she seemed not to notice us. Then Rex tried.

She started, and cried wildly, "You are an English soldier! You wish to help us; you are too late. See! The beasts have set fire to the house, and two are waiting to bayonet us when we rush out. They killed my old mother like that, and my boy, but we shall remain here. The fire is more merciful than they. Can you not see them killing her? Oh! it is awful!"

We tried to soothe her, told her that it was all over and done with now, that there was no more death to fear since, having died, she had won the victory over death; but she seemed not to hear us, and at last we gave it up in despair.

We next talked to a couple of women. They told us that they had been killed by a shell. One said; "There was a terrific crash, and then darkness. By degrees we recovered, and called to each other. At first we thought we were unhurt, but entombed. Then we saw other creatures, frightful in shape, and in terror we ran screaming away.

"After a while we saw other people in crowds, and joined some of them. Presently, amid the gloom, we heard someone preaching, as it seemed, and when we got there we found he was telling us that if we would follow him we should come out of this darkness into light, and be among more pleasant surroundings.

"So we, and many others followed him, and he took us a long journey. Often we began to tire of it and wished to turn aside, and indeed, many did; but ever he urged and prayed us to follow him, and at length he brought us to this town. Here we were lodged in an abbey where I found the abbess was one whom I had known on earth.

“We have dwelt here some time, and are gradually beginning to forget the horror of the last few weeks of our life on earth. They explain a lot of things to us in the nunnery.”

We left them after a few moments more conversation and returned to the house, talking of domestic matters. H.J.L. inquired about Aunt, and I told him she was no worse, at any rate.

I then told Rex and H.J.L. that I was so hard worked just now that, for the present, I thought it would be best if I only came once a week. To this they agreed, and I left them, deciding to keep to Mondays.

Chapter XXVII

A Vampire

August 7th, 1916.

On reaching H. J. L.'s house without any unpleasant adventures, I suggested we should again go out and inquire among the women as to the life here. H.J.L. agreed, and we once more made our way towards the park.

As we passed down a narrow street, two women and a man came out of a house. One of the women promptly grabbed Rex's arm, and said, "Hello, old chap! Come for a walk with me."

R.L.W. looked somewhat embarrassed, and said, "I don't know you."

She.: "That does not matter, you soon will (and laughed). It just shows what a lot you've lost. How long have you been here?"

R.L.W. turned to me. "How long is it, Jack?"

J. W.: "About three and a half months.

R.L.W.: "Yes, I suppose it is not more than that, though it seems longer."

She.: "Oh! You want someone to show you round the place? I am here twenty years, and can put you up to a good bit."

H.J.L. here intervened. "I think, Rex, we must be getting back home."

She.: "Well, cut off you other two. I didn't invite you but I'm going to do the decent thing by one of our noble defenders. Come along, Lieutenant R.L.W.: You see, even if you don't know me, I know you. She smiled wickedly.

H.J.L. took Rex's arm, and said. "Come along, my boy.. And Rex, somewhat reluctantly, obeyed.

Safe back in our own house, H.J.L. explained as follows:

"That woman is one of a band of very dangerous vampires, who for years have battered on the living, and have lured many of the dead, to follow their vile example. By means of obsession, they are able to enjoy a kind of 'dead sea fruit' pleasure. Later, they will pay for their fleshly joys with much suffering. Already I can see it is difficult for her to keep hold of her astral body. Soon she will sink down into Hell and, my boy (turning to Rex), if you had gone with her, like that man who was with her friend, you would have been fairly started on the downward path."

So, after a little more conversation, we parted once more.

Chapter XXVIII

R.L.W. Brings in a Comrade

August 14th, 1916.

On arriving at the house I found Rex, all on his own, had brought in a man from the battlefield, and the Officer, who was just taking charge of him, was very pleased.

“See!” he cried. “How much nearer your guardian angel has drawn to you.. And as he spoke, I became aware of R.L.W. ‘s guardian angel afar off, but plainly visible. Rex too, saw him and, though the figure vanished immediately after I could see he was delighted to have caught even so fleeting a glimpse.

The Officer then went out; taking the newcomer with him, but H.J. L. and R.L.W. remained with me.

R.L.W told me how he had gone down into the region near the fighting line with the Officer, and there persuaded one of the officers of his regiment to come away with him. He admitted he did not like much having to do it, and added, “However, the Officer said I must now help someone who was nothing to me when I was on earth. I had liked the Adjutant; but this chap belonged to a different battalion, though he was a York and Lancaster man. The Officer says I shall have to help someone I hated. I hope it won’t be a German, anyway. The worst of it is, I can’t remember anyone I really hated on earth, except the Germans in general.

“Look, I’ve adopted a poor lost cat I found near a house which was slowly rising from its ruins near the firing line..

J. W.: “I suppose it was really being destroyed on earth by gunfire?”

R.L.W.: “Yes, I suppose so. Well, I found a poor little tabby pussy wandering about as if quite lost. It had evidently just been killed, so I adopted it. See, here it is!”

As he spoke, he pointed to a small tabby cat which jumped down from a sofa and began to rub itself against his leg. I distinctly heard it purr.

H.J.L. then said, “How’s the mater?”

J. W.: “No worse, I think. My father went over to see her recently and told me that she was not so bad as he feared from what I had told him.

“I feel I ought to be getting back now.”

I then went out of the hall door after saying good-bye, down the street into the country, into a thick fog, and lost consciousness.

Chapter XXIX

Husbands and Wives

August 21st, 1916.

On reaching the house I found Rex and H.J.L. playing chess. I watched the game till it was finished which did not seem to take long and Rex was, of course, beaten.

After this we fell to talking of various matters of a private nature.

Rex told me that he had met a number of acquaintances. He added that they mostly seemed to have gone through similar experiences to those he himself had experienced.

He then continued:

“We went to a church the other day. It was a Roman Catholic Church, and was in charge of a delightful old priest. He had a large congregation, and the whole thing was very like a service on earth. H.J.L. then took me on to another church. It was a fine building in its way, and also came from Belgium. But the priest in charge was a very different sort from the last. His congregation consisted largely of women, and with some of them on earth he had been entangled, and still was. Nor did he seem in the least ashamed of it. Stranger still though the women were furiously jealous of each other, they had not a word of reproach for his misconduct. Indeed, they seemed to me to consider it perfectly natural.

“Wherever he went he was followed by a crowd of adoring females whom he bullied at times, but more often encouraged in extreme sentimentality. He was very dogmatic and conceited, so much so that he really, I think, believed he was a pattern and an example for all mankind.

“He quarreled with most of the men he met because they did not pay him sufficient respect and the last I saw of him he was undergoing a good thrashing from a couple of French soldiers.

“After leaving this scene, I saw a man walking along and looking most dejected. He was followed at a short distance by two women who were quarrelling the whole time.

“I got into conversation with him, and he explained that on earth he had married a second time on the death of his first wife.

“His second wife had been killed at the same time as himself by a shell, and his first and second wives had quarreled ever since as each claimed him as her husband and neither was willing to share him.

“He appealed to us for some solution of the matter, adding that he would gladly be without a wife at all; but this was the point on which they did agree, and when he suggested it, turned their wrath upon him instead of each other for a while.

“We left him, as we could see no remedy except that they should share him, which they did not seem willing to do.

“Then H.J.L. took me to see another case. This man had had no less than three wives, but instead of quarrelling with each other, they had united to keep him in subjection, and seemed like succeeding.

“I then saw another case where a man had married two sisters, and was living quite happily with both.

“Next I was introduced to a man who confessed that, at present, he was quite happy with his first wife, but dreaded the day when his second wife should arrive on the astral plane. ‘For then,’ he said, ‘trouble will begin, I know.’

“After him I met a man who was worried because his only wife had preceded him into the spiritual plane, and, owing to the materialistic life he had lived on earth, he feared he would never be able to ‘catch up’ with her again.

“‘You see,’ he explained, ‘she died twenty years before I did, and was always of a more spiritual type than I, so she had a long start.’

“We also saw a woman who was searching for her husband, but had not yet found him. She confessed that she had heard that he had greatly degenerated since she died, and she feared he had drifted into one of the worst portions of the astral plane..

H.J.L.: “Well then, it’s time you were off, Jack. One gets some curious problems over here does one not?”

J. W.: “Yes, indeed. It reminds me rather of the East. But what about the Biblical saying, ‘They neither marry nor are given in marriage?’”

H.J.L.: “Perfectly correct in the spirit plane, but not entirely so on the astral which, after all, is partly material. But there is no marriage in the grosser sense even here. That is why misguided souls fall into the sin of obsession.

“But now you must be off.” So we parted.

Chapter XXX

News of the Passing of Mrs. H. J. L.

August 28th, 1916.

On reaching the house where Rex lived, I found him alone, and he at once said, "H.J.L. has gone off to the spirit plane to meet Aunt Jane, as she has died.

"He suddenly sensed her presence passing through the astral plane. I saw nothing, but he went out at once, saying, however, that he would return as soon as he could.

"Beyond that, I can tell you nothing. You might give me any details you know."

I did briefly, and then said good-bye, explaining that I was going to follow him.

I therefore returned to my bed (on earth) and there my astral form seemed to slide away. At once I felt myself delightfully free, and sped upwards through the air. I saw nothing of the astral plane, but almost at once found myself on the familiar hill overlooking the college in which H.J.L. had dwelt on the spirit plane.

I hurried into the college, and entered his rooms, but found no one except Molly (the dog) who welcomed me effusively.

So I sat and waited a long time, till, suddenly, H.J.L. entered.

H.J.L.: "I could feel you calling, so have just come over for a few words, but must return almost at once. Your Aunt passed through the astral plane with hardly a check. She is now, as it were, on the edge of this division and of the one above. There for a minute, she is pausing, and I of course, cannot go on beyond.

She is in a rather dazed state, but she recognised and was glad to see me. Miss E. and H. have come to meet her. As she will soon pass on, I must hurry back to say good-bye. I am sorry I can't go with her, but I expect it is best so. I shan't be entirely cut off from all news of her, as I keep in touch with P.. She has not yet begun to see her whole past life, as I did, but soon will.

"Now, good-bye for the present."

He went out, and, as there was no further use in my remaining, I returned to earth, and entering my body, lost consciousness.

September. 4th, 1916.

I went straight to the astral plane, and found H.J.L. in the house. Rex was out.

H.J.L.: "Yes. I'm back here, as you expected. Your aunt found quite a large number of people she knew on earth, including Old A__. These came to meet her and after saying good-bye to me she passed into the division above mine, and so we parted.

"Old A__ assured me that she was very happy, and wished that I could come too. I felt rather out of it, and indeed glad I couldn't. The people, though they had improved, seemed to me to be very similar to what they were on earth, and the atmosphere was rather uncongenial.

However, it will suit your Aunt splendidly and that is the main thing. She went straight off to a church of which E. is parson; to offer her thanks for her safe passage from your world to ours.

"Since then I've been back with Rex, helping him to help others. He is getting on well."

We continued to talk about private matters for a short time, and presently Rex entered.

He assured me he was getting down to the life on the astral plane, and then went on:

“We seem to be doing very well on the front, and it’s leading to a tremendous influx of newcomers. The Adjutant has settled down to life here and is one of our band of workers who try to help those who pass over.

“I don’t like a good deal of the work we have to do, but my guide says it is good for me. By the bye, I see my guide fairly regularly now, but I can’t bear his presence for long.”

We talked about various private matters for some while longer, and then parted.

Chapter XXXI

The Ideal Garden

September 12th, 1916.

On arriving at the house they occupied, Rex said, "We are going out for recreation. Like to come too?"

So H.J.L., R.L.W. and I set out together, and, after passing through some pretty country, came to, a beautiful house in a lovely garden. It was set back from the road and in pleasure grounds of considerable extent.

They were surrounded by a hedge of yew, carefully clipped which appeared about eight feet high and completely arched the gateway, which had a gate wide enough for a carriage to pass through.

J. W.: "The gateway is wide enough for a carriage, but the coachman would be knocked off the box."

H.J.L.: "Yes. I don't think, however, any carriages ever pass through this way."

On entering we found broad beds (about ten feet deep) full of lovely flowers of every kind that are found in June in England. They were mostly herbaceous, though a few bush roses were to be seen among them. At the back of the beds, on either side, were yew hedges about six feet high.

This path was about a hundred yards long, and at the further end was a square pond, edged with flat stones. The edge of the stones, which were moss-grown in parts, over hung the walls of the pond by about four inches, and the water was about nine inches below the surface of the ground.

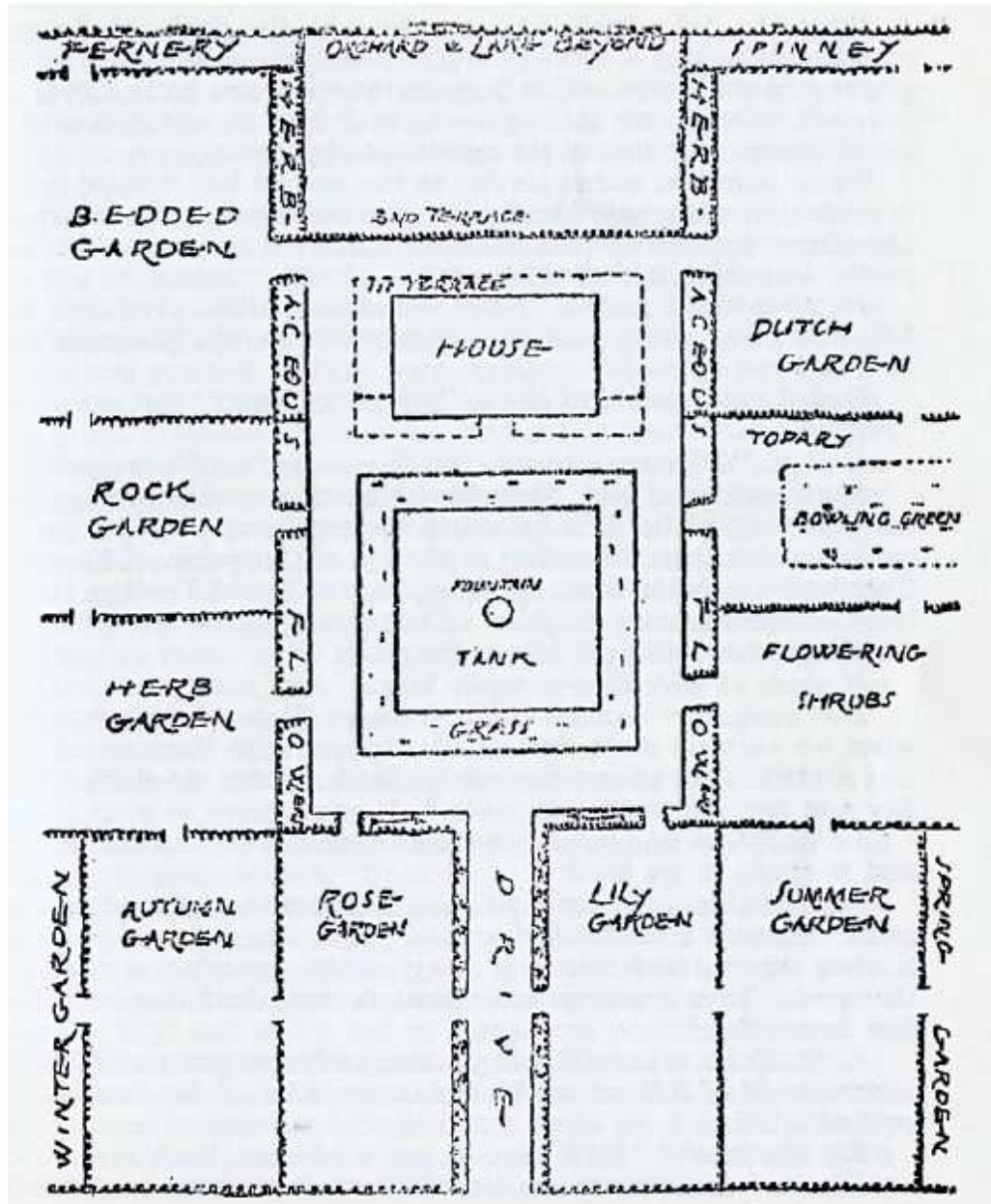


Diagram of the Ideal Garden

The 'drive' turned sharply right and left and ran parallel to the pond at a distance of five yards. Round the pond itself were clumps of iris and other plants and the rest of the space was filled with turf of an exquisite, velvety texture and beautiful green. In the pond itself were many water-lilies and in the centre a dolphin reared up and spouted a jet of water.

On the further side of the pond was the house, which appeared to be a sixteenth-century building, made of stone, with mullioned windows. The drive ran right round the pond, always at the same distance from it

From the drive itself, half-way between the gate and the pond on either side, was a short path about four feet wide, leading to a gateway in the hedge. This gateway was likewise arched over with yew but whereas the main gate way arch had its top flush with the top of the hedge, this had the arch raised but cut square.

There were two arches similar to the one we had entered by, one in the middle of the side parallel to the outside road, and one opposite. The former led into the drive where it turned round to the left, so we passed through the arch opposite.

Here we found people. There were four of them, two men about fifty, one about thirty, and the last a youth about eighteen or thereabouts.

H. J.L. at once asked them, "Who lives here?" and one replied, "Miss H."

H.J.L.: "Who was she on earth? Someone of wealth and position?"

The Gardener. "No. She was, I believe, a woman of good birth, but poor, and all her life she longed for and dreamed of a house and garden such as this. She died at the age of thirty five. I have heard from her own lips how, though compelled to live at Tooting, she used to be always planning the kind of house and garden she would have if only she were well off. Now she has it."

H.J.L.: "Why do you work here?"

The Gardener.: "Because we like to do so. Three of us were gardeners when we were on earth, but Charles (pointing to the man of thirty) was a clerk. He always hankered after a garden, so drifted in one day and has remained ever since."

J. W.: "And do you have to tend these plants, and cut the grass and so forth, as on earth?"

The Gardener.: "There is not the same amount of drudgery as on earth. These are the astral forms of plants that have died on earth. In time their astral bodies wilt away. The grown thin and wan, like that rose. Then a puff of wind scatters them, and they vanish into fine dust. See?"

As he spoke, a rose-bush in the rose garden we had just left, which looked so thin that we could almost see through it, vanished in a puff of smoke.

The Gardener.: "We'll have to put a new one there now."

I noticed that there was a large collection of plants lying ready to hand behind a yew hedge which formed a square.

J. W.: "How do the plants come here?"

The Gardner.: "They simply appear here. I never see them coming, but am constantly finding fresh ones, I just plant them where I think they will look best. I think they have a sort of instinct, and come where they will be welcome.

This plant dump was well hidden by a yew hedge, but it was, nevertheless, a beautiful picture in itself, very different from the rubbish heap which would have been similarly placed on earth.

The garden here was full of chrysanthemums and other autumn-flowing plants.

The Gardener broke in with: "Yes. We've a garden for every season of the year, and many other gardens as well. Next to this is the winter garden, though there is no winter here. Miss H. insisted on its being made, as it was always her dream to have a garden for each season."

We passed through another arch, and found a garden with a grass lawn in the centre, and round the sides, near the hedges, were broad borders full of evergreen shrubs. Many of them had silver and gold foliage. Others had masses of berries which looked like blooms at a short distance, so large and fine were they. I had no idea such a variety of colours was possible.

There were masses of white berries and of yellow ones, scarlet, deep red, purple, blue, and almost black berries.

I asked the Gardener, "Have you tropical gardens here as well?"

The Gardener.: "No. Miss H. says that she wants to keep to a strictly English garden, and I agree with her. Not but these tropical plants are very fine, but I prefer

our own plants. They seem more home-like. Have you seen the sweet-herb garden? It smells beautiful.”

He pointed to an arch in the top hedge, and we passed through into a garden full of marjoram, thyme, lavender, and countless other herbs. Then we came to the rock garden, and beyond it was a garden with bedded-out plants, but instead of going into this we came out again onto the drive near the house.

“Shall we call?” said Rex.

“Let’s glance at the gardens on the other side,” said H.J.L. “Jack will have to return soon.”

The Gardener.: “All around this house, as you see, are lawns with beds of midsummer flowers. Look!”

We found at the back the house had a terrace with stone balustrades, and three flights of steps leading down to a fine lawn. This also was terraced, and bounded on its lower side by a wall level with the grass, from the crevices of which rock plants and creepers grew. The wall was five feet high and had a bed of herbaceous plants in front of it, and another lawn beyond which had a grass slope. At the foot of all were lovely orchards in full bloom, and from the terrace by the house, where countless wall flowers bloomed, one could see a lake stretching beyond the orchard, and hills beyond the lake. We turned back past the house. On the right of this as one faced it, and therefore corresponding with the bedded garden, was what the Gardener described as the sunk or Dutch garden and next to it opposite the rock garden, was a garden full of quaintly cut yews, and centering round a bowling-green, with an exquisite little summer-house and sundial.

“Here are the flowering trees and shrubs,” said the Gardener, and we found ourselves in the garden opposite the herb garden.

Grouped round a circular lawn were flowering trees of every description, while on the lawn itself were dotted about the smaller flowering shrubs.

The air was laden with the scent of the lilac and may, but there were several trees in full flower which on earth would have hardly sown a bud when may trees were in bloom.

The Gardener.: “As I gather you must be returning soon to earth, let me show you the lily garden, and excuse me asking you, but you three gentlemen seem different. You, sir {addressing Rex}, appear to be one of us, and as you are a soldier, I presume you are one of those who have fallen in the great war, of which a rumour has reached us even in the peaceful glades.”

Rex nodded, and he went on to me. “You, I think, from what the old gentleman said just now, are still living on earth.”

I hastened to explain my position, and he turned to H. J.L. “But who are you, sir?”

H.J. L told him briefly, and he replied, in a respectful tone, “Then you are one of the Messengers?”

H.J. L.: “Oh, dear no! Only a relation of this young man who has come to this plane to help him. But let us hurry on.”

The gardener then showed us the lily garden, where were growing at once every kind of lily which will grow out of doors in England. But the beds were grouped according to the season, to avoid incongruity so far as possible. We then passed on to see the summer and, finally, the spring garden, in which were all manner of bulbs. At length we returned to the drive, and I said, “I must be going.”

The Gardner replied, “Besides these there are other divisions in these grounds. Thus, beyond the bedded-out garden on the left of the house is the fernery. It is very

pretty, and centers round a little stream which falls over a waterfall and then goes into the lake.

“There are several other men at work besides our four selves, and we are always busy, yet never overworked. If you two gentlemen would like to call on Miss H. she would be delighted to meet you, and if you are interested in old furniture, the house is full of it.”

They agreed to do so, and we parted. I went through the gate into the road. The view grew misty, and I lost consciousness.

Chapter XXXII

More About the Garden

September 19th, 1916.

I found R.L.W. and H.J.L. in their house. This visit was devoted mainly to private matters.

After a while, I inquired, "What was the garden like beyond the house?"

R.L.W. : "Lawn after lawn, terraced one below the other, till we reached the river, which here spread out into a lake. Above and below the lake were spinneys and orchards. On the lake were swans and a gondola. The gondolier was there, and good-naturedly offered to take us on the lake. So we went aboard, and as he rowed he sang a song. I suppose it was in Italian, but we understood it quite easily. It was all about the sunlight on the water.

"We enjoyed it immensely. As we returned we stopped to admire a beautiful fountain on one of the lawns. The jet of water appeared to me about one-hundred feet high."

J. W.: "Anything more to tell me about that garden?"

R.L.W. : "Not much, except that we found the owner had a large aviary. The birds, however, were not kept in cages, but lived in the woods and garden. The only thing that kept them there was the bond of love for the lady, and therefore hundreds came to her.

"They liked the quiet of the gardens, and the fact that few people came to disturb them.

"She said, for the most part, they made little attempt to hunt for food, and spent most of their time in singing.

"There were countless flocks of butterflies also.

"They likewise appeared drawn to her because she loved them. All manner of butterflies I saw, not merely tortoise-shell and peacock, but rare ones such as the swallow-tail and the large copper and the Camberwell beauty, which are practically extinct in England.

J. W.: "Well, I must be going now." And so I left them.

September 26th.

I only stayed a few minutes, and told Rex mother was dying, and he said he would go down to earth to meet her.

Chapter XXXIII

My Mother Passes Over

October 2nd, 1916.

On arriving in the room where R.L.W. and H.J.L. lived, Rex said: .I know about mother's passing over. I went to the Vicarage on the Tuesday that is to say, as soon as you left me.

"At Charing Cross Road I saw mother lying there unconscious, noticed the picture of Blanche had been placed over the fireplace, and saw Miss H. buzzing about.

"The pater seemed to be there most of the time. Presently I saw you arrive, and thought you could see me, but you did not, nor did you see me once the whole time, which rather surprised me.

"Mother's astral body was partly out of her physical body, but seemed to be lying supine and unconscious, as it were.

"I saw you come three times on the Wednesday.

"After you had gone, I could see that the astral form was slowly drawing away from her body from the head. Gradually it freed itself and floated above her body, connected only by the silver cord. By degrees this seemed to fray away from the head, like the strands of a rope, till only two or three threads remained.

"One snapped. There was another pause, and then another went, and then the last thread broke, and still the astral floated over her corpse.

"While this was happening, I was aware of a number of astral beings who gathered round. I will tell you more about them at another time. I called mother, but she did not move. Again and again I spoke, hoping to arouse her, but with no result.

"Then one of the newcomers spoke. 'She needs sleep; she will remain like this for some little while, and we have come to look after her. Have no fear. We are a band of spirits who make this our special work. Come with us and see that all is well with her.'

"They lifted her and carried her away, four of them, while two walked beside her. It seemed to me as if the body floated. I leant over and kissed her, but she showed no sign of recognition or consciousness.

"I spoke to the being who was in charge of the party, 'Who are you?'

"*He.*: 'I am a being on the astral plane, as you are. I was a doctor on earth, and so were those three. The two women were nurses. We are taking your mother to a kind of hospital.'

"H.J.L. was with me, and said: 'On the spirit plane where I dwell I have seen such hospitals, but did not know there were similar institutions here, but of course, I can see that they are probably even more needed here than there.'

"*The Doctor.*: 'I noticed you seemed different from most of the denizens of these spheres. I should like to have an opportunity of questioning you about life there.

"*H.J.L.*: 'Yes, certainly, but not just now.'

"*The Doctor.*: 'What brought you back here after having once quitted this plane?'

"H.J. L. 'When I came to help my young nephew, but you must not suppose that I was on this plane before passing on to the spirit plane. I was an old man when I died, and shed my astral body almost as soon as I did my physical one, and so practically saw nothing of this sphere until I assumed an astral body in order to help my nephew.'

"*The Doctor.*: 'I wonder which is best? I think, however, I'm glad that I have had some time here first. I feel one's life experience would not be complete without it. Of

course, no man can know all there is to learn, but the more one experiences the better, I fancy.”

R.L.W. continued. “By this time we had drawn near to a high wall, and passing through a gateway, found ourselves in a most exquisite garden. It was very like the one we all three saw recently.

“There were countless flowers and beautiful lawns, stately trees and flowering shrubs. Here and there fountains played and streams rippled along over their shiny beds. The water looked clear and limpid, and often the streams widened out into large lakes on which I noticed boats. Yes, real boats, which were being rowed and one which was being driven by a sail. Till then I had hardly noticed that there was a soft breeze blowing.

“In these boats were many persons, while members of both sexes walked about the grounds. Overhead birds sang merrily, and butterflies flitted from flower to flower. It seemed very like old mother earth, but yet there was a subtle difference, impossible to describe yet very real.

“Then I saw the hospital. I think it had once been some fine French chateau of the eighteenth century, but if so it must have been remodeled internally either before or after its arrival on the astral plane, for inside it seemed a modern hospital. At the same time, I could not help noticing that it had a greater air of comfort and peaceful calm than the hospitals I saw on earth. It was not so cold and bare as they usually were. I discovered too, that the operating room was replaced by the hypnotising rooms, in which the patients lay on couches while the doctors treated them, either by simple hypnotism or else by various forms of suggestion. Again, crowds of students were not admitted to watch these operations, at most two might come with the doctor, as it was considered that a large number of different types of men with differing magnetic conditions would upset the patients or even the doctor himself when engaged on this delicate task. Therefore, there were many small rooms rather than one big theatre.

“They took mother into a room, where she was laid on a couch by herself, and left in charge of two nurses, still sleeping quietly.

Chapter XXXIV

Of Diseases of the Astral Body

As we went out, H.J.L. spoke to the Doctor.

H.J.L.: ‘Do you get many cases of this kind? I must admit that I have not come across any cases in these spheres or in my own spirit realm before in which the soul lay sleeping like this.’

The Doctor.: ‘Oh, we get a fair number, but it’s certainly less common than most other forms of diseases here.’

R.L.W.: ‘What sorts of “diseases” do you get here? I thought disease was left behind with the body?’

The Doctor.: ‘Merely physical diseases of course are and as the bulk of the ills man is prone to are purely bodily complaints, this is a happier world than the earth. But even on the material earth the mind has far more to do with physical defects than the average man imagines, and here it is almost entirely a matter of healing the mind and spirit. Typical complaints are:

“(1) Religious mania, and let me tell you that is one of the most difficult diseases with which to deal.

“(2) Hysteria of different kinds, especially a kind which makes the victim believe that he is crippled. Of course, though normally such physical defects which belonged to the earth life do not remain with the astral body, yet in these cases the mind makes the astral body behave as if it were crippled.

“(3) Cases like your mother’s, in which the spirit does not awaken to consciousness.’

R.L.W.: ‘But when the body no longer holds the spirit, how can a defect in the brain be carried into the astral plane? Now that my mother no longer suffers from paralysis, how is it that she still appears like a victim with that complaint?’

The Doctor.: ‘Your mother’s illness was partly, though not entirely, due to her soul. It was caused by certain faults of character, of which you are aware, and these have to be dealt with.

“‘Again, her illness has really been a very exhaustive one and enfeebled her soul, which has tended to atrophy for some years. This was not her fault in the main, but due to some physical defects, and especially to her brain being clouded, which prevented her keeping her astral body fully alive.

“‘But you must leave us now, as we have much work to do. You can come again.’

“So, after once more kissing mother, H.J. L. and I departed.”

J.W.: “How long will she be like that?”

H.J.L.: “The Doctor said it might be a short time, or it might be several months. Six months as earth reckons time.”

J. W.: “Did you see anything of the funeral? Of course, mother didn’t.”

R.L.W.: “Yes, did we not, Boss?”

H.J.L.: “Yes, the Requiem sent up a great shaft of light, which seemed to transfigure the hospital, and mother smiled in her sleep, but otherwise did not stir. I saw right down into the church. Saw you, and B___ and C___. Later, saw the funeral service, and even came to the actual interment.”

J. W.: “Did you notice any other people at the services?”

R.L.W.: “Saw C. and I. and a lot of others, including quite a number of spirits.

“By the by, when at the house I noticed rather a nice Persian kitten. It saw me too, but was rather frightened, arched its back and spat at me. That cat’s second sight was better than yours, Jack.” And he laughed.

“After we got back here we talked things over, and agreed that though it was a bit disappointing for me not to be able to greet mother properly, it was probably the best thing under the circumstances.”

H.J.L.: “Yes, I think she would have been rather lost over here if just turned loose, where she had few friends. As it is, she is sure to make some at the hospital, and will be warned of the dangers of this world of which everyone on earth is so ignorant.

“But now you had better be off.”

So I returned to earth.

Chapter XXXV

Mother Awakens

October 9th, 1916.

On entering the house of H.J.L., I found him alone there.

H.J.L.: "Rex is with his mother. She has just recovered consciousness, and I am waiting here to take you to the hospital to see her."

We started at once, and on passing through the gates of the hospital, which was some little way from H.J.L.'s house, I was struck with the beauty of the garden. We entered the hospital, and found ourselves in a kind of waiting-room. This room was comfortably furnished, and looked out over the gardens. We were not long here when a nurse came in and told us to follow her. We entered a large well-lit room and saw mother, with Rex seated beside her.

"Why did you not tell me Rex was dead?" was her first greeting. I endeavoured to pacify her, for she was evidently very annoyed. However, her irritation soon subsided, and she next said, "I can't understand things. Rex says he is dead, and I am dead, but what are you?"

I then explained, as briefly as I could, how it was that I was privileged to come into these planes. She evidently did not fully grasp it but, at the same time, appeared satisfied. I then introduced her to H.J.L., but she said at once, "Oh, Rex has already done that. And I'm glad Rex brought Mr. L. along with him, we've always been good friends."

I then began. "Do you remember anything of your passing over?"

Mother. "Most of it seems a blank, but I remember hearing you call me and saw your face, as in a dream. I think I was alive then. If so, that is the last thing I remember till I awoke here, and saw Rex looking at me. I thought I'd been sent to a home and that Rex had returned from France. Even now I can hardly believe I'm dead."

"Indeed, it all seems like a dream. My talking to you seems very much like a dream. You look different from the others, less real."

She ceased, and the Doctor, who was standing by, said, "You had better leave her for a bit. The spirit is both weak and clouded still. All the same, I am surprised at her waking so soon. Often they sleep for months and months of earth time. How long, exactly, is it since she passed over to us?"

J. W.: "Nearly twelve days."

The Doctor. "Yes, I consider she is making good progress, but it will be some time before she is really normal. The spirit has been clouded so long, that it will take a considerable time to recover."

Mother interrupted. "How is B___? Is her birthday, soon?"

J. W.: "Yes, in less than a week. She is very well, and was very sorry when you died. She always remembers you and Rex in her prayers."

Mother.: "She's a dear little thing. I wish I could send her a present."

R.L.W. : "I say, suppose you buy her some trifle for mother and for me, and tell her they are from mother and me, with love. She'd understand."

J. W.: "A good idea and I'll do it. There won't be the blank there otherwise would have been."

The Doctor.: "I think you had better go now."

J. W.: "Goodbye mother! Any message for father?"

Mother. : "Give him my love for me."

So I kissed her good-bye, and we all three left. I parted from the other two almost at once, and returned to earth.

Chapter XXXVI

Mother Gets Better

October 16th, 1916.

On entering the astral plane, I went first to the house where H.J.L. and R.L.W. were. They were both there, and Rex said. "We've been waiting for you to join us before visiting mother."

J. W.: "Have you seen her since last I was here?"

R.L.W.: "Yes, several times. She's quite comfortable and going on well."

We started off, and on the way talked of various matters, the war in particular.

On reaching the hospital, we passed into mother's room after a short wait. Mother was very pleased to see us, and promptly asked me how B. was, and whether I had done as she wished with regard to a present. I had already answered the same question asked by Rex but went through it all again, and told her what I had got for her. I further told her how pleased B. was, and that she always prayed for the two grandmas and uncle Rex.

Mother. "Was Mrs. L. dead, then?"

J. W.: "Yes."

Mother. "Why isn't she with you others?"

J. W.: "She's in a higher plane, along with H. and Miss B."

Mother.: "The same 'churchy' lot. Well, I don't want to go there, anyway."

J. W.: "I don't suppose you will. Like attracts like."

Mother. "Why am I here? I did think when I died, I would get out of the doctor's hands, but I seem still to be surrounded by nurses and doctors. Can't you take me away, Rex?"

R.L.W.: "You've got to get well before I can. You're getting better every day."

Mother.: "There aren't any days here. I want to go to a theatre."

A Nurse. "So you shall, dear. We'll put you in a chair; and take you there now."

Mother. "I don't need a chair. I can walk all right."

She got out of bed, and I noticed she was clad in a long, grayish-white garment, but as soon as she tried to walk she collapsed on the floor. She didn't hurt herself, however. The nurse and I helped her up, and she sat on the bed. She sat up quite well, did not hunch herself up as she had done on earth.

The Nurse. "Let me do up your hair."

Mother. "Yes and you must dress me properly."

The Nurse. "Why you are dressed!"

Mother. "I call this a nightdress."

The Nurse. "Oh no! It's the dress you'll wear for some long time yet."

And turning to us, she added "We'll be out in the waiting room very shortly."

And she was, with mother in a bath-chair, and accompanied by the Doctor, to whom I spoke quietly.

J. W.: "Doctor, how is it she can't walk?"

Doctor. "I thought I explained it all to you last time you were here. Only you mortals are so dense. It's a case of the mind dominating the body. Her mind, which was very material on earth, reproduces here the most prominent features of her former bodily infirmity. But you notice that the very things which were not selfish and material are the ones on which she is most clear. Thus her love of children, especially of your little girl, she is quite clear about that. Practically no clouding of the intellect at all when she's talking of her."

The Nurse. “Yes, she talks about B. almost all the day. Don’t you, dear?”

Mother. “She’s a dear little thing. I wish I could see her.” And she began to cry. It took quite a long time for the nurse to comfort her, and she did so mainly by talking about the theatre to which we were going. We went down several passages, and came to a theatre in the building.

The Nurse. “We run these plays almost exclusively for the benefit or the patients. They are not very ‘high browed’ stuff. Of course, that sort of thing would be beyond most of our patients.”

The theatre was very much like one on earth, except that almost all the stalls and pit were given up to bath-chairs. In the dress circle and upper circle (there was no gallery) those who could walk were seated in ordinary seats.

The play was an innocent farce of a fairly rollicking nature and judged by the roars of laughter that greeted it, it was fully appreciated. Mother enjoyed it hugely, and as she was wheeled back, said, “I haven’t enjoyed myself so much for ages. Be sure to tell H. that they have theatres here and no churches, He won’t believe you.”

J. W.: “Right, I will!”

Mother. “What is he doing now?”

J. W.: “Staying at M.”

We continued talking like this on various domestic matters till we reached her room, when Rex said to the nurse. “Aren’t there any good plays or concerts here?”

“Rather,” she replied, “didn’t you know of it?” And she told him there was a good theatre and an opera not far away, and added, “We have soothing sorts of concerts here. You’re always welcome. Ask them at the main entrance. But if you want rather stronger meat, you’d better try the opera or the theatre.”

Rex was highly elated at this news and we three parted from mother. Soon after leaving the hospital I felt the call of the world and returned.

Chapter XXXVII

R.L.W. Visits the Opera

October 23rd, 1916.

On arriving at the house where R.L.W. and H.J.L. lived, I found them both waiting for me.

J. W.: “How is mother?”

R.L.W.: “About the same, I think. We’ll go and see her soon.

“I’ve been going to the opera lately. There’s quite a number of good singers here. I heard *Faust* and *Lohengrin* and *The Huguenots*, also a new one composed over here.”

J. W.: “Who by? And what is the name of it?”

R.L.W.: “It was a version of *Alkestis*, and was by Wagner. He’s not in this plane, he’s higher up, but some of the operatic folk got into communication with him and produced it here. He’s in the sphere of Belief without Acts.

“It was very fine. Thoroughly Wagnerian, but of the type of *Tannhäuser* rather than of *Tristan*. Still, it was not exactly like any of the work he did on earth. I think it’s better and freer.”

J. W.: “I suppose the singers were from this (astral) plane?”

R.L.W.: “Yes, all of them. There were no very famous people, but the general level was distinctly high, above that of the usual company one saw at Covent Garden though the stars there were better than the people who took the principal parts here.

“Now, let us go on to see mother.”

So we set off for the hospital, and in due course reached it. Here we found her seated in a chair looking out of the window and she was delighted to see us. We talked about domestic matters, and she asked how father was getting on and I told her. She appeared fairly interested.

J. W.: “Have you been to that theatre since I last saw you?”

Mother. “Yes. By the by, where is Ch____.? I thought I’d see him when I got over here. I haven’t seen any of my own family. There doesn’t seem to be any arrangements here for sending letters to one’s friends or even finding out where they are.”

The Nurse. “When you are better dear, you will be able to find out where most of them are.”

H.J.L.: “I’ll try and find out about your brother.”

So after a little more conversation of a general order, we parted and soon after I returned to earth.

Chapter XXXVIII

A Painful Subject

October 30th, 1916.

I found the Officer with H.J.L. when I arrived.

The Officer. "I've found your Uncle Ch. at H. J. L's request. I was not allowed to go into Hell myself, but one of the higher messengers who was going down made a special effort at my request. He found him in the sixth division, told him about his sister having died, and urged him to make an effort. He thinks he will, and has gone back to help him. It ought not to be so hard to climb out of the sixth division as it was for me to climb from the very bottom.

The messenger said it's always easier to get hold of the so-called 'lost-soul' if you can bring any personal touch, such as a message from a friend or relation, or even merely information about them; especially if the relation is in a higher sphere than the lost soul. It makes a big difference. I had nothing of that sort to help me."

R.L.W. entered at this moment, and said, "Mother is getting on splendidly. I think soon she will be able to come and live with me here."

J. W.: "Shall you tell her about her brother Ch__?"

H.J.L.: "We shall keep it from her for as long as we can, but as she gets mentally clearer she will learn to read what is in our minds; but, till that time, we shall simply say that he is at present in a different sphere, one of the divisions of the spirit plane."

J. W.: "It's a hard law."

The Officer. "Justice is always hard, and the price for all things must be paid. I know it well now, but mortals still refuse to believe it."

J. W.: "Still, there were many far worse men than Ch.."

The Officer. "And they too pay the penalty, be sure of that, although you may not see it, but suicide is a very deadly sin."

He ceased, and R.L.W. said, "Let's go and see mother."

The Officer went back to his work, but we three went to the hospital.

We found mother in a bath chair, and a nurse pushed her while we went with her into the park.

Here we talked about private matters till it was time for me to return.

The next few visits were devoted to the spirit plane, where for a short time, H.J.L. had returned.

Chapter XXXIX

The House in the Garden

November 27th 1916.

I went to the house in which R.L.W. lived. There I found H.J.L. and R.L.W.

H.J.L.: “Yes, I’ve returned here for a short time.”

J.W.: “I never heard what happened when you entered the house in that beautiful old garden which we visited.”

R.L.W. : “When we entered we found a lady who appeared to be middle-aged. She seemed very pleased to see us, especially when we said how much we liked her garden.

“She answered, ‘Yes, I’m very proud of it, and happy here. I hope, as you like the garden, you will like the house also.’

“We spent quite a long time there. Jack, you’d have loved to have seen it! She had various rooms furnished in various styles; and each room seemed to belong to the same period as that of the furniture it contained. Thus there were Elizabethan and Jacobean rooms furnished with splendid old oak furniture in the contemporary style.

“There were Charles II and Queen Anne rooms; early Georgian, Chippendale. Sheraton, and so forth.

“She said that she had not troubled about anything later in date than 1815, as the later stuff did not interest her.”

He went on enlarging on the various beautiful pieces of furniture, pictures, and so forth, for some time, and then the subject changed.

R.L.W. : “Let’s go and see mother. She’s beginning to get about a bit now..

So we went to the hospital, where mother declared she wanted to go out for a walk.

She started off, and though she walked slowly and at times with difficulty, she succeeded in reaching the park with but little help.

We sat there for some time, and a cat came up and jumped on mother’s lap.

Mother: “She often comes to me, knows I like cats, I suppose.”

When we started to return, the cat followed us to the gates of the park, and then sat down and watched us out of sight.

J. W.: “I wonder who the cat belongs to.”

Mother. “To the park-keeper who lives in that cottage. I’ve often spoken to him. He seems rather a decent sort of man.”

Then the conversation turned to personal matters.

After a little more desultory conversation we parted and I returned to earth.

Chapter XL

I Prove my Friends by Means of Another Medium

I went to Mrs. L., the medium, as a test, to satisfy myself as far as possible that the experiences were real, and the people I met the ones I thought them to be.

I had two very successful meetings. In the first she described clairvoyantly H.J.L., R.L.W., my mother, and my great-grandfather. The description of the latter was very accurate; I was surprised at his presence, as I have never met him in the land beyond the grave.

In the first interview she gave me many intimate details of my life at W___ when R.L.W. and I were boys.

In the second interview, by means of table-writing, we obtained details such as names and dates from my mother, R.L.W., and H.J.L. The details given were known only to myself and them and certainly were not known to the medium.

I afterwards questioned H.J.L. and the others, and they declared that they were present, and gave the answers which came through, but they also attempted to get through certain other messages and failed.

Having obtained evidence from an outside source of my communicators I did not continue these séances, as it was evident I could get better messages direct. I consider, however, that the experiment was of real value, for these three reasons:

1. It gave me additional evidence as to the objective reality of the communicators.
2. It proved that such communications could be obtained through this medium.

Of this fact I had little doubt but, in view of the recent attacks on all mediums, I thought the experiment desirable.

3. It also showed, to a certain extent, the limitations imposed on this form of intercommunication between the two worlds.

It should, however, be borne in mind that these limitations might (probably would) have disappeared in time as the entities became used to the new medium.

The following visit gives the comments of the spirits themselves upon this experiment. It should be remembered that Mrs. L. had no knowledge of the fact that I possessed mediumistic powers myself.

December 4th, 1916.

As soon as I entered the house where H.J.L. lived on the astral plane, I said, "Did you try to get into touch with me through that medium?"

H.J.L.: "We did, all three of us, and there were others there besides."

R.L.W.: "I found it very difficult to get the ideas through which I wanted. Many failed, I don't know why; still we did not do so badly."

H.J.L.: "That was, of course, largely because R.L.W. has never tried any medium on earth, and I've practically never tried anyone else but you."

R.L.W.: "I was trying to give you proofs that it was I, while not giving the medium more information than I could help. So it was rather like throwing down bits of a jig-saw puzzle which you had to piece together. Moreover, all the pieces did not reach you. However, we did not do so badly.

"Mother insisted on coming, but, of course, she could not do much. Yes, it was B. she was thinking of. It shows how she is improving that she was able to come.

"I notice that when one gets into the denser and more material conditions of the earth plane, one gets fuzzy, as it were."

H.J.L.: “The old gentleman was your great-grandfather. I’ve never seen him before. He comes from the division above, i.e. of Faith without Acts.

“He told me he was drawn there by some invisible force. But we had very little conversation.”

J. W.: “Why were you seen as having brown hair? I always see you as white haired?”

H.J.L.: “That is because you expect me to be like that, so I take that form, but usually here I prefer to look a healthy, middle-aged man.”

R.L.W.: “Yes, I’ve noticed that of late, though at first you appeared old.. .

I then told H.J. L. that during the last few days I had been seized with a desire to do cubist drawings - did he know the explanation?

H.J.L.: “I’ve no doubt that some cubist artist who has been killed lately is trying to continue to work through you. If he finds you a suitable medium, he may be able to achieve something interesting, but I don’t suppose there’s any money in it. Personally I can’t imagine anyone buying a cubist drawing, but there’s no accounting for taste. Anyway, you’ll make the poor fellow happy, and that’s no small feat, after all. So I should let him experiment at it, it won’t do any harm, anyway.

“I have not an idea who it is, and, unfortunately, you’ve nothing by which I can trace him. These realms are fairly wide, you know. However, I’ll be on the look out.”

After a little more conversation we parted.

Note. . This cubist phase soon passed.

Chapter Xli

Food and Sleep Not Necessary

December 11th, 1916.

On my arrival at the house in the astral plane where H.J.L. and L.W. lived, I found mother with them.

R.L.W.: "Yes, mother is so much better that she has come to live with us."

Mother.: "Yes, Jack, but there is no housekeeping to do here. That seems funny. However, I shall not be dull, for I am just beginning to get about again. This is quite an interesting country. It's very like the earth, only it's a great blessing not having to bother about meals.

Meals are a perfect nuisance on earth. Do you know, I met a woman recently who said she missed her meals? Fancy wanting to eat for the sake of eating! Then one does not need any sleep here, though another woman I met told me she came from a district where they used to lie down and go to sleep. Can you make that out?"

H.J.L.: "There is a division very like this in appearance, but nearer the earth plane, and there the astral beings both eat and sleep. At least, so I understand from various people I have met. That division is so like the earth that many astrals refuse to believe they are dead; others know they do not need food or sleep, but it has become such a habit that they nevertheless continue to do so. Of course there is a danger that after a time astral food and drink will fail to satisfy them, and they may fall into obsessing.

Mother.: "What is obsessing?"

H.J.L. then explained this phenomenon.

Mother.: "What a disgusting idea!"

The conversation then drifted into other channels, mostly of a private nature, and after a while I left.

Chapter XLII

The Officer Describes His Organisation

December 18th, 1916.

As soon as I arrived at R.L.W.'s house, I wished them all a Happy Christmas. Mother promptly inquired about B.

H.J.L. told me that R.L.W. and mother were now settling down to the normal course of life on the astral plane. The Officer was gradually expanding his organisation for helping the soldiers who passed over. The latter entered while he was speaking, and said:

“Yes, it is getting quite a big thing now. I have under me over 5000 astrals working. At the head of all is myself. I have five officers whom I call colonels, each being in charge of 1000 workers. They have two majors; each major has five captains (one of whom is R.L.W.) under him, and these have 100 workers. These workers are divided into sections of nine men and a sergeant. This is the smallest unit we employ, though, of course, sometimes in the course of this work one worker will be attached to one newcomer. Headquarters staff is represented by five colonels and myself. Besides the permanent staff we have a constant stream of new recruits, whom we utilise so far as we are able. Many are useful as messengers, and so forth. After a time those who wish to join our organisation are drafted into new companies, which are officered by men promoted from the old camp.

“Thus, I have just absorbed all Company E. All the sergeants became captains, and most of the privates became sergeants. I retain, however, two or three privates for each section to keep the new recruits straight.

“It’s working very well, I am glad to say, but we need more workers still.”

After a little more conversation, I said to R.L.W., “What work are you undertaking?” R.L.W. looked a bit sheepish and then said, “I can’t help Germans, really, and I am doing a fair amount under the Officer.”

J. W.: “Well, why not set out to take a general survey of the astral plane?”

R.L.W.: “A jolly good idea! I’ll start at once.”

J. W.: “Don’t hurry. I have the original work to deal with first, but meanwhile, just look round.

Uncle will you help?”

H.J. L. “Certainly. This place needs a full survey, but it’s a huge task, I warn you.”

The Officer. “I will give you a helping hand. I get to know many types of men and many different experiences of death.”

So it was agreed, and soon after I returned to earth.

Since then I have visited my friends every Monday night, but although we have much private conversation, I have learned little of general interest. Meanwhile my first work, *Gone West*, was accepted, and when I informed the spirit friends, they began to redouble their investigations. What now follows is the result of their labours.

Chapter XLIII

Two Occult Experiences of B__

*September 6th, 1917.***(A) B.'s Dream of the Millars' Dog.**

B. dreamed she was in the M.'s garden and their dog rose up out of its grave and began to play with her. It was somewhat shadowy; she could see the plants, etc., through it. It romped and played with her for some time and while doing so, she asked it if there were any fairies where it was. It replied, "Thousands!"

After a time it sank back into its grave.

J. W.

*October 30th, 1917.***(B) B.'s Dream of my Mother.**

B. found herself in a tract of rolling down; bare of trees or shrubs, except that here and there were juniper trees. She found herself with the 'big Grandmamma,' and talked with her.

She asked her if there were any fairies, and Grandmamma said, "Lots!"

She seemed to be very pleased to see her (B.), but B. could not remember what they talked about.

I checked this last account when next I saw my mother, who confirmed it in every detail. Evidently they met on the 'Dream Plane'

J. W.

END OF PART I.

Part II

General Survey of the Astral Plane, and Further Accounts of the Work
and Life of this Band of Friends thereon.
Related By Lieutenant R. L. W. To J. S. M. Ward.

Chapter I

Describes the Difference Between
the Spirit and the Astral Planes

Nov. 12th, 1917

As soon as I entered the room where R. L. W. dwells, he began:

H.J.L.: "Well, Jack, shall we start the survey of the astral plane I'm quite ready to begin."

J.W.: "Yes, I am all attention."

H.J.L. then spoke. "Before Rex begins, let me give an introduction.

"The first point you must realize is the great difference between astral and the spirit planes.

"Let us consider the spirit plane first. These differences strike the investigator at once:

"1. Matter has vanished entirely.

"2. Space is non-existent.

"3. Time is nearly non-existent, although there is something akin to chronological order.

"To make my meaning plain, consider Hell. Hell is not a place. It is a condition.

"The evil spirit quits the astral plane-that is to say, he leaves astral body and ceases to be visible to the denizens of the astral. It is quite possible that he is still on the same spot as he was at time before, if you can so use the word, just as a 'dead' man may haunt the earth, invisible to most. I'll prove this statement of mine.

He ceased and suddenly his form grew wan, became thin like paper, tore in shreds, and vanished. Mother shrieked, and R. L. W sat Spell-bound and horror-struck.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated, "I hope he has not left us for good. J.W. I have never seen him do that before; but I know I can him if I return to earth, leave my astral form here, and go out to the spirit plane."

We were still debating what we should do, when I perceived a mist near where he had sat. It grew thicker and denser. By degrees it became almost a solid mound. Then the mound moved, and began to pulsate. Slowly it changed into the form of a man, and there once more was H. J. L. back amongst us. He was standing a few yards away from the chair upon which he had been seated. That was the only difference.

Mother: "I wish you would not play these tricks, they are so startling. You gave me a fearful shock."

H. J. L. smiled, and said, "I did it to bring home my point. So far as I am aware, I never moved away from this point, yet I vanished, as you saw, and my astral body disintegrated. Of course, I am not a real denizen of this plane, so it's the easier."

J. W.: "What landscape did you see?"

H.J.L.: "I found myself seated in my study in the Twilight Land.

"Well, to continue. This evil spirit immediately drifts into the company of other evil spirits of an equally evil nature. Their dominant sin grips them as in a vice, and

their chief thoughts run on the lines it has marked out. Take the Officer, whose dominant vices were hate and ruthlessness. He thought hate, that produced an atmosphere of cruelty and hate, and his companions were likewise thinking the same ideas. The sum total of their united ideas formed that division of Hell. Those who were weaker in character, or even in cruelty, had to accept the ideas thrown off by the stronger, and, therefore, the Officer was able to inflict pain and wounds on those whom he crushed.”

J.W.: “It has been suggested that the Officer’s account of Hell is an account of a nightmare dreamed by his sleeping spirit.”

H.J.L.: “That is not a correct summary of the position. Earth folk find it very hard to realize that even on earth the ‘idea’ is everything. They are so used to seeing ideas clothed in matter, that they regard ideas not so clothed as much less important. Now this is incorrect. Let us consider, say, the winged figure of Victory. The idea existed in the mind of its creator before he carved it in marble. The idea would still have existed if he had never carved it. Moreover, he might have made a model of it, and then had a bronze cast there from by someone else. But if he had, the idea would have been his, not the caster’s. Mind, I think he is the better artist, and probably the statue is a better statue, if he does all the work himself, but that does not alter my argument. Well, though on earth ideas, to become visible must, as a rule, be clothed in matter, on the spirit plane the idea itself is perceived by us and takes the form in which we have conceived it. You, Jack, will understand this easily, as you have seen the statues in the galleries on the spirit plane, which is explained in the work we have recently given to the public. (Gone West, pub. Wm. Rider & Son.)

“Now, add to that fact the further one that united belief in an abstract idea creates it, as seen in the ‘Forms of the Gods’ which are worshipped in the second division of the spirit plane, and you have all the material for Hell as described by the Officer. So, too, you have the explanation of how the rest houses are set up in Hell by bands of good spirits.

“These phenomena are as objective to us as material phenomena are to earth folk, and more so for we feel them with our whole being instead of merely perceiving them by means of one of our senses, as, for example, by means of sight.

“Now I object to the ‘dreaming them’ for this reason. In mortal life the dreamer is a passive witness of the scenes which pass through his mind. I do not mean that he does not sometimes appear to play a part in them; of course he does. But there comes a time when he wakes and knows they were a dream. No such thing occurred with the Officer. He did not wake from the nightmare. Rather, his nightmare, by degrees, changed into a pleasanter dream, but if he and I and all we see are dreams, if so whose dreams? Not the Officer’s! No, the way in which a dream could explain the phenomena is not that Hell was a dream of the Officer’s, but that he and I, and R.L.W. and your mother are all dreams - and you are the dreamer. Well, you know that this is absurd, though the outside world may, or may not, think so, but as I am speaking for your satisfaction mostly, I tell you to put that idea away. It won’t enable you to explain the subject. Grasp fully the import of the law that the form and the idea take the place of the physical and the astral body, and much that is difficult to understand becomes plain. For this law governs the spirit plane whether in Hell or in the highest division.

“Therefore, it is true to say that Hell is a condition and not a place.

“The Astral Plane”

“But this statement is not true of the astral plane.

“1. The astral plane is semi-material.

“2. It has something to akin to space and even position

“3. Time does exist, though in a more fluidic form than on earth.

“Now, before enlarging on these points, I want to draw your attention to these characteristics of the astral plane which differentiate it in a marked way from the spirit plane.

“The whole astral plane and its inhabitants are much less fixed than either the earth or the spirit plane. It is a half-way house between the two, and partakes of the nature of both, often with incongruous results.

“Its inhabitants are much less graded and sorted out than those in the spirit plane. You can meet quite evil persons on the sixth division of the astral plane, and quite good ones on the earth plane.

“Again, you find in certain parts of the astral plane life approximating closely to life of the earth, and yet you will find men of several nationalities discussing abstruse problems by means of telepathy, nearly as completely as we do in the spirit plane.

“Let us take point 1.

“The astral plane may be regarded as the astral body of the earth itself, and just as the astral body spreads its aura or outer fringe beyond our earth body to a distance of a few inches, so does the world.

“But just as the astral body of a man is within as well as without his physical body, so the astral plane interpenetrates the earth.

“The further one gets from the earth, the finer becomes the matter which still exists, until at length it ceases. Therefore, gross astral beings cannot reach the higher divisions of the astral plane.

“Now, I am trying to keep this as clear as I can so if you can’t follow me say so at once and remember that what may seem clear to you may not seem clear to others who have not had your experience.

J.W.: “I follow you quite well.”

H.J.L.: “Yes. With regard to the second point. You will now understand that in a certain sense - you must not be too literal, of course - but in a certain sense there is space, place, and position. In a moment, when I’ve finished, R.L.W. will show you a diagram of the astral plane.

“The two lowest divisions may be considered as within the earth’s crust. Of course, I don’t mean that if you dig a big hole you will ever be able to see them with mortal eyes, but yet in a sense that is their position.

“The third division, our earth plane is really the outer crust of the physical earth, *as seen by an astral being*. Those last few words convey a great deal as Rex will explain later.

“The fourth division or the land of the dreamers is a curious band of country linking up the earth plane and the higher division of the astral plane. Here time begins to play a curious part for here come the astral elements which are being thrown off by all things physical whether ‘animate’ or what you are pleased to call ‘inanimate.’ Here come the dreamers, and here also come many astrals who descend from the higher division to meet those who come seeking them, and at times they stay and talk as your mother did to B., and sometimes they lead the dreamers into the fifth or sixth division of the astral plane as I did when I met C. W. (see *Gone West*).

“This division corresponds largely with the lower atmosphere, and the very finest particles of dust which are made visible to mortals when the sun illuminates them are the grossest form of matter which we can see on that plane.

“Of course, when we are on the earth plane we are brought within the influence of earth conditions, and can see real material objects, but they look different to us from what they do to you.

“The next two divisions are further out in space, i.e. further from the earth, and also the effect of time begins to appear.

“The fifth and sixth divisions mingle in a way which is very difficult to describe which brings home to us more than anything else the curious blend of physical and spiritual, so characteristic of the astral plane.

“In the fifth division the denizens think they need food and sleep, and so they have astral food, and actually appear to sleep.

“In the sixth division, where we are, all four of us, the denizens know that neither food nor sleep is necessary and therefore do not have them.

“Now, you will perceive at once that this is the law of spiritual condition. It marks one of the earliest stages of the cleansing of the spirit from earth influence.

“But the effect of time is peculiar also, for these two divisions which in outward appearances resemble each other very closely, show all the various stages through which the world has passed. Thus the world which is perishing today under the guns in Italy is speeding over to the fifth and sixth divisions.

“Here also you will find the astral form of the Ice Age or of the coal measures.

“Now, whereas on the physical world the most recent one is beneath your feet, and the Archæan rocks are buried deep down in the bowels of the earth, here you seem to see these ages reflected in a mirror, and so the age of today is in order of space nearest to the earth and each earlier age is further out in the ether.

“To take a homely simile, if the earth were the heart of a bulb the outer husk would be the Archæan rocks, and the intervening layers would represent the coal measures, the Ice Age, the present age, and so forth, of the astral plane.

“But though this is a simple and effective simile, it is not, unfortunately, a completely correct one.

“The position is complicated by the fact that these ‘strata’ here have each two sections - one for those who need food, and one for those who don’t. If I were to merge them into one division, and simply say that those who needed food formed little communities together while those who did not likewise lived apart. It should give you a very fair idea of the truth, out yet I should not be absolutely correct.

“The highest division lies away beyond the sixth division but by the time the astral being reaches that division, his astral body is growing weak. He is losing his grip on locality and coming more under the influence of condition. Most astrals hardly see it, because their astral body wilts away and their spirit soars into the spirit plane.

“Before leaving the subject of place, I should add that there is a strong tendency for the layers which represent say, London in the past to correspond roughly with London of the present on the earth.

“Let us now briefly consider the question of time. We have a very fair chronological order which in our cases, I mean R.L.W. and myself, is aided by the recurrence of your weekly visits. At the same time, as we have no physical sun we have no simple time gauge as earth folk have.”

I (J. W.) started, and said. “But if you have no sun - what is the light I see?”

H.J.L.: “The astral sun which does not follow exactly the same hours as the physical sun, and the more material the division into which it has to penetrate, the less light is received.

“Thus there is no light in the two lowest divisions which are, as it were, within the earth. Even the third division, which is, remember the earth as seen by the astral being, is comparatively dark. ‘Dreamland’ is inclined to a soft twilight, though some parts, those nearest to the fifth division, are fairly bright.

“When we reach the fifth and sixth divisions we find an abundance of light, and so too in the highest division.

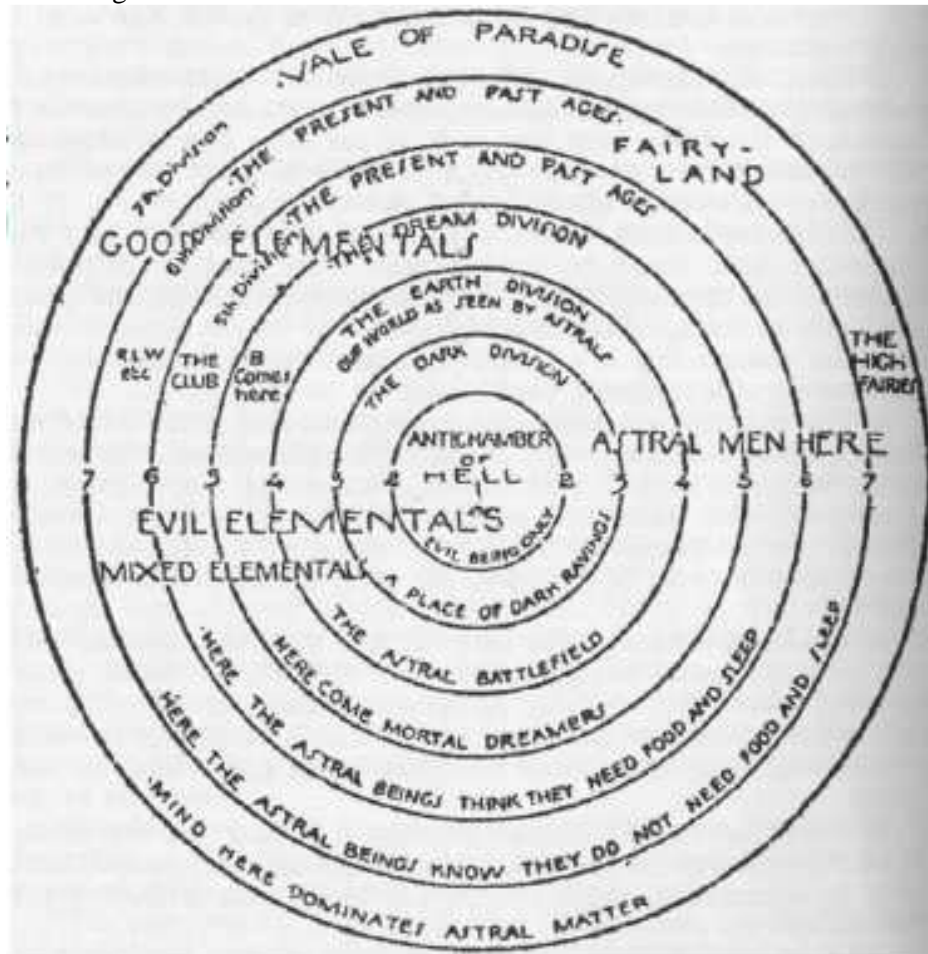


Diagram of the Astral Plane

“When the astral being passes out of his astral body into the spirit plane, he no longer perceives astral sunlight. You know the cause of light there; and how those who have failed to develop their spiritual nature are unable to enter the brighter divisions.

“But to continue about time. It is far more fluidic than it is on earth in one sense, yet in another sense one sometimes is inclined to think that it has stood still in certain parts of the astral plane. Thus one enters the Ice Age area one finds men and animals which must have entered it thousands of years ago still behaving just as they did at the time of that long forgotten epoch.

“These are examples of its curious stability. But I fancy it’s caused by the old law of ‘Condition.’ The savages have created an Ice Age atmosphere, as it were. Then,

again, we have no set seasons. You realized that when we visited that splendid garden. Again, our feelings cause some periods of earth time to drag for a great while.

R.L.W. here broke in, "Yes, the time that passed between my death and your first visit seemed enormous - almost as long as your first visit until now."

I (J. W.) nodded sympathetically.

H.J.L. continued. "Now, I don't suppose I have covered all the ground I ought in this introduction, but I have given enough to enable a start to be made. Further points can be elucidated as we go on."

He ceased, and Rex began: "I will first of all show you a rough diagram of this plane which I have made." He then opened a drawer in a desk close by, and took out a sheet of paper on which he had drawn the above diagram.

"Where did you get clean paper here?" I inquired.

R.L.W.: "Found it in the drawer. I expect it was destroyed with the house."

I studied the diagram carefully, and while I did so he emphasized and explained certain features.

Chapter II

The Diagram of the Astral Plane

R. L. W. “Division 1, which I call the ante-chamber of Hell, is a dismal place, and I have not visited it myself, but you have [see page 53]. Men are seldom, if ever, found there. Only when falling into Hell do they enter and pass through it, and most of them, as in the case of the Officer, see nothing of its condition. It is the battleground of all the evil passions which sink there from earth or rise out of Hell. Many of them become personified, as you know, and the other denizens are the lowest and vilest form of elementals. It is a perfect nightmare land with no buildings or semi-physical features - a weltering waste of raging, evil passions.

“To keep these in check, and prevent them from overflowing onto the earth, the astral plane, and even the twilight land of the spirit plane, spirits of light descend and do battle with the powers of darkness.

“Its borders are ever fluctuating; the powers of darkness constantly overflow into the second division, and even penetrate through it in places and enter the earth division and the land of the dreamers.

“They never reach the fifth division.”

H.J.L.: “The reaction of the struggle, however, is sometimes felt on the lowest edge of the twilight land, as J can bear witness.”

R.L.W.: “The second division is the division of evil mortals who sink into the various sins of obsession. It’s a dark and murky air, and is a fair counterpart of Hell on the astral plane.

“There are no buildings on this division, nor any animals.

“The landscape, if so we can call it, consists of great canyons, with high precipices. Amid these canyons lurk degenerate mortals who are fast drifting into Hell. There is a little dirty water in parts, and slime and filth everywhere.

“By means of obsession its inhabitants, do escape on to the earth division and there prey upon human beings who are still in the flesh. Their victims are for the most part drink sodden criminals, and their favorite hunting ground is some slum on earth. They crowd round drinking dens and houses of ill-repute. There they urge on the criminal and debased to fleshly excesses, and entwining themselves with their victims gain a vicarious gratification of their burning desires. There is very little hope for an astral being which has sunk to this state, except via Hell, but there are exceptions, and I have met one or two quite recently. It is from them that I have gained this information.

“Evil elementals abound. I will give you a chapter on elementals later, so we will next turn to division 3.

“This division, as H.J.L. has explained, is really your earth as seen by us astrals.

“It looks rather different. In the main we perceive not so much the physical bodies of men, animals, and inanimate objects as their astral bodies, which, however, closely resemble their physical in general shape.

’We see the astral embedded in a gray, shadowy substance. As a rule, we do not see physical color. We do see another kind of color, however, that of the aura of all living objects.

It will surprise you to know how many things which you call inanimate are really alive. Even things like rocks have their aura. Why, even houses have their kind of aura. Indeed, there are very few things which have not. The deadest thing we see and

we see that with difficulty, is something which has once been alive, and is now dead and decaying such as the corpse of a man or animal.

“Auras vary in color, largely according to the feelings of the creature at the moment. Blue or white auras show forth a good or kindly nature; red shows anger; a muddy orange-brown shows a thoroughly malevolent nature.

“Some trees, for example, seem to possess a very unpleasant band of aura, but I will deal fully with this subject later.

“The newly dead, as a rule, see something of this division though often through lack of previous knowledge they are unable to comprehend what they see. Those who die as old men, having worn out their astral bodies on earth, lose it almost at once, and so often see no more of the astral plane than this.”

H.J.L.: “Yes, that was my experience. I saw the room in which I lay, but was there for so short and brief a space that I had little opportunity of gaining any real knowledge of it at the time. When I revisited the earth to see my funeral I descended from the spirit plane, but we won’t deal with that now.”

R. L. W. resumed his narrative:

“Sometimes the astral cannot get free from its corpse, and remain entangled with it for a considerable period. Hence the stories of ghosts in churchyards, though there are other explanations of their appearances.

“This fate befalls’ those who were very materialistic on earth. Suicides are also similarly afflicted. Sometimes a sudden and violent death may produce the same result, but not for long.

“Sooner or later the spirit gains its freedom, and may wander about the earth plane, as it is often called. This is usually the fate of those whose interests are still centered on earth. In particular, men who have died and left some task undone, or who wish to convey some message, may haunt the site of their former earth life for years. The cause which holds them earth-bound need not always be a bad one, or even merely a materialistic one. Sometimes love for those they have left behind may act as a serious bar to their further progress. Relations should be careful of excessive grief for their loss, for it may draw the astral back to the earth plane, and keep him chained to the earth, to his great detriment.

“Lack of knowledge may also keep a man upon this earth plane, wandering aimlessly and making no effort to progress because he knows not where to go.

“In this condition they are a mark for evil beings, who tempt them into obsession.

It is on this division that the newly slain continue the battle in which they fell on earth - as I did for a while. It is chiefly on this division that the Officer carries on his rescue work.

“In division 4 we find a barren ground, with here and there scattered shrubs. It looks

somewhat like open down-land. I call this the division of the dreamers, for here come tens of thousands of earth folk. Often they sweep in batches across the countryside, with eyes closed and unable to see anything, But others go with open eyes seeking their lost ones, and often meet them. Others go seeking those who are not on this plane at all - perhaps they are in the spirit realms above, perhaps in Hell.

“Often we astrals come from the fifth and sixth divisions to greet them and lead them to our homes, and you can guess how glad we are of the all too short meetings.”

Mother broke in with, “Yes, it was there that I met little B.”

R.L.W. continued. “I have met father there on several occasions.

But often the visitor when he awakes seems to have no recollection of these visits; why, I cannot understand.

H.J.L.: “Because they have not developed the super physical senses, and so when again clothed in gross matter they are unable to impress these experiences on their physical brains. It is very sad, for otherwise they would learn much that would be a consolation to them in these days when so many are falling for their country.”

R. L. W. continued: “In our upward journey we pass through this dreamland. It was there you found me, I think, for it impinges on the earth plane, so that it is hard to distinguish between the two. Indeed, all these divisions blend into each other. It is next door to impossible to say exactly where one ends and the next begins.

“Of course, all astrals do not remember all the divisions through which they pass. Some pass too quickly, others, like mother, are carried by waiting astrals through them in an unconscious state.

“In this division we find animals, though not many of them. They pass from the earth division (or earth plane) on to the fifth division quickly, as a rule.

“Mixed elementals, by which I mean elementals which are neither all good nor all bad, but mixed in disposition, like most men, begin on the earth plane, and are found in the fifth and sixth divisions, but not in the seventh.

“Evil elementals are found on all these divisions up to and including the sixth, but not in the seventh, and only a few are found on, the sixth division.

“The next two divisions are those of chief interest to the ordinary person after death. I shall, therefore, devote rather more time to describing them.

“The fifth and sixth are very much alike in general appearance and we move from one to the other with the utmost ease.

“The fifth division is remarkably like old-mother earth. It falls into layers in which can be seen all the various stages through which the world has passed. The people of various historic periods tend to drift into the appropriate surroundings; but, of course, each period fades imperceptibly into the next, and the inhabitants often stroll from one period into the other.

When H.J.L. took me into the great Land of Silence, I passed through many of these layers, though I do not remember noticing quite all.

“The earlier periods still have examples of primitive man; it is strange that their astral bodies have not long since perished.”

H. J. L.: “I think that is due to the fact that for the most part their spiritual nature was so little developed. Still, if you think of the millions who must have lived on the earth, the number of survivors is relatively small. Then too many present-day savages reinforce the old inhabitants. Like attracts like, and they naturally join that community which is most like the one they left.”

R.L.W.: “The animals likewise find their appropriate setting. Buildings tend to appear in that part of the astral plane which corresponds with the period when they were destroyed, rather than the period when they were built. Thus you will see out of the window a Gothic church from Flanders which was destroyed a few months ago, but most of the houses around it are not earlier than the eighteenth century, and some are quite modern. Of course, the whole of this town has been destroyed during the war.

“The section of the most general interest is that which represents the destroyed buildings of the last hundred years, what we might call the ‘present time’. To this section most of us come, I among others.

“All that I have been saying about the fifth division up to the present is equally applicable to the sixth division, but now to the difference.

“The more materialistic people remain in the fifth division. There they eat astral food and even sleep. They have no real need for either, but they do so from instinct.”

J.W.: "I hardly realized that you could get food here."

R.L.W.: "If you come to think of it, since even a house has an astral form, food must also, and they eat that."

J.W.: "But, as a matter of scientific interest, does not the eating and drinking produce similar effects to those it does on earth?"

R.L.W.: "I quite follow you. I determined to sacrifice myself in the interests of science, and obtained the following results:-

"1. Once I started to eat, the desire kept on recurring.

"2. I found, to put it bluntly, I produced excreta.

"H.J.L. foresaw the danger in the former fact, and advised me to give up the dangerous experiment. He said that I should probably become a slave to the habit, and, in time, my appetite would cease to be satisfied with astral food, and would crave for the strong meats of earth, hence would arise the temptation to obtain them by obsessing. So I dropped it. One satisfactory result was that I had no longer any necessity for the other matter which I mentioned."

(He then gave me certain interesting medical details with regard to the latter, which need not be published here.)

"The people of the fifth division are grosser than those of the sixth, and more often take the downward path. They tend to continue, in a somewhat aimless way, their former earthly pursuits and pleasures.

H.J.L.: "In short, are rather similar in their conduct to the spirits in the sixth division of Hell." (See *Gone West*.)

R.L.W.: "Though elementals abound, they seldom enter the towns, and so many astrals will deny that they exist. The elementals seem to haunt the country; woods, streams, lakes, and open moors being their favorite places of habitation, just as those who are seen on earth are usually found in these surroundings.

"Our guardian spirits are seldom seen. They appear only when they wish to do so for some special reason.

"In my upward journey I did not pause in the fifth division, but since reaching my present abode I have made excursions into it, for the purpose of gaining material for this work.

"I dwell in the sixth division, as you know, and to it mother was brought by the doctors who received her at death. The hospital to which she was taken is only one of the many institutions which exist on this plane. There are homes for children; although many children spend but a short time here, and there are schools for them. There are colleges and science laboratories, libraries and museums, picture galleries and theatres. In short, all the amenities of life on earth.

"You will readily understand, therefore, that the uninitiated are often puzzled, and even deny that they are dead.

"But these are the superficial folk, for any person who really goes at all deeply into the matter realizes a profound difference, as I told a man the other day who tried to stuff me up that we were not dead. 'If we are not dead, how is it there are no funerals here?' He started, 'I never thought of that, but look here, several men I knew once have disappeared!'

'Disappeared, yes,' I replied, 'but you have never buried them. No, nor even a dead dog! Those you miss have passed on to the spirit plane, but their method of passing is different from that by which we quit the earth. Think it over,' and I left him doing so.

"The seventh division I know less of than any of the other. It is much more ethereal than this division, and is a place of preparation for the next or spirit plane.

But you must not assume from that that we must all pass through it to get to the next plane of existence, any more than that everyone passes through Twilight Land.

“Many go off straight from this division. I understand that it is a very pleasant place, and the descriptions which I have received are reminiscent of the old stories of the gardens of Paradise, and, indeed, it is usually the resting place of saintly beings whose astral bodies are not yet ready to be discarded. Of course, many really saintly people can discard their astral bodies almost immediately after death, but some are still comparatively young when they die, and these rest for a while in the pleasant valleys of the seventh division.

“The only elementals found there are good ones. Not even the mixed elementals are permitted within its borders.

“Animals are found there, and, owing to the general atmosphere of love, they are, for the most part, on the friendliest relations with man, whereas, on most of the astral plane, this is not so.

“So far as I can discover, there are no carnivore there, nor any unpleasant reptiles or insects.

Flowers are there in abundance, and singing birds and butterflies.

“One fact I must mention, because it shows the great advance the dwellers in this division have made. They are able to construct new buildings out of astral elements. On the sixth division a little of that sort of thing is done, but only a little, for there is such an abundance of astral utensils and buildings that there seems but little necessity. So far as new astral things are made, it is by similar means to that employed on earth - for example, by machines or handicraft, only we employ astral elements instead of physical.

“In the seventh division, however, you find the beginning of the power possessed by all spirits of the spirit plane to create new ideas and make them visible by the power of the will.

But there is this difference: where H.J.L. dwells the artist, for example, by the mere exercise of his will, produces the form of his statue. In the seventh division of the astral plane that is not sufficient. He has to clothe the idea with astral elements, which he draws in some way from the atmosphere. I don't know exactly how it is, but done it is. I think it is analogous to the way in which H.J.L. creates an astral body for himself.”

H. J. L. nodded, and said, “Yes, you are on the right track, and I could do the same in that division, but I could not teach you how to do it. It is a matter of the will, and until you have learnt to control that mighty force and direct it as you wish, you cannot be taught such secrets!”

He paused, and then continued: “But it is time you were returning, Jack. We have had a most interesting evening and I hope your next will be equally profitable.”

So I said good-bye to them all and returned to earth.

Chapter III

Auras

November 20th, 1917

I found R.L.W., H.J.L., and mother awaiting me in their house.

R.L.W.: "What would you like me to deal with this time?"

J.W.: "Auras, I think."

R.L.W.: "Very well," and then he began his narrative.

"All things that exist possess an astral form, and this form is often seen even on earth by mortals, and is sometimes called the aura. At the same time there is also a spiritual aura, which may likewise be seen. H. J. L. knows more about that kind of aura than I do.

"The aura is not so much the astral body as an emanation thrown off by it. It is, however, so closely associated with it that it is almost impossible, as a rule, to say definitely what is aura and what is the astral body. The aura may contract within the astral body or expand in such a measure that it extends a kind of fringe beyond both physical and astral bodies. This fringe varies in actual depth while the individual is in the flesh, but, roughly it usually extends about two or three inches beyond the physical body. The aura is not only visible to psychic mortals and to astrals, but it also has definite functions of its own. It is sentient to a very considerable extent.

"To give an example: If you were walking on a dark night along a road, your aura might come in contact with the aura of a tree which, owing, say, to fog, you were quite unable to see.

"If your astral functions were well developed they would be able to give a warning to your physical brain of the proximity of the tree, and you would instinctively stop."

J.W.: "Yes, I have experienced such incidents."

R.L.W.: "Good, then you will understand me the better. Well, the example I have given is a simple one, but the aura can detect more subtle dangers than merely physical. It is particularly useful in warning its owner of hostile feelings in another physical being, be that being a man, an animal, or even some so-called inanimate object.

"That much misused word 'instinct' covers many of the manifestations of the aura. The more psychic a person is, the better judge he will be of the characters of others, and he does this by means of the impression his aura receives of the aura of the other person. Of course the spiritual aura, which extends to a far greater extent round the physical body than the astral aura, is even more valuable in this matter. But perhaps H. J. L. will say something on that subject."

H.J.L.: "No, my boy, we are dealing with the astral plane and so I think we had best keep to the astral aura."

R.L.W.: "Well, this aura, as I said, exists with animals and trees, and, strange to say, some trees appear from their auras to be benevolently inclined towards man, whereas others are distinctly malevolent. The aura varies in color according to the character of the individual, and even varies according to his moods. Thus a red aura denotes anger, and so an aura of which the dominant note is red will denote a being of an angry ill-tempered nature, and probably one in whom hate was the dominant vice.

"The worst auras of all are an ugly orange-brown. These show a malevolent and grossly material nature, with little of the higher side in evidence. Fortunately, this

kind of aura is rare in man. It is common in certain low types of astrals and elementals, and is also characteristic of certain trees.

“Auras vary in brightness and apparent texture according to the physical health of persons in the flesh.

“This is so marked that a person possessing good psychic faculties on earth could tell at a glance the condition of health of any person who came to consult him. More than that, he could tell the spot in the physical body which is causing the illness. Much more might be done on earth in this manner to locate hidden complaints and diseased organs, and so dispense with the necessity of exploratory operations.

“The treatment of such complaints is not a matter on which I care to say anything just now, but in passing I might add that there are distinct affections of the aura which account for such subtle complaints as those described by the phrases, ‘I don’t feel up to form today’ . ‘I feel dispirited’.

‘I can’t make out what’s the matter. I’ve nothing physically wrong, but I feel despondent and down in the dumps.’ Usually these are due to some affection of the aura, though at times they may be caused by some undiscovered physical trouble, such as indigestion, or, perhaps on the other hand, to sickness of the spirit. The latter may or may not be an evil conscience.

“When the physical body has an affected organ - for example, congestion of the lungs - the aura, instead of showing a healthy light, white, blue, or greenish, according to temperament, will be greyish over the spot. If examined closely, the aura will be found to consist, apparently, of thousands of minute streamers or hairs of light. In a healthy person, in a calm mood, these ‘hairs’ stream straight out from the body. When mentally agitated they wave in a convulsive manner and if a portion of the body is diseased the aura ‘hairs’ either become tangled and knotted in appearance, or else lie flat like dank seaweed, instead of streaming straight out like seaweed does when under water.

“In cases where the physical body is in good health, but the aura itself is affected, observation will show that it is pale and wan, and of a grayish color. Occasionally it appears to hang down like seaweed left high and dry on the shore.

“Now all these peculiarities of the aura can be seen by us astrals when on the earth plane.

But it is the auras of mortals, not of astrals, of which I have spoken so far.

“I will now turn to the aura as seen on this (astral) plane.”

J.W.: “Before doing so, I should like to know what trees you particularly noticed as malignant.”

R.L.W.: “Most alder trees and most ash, particularly the older ones. A few beech trees and pines also had very hateful auras. Most oak trees, on the other hand, were benevolent, and all fruit trees. The sycamore is always friendly, and I understand the same applies to palms.

“The alder and the ash seem in toto to be hostile to man, but in the case of most other trees it is only individuals which exhibit this trait.

“Sometimes the position is complicated by the fact that an elemental has seized upon the tree, and either absolutely entered in or else has attached itself to it as it might to a mortal whom it was obsessing. In such cases I might see only the aura of the evil elemental - a muddy-brown in color - or I might see the aura of the tree in conflict with the aura of the elemental. In the latter case parts of the aura would be reddish, while the rest would be gray or yellow. It would not be bright and clear, for if completely healthy the tree would not have fallen into the clutches of the elemental. I mean healthy as regards its astral body.

“Turning to the aura as seen on the astral plane we find it is more easily seen than by man on the physical. All the same, in the fifth division it is seldom noticed, but here we can see it if we concentrate our minds on doing so.

“I have little doubt that it could also be seen in the lower divisions if the investigator concentrated enough will power on so doing. But many of the people there are so hidebound by earth traditions that they seldom endeavor to improve their psychic faculties, being content to go on vainly reproducing earth life on this plane. These naturally know little of the aura. As, however; I have gone down into the lower divisions, even to the third or earth plane, and have seen auras there which belonged to astrals, It is evident that others could see them. At the same time I admit that unless one concentrates one’s mind on seeing them, one hardly notices them. As I see ordinary astral phenomena without any such special concentrations of mind I think there must be a subtle difference, and that the aura is rather less material than the astral body.

“Now, I think we have said enough about the aura. It is not a very important subject to the medical profession here, and it is from the doctor who attended mother in the hospital that I have learnt the facts which I have given you, showing the effect of ill-health upon the aura. As, however, we are not particularly interested in medicine ourselves, I suggest we move on to a fresh field of labor.”

J. W.: “Yes, I think so but before doing so I want to ask you one or two questions.”

R.L.W.: “Very well, let’s have them.”

J.W.: “Can you see my aura now?”

R.L.W. concentrated his mind on the subject, and I did likewise. He then spoke: “Yes.”

J. W.: “What color is it?”

R.L.W.: “Mostly blue, with some white, and a little yellow. Can you see mine?”

J. W.: “Yes, yours is largely green, but also has some white in it.”

Suddenly I sprang up, and said, “Something is happening. I must go at once.”

Even as I spoke the room vanished. I seemed to be falling rapidly, and almost immediately awoke with a start. I had evidently been awakened by *C.W.*, who was not very well.

Chapter IV

A Summary of R.L.W.'S Career on the Astral Plane

November 26th - 27th, 1917

As soon as I had arrived at R.L.W.'s house, where I found also my mother and H.J.L., R.L.W. began as follows:-

R.L.W.: "Bearing the map in mind. I will now trace my journey through the different divisions of the astral plane. I have never visited the two lowest. You evidently saw the first [see page 85], and I have also caught a glimpse of the second. My story therefore begins with division three, often called the earth plane. Immediately after my death I seemed to recover, and went on fighting with my 'dead' companions against 'dead' Germans. I do not remember seeing any of the living who must, however, have been present. Probably I was not able to distinguish clearly between the two groups. After a while, as I have told you. I grew weary of this mockery, and realized that I was dead. I somehow escaped from the turmoil of the earth plane or third division on to the fourth division or dream plane.

"Here I sat down, feeling utterly miserable, on a hummock in a rather dreary waste. While there I saw the Requiem Mass for my soul, which shone through the ground itself and brought for a while a sense of peace and kindliness. When, however; that faded, I again sank into a state of lonely misery. I was aroused from this by your appearance which cheered me greatly, especially when you promised to fetch H.J.L. to my aid. After you had returned to earth, I was again miserable and seemed to feel waves of sorrow coming up from the earth, the grief of my friends, I imagine, which made me feel more unhappy. However, I buoyed myself up with the hope of seeing H.J.L. soon. It seemed a long time before he came, but he did come at last. He proceeded to describe what life was like here, and after a time led me into the fifth and sixth divisions. He led me through various sub-divisions of them into the great silence of the Achaean Age. Here I gradually became attuned to my new condition of life, ceased to be in a muddled state, and began to take an active and intelligent interest in what I saw around me.

"We then, as you know, returned by easy stages to the counterpart of the present-day world and took up our residence in this old Franco-Flemish town.

"Here I have dwelt ever since. As soon as I was 'acclimatized', I went back to the earth plane to help the Adjutant and succeeded in getting him away. In spite of sundry set-backs he is now reconciled to his life here, and is an active agent for helping the soldiers who are passing over.

"Again, under the guidance of the Officer, I returned to the earth plane or division three, and helped English soldiers, strangers, and so fulfilled the second condition which is imposed on those who desire to progress.

"I remember one incident which will serve as an example of many others. Under the charge of the Officer, we descended to the battlefield near Ypres.

"I could see the shadowy 'still living' leap from their trenches as the barrage lifted and charge over no-man's-land towards the Germans. One after another men toppled over. Some lay groaning, but from others a brighter and more substantial form emerged and, with rifle in hand - mark that - followed in the direction the living had gone. Fresh bodies of still-living men surged over no-man's-land, passing around through the newly dead. The latter paid but little heed to them, but flew at the throats of the astral Germans, and fought like furies. 'Forward!' cried the Officer and we rushed in amid the fighters and tried to get some of our men away. I caught hold of

the arm of a man called Whiting (I learnt his name afterwards). He cursed me roundly, called me a coward. 'I am your superior officer,' I replied. 'Come with me.'

"'Superior officer be d__d,' he replied. 'You're not of my regiment, and may be a German dressed up in our togs. I'm not coming out of the fight at your orders. Let go, or I'll put my bayonet into you.' He was mad with excitement, of course. 'Let go, blast you! I knows my duty. It's to take them trenches. All right, you can have it.' So saying he ramm'd the butt of his rifle into my face. It hurt, I can tell you, mental pain, of course, but it felt confoundedly physical at the time. I didn't let go though.

"'Look here;' I said, 'you are dead, and I am dead, and all these men are dead. You are not helping to win the trench at all. I'll prove it to you. Drive your bayonet right through my heart, and if I don't die as I should, it will prove it to you.'

"'Look here, sir,' he said, almost kindly, you're balmy. Had a whack on the head, I expect. You run along to one of the dressing-stations, there's a sensible chap. Sorry I gave you that biff, but didn't know you were wrong in the head at the time.'

"'But I want to prove to you that I am dead,' I replied, 'so stab away; it won't do me any permanent injury.'

"'No, sir, I'm not going to murder one of our officers just 'cause he's light headed. Just let me get on with my job-killing Germans, that's my job, not Englishmen.'

"I held out my left hand. 'Stick it through that, then' I cried.

"'My! You're a brainy one. Want to get home to Blighty. It wouldn't be right if you were not off your chump, though. Still, I reckon it's the best place for you just now. It'll hurt though. I'll give you five seconds, 'cause I want to be after the others.'

"'Hurry up,' I said, 'only you've got to see the result.' 'Righto! but don't cuss me when it hurts.'

"It did hurt, too, for about a minute. He pulled out his bayonet and grinned at me. Slowly the grin faded from his face, and a look of blank astonishment came instead.

"'My Gawd! it's healing up.'

"Slowly the gaping wound closed up. You could see the severed edges drawing together. At length not even a scar remained.

"'Are you satisfied?' I inquired.

"'I am dotty, I think,' he murmured.

"'No, you're not; you're dead. Come a little way out of the scrimmage and you'll be able to prove it.'

"He followed me for a short way, stopped, and looked back.

"'Watch that pair,' I said. A German and an Englishman were fencing with their bayonets, and next minute our man's blade went clean through the German's stomach.

"'Hurrah!' yelled Whiting, as the Hun slithered to the ground. The Englishman pulled out the blade. Suddenly the Englishman jumped back as the German sprang to his feet and plunged his bayonet into our man's chest. He fell, and the German wrenched his bayonet out and shouted with glee, only to fall to the ground again as the Englishman leaped up and struck him on the head with the stock.

"'Damn it,' said Whiting, 'the Hun's been killed twice, and our fellow once already, and there they are at it again.'

"'Do you believe me now?' I asked.

"'Looks as if you were right, sir,' he replied, 'but it's damned easy to die. I thought it was a much harder job than it seems.' 'That's the first smart thing you've said today.' I told him, and then led him away to where the Officer was marshalling other rescues; it was a goodly haul.'

"He then said, 'All together, the next division.'

“We all thought of the dream plane and the earth plane seemed to jump away behind us. As soon as we reached the fourth division we scattered into little groups of twos and threes. I took my charge to a little valley, where I told him in the simplest words I could muster what life was like on the astral plane.

“The reaction, however, had begun to set in, and he was very miserable, and said, ‘It’s not myself I care about, but the wife and kids. How the devil can they manage on the measly pension the Government allows them? Rotten shame I call it, all these munition blokes’ making five to ten pounds a week, and my missus got to starve and scrape just ’cause I goes and gives my life for my bloomin’ country. Damned shame!’ And he went on like this for some time.

“I did my best to soothe him down, but didn’t seem very successful, when suddenly the Officer came over the top of the hill. ‘Now, what’s all this about?’ he rapped out. The man began at once, but the Officer cut him short with, ‘Quite right! If I was on earth I’d tell them too, but I’m not, and you’re not either. So it’s no use getting ill over it. Now, listen to me, and don’t interrupt, remember who’s speaking.’

“‘I’m sorry, Colonel’, began the man, but the Officer cut him short with, ‘You’ve work to do here, same as I have. The work is to help others as you have been helped, but first you’ve got to settle down here. When you are ready you will be enlisted in one of my corps. You’ll find life is much pleasanter than on earth. You won’t regret coming to us, not a bit. You’re out of the slush and the mud, and the everlasting drudgery of life on earth, and especially of life in the trenches. You’ll find lots of old pals, and (here his voice became strangely gentle and kind) if at times you grieve over those you have left behind, remember this - you won’t help them by so doing, you will only hinder them and make them feel miserable, just as their grief will make you unhappy. Remember, too if you are oppressed by the thought of their struggles on earth, that if life there be too happy, how hard it would seem to have to part from it; if life is hard, then death comes as a glad release, and the life here would be the pleasanter when they attain to it. The world is hard and mean and selfish; but here things, though not perfect, are far happier. No need here to toil noon to night to keep body and soul together. No food is needed, and so the tyranny of work has vanished. We work here at what we wish to do, and not at something we hate because we must earn our bread. So remember, though their lot may be hard, it is not long, and having nothing to lose, they will have nothing to regret when they pass from thence to you.’

“Again his manner changed. ‘But, by the living God, those who are responsible for their sufferings shall have good cause to fear the hour when they must enter these realms. Not from me nor from you shall come the doom, but from themselves. I, who have suffered, know whereof I speak.’

“He ceased, and the man saluted, simply saying ‘Thank you, sir.’

“I then spoke. ‘Colonel, shall I take him to the Land of Eternal Silence?’

“‘No,’ replied the Officer. ‘I have arranged a different system for these. I have taken possession of a great chateau a little way outside the town. We will take them all there. It has fine grounds, and a river running by, and if they wish they can play games there. I daresay they will soon learn that games haven’t the same fascination that they had on earth, but being still partly material, they can get some amusement out of them. Therein they differ from denizens of the spirit plane.’

“So we set out in columns of fours, and as we went someone struck up an old music hall song, ‘Bill Bailey.’ In due course we seemed to pass from the fourth into the fifth division. I’ve never yet been able quite to discover how one does pass from one division to another.

“Many of the men began to complain of being hungry, but the Officer never does things by halves, so he wouldn’t allow them to give way to the temptation. ‘No, boys,’ he said, ‘you’ve no physical bodies, so you don’t need food. On earth we must eat, but here we need not. It’s just a bad habit, and the sooner you get out of it, the better. I’m not going to let you start, as you’ll find it very hard to drop it later.’

“No one dared argue the point, you can’t argue with the Officer. He seems to dominate the whole neighborhood so completely. So we went on till we reached the sixth division and the chateau. It was just the place, and I found it already in the hands of a large number of men belonging to the Officer’s organization. The newcomers, including Whiting, were handed over to them, and they went in meekly enough.

“There they were given a concert straightaway to cheer them up. It wasn’t even a religious concert, but just a jolly little show, with a certain amount of soothing music at first, followed by livelier stuff and ending up with some rollicking songs, in which the ‘newly dead’ joined in heartily.

“As the party came out, Whiting said, with a sheepish smile, ‘Beastly sorry about that whack I gave you, sir.’

“‘That’s all right!’ I replied. ‘How do you like being dead?’ I added.

“‘Darned sight better than being alive,’ he chuckled, and followed the others out into the grounds where a football match was being arranged.

“I turned to the Officer. ‘I can’t see that the footer will do them much good.’

“‘Won’t do them any harm, though,’ he replied; ‘they’ll get sick of it after a time. It’s a sort of habit, like eating, only it will wear off easier than eating or drinking, and there is very little risk of its leading to obsession, whereas drinking often does.

“‘You see, most of these men, though not all, had little opportunity on earth of developing their faculty of appreciating mental amusements, but they will develop it here. Of course, if they don’t they’ll be rather lost when they reach the spirit plane where all amusements are mental. That’s one of the advantages of dying young, my boy,’ and he clapped me on the shoulder, ‘I don’t pity the brave lads who are giving their lives half as much as the elderly man who has toiled all his life to help himself and family. The lads die before they have tasted half the bitterness of life. They come here, and if they fall into good hands they improve their minds, learn to appreciate other than physical pleasures, and so on entering the spirit plane are at no loss for subjects in which they can take an interest. The same men, had they lived to a ripe old age, would never have had time really to develop their minds, and so in the spirit world, without even an astral body, and therefore unable to enjoy any physical amusements, they would slowly and painfully have had to devote themselves to self education.

“‘No, an early death is by no means a hardship in the long run but, of course, it depends very largely on how a man develops here. If these young fellows had fallen into evil hands, and were to develop badly, an early death would indeed be a curse to them. It would mean attempting to indulge in earth lusts, which lead to obsessing and so to the dark regions and ultimately the gates of Hell, which lie beyond.

“‘And, by the way, the powers of darkness are organizing a counter blast. My “secret service” informs me that they are laying their plans very carefully. Copying our organization, and intend to make a bold attempt to capture the young men as they enter this world from the battlefields. I am preparing a counter-stroke also.’

“We turned to other matters, but I may as well tell you at once that since then this counter organization has been developed, and of what has since occurred I will tell you later.

“The example I have given you must serve for the time being, as my object tonight is to give you a general summary of my life here.

“Since the date of which I have been speaking, which is about July, 1916, the Officer’s organization has grown to vast dimensions, and new difficulties have arisen which he has met in his characteristic manner. Well, I kept fairly busy at this sort of work for some time.”

Chapter V

His Recreations

“I often got short spells of leave, in which I was able to explore the sixth division. On some of these explorations you have already been with me as in the cases you have already described where we visited the curio shop, and also that fine garden. I also spent quite a considerable time in the great library we have in this town. There was quite a good library to begin with, destroyed when the town was destroyed, but an old Frenchman - we call him Pierre, but I believe his full name is Pierre Blanchard - is in charge of it, and has added to it enormously. He has an ex-British soldier, formerly a schoolmaster, as his chief assistant and between them they have built up a huge Anglo-French library. It has overflowed into, about a dozen neighboring houses, and they have now determined to make it international, and are even going to have a German section, if you please. However, that’s a long story, and must wait for another time. Perhaps we can go there together one day.

“There’s a picture gallery, and yes, you’ll be delighted to learn there’s a very good museum. Some enthusiast on zoology tried to start a zoo and it was very funny - the animals refused to be kept in cages, so all they were able to keep were a few semi-tame animals, including three monkeys. The other creatures, as soon as no one was looking, quietly walked through the bars of their cages. There was great excitement when a fine lion escaped. He didn’t do any harm; all he thought about was trying to get back to his native jungle, which he did, but he created quite a panic walking down the High Street of our peaceful little town.”

“‘Little,’” I (J. W.) said: “but it’s growing quite a large city.”

“Then I go to the theatres, and sometimes attend the lectures. There has sprung up a kind of university here. The best of it is that it does not matter whether it is an Englishman or a Frenchman lecturing, we can understand him perfectly. No, there, are no Germans, they aren’t allowed here - not popular, as you can guess. They live in another town, and everyone sends that town to Coventry. That’s why old Pierre caused a bit of a rumpus when he declared he was going to include German books in his library. He said some of their books were good, and it wasn’t the books’ fault they were written by the swinish Boche. Still, I must not diverge.

“I want to give you a fairly complete idea of my life before mother came to us. After she came, my life had to be altered for a bit, you see.

“Well, I even visited a few churches. Went to Anglican and to Roman Catholic ones, and also to Nonconformist chapels. They were very much like what they were on earth. Some of the parsons were better, I think, but most were the usual sort, and devoted themselves more to the form of religion than to its real fundamentals. I can’t say I learnt enough from them to turn me to a church-goer once more.

“I wonder if there’s anything I have missed. Oh, I visited some factories. They were making not only things very like we make on earth, but also some which have not reached earth. There were even chemical laboratories, where scientists were endeavoring to make new discoveries, but as I am not very interested in that side of life, I won’t worry further about them, but will just say a few words about the arty-crafty folks. There’s quite a colony of them, and they make some really ripping things. I saw some beautiful glass and copper work; it would have made your mouth water; and some really good modern furniture and china too.

“I asked them whether they sold these, but, with the exception of one or two, they repudiated the idea with scorn. They love to furnish empty houses, and even to build

artistic houses and furnish them afterwards: Then they hunt round for some kindred soul to inhabit the house. I've had three fine houses offered to me, but somehow I prefer to stick to this one. However, I've had one or two nice pieces given to me, which I rather hankered after. The maker said he could easily make another, but I don't believe he did. They hardly ever repeat a successful piece; like to try something a little different."

R.L.W. took down a water-jug of glass, which looked distinctly Venetian in style, and showed it me with pride. It was a very beautiful piece. The handles were two twisted serpents, and the jug rested on a foot. The stem, which was thick, was carved like a mermaid, and it was her tail which formed the base. The body was powdered with gold, as was the handle, but the jug itself was clear crystal glass with a slightly blue tinge. He next showed me several pieces of china, including two tall vases in mazarin blue, with apple-green reserves containing figures of men and women in the dress of the eighteenth century. A bowl he handed me was chocolate outside and blue and white within, while two plates were in old rose and matt gold, the centre being white. In the middle was painted a basket full of roses.

He next showed me two tall brass candelabra, but here H.J.L. broke in.

"It's nearly time Jack returned. Have you any other points you wish to make?"

Mother then spoke. "Tell Jack about the theatres."

R.L.W.: "Oh. yes. As I told you before, there are theatres here but as I only discovered the best ones, including the opera house, after mother joined us, I thought I would keep that for next time.

"One thing I must add. I've got quite a nice little garden at the back, just take a peep at it. There's Tiger under the rose-tree in the central bed. It's not the Tiger we had at W__. I've often wondered what became of him, as I haven't found him yet. I daresay I shall in time, though. I named this cat in memory of Tiger."

It was quite a pretty garden, with a high wall all round, and I noticed a number of birds singing in some lilac bushes at the end of the garden.

J.W.: "Does Tiger try to catch the birds?"

R.L.W.: "Yes, especially at first, but he never got any, and he's rather dropped it lately. I suppose he's realized that it's no use."

J.W.: "Do the flowers follow the seasons?"

R.L.W.: "Well, they don't really. You remember what the gardener told us when we were going over that fine garden. They remain in their prime till' they gradually grow thin and vanish. I suppose they then go to the spirit plane. I notice that almond tree is growing thin. Before long it will probably vanish completely.

"Well, that was the sort of life I led till mother came to join us. Once I had got the hang of this place I joined up and helped the Officer. The worst setback we had in those early days was the great recruiting march, when even the Adjutant broke away but we had similar incidents later. Even now they occur sometimes, but the difficulties we have to meet to-day are more subtly organized.

"H.J.L. often came down to help us on our expeditions to earth, really to help me; he does not come so much now.

"When not helping the Officer, I explored parts of the astral plane, and even began to make investigations on the question of fairies, but I had not got far on that subject when mother came, and I broke off for a time. Recently I have taken up the matter again and will tell you what I have learned in its proper place."

He ceased and I rose and said, "Well, it's time I was off." And so after saying good bye to all three, I willed that I should return, and did so.

Chapter VI

More Details of Mother's Passing Over

December 3rd, 1917

On my arrival at the house where they dwelt, R. L. W. took up his narrative:

"A few days before mother died, I began to feel a strong desire to return to earth. I could not explain why. I told H.J.L., and he said: 'We will go down together. It is probable that someone there is needing you but, on the other hand, it may be a recrudescence of earth longing. However, if I am with you no harm can happen.' So we entered the earth plane, and at once found ourselves in mother's room.

"We realized at once that she was dying, so we decided to remain. By degrees others arrived; I mean other super-physical beings. There were several evil-looking elementals, who seemed to be trying to suck up some of the vital fluid which was slowly draining away. There were evil astral humans also, who hung round with a similar purpose. On the other side were a band of astrals led by a doctor, who came to take charge of her when death had freed her from the body, at least so they told me, and subsequent events proved that this was so. Not that I was ever in any doubt. I have not yet found the astral being who could deceive another like men can deceive each other by lying on earth.

"The number of super-physical beings increased on both sides and the drama that was being enacted then almost hid us from the other earthly drama. I will not say anything about the latter, as it is a private matter, and this book is intended for publication.

"These two groups of hostile superphysical beings gathered, the good on her right side and the evil on her left. We stood on the right of course.

"As the hour of her passing drew nearer, a malignant form began to build itself up at the foot of the bed, and as it did so, her guide became manifest at the head. The wall of the room made no difference to him, and he stretched out his hands over her as if to protect her.

"A howl of fury arose from the evil onlookers, but all save he who stood at the foot of the bed fell back, overawed by the majesty of her guardian spirit. This dark spirit spoke, and as he did so clouds of darkness seemed to exude from him.

"'For every act of wrong I claim my right, and will not go.'

"And the bright spirit answered: "'For every act of wrong she has paid the price, or shall pay it. But by every kindly deed she wrought, I claim her. Be gone! By the accomplished fact you are defeated. For I hold the mastery, and you can approach no nearer.'

"'I shall not forget her,' the other replied grimly.

"'Nor I,' replied her guide.

"Then the dark spirit became invisible, and so did her guide.

"But the good friends who had come from our side gathered all round her bed, and the evil faces vanished.

"By degrees a pale light grew about her head, and slowly her astral body emerged, but remained apparently sleeping.

"For a while it lay over her body, and seemed to be about a foot above it. Then the cord of light broke, but the astral body still lay asleep.

"The doctor and his party placed a stretcher - yes, I mean what I say - under it, and four men lifted this stretcher and carried it away. J.L. and I followed with the others.

“As we went along, I said to H.J.L., ‘Surely two would be enough to, carry her?’

“*H.J.L.*: ‘To carry her, yes; but it is a sound occult law to have someone at each of the four cardinal points to ward off possible danger.

“The room faded, and we passed amid clouds into the dream division. Across this we passed, and one of the nurses began to sing, *Lead, Kindly Light*.

“The familiar words, gave one a sudden feeling of home-sickness, but I conquered it. Soon we had reached the sixth division, and entered the hospital, which you know so well. Here we left mother in charge of the nurses, in a bed, as you afterwards found her.”

He ceased, and mother spoke. “You made me shiver with your horrible stories of elementals. I never saw anything of them.”

R.L.W.: “No, because you were asleep. He then continued:

“I need not give in detail the story of mother’s treatment at the hospital, for you know it already. You can see for yourself she is completely recovered.

“While her treatment was going on, I was constantly in attendance, and so had little time to devote to my work with the Officer. Towards the end, however, I resumed it, and found that his organization had increased enormously. I will therefore, relate more concerning it.”

Chapter VII

Opposition to The Officer

“When I reported to the Officer, he said, ‘I must warn you that the powers of Darkness have organized themselves very much on the same lines as we have done.

“Indeed, there is no doubt that they have deliberately copied our system.

Their followers dress as much like us as possible; have adopted our system of officers, and endeavor to get hold of the “newly slain” by pretending to be their friends.

“Here is a man whom we have just rescued from their clutches.’

“He indicated a young sub-lieutenant, whose name I won’t give for obvious reasons.

“The Officer said, ‘Just repeat your story, will you?’

“The sub-lieutenant then began:

“I was killed in a charge, shot through the head just as I went over the top. For a short time I must have lost consciousness, but when I came to I felt little worse; thought I had been stunned. Seeing fighting going on, I rushed in to give a help.

“We fought on and on without producing any visible effect, but when I had shot the same man through the head three times, and been bayoneted twice myself, I came to the conclusion that something was wrong.

“I thought, “I am delirious, and this is a bad dream.” I tried to wake, but couldn’t. Then I walked away till I came to a little valley where there was no fighting in progress. Here I sat down, and began to wonder what would happen next. Slowly I began to realize I was dead, and while I was still in this state three soldiers approached me. Two were privates, but the third was a captain. I jumped up and saluted.

“Am I alive or dead?” I inquired.

“The captain replied, “You are dead, as they call it on earth, but don’t let that distress you. Your life here is very similar to life on earth, and if you get in with the right set, you can lead a very jolly life. You can have whatever you like; and you don’t have to pay for it.”

“Anything?” I inquired.

“Yes, anything, absolutely anything; but, of course, you need friends to put you up to a wrinkle or two. That is what we are here for. Lots of poor fellows arrive here, and wander about hopelessly lost. They are like strangers in a new land, without friends and ignorant of the customs and ways of the people. So, a lot of us who have experienced that sort of thing when we arrived determined to start an organization to help our comrades. We don’t pretend to be saints. You’ll find a few psalm-singing humbugs over here, just as you did on earth, but I don’t fancy you want to mix with that sort.”

“Not much!” I answered; and he continued:

“Well, come along with us, and I will take you to our club, where you will probably meet some of your old friends, and certainly make some new ones.

“You’ll get some surprises, I daresay. The parsons stuff people up with a lot of rubbish, so as to make themselves important, but it will take you some time to understand everything here. Don’t jump hastily to conclusions, but just keep your eyes open, and judge for yourself. I tell you this because you have probably got ingrained ideas about right and wrong, which may be a little upset, and I should not

like you to run away with the idea that we are a bad lot because we tell you that a lot of what parsons call sin is not really sinful.

“You can see for yourself that this world beyond the grave does not correspond with the Church’s picture of Heaven or Hell. Similarly, you will find that most of the other stuff they told you was entirely untrue.”

‘We started off together. I could tell by instinct that these men were not stained-glass window saints, but neither was I. So we went along quite happily.

’The Captain walked by my side, and the two privates fell in behind.

“He told me a long story about his former life on earth, which interested me so much that I hardly realized where we were going till we pulled up in front of a large building situated in fine grounds. The place was not well kept up, but there seemed to be any number of people about, both men and women.

“This is our club; let me put down your name,” said he.

“What is the subscription?” I began; but he cut me off with, “Youngster, I told you just now that you could get everything for nothing.”

“So we went first to the office, where he put down my name, and got someone else to second it, then said, “Come and have a drink.”

“Can one drink here?” I inquired, in surprise.

“Oh, yes; try a whisky and soda.”

“So I had one. Somehow it did not taste quite right, so I had another, and then a third; but, while they resembled whisky and soda, they seemed to just miss it. I told the captain so, and he answered: “That’s probably because you are not yet used to astral food, but there are other ways of satisfying one’s natural appetite. You will learn about those later.”

’He then introduced me to various men and women, and after a good deal of general conversation, I turned to him and said, “Can anyone become a member of this club?”

“Oh, no,” he replied; “we are fairly Bohemian, but we don’t admit privates. But we have a fine club for them, and all officers who belong to this club are honorary members of their club. It is a fine place, I can assure you, just beyond the trees over there. We are not snobbish, but men are still men, and the privates would be rather uncomfortable here. They can’t forget old instincts, you know.

“One problem has presented considerable difficulty. Owing to conscription, one brother would be an officer and the other a private. Naturally, the officer brother wants his brother to be a member of his club. So, in such case, if the chap is at all possible, we get him promoted to commissioned rank.

“You see, this organization is on military lines, but enlistment is entirely voluntary.”

“How did you get the idea?” I inquired.

“To tell the truth (and you can’t tell lies here even if you try), we took the idea from a fellow who calls himself ‘the Officer.’ “He is a most extraordinary character, and I had better put you on your guard against him at once. He appears to have been an unmitigated blackguard, both while on earth and after. Now, however, he plays the hypocrite, and runs a sort of Y.M.C.A.”

“But,” I broke in, “the Y.M.C.A. do a lot of useful work on the battle front, and you need not pay too much attention to their ‘pi jaw’.”

“He hurriedly answered, “Yes, quite so. I meant really a show like the Salvation Army. His object, I believe, is to obtain unlimited power, and he is fairly sharp. So he started an organization to rescue the newly slain, as he puts it, and to warn them against the dangers of life on this plane. He thunders about Hell, and says people must

not do this and must not do that if they want to get to Heaven. In short, takes the same sort of line that a revivalist does on earth. Just as if we have not already proved that all that stuff is moonshine. If the fellow had been some saintly parson on earth, one could understand it, but when you learn what sort of chap he was, you can only stand aghast at such an arrant humbug and amazed at the number of fools whom he has gulled.

“His sole object appears to be to gain unlimited power and influence, and the worst of it is he contrives to render the lives of all his subordinates a dreary Sabbath. He seems to delight in preventing them enjoying any of the joys of life and at turning them from jolly good fellows into a pack of killjoys.

“Some of us, who had learned what life over here really was, determined to take a hand in his game. We copied his organization, but cut out all the ‘pi jaw.’ Mind you, we don’t want blackguards, but we do want men. Everyone is free. If he wants to go to church he can do so, no one will even laugh at him, but we do bar cant and humbug of any sort. Our motto is: Believe what you like and do what you like, so long as you don’t make a nuisance of yourself to the community. If you do we put our foot down without wasting time.”

“And a jolly good motto, too,” I replied, and with that he left me.

“I soon found my feet, and got very pally with a little lady. She told me she had been dead three years. She was married, and hadn’t a very great opinion of her husband who seemed to have been rather a fool, according to her story. I began to make love to her, and she was by no means backwards, I can assure you.

“The club, by the way, was a residential one, and I slept there, had my meals there, and generally made it my headquarters.

‘I learnt various details about their organization, which was copied in almost every detail from the one founded by “the Officer.”

‘Parties went constantly down to the battle-fields to bring in fresh recruits, but I did not make one of them. Truth to tell, I was otherwise occupied. I and the little Lady (I shall continue to call her by that name) went about together everywhere. We visited theatres and went to soirees, to concerts, balls, and other forms of amusement. The more mental forms of amusements exceeded my expectations; but those which were of a more physical type somehow failed to satisfy.

“At length, I proposed to my friend that we should get married. She laughed; and said, “My dear boy, you have forgotten the old text, ‘They neither marry nor give in marriage,’ but don’t look so glum. It’s not so bad as it sounds.

“If you really wish to have a parson spouting over our heads, you can, but remember as we can’t die here; it might be a bit awkward later. You’ll get tired of me in time, and as we can’t die, we shall have to get divorced. Besides, there is no advantage in being married as we can’t have children. That’s the sole object of a legal marriage on earth. But there, you shall have all the joys of matrimony without its responsibilities.

“But have you had a really decent drink over here one like you used to have on earth?”

“I admitted I had not, and that the drinks one got at the bar simply made one crave for more and brought no real satisfaction.’

“Ah, you haven’t learnt how to drink, and until you know how you won’t possibly understand how to get married here.’

“You trot along to your friend the Captain, and ask him to give you a wrinkle or two.”

“I soon found the Captain, and explained what had happened.

“I’ll soon show you how to get a drink, a proper drink, and the ’little lady’ can then explain how to get married. Here, T., take our young friend down to earth again, and initiate him.”

“So T. and I went off together.’

“He ceased for a moment, apparently trying to pull himself together to make the further revelations, which he felt to be of a most unpleasant nature.

“The Officer spoke to me (R.L.W.): ‘It’s a devilish clever scheme ... I have known for some time that they were working against us, but this is the best account I have had yet. Note the ingenuity displayed. The real controlling entities keep absolutely in the background. If they dealt with these young fellows direct, their evil natures would be so evident that the youngsters would avoid them like poison. So they get other men, themselves newcomers, and not wholly bad, to do their work. As it is almost impossible for one man to deceive another here, they trade upon their ignorance rather than upon deliberate deception.

““The members of the counter-organization have no real knowledge of the absolute wickedness of obsession, nor of its terrible results. They have a smattering of knowledge about this plane, and none of the spirit plane, and so can genuinely think what they say about me and it.

“It is clever, too, how they utilize the truth about my former evil life, and yet miss its real significance. Then, too, imitation of our organization is absolutely diabolically clever, for it catches the unwary in a trap. Again, the gentle, downward path, at first appearing perfectly innocent, the appeal to the material and earthly instincts of their victims, and the way in which such an attitude is justified by the apparently earthly surroundings in which the newly slain find themselves, shows that there is a master mind at work.

““But the Subaltern wants to continue his narrative:”

Chapter VIII

The Subaltern Continues His Story

“The latter continued:

‘He took me down to the earth plane, where we entered a famous nightclub in the West end. We passed through the walls, which seemed wan and shadowy, into the saloon, where we saw many mortals dancing, and many astrals watching them. From thence we entered a bar where men and women were seated at tables, drinking liqueurs and various other drinks.

“What would you like?” my companion inquired.

“A good stiff whisky and soda,” I replied.

“Do as I do” he remarked, and began to twine himself round one of the drinkers in a most extraordinary manner.

“There were several men drinking really heavily, and I tried each in turn, but could not find out the knack.

“At last, after closely watching several other astrals, I discovered the secret, just as the show was coming to an end. I got my drink, however.

‘The effect was extraordinary, and more closely resembled drinking whisky on earth than any of my previous experiences in the astral club.

‘But as soon as the mortal threw me off, and staggered out of the room, the craving grew on me and I longed for another.

“T. took me to a large hotel, but owing to the drink restrictions, we found the private bar empty. There were other astrals there already, but I could not restrain my impatience, and going behind the bar tried to pull out the cork of a bottle of brandy. Of course I could affect nothing, so wandered up and down impatiently till at last the doors were opened, and customers began to enter.

‘Most of them were quite moderate drinkers who took a glass or two and then went about their business. We rushed at them, but were quite unable to get hold of them.

‘At length a commercial traveler came in who had already had as much as was good for him. The landlord eyed him suspiciously, but evidently came to the conclusion that he was not sufficiently far gone to justify a refusal to serve him. There was a rush for this man, and being less cunning than the rest, I was shouldered aside, and had the great mortification of seeing another astral finally obtain control, though not till after a fierce struggle with T. Presently the landlord refused to serve the commercial with any more liquor, and the man went out cursing, and the astral with him still entwined with his body.

“As the day wore on others came in, and at last I got my chance, and attached myself to a cardsharp, through whom I obtained several drinks. At 2:30 we were all turned out, and I stuck like glue to the cardsharp. He had bought a couple of bottles of whisky, and went off with two others to a dingy little office in Pimlico.

“The three men sat round a dusty table, telling yarns and drinking hard till they had finished not only my man’s two bottles; but three others which the other two had bought.

“One of the men collapsed in a drunken stupor, but the other two, though a bit dazed, pulled themselves together and, after being violently sick, started out again.

“While they were feeling sick, I felt the same, and I also felt very stupid. I felt as though I could not leave these two, although I had had enough of the whole business. I had to go with my man, who drifted into a very second-rate “pub” in the Euston

Road, and there began to work various card tricks. He drank fairly heavily, and I with him. I found now that I could not get away, try as I would, and began to regret my conduct most bitterly.

“In the midst of one of his cleverest card tricks he was arrested by one of his supposed dupes, who revealed himself as an astute detective, who had been put on his track. His confederate was also arrested, and the pair taken off in custody.

While in jail he was, of course, unable to obtain any liquor, and by degrees I found the invisible chain which bound him to me growing weaker. At length I shook myself free, and after wandering about the earth plane, succeeded in returning to the club of the astral plane.

“Here I met my lady friend, to whom I described my adventures, but when I went on to say how disgusted I was about the whole business, and how ashamed of myself, she rather laughed at me, and said, “You were new to this business and overdid it. You must be more moderate in future; then you won’t get tied to the mortal.” She then explained that we could get “married” in a similar manner. I was rather afraid of a second experiment after my first, but for fear of being laughed at by her, and called a milksop, I consented.

“I need not go into the whole business. You probably understand the whole beastly affair better than I do, but you have to bear in mind that this was a more complicated business than the last one. There were two of us and two mortals needed to complete the experiment but at length we were successful.

“After a time the vice seemed to grip both us and the mortals in a fiendish grip, and though after a time we tired of each other and of our mortal victims, we were unable to get free.

“At length the man became ill, and this, as in the case of the card sharper’s imprisonment, procured my release. My lady friend also obtained her freedom, but by now she was tired of me, and took up with another astral officer.

“I should doubtless have drifted back into my old ways had it not been for my mother.

“I was startled one day by hearing my Christian name shouted in my ear. I looked round, but there was no one, and again and again my name was called. I seemed to be drawn in the direction from whence it came. As I drew nearer, I recognized my mother’s voice. My pace increased, and I found myself in her room. She was praying. As I heard her prayers, my heart was filled with remorse, and I realized how degraded I was becoming. She was grieving still for me, and I rushed instinctively towards her, but was instantly hurled back by some tremendous power. So I turned and fled in utter misery, not knowing where to go. I would not go back to the club. I felt somehow that it was the cause of all my troubles, so went back to the battle-field, of all unlikely places. It was more by instinct than from any intelligent reason, but I fancy it was because I had made a false start, and wanted to begin all over again.

“Almost at once I was picked up by a man belonging to the Officer’s organization. At first I thought it was one of the old gang and told him to be off, but he stuck tight to me, and after a while he said something about the Officer. At once I remembered the Captain’s attack on the Officer. I promptly said to myself, “That last organization led me astray. It was avowedly a counter-blast to this one. Perhaps, after all; this is a good organization.”

“By now I was feeling desperately lonely, and moreover, the old desires were coming back. I felt that if I did not get with someone who would help me to keep

away from these temptations, I should have to give way to them. So I determined to chance it.

“So I told the private to lead me to the Officer himself. He demurred at first, but I insisted, and at length he did so.

“As soon as I saw him I felt the magic of his influence. He seemed to sum me up in a moment. He was strong, and I gained new strength from his proximity, which helped me to resist the terrible temptations which were beginning to worry me once more.

“Now, I’ve told you everything I can remember. I am thoroughly ashamed of myself. This obsessing is a horrible habit. It’s like drug-taking on earth, and once started grows and grows on one till it becomes absolutely one’s master.

“The Officer has been a brick, and without his help I should have given up the struggle.’

“When he had finished, the Officer turned to me (R.L.W.) and said, ‘We’ll go into the next room, and talk things over. The subaltern will be all right while Lieutenant C. is about.’

“We talked matters over, and the Officer decided to call a general council, and sent out thought messages accordingly. He just called the people he wanted mentally, and they knew, even if they were down on the earth plane.

“But it’s time I broke off; this is a suitable moment.”

So I (J.W.) said good-bye to all three, and returned to earth.

Chapter IX

The First Act of Open War

December 11th, 1917

I arrived at R.L.W.'s house without any untoward incident, and after greeting all three, R.L.W. continued his narrative.

"The matter of this counter-organization was discussed from every point of view, and we finally determined upon a definite line of action.

"Some of the more hot-headed advocated an attack on the club, but the Officer refused to allow this, although he admitted it had several attractive features.

"Instead, arrangements were made to picket all roads leading to it, and as our organization had grown to a huge concern, we had no difficulty in placing squads of fifty men, under their proper officers, at all important points.

"Groups were also told off to shadow their expeditions, and endeavor to counteract their machinations.

"I was given charge of one of the pickets, which took up its position close to the main gates of the club.

"The Officer warned me that we might be attacked by the members of the club, but he said that this would only happen after they had exhausted all means of persuasion.

"If attacked, I had simply to send out a thought call, and it would be answered by reinforcements.

"Well, we started work at once, and soon were spied from the club. Several girls came out and asked us to come in. Of course, I refused, and the other men ignored their presence.

Other attempts on the part of the fair sex were equally unsuccessful, and in the midst of one of them a party approached the club from the direction of the battlefield. There were about a dozen newly slain and fifteen of the counter-organization.

"I shall call the latter 'the enemy' henceforward.

"As the newcomers approached, our picket spread out, and intercepted them.

"My men at once began to reason with the newly slain, but this naturally did not suit the enemy, who peremptorily ordered the former out of the way.

"We refused to move, and the enemy threatened to use force. The situation was noted by those in the club, and one of their officers led out a company of their men.

"He wasted few words. All he said was, 'Now then, clear out or there will be trouble!'

"I answered, him, 'We won't clear out.'

"I formed my men into a square just in time, and there was a regular rough and tumble. At first they used only their butts, but soon took to the bayonet, and so did we.

"Meanwhile, I was sending out calls for help, and our neighboring pickets broke into the grounds, and running across caught the enemy in the rear. They put up a stiff fight, though, and were constantly being reinforced from the club.

"The struggle grew more bitter. Meanwhile, the newly slain looked on amazed, unable to decide on which side to cast in their lot, though they seemed to be itching for a scrap.

"At length an Irishman called out, 'Begad, I don't know what the row's about, but I'm not going to be out of such a lovely scrap!' So saying, he hit the nearest man on the head with his rifle.

This man happened to be one of the enemy, so they went for him. Several of his friends backed him up, but a Scotsman promptly went on the other side just because he was an Irishman. Soon all were involved except two privates and an officer, who drew out of the press and watched the scrimmage with a puzzled air.

“But my calls for aid had reached the Officer, who came into action with several regiments—at least ten thousand men.

“But what really turned the day, I believe, was his tremendous will. He seemed to dominate the whole situation. I never saw such conclusive proof of the power of the will before in all my life.

“The enemy seemed to lose heart at once. Some surrendered, others broke away and fled.

“When the fight was finished we found we had captured sixty of their men and seven of the newly slain, counting friends and foes. The Scotsman had escaped, and the three neutrals were still looking on.”

R.L.W. paused for a moment at this point and said, “You seemed surprised that we nearly all had weapons. Well, we are organized on a military basis, and every soldier gets the idea absolutely drilled into him that he must never be without his rifle. It becomes almost a fetish. What more natural then that he should take one about with him on the astral plane? It’s quite easy to get one, for there are thousands of broken rifles lying about on the battle-fields of earth, and, therefore, their astral forms are ready to hand.

“Again, nearly all the men who belonged to either side in the struggle had fought for a while on the astral plane, and when they left it, brought their weapons with them. Most of the newcomers, for the same reason had rifles with them, and used them.

“The young officer and one of the privates who stood aside during the scrap had not; the other private had. I’ll explain why the officer and the first private had no weapons presently. The Scotsman had no weapon to start with, but he tore a rifle out of the grasp of one of my men.

“Cartridges! The same rule applies, but we soon ran out of ammunition. A man does not carry a large quantity of ammunition about with him on earth, but relies on the general supply which is usually brought into the firing line by others who are detailed off for the work.

“Not much damage was caused by the fighting to the grounds. The hedge was broken down a little, and did not recover like the men did. You see ‘inanimate’ objects have little, if any, will of their own. Nothing, at any rate, which can put itself against the will of a man. We willed to destroy it so as to get through during the fighting so it was broken.’

“The fighting in general closely resembled the fighting in the great astral battle, so I need not go into it any further, and will continue my narrative.

“The Officer now issued the following commands: ‘We will now blockade this place.’

“*R.L.W.*: ‘Why not storm the place and drive these swine out.’”

“*The Officer.* ‘Because fighting generates evil passions at all times, and would only “harden their hearts,” as the Bible would say. On the other hand, these people have grown to crave for food. It’s not necessary for them, but indulgence in this craving has made them gross and material, and inclined to gratify their appetites by even worse methods.

“‘Deprived of astral food, they will be compelled to realize that they don’t need it, and after a while some will begin to lose the craving for it. This will lead to an improvement in their spiritual and even in their mental outlook.

‘We shall, therefore, find them easier to reason with when they surrender.

‘If we stormed the place they would be angry and rebellious. It’s very difficult, if not impossible, to keep beings prisoners against their will for any long time, and I am doubtful whether we should be justified in attempting to do so. You cannot compel a man to be converted. I have, however, no scruples about applying this amount of coercion.’

I (J.W;) here interrupted.

“Just a minute. What happens to the astral form of astral food when it is eaten?”

R.L.W.: “Its astral elements are broken up, and take a new astral form, which rapidly breaks up and vanishes. It passes out in just the same way that earthy waste does. But it does not really nourish the astral body. You see, astral food has no will to resist destruction. But we could not capture an animal and kill and cook it, because the animal has a will of its own, and would resist.

J.W.: “What about the astral form of a leg of mutton?”

R.L.W.: “I never saw one. But the only foods I ate when I made my experiment were foods derived from vegetable matter. Cereals, for example, apples, and so forth. If they had any will-power, it’s so weak that it hardly counts.”

H.J.L.: “There is a marked difference in this point between the astral world and the spirit realms. No forms of food come to us. They pass to Hell, and there constitute the menus for the feasts of Tantalus, with which that place abounds. You get the form of your roast leg of mutton there. But though you may carve it up and eat it, not only do you get no satisfaction there from, but you find the leg of mutton appears intact at the end of the banquet - if there is an end.

“All the forms of all the filth of the world go likewise to Hell,” added Rex.

R.L.W. then resumed his story.

“The Officer thought for a moment, and then said, ‘There are about thirteen hundred people in there, including those in the privates’ club. There are about five hundred men on picket duty. If I leave two thousand more, that should be sufficient. You, “Adjutant” (by the way, Jack, he was a Colonel by this time), will take charge with the acting rank of a Brigadier.

““The rest of the force are needed on the battle plane. Our forces are hard pressed, and all sending out S.O.S. calls.

‘I think you (Rex) had better take in hand our young friend here, and explain matters to him. Colonel S. will take charge of the prisoners, and return with them to headquarters. We will try what a little reasoning will do before we let the enemy go, and I think some will join us. Hang on to them till I return. The newcomers will present little difficulty, you will find.’

“He turned to the Adjutant. ‘Brigadier, you will have to exercise all vigilance. It’s true that about one-third of those in the club are women, but you will find them quite as dangerous as the men. In some cases more dangerous, for our men will not like to use force against them.

““However, no one must leave the club if you can possibly prevent it. Above all, no reinforcements or food must be introduced from outside.

““I leave you in charge with perfect confidence.’

“In a few moments he was out of sight, taking with him the bulk of the troops. The Adjutant I left in the middle of his task, and took charge of the three astrals. Colonel S. started off towards headquarters with his prisoners and the rescued. Most of the latter were already on our side, and promptly fell to at the rear of the column.

We walked along with the officer, leaving a sergeant in charge of the two privates, so as to give myself greater freedom with young Captain B. The following is

the story of his death, and since it is typical of many men who die of wounds, as distinct from those; who are killed instantly, I will give it in detail.”

Chapter X

How Captain B. Died of his Wounds

“CAPTAIN B. began:

“‘This seems a funny sort of place. I did think I’d get quit of fighting when I died.’

“‘Let’s hear about your death,’ I (R.L.W.) said.

“‘I was hit by a piece of shell in the stomach as we were advancing across no-man’s-land. I lay on the ground in agony for hours. Dawn was breaking, and men stumbled over me as succeeding waves of men went forward.

“‘After a time, loss of blood and pain made me faint. I came to later as the sun was setting. The Huns were shelling our lines and no-man’s-land in front of them. I longed for a shell to hit me and put me out of my agony, but my luck was out.

“‘Again I fainted, and when I recovered I felt dazed but experienced little pain. I watched in a detached sort of way the pool of blood which lay at one side of me. I made no effort to get up. I felt tired out. I remembered I felt like that once before. I cut my arms when a boy-fell through a cucumber frame and cut my arms rather badly. The loss of blood made me feel faint, but I felt no pain. I remembered the incident quite clearly. Then other incidents passed through my mind. Often trivial matters with no real significance, and mostly drawn from childhood’s experiences.

“‘Once more I became unconscious, and when I recovered I found myself in complete darkness. I groped round, but could find no familiar object, but I realized that I no longer felt weak and tired. I moved my legs, rose to my feet, and tried to walk about, but soon felt myself held as if by a rope. I hunted for this rope, and found it was attached in some mysterious way to my head.

“‘I caught hold of it and tugged, but could not loosen it. So I ran my hand downwards till I came to the place where it ended - in nothing. This puzzled me a good deal, and I sat down to think things over.

“‘After a while I began to get used to the darkness which resembled a dense fog, and perceived amid it darker shadows, some of which flitted to and fro, while others lay still. Suddenly I heard voices close by, even recognized one of them as that of my batman, so I called out to him.

‘He said, “I am sure I can hear the Captain’s voice.” I shouted louder than ever. The shadow moved nearer.

“‘Look out!’ I cried, and it walked clean through me.

“‘It knelt down near a shadowy heap which lay close beside me, and another man knelt also near this heap, and seemed to be doing something to it.

“‘I was tremendously puzzled, and thought, “I am evidently delirious, but they have found me. I doubt, however, if they are in time.”

“‘But the other man suddenly cried, “He’s gone, poor fellow!”

“‘My batman replied, “But, sir, I heard him call.”

“‘Imagination, my man, or perhaps some other poor fellow. In fact, I can hear someone even now.”

“‘But, sir, I know his voice ... I.”

“‘Rubbish! The man has been dead for two or three hours. “Best take the body back, hadn’t we?” inquired another voice.” “Yes, you two can manage it. Now, you other men, this way.”

.

“The shadowy form was lifted by the two other shadows, and as it began to move away I felt myself dragged in the same direction. I got up and followed them, puzzling my brains as to what it all meant.

“They stopped. I heard the words of the burial service, then silence. The men turned to go, and for the last time I heard my batman’s voice, “It’s strange. Harry, but I could swear it was his voice; and what’s more, I’m sure I’ve heard it several times since.”

“You’re upset, chum,” replied the other; “enough to give anyone the jumps.”
“He was a decent sort”

“I heard no more. I was dead and yet alive. What did it all mean? I passed my hands over my body and face. I had a body, and yet they had buried something. Why could I not get away? I gave a desperate tug. I nearly skipped with joy. I could move. I was free!

“I wandered away into the fog, which by now seemed less dense.

“Presently I saw fighting going on, and watched it curiously.

“These are also dead,” I came to the conclusion, for I saw men fall run through and through, yet rise and fight again. “This is absurd.’ Just at that moment a private saluted and spoke (the chap just behind me now). “Excuse me,” he said, “but am I dead or alive?”

“Dead, I think,” I replied, “but I am not absolutely sure.” “Yes, sir, that’s what I says, you see, my right leg was blowed off by a bomb. I know that all right, yet here it’s safe and sound, so I reckon I must be dead. Made a fair mess of me, it did, but not a mark now, so I must have gone west”

“Quite right. I’ve been watching those chaps fighting, and they keep killing each other and getting up and going on again as if nothing had happened.”

“They make a fair row when the bayonet sticks into them, though.”

“Yes, so I noticed, but it does not stop their fighting as it would on earth.”

“Talking of earth, sir, what are we on now?”

“His question flummoxed me, and I told him so.

“Just then another private came up, and entered into conversation also.

“He’d died of wounds in hospital, he said, and as we were comparing our experiences, up came a captain and several men. ‘The Captain told us we were dead, which we knew already, and asked us to come along with him, saying, “You feel a bit lost, and we’ll show you round, put you up to all the wrinkles, and generally help you to find your feet. You’ll find life here not half bad. Plenty of fun, and no more fighting or death.”

“You can guess my amazement, therefore, when this recent scrap started.

“As I could not make out the rights and wrongs of the case, I just stood aside, but I’d really like to know, now that you’ve settled the business, what it was all about?”

“So I went into the matter fully, but before doing so, I told the two privates to walk beside me so that they could follow all I said.

“You see, while they were attending to the sergeant they would probably not have realized what I was saying. It is not distance which prevents one from hearing on this plane, but whether we direct our thoughts in the required direction or not. I felt I could explain matters a little better than the sergeant could.

“When I had finished, they all three had grasped the situation, and said they would join us.

“You can understand now, Jack, why Captain B. had no weapons. His slow death made him realize he was dead. His knowledge of that fact made him realize the

futility of the battle on the earth plane, and he therefore did not trouble to acquire a weapon.

“One point still puzzles you, I see. He was attached to his body by the silver cord. The real severance of the astral from the physical body does not always coincide with the heart’s failure.

“It may not take place until the body has actually decayed. Some of the earth-bound and suicides are in that unhappy position.”

H.J.L. here broke in. “Captain B., of course, perceived the thoughts of those he heard which coincided with their spoken words. That is easy enough to understand, but evidently the batman was clairaudient. Possibly only temporally, and he perceived the thoughts of his former master. It would be the easier because Captain B. would be more material at that moment than he was even a few hours later. Doubtless the batman had a real affection for the Captain and this, as it were, sharpened his psychic faculties.”

We nodded, and Rex went on.

“Before leaving the subject I would like to add that I know of the case of a man who was dying on the battlefield and he had a clear recollection of leaving his physical body for a time and finding himself still attached to it, and returning, once more to his body to awake to the earth life, only to lose consciousness again and finding himself once more outside his body, where he remained until the cord broke .

H.J.L.: “Another point to note is that Captain B. could feel the cord, but not the body to which it was still attached. But go on with your narrative.”

R.L.W. then continued.

“We had reached headquarters by now, but as we entered, I said to the other private, ‘I understand you died in hospital. I should very much like to hear your experiences if you don’t mind waiting for a short time- while we get these other fellows fixed up

“‘Right, sir’ he replied. So we entered our grounds.”

Chapter XI

At Headquarters

“Colonel S. drew up his forces in the big square in front of our buildings, “The prisoners were in the middle, and looked as furious as any men could. ‘Well done, men,” he cried, ‘a good fight and a fine victory, but now that open war has begun, you will have to be on your guard. It’s not so much force as guile which you have to fear.

“Now, I propose to keep these prisoners here surrounded by a wall of men., It’s the only way to hold them, and remember you must keep your minds concentrated on holding them here. The fact that they are disarmed makes little difference. It’s the will that counts. That’s why it’s useless to attempt to lock them up in dungeons. Astral walls cannot hold an astral spirit if he wants to get out, because they have no will to resist him. You understand?’

“‘Yes, sir,’ they shouted.

“‘Well, remember, if your minds wander they’ll be able to escape. ‘Yes, I know you can’t stay here forever, but I don’t intend you should. The Officer said, “Keep them here till I return.” He will know what to do with them.

“‘Meanwhile, I’m going to start addressing them.’

“He tried to do so, but they all shouted different things at once. Most told him to ‘shut up’ as they didn’t want any ‘pi jaw.’ There were a few women among the crowd, and these began to ogle our men.

“I (Lt. L.W.) therefore went up to him and suggested I should ask some of the chief men who were in the building to come out and help and also to bring at least one of our party for each of the enemy.

“‘He jumped at the idea, and we were soon busy at the job.

“I dodged a golden-haired damsel and button-holed a young private, who I could see was a fairly new arrival, and therefore not hopelessly hardened. I won him over, incidentally.

“While we were in the middle of this job the Officer arrived. “He afterwards told us about his struggle with the enemy on the battle plane. But that must wait. I’ll just tell you he had won.

“He at once dominated the whole of us. He told his old story, which you know so well, of his own fate, and we could see it made a tremendous impression.”

“When he had finished, man after man came up to him and said: ‘Sir, I should like to put myself in your charge for a time, at least. You have given me a bad fright, and I know some of the things you have said about obsession are true. I can see you are telling us the truth about the other matters. I would like to stay with you and learn more. If, after all I decide to go to the devil, it shall be with my eyes open. “So I put it one way and some another, but those are the words of one man, and they were typical of many.

“The enemy captain said, ‘If I want to go to the devil, I shall go, and no one shall stop me.’

“The Officer replied: ‘Certainly, but you are not going to hang about here dragging others down. I’ll see to that.

“‘Go down to the second division, and stay there.’

“As he spoke the words I could feel the will-power going out. He made mysterious passes, and the man turned and fled. He burst through the ranks of the surrounding troops, and as he went we heard him screaming, ‘I can’t stop. I must go on.’ He disappeared.

“I dared not speak to the Officer for some moments, but at length the set expression on his face vanished, and he turned to me and said, ‘You have seen me work a spell for the first time. Some might say it was not right. I know it is. He can’t return now. He has made his choice. Let him abide by it.’

“Silence fell on all. It was the first time any of us had seen the Officer in this mood, and we were frightened. Yes, frightened.

“In a flash we realized the tremendous power the man possessed, and the awful strength of his will. It was almost as if the voice of God, or, at least (he added quickly), of a god had spoken. Yet we knew he was but a man, and had once been a thoroughly bad man.

“Still the silence reigned supreme, till it was broken by the voice of a woman crying, ‘O God! If there is a God, what will become of us? I’m afraid.’

“The Officer turned to her quickly. ‘No more of that, madam. You have set yourself to drag men down. If you are penitent, the road to salvation lies open. If not, there lies the road to Hell. Take your choice, and blame no one but yourself.’

“She rushed up to him. ‘What can I do to be saved?’

“The words gave us a strange thrill. Needless to say we recognized them.

“‘Over there lies the Nunnery of St. Benedict. Go to the Mother Abbess and ask her help. She can show you how to be saved.’ ‘But am I free?’ she asked in evident surprise. ‘Yes, if you wish to return to your evil ways, go and do so. You asked, “What can I do to be saved?” and if you are not, you know now what lies in store.’

“‘Let me stay with you. You are strong; you can save me.’

“‘That is not my work. I save men, not women. I should be too hard, and you would hinder me. Choose.’

“And she did go straight to the abbey where, for aught I know, she still is.

“And thus he dealt with the remainder, reading their characters to a nicety. Always he sent the women away to the abbey, and kept the men with him.

“But at length there was a residue who showed plainly that they did not wish to be saved, and yet he evidently considered they were not yet sufficiently evil for him to drive down to the second division.

“They took the attitude that they could not help it. They were too much in the clutches of their earth desires to resist. They knew they were fools, but they could not help it. If he would let them go, they would promise not to tempt others, but it was useless to pretend they could give up their evil ways. They hadn’t the will.

“‘Promise!’ he said, with withering scorn: ‘You promise anything, yes, and mean it at the time, but you have no more will to keep your promise than you have to change your way of living but I will reinforce your will with mine. Go, and never dare to draw near the club, nor to approach the battle plane, nor to speak to any of the newly slain.’

“As he spoke again, we felt the power of his will beating upon the abject creatures who cringed before him. He made strange passes, and again silence fell on all.

“Then, one by one, they crept away, ten men and three women, and as they passed the significance of the number struck me.

“It was all over now, and a sigh of relief broke out from all present, as the last of them disappeared in the distance.

“The gathered troops were dismissed, and the Officer, followed by most of his staff, including myself entered the building. We were all anxious to know what had happened on the battle plane. But I must stop now. I’ll continue next time.”

H.J.L.: “Yes, Jack, you must be off at once.”

J.W.: "Half a minute. I want you to make inquiries about a certain matter. Recently I read in the Occult Review an article by an airman, who inquired whether anyone knew whether there were occult forces which ruled the air and were hostile to man."

H.J.L.: "The answer is in the affirmative, as they say in Parliament, but we will collect further information on the whole subject, and let you know later.

"Now, good-bye." And I returned to earth.

Chapter XII

I Go out in Search of F.

December 14th, 1917

When I heard this morning of the death of J.H.F. in action, I blamed myself for not having told him when last I saw him at G___ P___ of what I knew of life on the astral plane. It might have been of such help to him, and now six weeks had elapsed, and in that period he might, through ignorance, have been led astray. Therefore I determined not to wait till Monday, but to go out the same night, seeking him.

As this (Friday, Dec. 14th) was not my usual night I foresaw difficulties I, nevertheless, adopted special steps before lying down to sleep.

Apparently I had little difficulty in getting clear of my physical body, for I soon found myself in front of the house where R.L.W. dwelt. On entering I found there only mother, who said, "What's the matter? I was just going out. Surely this is not your usual night."

"No," I replied, and told her briefly my purpose in coming, inquiring at the same time where H.J.L. and R.L.W. were.

Mother: "H.J.L. is in the spirit plane, and will not return till Monday. Rex is at headquarters attending to some sort of duty. I don't exactly know what it is."

J.W.: "Where is it?"

Mother came to the door, directing me how to proceed, adding, "I believe it is some way off, but it won't take you long, of course. It never does here."

So, I started off on my journey.

I soon left the town behind me, and found myself passing along a road bordered with tall poplars. I passed a small spinney on the right, and over a low hill. I traveled fast, and it did not seem long before I saw R.L.W. coming rapidly towards me.

As soon as we met, he said: "I was surprised to receive your call, but gathered you were seeking a friend who had been killed." I told him what had happened, and he then said, "You've got the number complete?"

So I repeated it. "I want to find Private J.H.F., No. 762128, 1st Artists' Rifles, D Company, 13 Platoon."

R.L.W.: "We will go to headquarters and look him up in our books."

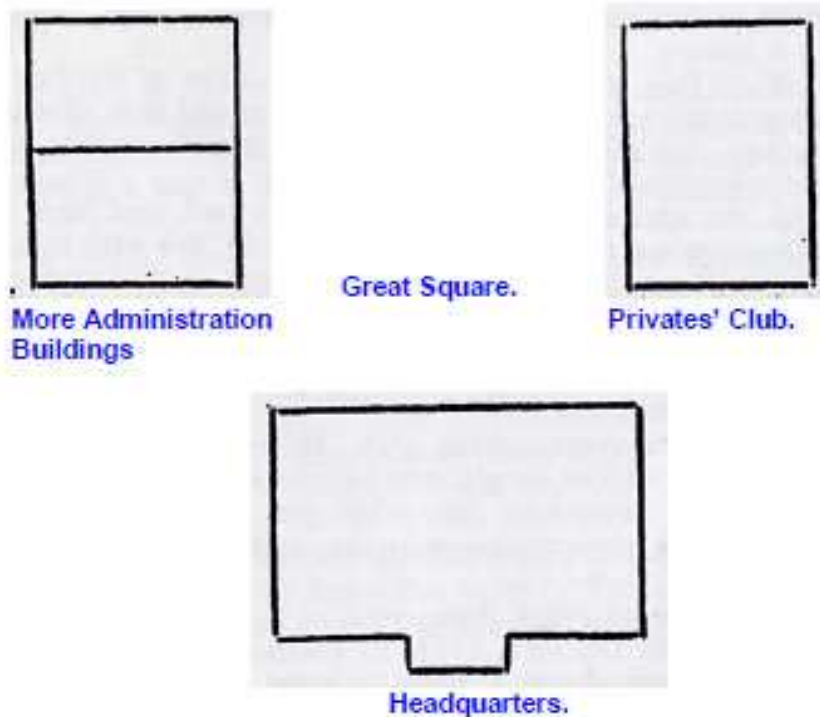
So we continued our journey and soon saw a fine block of buildings in a large park was what on earth must have been a fine French chateau, built in the style of about 1770. A broad flight of steps led up to the main door, which was supported on either side by two great classical columns.

R.L.W.: "Large as this building is, it was not large enough, so you will see on either side are two other chateaux in a somewhat similar style."

We walked round this huge mass of buildings, and found that these two other chateaux had been placed at right angles behind the first buildings.

We passed through a narrow passage on the right as we faced headquarters, and R. L. W. said, "This building is a club for the privates and 'non-corns.' All officers are honorary members, but the whole management is in the hands of a committee elected by the privates and 'non-coms.'"

"It's a fine place, with every form of mental amusement you can conceive. Officer's Club, etc."



“The building on the other side of the square is divided into two blocks. The wing on the right (as we face the main building) contains additional administrative quarters, while the other half is the officer’s club.

“This square was the scene of the triumph of the Officer over the enemy, which I described to you on the last occasion.

“We’ll waste no more time, though, but go into the main block.”

J.W.: “Just a moment. How did you get those three buildings together?”

R.L.W.: “Headquarters is the original chateau which, when destroyed, came to this spot, which corresponds with its original site in France. We used it as it stands for some time, merely making a few internal adjustments to suit our present needs.

“As our organization expanded we needed more room. So we moved, piece by piece, these other two from their original location. The men did it themselves, under suitable direction. The methods were very similar to those which would be applied on earth. These buildings were semi-material, you must remember, and not like those in the next plane, where the fortunate inhabitants can construct great buildings out of their mind stuff. They are still working at the officers’ club,” and he pointed to one corner where a large number of men in their shirt sleeves were busy adding, “We have made a very considerable rearrangement of the interior, putting in new walls in some places, and leaving them out in others. But come; let us go back to the front. We can go over the whole block at another time.”

So soon we were passing up the flight of steps which led us into a magnificent central hall.

We turned down a passage on the left and Rex opened a door on the right of this passage and led me into a large room which was evidently a library.

R.L.W.: “This was the library, but many of the books we have handed over to the town library, run by the old man of whom I spoke some time ago. We needed the space for our own books, and particularly for the register.”

He took me into a small room at the end, and here we found a young sergeant at a table, to whom he said, "We wish to trace a man, Artists' Rifles, name J.H.F. By the way, Jack, I suppose you are sure that was his real name?"

J.W.: "Oh, yes, quite certain of it. What makes you ask?"

R.L.W.: "Sometimes we get men who have enlisted under another name. When they come here they often give their real name. Afterwards they tell us their assumed name, and so we have to cross-reference them.

Sergeant: "About what date, sir?"

R.L.W.: "30th October, 1917, 13 Platoon, D Company." The sergeant got down a large volume finely bound. It was labeled "Artists' Rifles, Volume III., August, 1917."

R.L.W.: "We register them under their regiments but, of course, often we have to have cross references when a man has been transferred from one regiment to another."

I noticed the book was arranged in alphabetical order, with twenty-three pages index at the front, one letter to each page, except "I" and "J", "Q" and "R", "X" and "Z," which had only one page.

Running through index "F," the sergeant rattled off several names, and then stopped. "F.J.H. This must be the man, sir, page 163. The book has filled up very fast lately."

He turned over the pages rapidly, and then handed the book to Rex, saying, "Here you are, sir."

R.L.W. read as follows: J.H.P., No. 762128, D Company, 13 Platoon. Killed in action between the dates October 27th and November 3rd (visit of J.W.).' (You see, Jack, we use your visits to help out our chronology, and we find it difficult to be precise in our dates unless a newly slain man is certain, and this chap wasn't, as you will see.)" He continued, "This man was brought in by Privates Simpson and Reid. He appeared very dazed, and could give no clear account of himself. Private Reid reported that he found the newcomer wandering vaguely up and down the earth battle plane and persuaded him to come with him. All they could get out of the newcomer was. 'I want a drink damned badly. I feel beastly queer.'

"He was taken to Captain G., who spoke as follows:

"Captain G: "Private F., you have now left the earth for this, the astral plane. You have given your life in a good cause as have all those with whom you are now associated. We are anxious to help you in every way we can. To do so we require all the information you can give us about yourself. Can you tell me how you were killed?"

"Private F. "No, sir. There was a hell of a bombardment, but I don't remember what happened till I found myself wandering about in a fog. Don't remember much till these two found me and brought me here. Perhaps if I had a drink, and something to eat, I'd feel clearer."

"Captain G: "You don't need either here, and will soon feel better. Can you tell me anything about yourself - who you were on earth, what profession or trade? Been in the East, I think?"

"Private F: "Yes, in Burma. Came home to get a commission, and didn't get it. Beastly shame, I call it. But I can't think clearly."

"Captain G. then put sundry questions to Private F., but as he could get no clear answer, put down this entry: "Private F. evidently inclined to need drink. This should be guarded against, and I have handed him over to Dr. C."

"Private F. was then examined by Dr. C., who reports as follows:- "Private F. of the

Artists' Rifles appears to be suffering from death by shell shock. There appear no traces of wounds, but conditions are not clear. I believe killed by a shell, but there appear to be other complications. Condition of death seems to have resulted in soul being in a disturbed and muddled state. He should be watched carefully. Strong tendency to alcoholism: not necessarily chronic. Strong materialistic tendencies. Animal appetites greatly in evidence. Recommend he be placed amid cheerful surroundings. Taken to entertainments. Every endeavor should be made to distract his attention from (1) his own condition, and (2) earth conditions."

"The report was acted upon, and the above-mentioned privates took Private F. to the privates' club and watched over him.

"Private F., however, proved himself a difficult case. He was unable to shake off the desire for food and drink. At all times exceedingly amiable, he yet displayed an obstinate nature on this subject. He escaped from the club on several occasions, and was persuaded to return only after considerable difficulty.

"The latest report is that he recently left the club and was seen in the company of some very undesirable characters. It is doubtful then it will be possible to save this man from his besetting temptation."

R.L.W. ceased and then said, "Not a very hopeful report. I fear it means that he has gone back to the earth plane with these 'undesirables,' and if so, there can be but one end:"

J.W.: "Poor old F. Well, I'm going to make an effort anyway. Do you think we can find him?"

R.L.W.: "Perhaps you can. There is the bond of friendship to help you. We hadn't that, you see. I'll come with you." So we left headquarters and, concentrating my mind on F., I felt myself drawn in a certain direction. We passed rapidly across the astral plane. Thence we descended to the earth plane. On this we passed amid shadowy towns and buildings, and always the atmosphere grew more dark and foggy. At length we came to what must have been London. We paused finally in front of a low drinking den, somewhere in the East End.

"But all 'pubs' will be shut at this hour of the night," I said.

R.L.W.: "Not all. These illicit drinking clubs still survive. Being illicit, only the most hardened reprobates are to be found here."

The house we entered appeared a dilapidated place, but once inside we found it was lighted up and fairly bright. There seemed a fair number of men and women present, and many astrals battenning upon them, but I hardly had time to notice this before I spied P., and clapped him on the shoulder. "Good God!" he cried; "are you dead too?"

J. W.: "No; I'm not dead, but I've just come to find you."

F. "You're wrong, W—, you're dead, and don't know it. It took me some time to twig that myself; but as I'm dead, you must be."

I argued the matter with him, and asked him to come away with me, but he said, "Have a drink, old chap! I've just discovered how it's done. It's taken me a devil of a long time to do so, but thanks to that chap over there. I've learnt the trick at last. Come along!"

Then began a strong tussle between our respective will powers, but luckily, he was evidently not very strong in that faculty, and R. L. W. helped also, so that at length we got him outside. His companions were so busy satisfying their own appetites that they did not worry about him. Once outside, R.L.W. and I painted such a terrible picture of the results which would flow from his proposed action that we frightened him rather badly, and he agreed to come back with us. He seemed also

greatly impressed by my coming to help. As I said good bye to R.L.W. I said to him, "Did I interrupt you in any work you were doing?"

R.L.W.: "I should just think you did. I was right in the middle of a lecture to a class of officers when I felt you calling me. I knew you wouldn't be here unless for some good reason, so I got another man to take my place and came straight off to see you.

"But now we must part. Hope to see you all the same on Monday."
So I returned direct to earth.

Chapter XIII

The Rout of the Enemy

December 17th - 18th, 1917

As soon as I entered the room where R.L.W. sat I said: "What has happened to F.?"

R.L.W. replied, "He is still at the club but, of course, I can't say how he will develop. Without allowing any more conversation, he resumed his narrative of the previous week.

"We all gathered in a large room where we usually meet to discuss matters, and as soon as we had taken our places round the table the Officer began: 'When I arrived back on the earth plane I found a regular battle raging between our men and the enemy.

"At first sight it must have been difficult for a newcomer to distinguish it from the other astral battle.

"None of us, however, had any doubt on the matter, and flung ourselves into the fray. As you know, until the fight near the club I have not fought since my great battle in Hell. Now, however, I was on the side of the angels.

"The enemy were endeavoring to drive us clean off the earth plane into the dream plane, and if possible, even out of that. If successful in that it meant that all intercourse between the better astral being and the newly slain would be prevented. The earth folk who wander on to the dream plane would, in like manner find only the more evil astral beings, and I need not dilate on the disastrous results.

"But such a scheme was far too ambitious. The evil powers are always incapable of cooperation or of coordinated effort. To be short, I came into the battle line with 10,000 men, having picked up sundry reinforcements by the way, and as I came I sent out thought messages calling up all who were not already busily engaged.

"On the earth battle-field groups of our party were still at work rescuing the newly slain or beating off isolated attacks but between them and us lay the main body of the enemy.

"Often the swaying battle line seemed to rise in the air, and the tide of the war fluctuated rapidly over the heads of the newly slain who, for the most part, seemed not to perceive us.

"From the further side, or edge of the second division, came out swarms of degraded obsessing spirits who hurled themselves into the fight with the utmost fury. Still our line held, and even pressed them back. But from the lowest division of all the evil elements began to rise.

"In front of them rushed the elementals of the second division, either of their own will or possibly driven forward by the still more evil creatures who now began to appear.

"As these appalling apparitions came in view, the mortal battle which was raging on earth increased in intensity. Similarly the newly slain who fought over the same ground raged even more fiercely, but the worst effect was mainly felt in our struggle. The battle in Hell was nothing compared to it, and it was not surprising that some of my men, struck with terror at the sight of the evil elementals from the gateway of Hell, should fall back a little. I was just on the point of calling in you who were at headquarters, and those blockading the club, in a last desperate endeavor to stay the advance, which was gathering speed every moment, when suddenly a wave of white fire flowed over our heads, followed by another and another.

“As they kept on sweeping down we perceived they were spirits of light, far higher than ourselves, who had come to our aid. Whence they came, I know not. Maybe from the army who are ever battling with the elementals of the gateway of Hell. I think, however, that some, at least, had descended from above, possibly even come from beyond the wall of fire which bounds the spirit plane

“These new reinforcements quickly turned the tide of war. The elementals of the first division were swept from sight, the elementals of the second division followed them. The white spirits also rushed down in pursuit, nor did they appear to attack the evil mortals, being content apparently to leave us to deal with them.

“But heartened by this sight, we rushed in more fiercely and broke through the enemy, and, on seeing this, the astral men of the second division fled back to their own dens.

“We now devoted our attention to shattering the last remnants of the enemy. Immediately their lack of cohesion became manifest. All attempts at a concerted rearguard action were abandoned. They scattered in every direction, some flying on to the dream plane, others attempting to hide among the newly slain, while numbers turned and dashed wildly down from crag to crag into the crevices of the second division.

“Nor did we give them any rest. They had plagued the astral plane and hampered our work too long. Wherever we found them we drove them over the precipices. In and out among the newly slain we dashed, hunting down the enemy, till at length I cried enough!” and we swept back through the plane of the dreamers. Strange to say, the enemy seemed to stand out among the others. One might almost say that they bore the mark of Cain upon them. We passed among the dreamers as we had among the newly slain, hunting only the enemy, and when we found them we drove them across the earth plane into the second division.

“At length I stayed the fight and, on the edge of the earth plane, where it merged into the dream plane I spoke the strong words that bind, and when I had finished I bade all the army repeat these words after me.

“In the name of God Most High, and by the might of Christ and His apostles, by the saints above and the angelic sword, we bid you lie in the realms of night. Lie there and come no more till your astral bodies melt and fall. Then may the Lord remember you.”

“The astral plane is free of them at last. Doubtless there are many who have escaped, and new ones will arise, but for the time their opposition is broken. Remember this, gentlemen, there is a time for mercy and time for justice, and often justice is the greatest mercy. For, as in this case, by dealing out stern justice we save thousands from a like fate. These will tempt no more.’

We were silent for a space, but to some of us it seemed that the Officer was inclined to be ruthless in the extreme. Our hearts sank at the awful doom and gasped at what we almost felt was his presumption. At length one man voiced the feelings of several.

“Sir, I boldly ask, are you justified in such strong measures? It is for God alone to judge and doom men to Hell. For, to be blunt, your spell means that, for if they cannot climb from out the second division, they must fall to Hell. By what authority I ask.”

“The Officer smiled grimly. ‘By the same authority that made me founder of this organization. By the power of my will, and if any wish to strive against it, I challenge him here and now. But if you mean by what right I do this thing, meaning how can I justify myself, I answer this: In every society of men there exists some system of law

and order, suited to their condition, and to enforce the laws of the community, penalties exist. Sometimes these are inflicted by one man in the name of all, sometimes the people themselves inflict the penalties.

“Here too, law exists, and evil-doers must be restrained lest the innocent should suffer. As head of this society, who has more right than I to inflict such penalties as are necessary? But further, not every person here knows how to inflict punishment suitable to such offences, for take note, the object of this spell is not so much to punish the wrong-doer as to protect others from him.

“And further, except a man have a strong will, tempered like steel in the fire of adversity, he cannot impress his will on others, nor even focus the united will of many upon one object, as I did in this case.

“If, then, any man considers I have done wrong, he is free. Let him go where he will, no one shall bid him stay.’

“But no one moved, and so the Officer dismissed us,”

R.L.W. paused, and then added (answering a thought of mine), “The soldiers had no difficulty in hearing the second spell, if so you like to call it. It was a thought, and as he desired all to know it, they heard it.

“What the first spell was I cannot say, but I presume it was couched in more occult terms than the second one, which was intended to focus the will-power of the whole army upon the object he wished to attain.”

Chapter XIV

A Death in Hospital

“As soon as I got outside, I looked up the other private who had told me he had died in hospital. We then went round to a little office I have at headquarters, where he gave me the following narrative:-

“I was struck by a fragment of shrapnel, which cut through into my lung. There were several other pieces in different parts of my body, but they wouldn't have mattered. I turned queer, and all went black. When I awoke I was in a hospital behind the firing-line. I was in awful pain, and couldn't help groaning. Doctors and nurses seemed to flit through my dreams, but I have little clear recollection of this period.

“Next thing I remember was being borne into another room, I suppose an operating theatre, where I was chloroformed. Now, strange to say, almost at once my mind grew clearer and, instead of losing complete consciousness, I found myself floating in the air, but fully alive to what was going on. My body was stretched on the operating table, but what interested me far more than the actual operation was the new point of view from which I was able to observe things. Men and inanimate objects looked different from what I remembered them. The men seemed to be double, to have a light figure inside a gray form. Sometimes the light figure shone beyond the gray, but more often it seemed embedded in it. Moreover, these figures varied in color. Some were very beautiful, and seemed to be shot with rays of green and purple, yellow, blue, and pink. Others were a steady yellow, while a few were an ugly orange brown or angry red.

“While I was still speculating on what these changes meant, I heard one of the doctors say, “It's no use. Better take him back. If we go on he'll die on the table.”

“Poor fellow! His number's up,” remarked another man, who seemed to be arranging bandages. I was vaguely conscious that my body was being carried back to the ward, and drifted along by its side. Once back in the ward, they put a screen round my bed, and everyone except the nurse left me.

“Suddenly I thought, “I'll go back into my body,” and next moment I felt crushed and pressed by a great weight. I heard a scream. It was my own voice. Consciousness seemed to be slipping from me. Now I realized that I was dying, and I didn't want to go. My will seemed to gather itself together, and my whole physical body shook with convulsions. An awful pain seemed to rend me, but I distinctly remember struggling up into a sitting position. That must have been my last effort. I seemed to collapse, and lost consciousness. Then once more I found myself floating over my body. Suddenly a strong wind caught me and whirled me round like a bit of thistle-down. I thought I was a boat in a raging storm, and even felt the rope which moored me to the shore. The fury of the storm increased, and the cord snapped.

Instantly I was whirling amid waves of darkness. Up and down, to and fro I danced, till at length daylight appeared. The dark storm-waves seemed to pile up into one huge wave and hurl me on to a rocky shore. As they did so I heard someone reading the funeral service, but I had no time to attend to it. I scrambled quickly to my feet and looked round at the sea, but there was none, simply the same strange ground as that which lay in front of me.

“I was puzzled at the time, and still am, but did not stay still for very long. I remembered the story of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and how Pilgrim had to cross a river on the further bank of which lay the New Jerusalem. That was the only bit of information

I had about the next world, but I took the hint, and set out to seek it. I am still seeking it.'

"He paused, and then went on. 'I walked straight ahead, and the ground seemed to rise upwards, till by degrees it changed into rolling downs with gorse, juniper, and such small shrubs.'

"I (R.L.W.) said, 'Oh, the dream plane.'

"He took no notice of my remark, but went on. 'I was feeling terribly lonely - not a sign of life. Not an animal, much less a man, and I sat down and wept. Yes, I know it sounds womanish, but I wept. And as I sat there weeping, strange forms began to flit across the downs. At first they were dull and shadowy, but by degrees they grew clear and substantial, and suddenly I gave a shout of delight, for there I saw my mother and father. He didn't see me, strange to say, and floated away in spite of all I could do to detain him, but at my first cry of "Mother !" she turned towards me. For a moment I thought she was blind, for her eyes were shut but in another moment they opened, and we knew each other.

"We had a tremendous lot to say but, strange to relate, we hardly touched on my death. We preferred to talk over old times, especially my boyhood days.

"Suddenly she broke off, and a wail of sorrow rose in the air. "I must go!" she cried, and turned and fled. I screamed, "Don't go yet!" but rapidly she moved away. I rushed after her, but she went even more swiftly. I stumbled, fell, sprang up, and fell again. She was gone!

"I rushed on, frantic with grief, heeding nothing, intent only on finding her once more. Darkness had taken the place of the twilight, but in spite of it, my surroundings seemed new and strange. Instead of rocks or downs, trees and buildings loomed up amid the gloom.

"The sound of weeping fell upon my ears. I heard my mother's voice. I was outside their house. I recognized it, despite the gloom, and the shadowy, unsubstantial form which it now seemed to have.

"I followed her voice, and through the very walls I passed into their room. She was sitting up in bed, calling my name, and crying bitterly. My father was doing his best, in a man's clumsy way, to comfort her.

"I went to her and put my arm round her neck and kissed her, but she neither saw nor felt.

"Why is it we can see these mortals, but they cannot see or even hear us?"

"Without waiting for me (R.L.W.) to reply, he went on.

"After a while I could bear the sight no longer and wandered away.

"Through familiar streets I passed, and slowly I drifted towards what must have been the place where my body lay.

"I found myself within sound of guns. The roar of battle grew around me, and it was there I met the young Officer and the other chap with whom you found me.

"I saw men fighting, but I knew my fighting days were over. Truth to tell for some time I thought they were living - perhaps some were - but by degrees I realized many were just as I was. However, I felt no call to join in, and it was then that a group of soldiers came up and told me about this club. So we agreed to go along with them and soon after we fell in with your band and witnessed the battle between your two parties.

"You know the rest; but now, in return for my death story' (he smiled at the phrase), 'perhaps you'll explain things to me. Above all, is there a golden city of Zion, or is that a fable?"

“So I told him briefly what life on this side was like, and added, ‘The golden city of Zion I do not know, because I think it is still a long way off but I hope some day to see it. But in the next plane to this - the spirit plane - are many beautiful golden cities, I understand, and if you reach these you will find that they will more than repay you for the arduous journey.’

“So I left him in charge with several men with whom I thought he would be in sympathy.”

Rex stopped for a moment, and H. J.L. spoke. “Time to be off, Jack.”

So saying good-bye to all, I returned to earth.

Chapter XV

Christmas Day on the Astral Plane

December 24th - 25th, 1917

As I came to the door of their house I found the three on the doorstep. "A Happy Christmas!" they said together, and R. L. W. added; "It's a good thing you weren't here early, for if you had been you would have found the house empty. We've just come back from church."

We were now in the house, and as we sat down, R.L.W. continued. "Yes, mother wanted to go to church, as it was Christmas Day, so we went to the Midnight Mass in Ypres Cathedral."

Mother. "It was a splendid service, and I enjoyed the singing immensely."

J.W.: "It was choral, then?"

R.L.W.: "Oh, yes, and there was a procession too. The last time I was in that cathedral was when I was on earth. It was a sad picture, I assure you. There was a huge congregation, and, do you know, we felt we were in communion with those on earth; It was a strange sensation, and difficult to describe, but there was no doubt of it."

J.W.: "What time do you follow here?"

R.L.W.: "Greenwich. We are used to it; even French time was only a few minutes different. But it is only on occasions like this that we trouble about time. You see, we desire to synchronize with men on earth, and therefore have to make our time fit theirs. We unite our prayers with earth folk, and so become for a moment caught within the circle of time, but only for a short time so long as we wish to be united with them."

J.W.: "Being Anglican, why did you not go to one of our services? Any special reason?"

R.L.W.: "Mother wanted to see a fine service, and I thought I would like to see Ypres under happier circumstances, and as H.J.L. did not mind one way or the other, we went there."

H.J.L.: "I wonder how many people realize how closely the unseen world is linked with the material. Very few, I expect, despite their constant repetition of the sentence 'the communion of saints.' I think however, they should have written it 'the communion of souls,' for we are mostly far from saints as yet."

We were all silent for a moment, and then I said, "How do you propose to spend, Christmas Day here? Yes, I was a bit late getting off to bed. Christmas presents, etc., you know."

R.L.W.: "Well, this is my programme. There is no Christmas dinner for us here, so our amusements are mostly mental.

"12.45 to 1.30. Midnight Mass.

"Till you leave we shall be together here. Then I shall go to the festivities at headquarters. The soldiers are having various forms of entertainment. There is a popular concert in one room; amateur theatricals in another; dancing in a third. The Officer has allowed invitations to be sent out to members of the women's organization. Your old friend, Sister Maria, belongs to that, by the way.

"You see, there is a special organization to deal with women. I've spoken to you about the Nunnery of St Benedict in one of my recent talks. I must give you a chapter on the subject one day.

“Well, quite a number have accepted and are coming, I understand. As you know, we usually keep our men away from the fair sex, but an occasional meeting will do good rather than harm.

“They have arranged a dance. I suspect it will not be the success they imagine it will be. It’s too physical an amusement. Still, that’s their affair. “Some of the arty-crafty people are coming down and are going to present everyone with gifts of their own handiwork. I shall appreciate that largely, but I’m afraid most of the men will find their things a bit too arty for their tastes. “Then there is a draughts tournament and a chess ditto. H.J.L. is going to that. Rather rough luck on his opponents, isn’t it? There are many other side-shows besides.

“Well, I shall look in at all that’s going on.

“I shall not go to any more services though there are plenty to choose from.

“After leaving headquarters I am going to a real miracle play, The Nativity. It is to be given in one of the medieval divisions of this plane, at about 11 a.m. earth time. It’s in the period of about 1450, I understand, and will be in the open air.

“Let me finish.

“These plays are fairly long, so I shan’t wait to the end but I shall go and see some Yuletide revels of the seventeenth century - see one of the advantages of being dead, and of knowing your way about here.

“After that I don’t know whether I shall go back to early Saxon pre-Christian times, and see how they kept Yuletide, or whether I shall go to a pantomime. Rather different, eh ?

“Anyway, I shall end up at the opera. There is a new one which is to be brought out for the first time to-night.. It’s called *The Three Magi*. It deals, of course, with the whole story of the Nativity, but there’s a magical and occult touch which would appeal to you.”

J.W.: “Who’s it by?”

R.L.W.: “Mozart. He’s in the spirit plane, and the opera has already been produced there. One of the spirit beings, who works on this plane like H.J.L. does, brought it down to us.”

J.W.: “I wish they’d bring it down to earth,”

R.L.W. smiled. “Perhaps they will, some day, and some musician on earth will receive the credit. Well, I hope it will be presented on earth.”

H.J.L.: “Rather beyond most opera-goers on earth, I fancy,”

J.W.: “Probably. Still, there is *The Magic Flute*.”

H.J.L.: “True, but I fancy this is much more occult, and even *The Magic Flute* would hardly be considered a popular opera.”

R.L.W.: “Well, you see what a lot one can do in an earth day here, and yet synchronize one’s time. That’s one of the advantages of needing neither food nor sleep. Of course, on the fifth division people will be having Christmas dinners (of a sort) and sleeping off the effects afterwards. Funny, isn’t it?”

We all laughed, and said, “Well, if it’s any consolation for you to know, we haven’t had any turkey ourselves this Christmas.”

This led to conversation about the war, and mother remarked, “It seems to me the world’s a very uncomfortable place just now. I am glad I have left it.”

R.L.W. then began again. “Last time I concluded the series of chapters dealing with the Officer’s organization. I gave you not only a description of how we work, but also typical cases showing the different kinds of experiences men have at death. While I won’t say that they cover every case, I do think they cover the majority of men who die in battle. If any striking variants occur to me later, I will give them. At

the same time, you might like to glance through them again, and if there are any normal types of men whose death you have not described, mention it and I will find someone who can describe them.”

J.W.: “Of course, most of these were war deaths, but mother shows a long and peculiar illness. Then I have H.J.L., who was a man of middle-age and average type; and the Officer, who was a bad type. You have given one or two women killed during the war, so I don’t think we need worry about any more examples unless something special crops up.”

R.L.W.: “Very good. Now, I have given you the chief crisis in the development of the organization. Since then, though there have been sporadic attempts to organize an opposition, we have never had anything so bad as the great battle in which the spirits of light came to our aid.

“So I shall give you no more about that subject for a while though, if necessary, I can return to it later.”

J. W.: “How’s F.?”

R.L.W.: “Still with us. I think we shall hold him now, though he won’t be much use for a long time.”

J.W.: “What new theme do you propose?”

R.L.W.: “You remember B.’s constant inquiries about fairies . also your own? Well, we have investigated the matter, and I propose to give you several chapters on the subject. Now, very few mortals trouble about the non-mortal beings over here, and so I think you will find that much that I have discovered will be absolutely new to the majority of your readers-if you have any. It would be new to most people, even here.

“Now, as your next visit will usher in a new year, I think it would be a good time to introduce you to a new world-for Fairyland is a new world, differing in many ways from this normal astral world.

H.J.L.: “Well, it’s time you returned.” So having again wished all three a Happy Christmas, and having promised to give similar messages from them to C. and B., I turned to go, when R.L.W. called out, “Tell B. the true history of Fairyland begins in the next chapter.” We all laughed, and I departed.

Chapter XVI

Of the Nature of Fairies

December 31st, 1917 - January 1st, 1918

As soon as I had wished them all a Happy New Year, at which they laughed, H.L.J. spoke: "We laughed at the idea of a New Year but after all I think we laughed too soon. For what you mean surely is: may this period of your life be better than that which went before, and that is well said."

Then R.L.W. began.

"I will begin your New Year with a subject and its title shall be 'Fairyland,' as promised last time.

"Now let me begin by saying that at first I thought the only fairies which really existed were those elementals of whom you already know, such as the astral elements thrown off by children, and which took the forms of fairies because of the dreams of little children; but I find there is another order of beings, but few of the earth folk know anything about them. Before describing to you anything about them, I will give a few general deductions I have drawn from what I saw.

"I think that these beings are souls in the making, spirit beings who have not yet been incarnate on earth. I think when they pass from this plane some, at least, become incarnate in men or animals or flowers. They are of various orders, approximating to the above three types of life on earth but, as the matter will be clearer after you have heard about my adventures I will pass on to another point.

"Their character is very different from ours and yet bears certain traits in common with our own. They are less serious than men and are very irresponsible as a rule. They seem often to be mischievous rather than wicked, but some are undoubtedly hostile to men and actually malevolently inclined towards us, while others are friendly and sympathetic. They have a culture of their own in some points similar to ours, but in others quite different, but this culture varies considerably among themselves.

"They are seldom serious for long, and are lacking for the most part, in concentration. They combine often in temporary organizations, but quickly forget their original purpose and either scatter again or follow some other whim.

"They pass from the astral plane like we do, but some depart to the spirit plane, and their astral forms vanish, while others descend to the earth with their astral bodies, and become incorporated in the material envelope which transmutes their former fairy body into an astral body suitable for their new life. Once they have left the astral plane for the earth, they do not return at death to Fairyland, but to this portion of the astral plane. Henceforth they are part of the earth and their development, whether as flowers or man, belongs to the history of our world.

"What happens to those who go to the spirit plane I cannot yet say. Perhaps later I shall find out.

"One other point, and then to my narrative. It seems evident that when the fairies become mundane, to a certain extent their progress is thrown back. Probably, however, this is more apparent than real, as it is probable that they acquire new characteristics of which they are in need and in due course develop in a higher degree those faculties which for a time have been overclouded. At the same time, it is evident that to some extent it is a step backward for a flower fairy to become encased permanently in an earthly flower, to lose its form of movement and individual consciousness, to become inarticulate to a great extent, and so forth. You will understand what I mean more fully when I have finished my narrative.

“Now to my adventures in Fairyland.”

Chapter XVII

The Search for Fairyland

“Partly because of the constant inquiries of B. about whether there were fairies, and partly because I was myself interested in the subject, I determined to probe the question fully.

“I therefore began to inquire from everyone I met whether there were fairies here. For the most part I was laughed at for my pains and told not to be a fool. One or two, however, said they had seen fairies but on investigation these proved to be only elementals of the type I have spoken of before.”

I (J.W.) then spoke. “Yes, I know the sort you mean. W. A. described them fairly completely in *Gone West*.”

R.L.W. nodded, and went on. “At length one man said, ‘Don’t be a fool. If you want to play at being a child play with children.’ “The idea struck me as being much better than the speaker supposed, so I went into the park where there are always children playing, and began to question all I saw.

“However, for some time I had no better result. Some of the children laughed at me, as their elders had done, while others said they had never seen any fairies, though they would like to do so.

“At length, however, I came across two little girls, who seemed to play mainly by themselves, and took little part in the games of the other children.

“When I asked them my usual question, ‘Do you know if there are any fairies?’ they looked at me shyly, and said, ‘Yes, but you won’t find any here.’

“‘Where shall I find them?’ I said.

“‘In Fairyland,’ they replied.

“‘Where is Fairyland?’

‘We know, but I don’t think the fairies would like us to tell you. It’s a great secret.’

“For some time I could get no more out of them, but I kept coming back to them, and gradually won their confidence by telling them all the fairy tales I knew. Sometimes they would say, ‘Yes, that’s just like the fairies are,’ but often they would say, ‘No, I don’t believe fairies ever did that.’

“So at length they agreed to take me into Fairyland, and we set out together.

“After a while the town was left behind, and we came into fields, and in due course to a wood, where the children led me to a rock overgrown with bushes. Pushing these aside they showed me the opening of a cave. In the crevices of the rocks were all kinds of ferns.

“Now the names of the children were Beryl and Joyce.

“Beryl said, ‘We go in here.’ So in we crept, and I found myself in a narrow cave which was so low that I had to stoop. In a short time it grew higher and broader so that I was able to walk upright. “Strange to say, it was not very dark, so that we were able to see our way quite plainly.

“Presently we came to what appeared to be the end of the passage. I saw in front of us nothing but the rock wall of the cave, but Joyce ran her fingers over the surface, and seemed to pull a knob of rock, whereupon part of the rock swung back and revealed a kind of doorway. Through this we passed, and Beryl pulled another knob of rock, which must have moved a lever, for the door closed behind us.

“We were in quite a large limestone ball, with shining pillars of stalagmite formation. These were white, and the place was lit by a kind of phosphorescent glow.

“Beryl said, ‘Isn’t it lovely!’ but Joyce said, ‘I think the pink hall is prettier.’ ‘I was delighted, and said so, but Joyce said, ‘There are lots of prettier places, as you’ll see. I think the palace of the Gnome King must be lovely.’

“We passed across the hall, chatting like this, till we came to an archway, which led us into a pink hall. Here the stalagmite pillars were of a soft rose colour, and I quite agreed with Joyce that this was the prettier of the two.

“Thence we passed through a blue hall. The pillars, roof, and walls were of a turquoise blue, and beyond this was a great hall of white quartz.

“‘See the gold?’ said Beryl, and, sure enough, there were veins of gold and other metals running through the quartz.

“Now, the first three halls seemed the work of nature only, but the pillars here had evidently been cut into their present shape by some intelligent agent.

“They were not highly finished, but they were evidently cut square, and not natural.

“On the left was an arched doorway, and Beryl murmured, ‘That door leads to the place where the gnomes and dwarfs live. I’ve never been there.’

“‘Why not?’ I inquired. ‘We’re afraid to,’ they answered together; ‘they mightn’t let us out again, you see.’

“‘What do they do?’ I continued.

“‘They get the gold and jewels out of the earth, and make beautiful things. The fairies say they have such lovely palaces in there but we’ve never been there.’ ‘They seemed rather frightened lest the gnomes should catch them, so we hurried on. ‘Roof, floor, and walls were all of the same material, but it was not always white. Some pillars were pink, and some green or blue.

“At length I saw a star of light, and, as we approached it, the phosphorescent light gave place to daylight.

“As we continued our journey I heard the tinkle of falling water, and presently found a little stream running down one side of the passage near the left-hand wall. At length we saw ferns, and in another moment were out of the cave.

“The little stream fell in a miniature cascade over the rocks into the valley below, where it formed a broad pool in a natural basin made of marble.

“A natural stairway led down into this valley, but before we went down it, we paused to admire the view.

“It was a glorious one; hills and valleys covered with trees, many of them in flower, stretched as far as we could see in every direction. Graceful ferns edged the waterfall, and bulrushes quivered in a slight breeze at the edge of the pool.

“We descended the natural stairway, and the grass was covered with all manner of wild flowers which on earth are found at different seasons of the year. Bushes, covered with wild roses, overhung the pool, and at their feet nestled violets and primroses. A little further off, under some tall oak trees, were wood anemones and bluebells. Harebells and corn-cockles grew side by side among the tall grass of a rolling meadow, while poppies were everywhere, throwing up by contrast daisies of all descriptions, buttercups, and sharlock.

“I won’t give you a botanical list, for I have given you sufficient to indicate the profusion of blossoms.

“The air was laden with the scent of the honeysuckle and wild thyme, and I bent forward to pluck some of the former, but Joyce screamed out, ‘You mustn’t; it’s the home of a fairy.’

“Even as she was speaking something flew in my face and tweaked my nose viciously. I instinctively put up my hands to brush it off, but it flew out of sight in an instant.

Next moment I felt a sharp prick in my ankle and then saw a tiny figure dive into a rosebud. I had hardly time to get over my surprise when I felt several sharp tugs at my hair, and next instant my hat went splash into the pool.

“‘The fairies are angry with you,’ said Beryl, ‘for wanting to pluck the flowers.’

“‘How can I quiet them?’ I began, but the rest of my speech was cut off by a fly in my nose. I sneezed, and another tiny creature tumbled to the ground. It seemed none the worse, for it scampered out of sight behind a dock leaf.

“‘Let’s sing to them,’ said Joyce, and they sang, ‘Up the airy mountain, down the rushy glen.’

“As the song proceeded the fairies ceased to plague me, and began to appear in the mouths of the flowers.

“From every harebell little figures dressed in blue appeared. Pink and white fairies nestled amid the leaves of the rosebuds, or swung on the twigs and leaves. A primrose at my feet suddenly became alive with little beings, and even the grasses seemed to have their fairy inhabitants.

“I looked at my cap, and was surprised to see gay little watermen in white and yellow liveries scrambling into it from the water-lilies. They plucked spear-shaped leaves from some of the water plants, in spite of the angry protests of little green fairies who pushed several of them into the water. But the water-lily fairies did not mind in the least. They laughed and gurgled, and climbed back into my hat, and at length, having got a full load, they began to paddle it about the pond like a boat. Perhaps it was too heavy for them, for they soon got tired of this amusement, and abandoned it when it bumped into a small rock near one side of the pool.

“I recovered it; little the worse for its strange adventure, and am not surprised that they found it difficult to manage, for they had to get on the top of the sides to ply their tiny oars, and usually fell off in the process. They were too small to see over the sides if they stood up in the bottom of the cap.

“The fairies were of almost every type and were more or less human in shape, but of the tiniest size. Some had wings, but many had not. All were dressed in a colour derived from the flowers they inhabited but often they had a little green about them, corresponding to the shade of the green of the leaves of the plant to which they belonged.

“Some, I said just now, had wings, and these were of almost every conceivable shape. Some were shaped like those of butterflies, the colouring being similar to that of their dress. Others had semi-transparent wings, like dragon-flies, which sparkled like gems, some opalescent, others silver white, red, blue or green.

“Another group were more like different kinds of flies, and later I came across the larger fairies with bat-like wings, these too being coloured red, green, and blue, and so forth, not dull brown-black, as bats’ wings are on earth.

“The forms of their bodies likewise varied enormously, although all the flower fairies were distinctly human in shape, but while some were dainty, slender, graceful little creatures, others were short and fat with rather ugly, comical faces, just like the brownies of the nursery books.

“Their clothes puzzled me a good deal, for they seemed to be partly themselves and also partook of the nature of the flowers they inhabited. But at the same time they were not part of their bodies, like the fur of an animal is, but real garments. For example, many of them had queer little caps on their heads.

“One other point. The prettier fairies were those who lived in the prettier flowers, such as the rose, while the funny little brownies belonged to the humbler weeds and grasses as a rule.

“Well, by the time the children had finished their song, the fairies had quite forgotten their earlier animosity to me, and seemed to ignore me altogether, but some had made a big ring round Beryl and Joyce, and began to dance round them, singing a pretty little song in their shrill, tiny voices, which reminded me irresistibly of the chirping of insects. But they never finished it, for suddenly three brownies came with a hop, skip and jump into the circle, and next minute there was a perfect scrimmage, which ended almost as soon as it had begun, and then the whole party dashed down to the pond and began to get into leaves and into acorn cups, in which they paddled about by means of paddles made from the leaves of couch-grass.

“Joyce shook her finger at me, ‘Don’t you ever do that again,’ meaning try to pick the flowers, and I promised humbly to remember.

“We walked towards the wood, and, as we went, my ear caught the sound of someone weeping. Looking down, I saw a violet fairy shedding bitter tears.

“Beryl said to the poor little thing, ‘What’s the matter, then?’ and the little creature answered, ‘My sister’s dead. See how still she lies.’

“We looked, but could see nothing but a dead violet.

“‘But,’ I said, ‘I can see no fairy, only a dead violet.’ “Yes, but the violet is dead because my sister has gone.’

“‘Can you not fetch her back?’ I asked soothingly.

“She gazed open-eyed at me for a moment, and then said, ‘You stupid thing! The flower is dead, so how can I fetch her back. She would have no home if I could, and, of course, I cannot.’ and at once she fell to weeping again. One or two fairies glanced at her for a moment, but none stopped to try and comfort her, they were too busy about their own amusements, and, as we could say nothing to console her, we stole quietly away on tip-toes.

‘Poor little violet!’ said Beryl, ‘I wonder where the spirits of the fairies go.’

“And I answered, ‘I, too, wonder.’”

He paused for a moment and then said: “Well Jack, I think I’ll break off there, for we next entered the wood which led into a regular forest, and many of the fairies there were different from the flower fairies, but you see even in Fairyland there is some sorrow.”

J.W.: “But for the most part, I imagine, they spend their time happily enough.”

R.L.W.: “Yes, in laughter and jest-irresponsible little people as a rule, and I think when they grow serious and learn what sorrow means they are on the road which leads to the earth.

“Perhaps violet, the fairy, is already being ‘born’ as a real violet on earth. If so, I hope her sister will be growing on the same root, but I wonder whether she will have intelligence enough to realise it. I asked the children, but I don’t think they understood me. Anyway, they gave me no satisfactory answer.”

He ceased, and as it was evident that he would not renew the conversation, I said good-bye, and returned to earth, wondering what had become of the two violets.

Chapter XVIII

The Battle Between the Oak and the Ash

January 7th and 8th, 1918

As soon as I had settled down, R.L.W. took up his narrative where he had left it last week.

“As we approached the wood, Beryl said, ‘Don’t trust the ash or the alder. They hate all men. Why, I don’t know. They are horrid things.’”

“‘They can’t hurt us, though,’ I said.

“‘I don’t know, but we’re afraid of them,’ she replied, and we said no more on the subject.

“As we advanced further into the wood, I noticed that both the flowers and the flower fairies grew fewer and fewer.

“The light too grew less, and I became aware of strange shadows that seemed to flit from tree to tree, and glided noiselessly near us. If ever I turned round to look at them fully, I could see nothing; but if I went on and appeared not to notice them, I caught glimpses of them out of the corner of my eyes.

“After a time this began to get on my nerves, and I said to the children, ‘What are those shadows?’ “Joyce answered, ‘They are the fairies who live in the trees and the shrubs, at least some of them are, but what the others are we don’t know. P’raps they are fairies who live in rocks and streams.’”

“‘Can you tell the difference between the two kinds?’ I asked her.

“‘Not easily,’ she replied, ‘they are all so shy, except the oak and the beech; they love us, and sometimes talk to us.’”

“Suddenly I heard a voice speaking, and it seemed to me from a big oak tree. ‘Yes, I love men. Sit down and talk to me.’”

“So we sat down under the spreading boughs of the oak tree and it continued:

“‘Who are you?’ (meaning me, R.L.W.). ‘The children I know well, and have often talked with them before, but you are new to this place.

“So I told him briefly, and he said, ‘Ha! A warrior. I long to be a warrior and to deal lusty strokes. To beat down the evil creatures who cross my path. To help and protect the weak from those who would ill-treat them. Above all I would like to break down every ash tree I see.’”

“‘Why do you hate the ash?’ I inquired.

“‘Because he is evil. Do you not hate him? You should, for he hates you, and so does the alder, and the deadly night-shade that fawns upon them. He hates the rose! Do you see how he tries to strangle her? So does the ash. I think he hates all the plants. See how they shun him. How often do you find any growing under his branches? Do you know that if any do, he drops poison upon them from his branches?’”

“‘He is an evil tree, and I hate him.’”

“‘Can’t you come out of the tree and talk to me more closely?’ I asked.

“He laughed a jolly, blustering laugh. ‘I will, my young friend.

“Next moment, in front of us, stood a tall, strapping fellow. He reminded me of the statues of young Hercules rather than those of the Dryads, as I expected would be the case. But instead of a lion skin he had what appeared to be a cloak of leaves matted together, but draped very much as one might drape a skin around one’s body. One shoulder and breast were bare, as were his legs from half-way above the knees. In his right hand he bore a heavy club, and his head was crowned with oak leaves, with acorns in place of jewels.

“He swung his club lightly in the air, and shouted for joy. The muscles of his arms and thighs stood out like ropes, and he towered over me.

“I stood up so as to get some idea of his size, and he must have been at least nine feet high, and broad in proportion.

“Suddenly his face grew set and stern, and he swung sharply round and sprang into the open. I looked in the same direction and perceived at once the cause of the change.

“A tall, lanky being was gliding towards him. Not so tall as the Oak, being about seven feet six inches high, yet it’s very thinness made it appear taller than it really was.

“It was a dull grayish-white in colour, whereas the oak was ruddy red-brown. It had excessively long arms, which hung well down below its knees, and which, like the rest of its body, were long and unpleasant-looking.

“But its face! It was like that of a dead corpse, save that its eyes were almond shaped, and set at an unnaturally acute angle. Its mouth was floppy and shapeless, more like the mouth of a leech than of anything human. It was naked save a loin cloth of ash leaves, and these told me what it was, even before I heard the frightened whisper of the children, ‘The ash! The ash!’

“He held in his hand a spear made of a pointed ash stake, and I noticed his hands, which were almost as bony as those of a skeleton, had nails like the talons of a bird.

“Suddenly I heard a shrill unpleasant voice call out, ‘There they are, master,’ and I perceived that there followed the ash; like a jackal follows a tiger, a repulsive little beast who, I knew by instinct, was the spirit of the deadly nightshade. It was not more than three feet tall, and more like a spider than a man. It was an ugly green, not the pretty green of grass or oak leaves, but a most repulsive colour difficult to describe. Its body was small, with purple and yellow patches, but its arms and legs, which were out of all proportion, were green. It could not walk properly, but sprawled and shuffled along, often using its hands to help its progress. It had orange-coloured eyes in its small, misshapen head, and in its hands carried a lariat of green tendrils and stalks woven together, and evidently made from the trails of the deadly nightshade. At intervals this lariat was decorated with bright scarlet beads.

“Neither of the great protagonists had spoken as yet, but now the ash cried out in a harsh, grating voice, ‘Give them to me, all three of them. What right have they here?’

“‘Give them to you!’ roared back the oak, in a perfect paroxysm of fury. ‘If I once get a chance, I’ll smash you to pieces, and your miserable servant too.’ Without another word he sprang at the ash.

“Seeing a fight about to take place on our behalf, I sprang at one of the boughs of the oak which sheltered us, and tore off one of its boughs. The latter came away readily in my hand. It was not rotten, but a stout piece of wood. Rather it seemed as if the good tree gave it to us willingly. Rapidly I broke off the twigs, and found myself with a stout cudgel about three and a half feet long in my hands.

“I then looked at the two spirit trees, for all this had taken but a moment to do. The oak struck at the ash, who nimbly leapt aside and as he did so, smote at the oak. The latter’s club had struck the ground harmlessly, but the spear of the ash hit the oak full on the right breast. His robe of oak leaves, however, seemed like a cuirass of steel, for the point of the spear glanced off harmlessly.

“The oak recovered himself, and aimed a smashing blow at the ash, who caught it on his left arm, and gave an agonizing howl. The limb seemed to be broken, but at the same moment there was a flash of scarlet and green, and next instant the brave oak

was caught by the lariat of the deadly nightshade. The rope was too wide to hold on his shoulders, but slipped and tightened round his arms and chest, preventing him striking again, as the little green beast pulled it taut.

“At once I dashed in to the rescue, despite the frightened shrieks of the children.

“Now the deadly nightshade was defenseless, for his lariat was round the oak, but the ash saw the danger, for he ran to meet me with his spear raised to strike. I struck it aside, and we passed each other not a foot apart.

“I turned at once and landed the nightshade a stout blow on his left arm, which he had raised to cover his head. The blow sent him sprawling, and he loosened his grip on the lariat.

“I heard a roar from the oak, and knew that he was shaking himself free of the green rope which bound him, but I had not time to look in his direction, for the next moment the ash was on me again, and I felt a sharp pain in my left thigh. He had transfixed me. For a moment I saw his baleful, evil eyes gloating over me, then heard a sickening thud, followed by the splintering of wood, and the gray shadow seemed to burst.

“The good oak had struck home, but I had no time to see anything further, for the next instant the long arms and bony fingers of the deadly nightshade were about my neck, trying to throttle the life out of me. I don’t suppose he could have done it, for, after all, I am an astral being, not a fairy, and so not amenable to their laws, but in any case, there was no opportunity of settling the matter, for next instant the little brute was torn from my throat, and I saw the oak holding him in the air by one of his legs.

“He squirmed and wriggled like an eel, and in his struggles tore the oak-leaf crown from the giant’s head. I tried to struggle to my feet, but the spear, which was still in my thigh, prevented my doing so.

“The next moment the deadly nightshade was dashed to the ground, but one of his arms, still holding the oak’s brown locks, was torn from its socket and hung dangling idiotically in the air.

“But the little green brute seemed as if made of rubber, for he bounced up again, and raced off into the forest far faster than I should have thought possible. His remaining arm was broken, and his right foot, with which he had torn the crown from the oak’s head, was still entangled with it. This proved his undoing, for he tripped and fell sprawling. In an instant the oak was upon him. The club flashed in the air for a moment, and descended with a thud. There was a squashing sound, difficult to describe, and soon there was only a heap of green pulp.

“Finally, the young giant stamped on the remaining arm, which had fallen from his head at last, and then returned to me.

“He drew the spear from my thigh, and was loud in praise of my heroism in coming to his help, but I could not respond appropriately, for I felt sick with pain. It seemed as if there was some poison in the wound. On realising this, the oak said. ‘Let us go back to the beech tree. She will soon make you well.’

“The two children, who appeared badly scared, joined us, and as we went I looked for the remains of the ash, but could see none except a few scattered leaves, which must have once formed his dress.

“That was a great fight!’ said the oak, joyfully. ‘There will be one less ash in the forest now. I wish I could kill them all at one blow, but there are so many.’

“At length we came to a noble beech tree, I limping painfully.

“‘Ho! Lady Beech. May we have some of your leaves to dress this young hero’s wounds? He helped to slay the ash and the deadly nightshade, but the ash has wounded his thigh. Give us your leaves to heal it.’

“And the beech waved its boughs, as a soft, gentle voice murmured, 'Take them. Poor lad! I hope he will soon be well.'”

“So the little girls plucked bunches of leaves, and made a poultice of them, and as soon as it was laid on, my wound ceased to pain me. While this was being done, the oak related to the beech all that had occurred, and when he had finished, and my wound was dressed, she said, “Let him rest under the shelter of my boughs, and I will talk to him, and soon his limb will be healed.””

“So we all three rested there, but the oak went back to his tree, singing lustily.

“But I think you have been here long enough, so I will break off here.”

At which I (J. W.) said good-bye, and departed.

Chapter XIX

The Beech Tree

January 14th-15th, 1918

As soon as I had greeted all three, R.L.W. began:

“We sat under the beech tree for some time, while the lady of the beech talked to us and told us many strange tales of the doings of the alder and the ash. According to her story there was an unholy alliance between these two. From what I could make out, it was seldom that human beings ever came their way, though they were filled with a deadly hatred of mankind, and so for the most part they vented their spite on the flower fairies and on the weaker trees, such as the elder.

“One part of the beech’s conversation I will give you in full.

“Some of us at times descend to earth, while still retaining our fairy powers, and dwell there for a season. Some of the ash and alder spirits do this, and while there are ever ready to work their evil will on any wayfarer. But of course, this is our real home, until the time when we depart to return no more.’

“How many orders of fairies are there?’ I (R.L.W.) inquired.

“Many, many orders. How many I do not know, but these are some of them:

“The flower fairies;

“The gnomes, who dwell in the earth, and delve for gold and gems;

“The tree spirits;

“The Spirits of earth, air, fire, and water, generally.

“The fairy folk; and above all, the high fairies.’

“What do you mean by the last two types of fairies?’ I (R.L.W.) asked her.

“She seemed troubled at this question, and the boughs of the tree waved mournfully.

“The high fairies are - the high fairies. I do not know how to explain what I mean so that you can understand me. They are above all other fairies, and even I have seldom seen them.

“They are so, oh so beautiful and bright, and their colours are ever changing! Perhaps you will see them. Then you will understand. As to the fairy folk, they are much like men, and live in houses and cities, and have kings and queens to reign over them. If you journey on beyond the further edge of the forest, you will doubtless come to them.’

“R.L.W.: ’And where shall I see the fire fairies, and the others of earth, air, and water?’

“The boughs rustled as if she were laughing, and she replied. ‘Why, they are everywhere. Every stream, on earth, as here in Fairyland, has its water sprite. Many of the gnomes are earth spirits, though indeed, there are greater earth spirits than these.

“As to the fire spirits, they are the servants of the god of fire and do his bidding.’

“I started at this, as you may well guess.

“Is there, then, a god of fire?’

“Yes, of a truth, and many other gods. Did you not know it?’

“I hesitated, and said, ’No, I thought there was only one God.’

“She waved her boughs, as she answered softly. ‘There is but one God, yet he works through many gods and spirits and men and animals. He shows His power and His majesty in all that is or was or shall be. For all that was is, and all that shall be was, and in Him all things are.’

“A great stillness passed over the forest now, and it was some time before I plucked up enough courage to ask her, ‘Is He in the ash, then, and the alder?’

“‘Yes, truly, even in the ash, who, doubtless, has his work to do.’

“‘But what is the work of the ash?’

“‘Nay, I am but a poor beech tree, or the spirit thereof, as you like. How then, can I know what is His intent? But doubtless it is good.’

“‘But what has happened to the spirit of the ash whom the oak slew?’

“‘That I can tell you. He has passed down to your earth, and even now a young ash tree is growing somewhere in which he dwells, but after that has perished I cannot tell you what will happen to him, but certainly his spirit will not perish. And as to the spirits of the air. They, too, are everywhere. In the air which you find on earth, but also elsewhere, according to their station they have their part in the Universe. Man is not the only spirit, either on earth, on this plane, or the next.’

“‘So,’ I said, ‘you know of what we call the spirit plane?’

“‘I have heard of it,’ she replied, ‘but know little of it.’

“‘She ceased, and at length I rose and signed to the children, but before we went I said to the lady of the beech tree, ‘Will you not show us yourself? We have heard your voice, but have not seen you.’

‘Here I stand!. she cried, and there, at the foot of the beech tree, stood a beautiful lady. A little taller than human she seemed, but perfectly proportioned, and I noticed her hair fell almost to the ground. It was brown in colour, and she wore a green robe, exactly the colour of the beech leaves, but shot here and there with delicate threads of bronze. Her face I cannot describe to you, but it was very beautiful.

“‘Good-bye, and beware of the alder. She, too, looks fair - at first.’ And so saying, she vanished as suddenly as she had appeared.

“‘I turned to the children. ‘Shall we go further into Fairyland?’

“‘Beryl at once said, ‘Yes, do let us. It is so nice here, isn’t it?’

“‘So we started on once more.

“‘But now you must return to earth, Jack.’”

So I returned.

Chapter XX

The Fairy Folk

January 21st, 1918

As soon as I saw R.L.W. he continued:

“We journeyed on, seeing various fairy forms flitting past us in the forest, but we saw no sign of the alder. As we went, we came to the splintered fragments of an ash tree, and Joyce said, ‘That must have been the ash which the oak killed.’ Near it was a crushed and broken deadly nightshade, and I knew that the child was right.

“On we journeyed, until we came at length to the edge of the forest, and passed out into smiling fields, where I saw little houses, and further off, across a river, a city with shining domes.

“Not far away was a castle; yes, a regular medieval castle, and clustering round it were cottages. We went towards this castle, and were suddenly stopped by a shrill, piping voice, and, looking round saw a queer old woman standing at her door. She was dressed in an oldfashioned dress, such as one sees in the pictures of nursery tales of the old crone.

“I turned to her, and said in my best fairy-book style, ‘Good-morrow, dame!’

“‘Where do you come from, and where are you going?’ she asked, promptly.

“‘We are mortals, or were mortals,’ I replied, ‘for we are dead, and now are exploring Fairyland.’

“‘Yes, I can see that, but how did you get here? That’s what I want to know. she inquired sharply.

“Joyce explained briefly, and she then said, ‘Well, as you are here, I suppose you deserve to be here.’

“‘What is your name?’ I inquired.

‘I haven’t one as yet, but someday I shall, I expect, when the children discover me, but so few of them believe in fairies now, and so only those who have already been discovered long ago when everybody believed in us have a name. Perhaps you will teach these silly mortals that there are such things as fairies, after all.

“I promised to do so, and she went in, saying as she did so, ‘I should call at the castle, if I were you.’

“We reached the castle without further incident. It was surrounded by a broad moat, and on a tree, opposite the gate, hung a silver horn.

“‘Blow the horn,’ said Beryl, ‘and let’s see what will happen.

“I did so, and immediately the drawbridge sank down till it rested one end on our bank. The barbican rose, and soon a knight, clad in silver armour, on a white steed, rode across to meet us.

“Greetings, friends!” he said, courteously. ‘It is long since I saw any wanderers from the earth. Welcome!’

“‘Who are you, sir?’ I inquired.

“‘I am he who was sung on earth as Sir Gareth, and the Lady, my wife, is none other than the Lady Lyonesse. Sir Gawaine and the Lady Linet dwell in yonder castle, and there are many other of the same goodly company.’

“‘But,’ said I (R.L.W.), ‘I thought that you were either real men who lived long ago, and to whose names these tales had become attached, or that you were inventions of some poet.’

“‘There you were wrong, young sir, for I, at any rate, am as you see me, a fairy. And the deeds of which they sang on earth were wrought in Fairyland. Truth it is that some of the deeds which were done here have become attached to men who once

lived on earth, as did King Arthur himself, but even so, though King Arthur was a man, yet much whereof they sing was done not by him, but by that other King Arthur who dwells here still, and who gained his name from your King Arthur.

“But as for me, no deeds of which they sing of me were ever done on earth. Yet were they truly done, only they befell here in Fairyland. If but in those days earth and Fairyland blended so that it were hard to distinguish between them. But tell me truly didst ever hear that I had a son?”

“I shook my head, and he smiled. ‘In Fairyland the children are not born as amongst men folk, and therefore it is that King Arthur had no son - in the story. But enough of this, for it must strangely puzzle you.

“Enter my hall, and the Lady Lyonesse will greet you well, but bear in mind that half of my adventures have not yet been told on earth, and belike they never will be told. For today men grow old and say adventures interest them no more. And, indeed, there are many nameless knights in these parts who, I fear, will never receive a name.’

“How, then, do you receive your name?” I inquired, wondering.

“In this wise: When a poet writes a song about us, it is because his spirit has entered Fairyland and seen or heard of what befalls there, and he gives to the knight whose adventures he relates a name, and henceforth that knight holds that name, and some knights have several names. But sometimes the nameless knights grow weary of waiting for the poet who comes not, and descend to earth, and Fairyland knows them no more.’

“We entered the castle, and, passing into the central hall of the keep, were received by a fair lady clad in the costume of the time of Edward IV. This was the fairy Lady Lyonesse. After the ceremonial greeting, I ventured to ask her how it was she wore the costume of that period, and she answered, ‘I have lived in the pages of many writers, but in none better than in those of one who wrote in the reign of that monarch of whom you speak. But, indeed, I have many changes of raiment, and it chances that at this present moment I wear this one.’

“Then I asked the knight several questions, and he told me many tales which, if I were to tell them all to you, would fill your book and make it appear to be an old-world romance, and not an account of life beyond the grave.

“So we stayed there some little time, and at length I asked him if he could direct me to the high fairies.

“Thereupon he summoned one clad like a wizard of the olden days, and gave us into his charge, and we made ready to depart.

“Even as we were bidding them farewell, there came a messenger. ‘Up, Sir Knight! The dragon is awake, and you must go out to do battle against him.’

“I would greatly have liked to stop and see the fight, but I felt it would be but a repetition of many medieval romances, and not of much practical use to you, so we said farewell and departed.”

Chapter XXI

The High Fairies

“We went on for a long way across the countryside in company with the old magician.

“At length he spoke: ‘My children, those whom you seek are seldom seen by mortal eyes, and I know not whether I do well to take you to them. Nevertheless, you have come a long journey and I think have proved yourselves worthy of so great an honour.

“‘Now you comprehend the laws of the astral plane, in which portion of it think you that Fairyland lies?’

“*R.L.W.*: ‘In the sixth division.’

“Wizard. ‘That is so, but the high fairies dwell in the seventh division, in the land which borders on the spirit plane. Thither they too may pass, under certain conditions. The reason why they, and they alone, can enter the spirit plane, is that they have aided man on earth, and thereby won for themselves a different road of salvation.’

“*R.L.W.*: ‘How comes it that you alone of all I have met in Fairyland know of the astral plane, or at least, know it so well?’

“Wizard. ‘Because I was once a man, and like yourself, strayed into this strange country. Learned in many curious and forgotten sciences am I, and finding this a congenial spot in which to stay, have remained.’

“Then I (*R.L.W.*) told him what I had learned as to the nature of fairies, and he confirmed it. Thus talking, we went gradually on till suddenly we came to a river.

“Across it was a bridge, but its entrance was guarded by a dragon.

“The strange beast had the head of an eagle, the body of a snake, and the legs of a lion, and great dragon wings sprang from its shoulders. It spread these out to bar our way, and spoke:

‘By what right do you claim admittance?’

“The Wizard answered. ‘In the case of the children, by their innocence. In the case of this warrior, in that he seeks knowledge. And in my own case, because I possess the requisite knowledge.’

“The Dragon answered. ‘The right of the children I recognise, but not that of the warrior. As to your claim, stand forth and prove your knowledge.

“Then the Wizard bent down and drew strange symbols and circles on the ground, and he made the double triangle and the pentacle. Then standing in the midst he spoke strange words and pronounced a name, and the dragon bowed his head in awe, and said, ‘Enter, ye three, but not that other.’

“Then I (*R.L.W.*) pleaded hard to be admitted for a brief space, and I promised to return, and explained why I was so particularly anxious to see the high fairies and tell you all about it. At last the Dragon said, ‘You others may enter. Go to the house of the king, stand before him, and make supplication and it may be your petition will be granted, and be permitted to enter, see, and return.’

“So the others went over the bridge into a city which gleamed like gold, and whose domes seemed to be made of gems. Here I lost sight of them, and felt very lonely with nothing but the strange-monster to keep me company.

“It was a long time before I saw Beryl walking across the bridge. Beside her was one of the most beautiful beings I have ever seen. Though neither so big nor so large as my guardian angel, he seemed to belong to that order of beings rather than to the human species.

“He was clad in a kind of golden mail, which flashed and glittered, while from his shoulders a mantle hung, thin as gossamer, which in the sunlight, was continually showing all the colours of the rainbow.

“His face was not only strikingly handsome, but bright and radiant, and on his head was a helmet, with a dragon as its crest. ‘The king bids thee enter to see what lies herein and to return!’ he cried.

“As he spoke, the Dragon drew aside, and I joined Beryl.

“We passed swiftly into the beautiful city, through broad streets lined with trees in full blossom-peaches and nectarines, oranges, and countless others.

“At length we reached a splendid palace, which at first sight appeared to be made of gold, but on closer examination I found it was made of no material I knew. The nearest thing I can compare it with is silvery morning mist solidified, and reflecting the golden sun. It was ever changing in colour, now gold, now silver opalescent, and then it would run through all the colours of the rainbow. It was neither opaque nor transparent, but rather between the two, and never for an instant did it remain the same. Its shape, however, was permanent, but its colour and texture, never. Dome upon dome, and tower upon tower, it rose, with courts and turrets and balconies-an ideal fairy palace, nowhere to be found on earth.

“We passed through spacious halls, each more splendid than the last, till at length I joined the others before the throne of the fairy king and queen.

“So dazzling was his face, that I could hardly bear to look on it, but when he spoke his voice was so sweet and musical that all fear left me, and a great peace stole into my soul.

“‘Stranger, seeking knowledge, ask, that I may answer.’

“*R.L.W.*: ‘Sire, who are you, and these beautiful fairy folk I’ve seen in this city, and how is it they dwell in the seventh division of the astral plane?’

“The king answered, ‘Long ago I was one of the fairy folk, such as those you have just left, and so were we all. I dwelt in a castle, and did deeds of glamour, and hoped that a mortal would one day proclaim them to the world. But one day I fell into a strange trance and dreamed of earth and the sufferings of mortals, and their follies, and I saw how foolish were their griefs, and how easy it would be to relieve them.

“‘And when I awoke, I pondered over these things, and it grew upon me that the life I lived was aimless and empty, since it was but glamour, and there was neither real sorrow nor sin, but only make-believe. For evil was only potential, but there it was real. Here the triumph of the good knight was always assured, but there it was uncertain.

“‘Then I set out towards the confines of Fairyland, and turned my back on the pleasant vales. I journeyed through the dark woods, and came at last to the cave where the gnomes dwell. These would have bidden me stay, but I heeded them not, and at length I came out into the astral plane, of which you know. But lower and lower I went, seeking sin and suffering, just as you men folk flee from them, and on the astral plane I worked for a while; but as I knew not earth life, I found my efforts of little avail.

“‘So at length I reached the earth plane, and wandered unseen among the sons of men- till the sorrow of the world ate into my soul and grief for its woe overwhelmed me.

“‘Yet try as I would, I found I could do little to help mankind, for I was not of their nature. Till one dread day I stood on a hill near a city men call Jerusalem and I gazed in the faces of three who were crucified. Then He in the centre saw me, though the rest saw me not, and He spoke these words:

“O spirit of air, who knowest not the love of man, draw near.”

“And I drew near, and said, “I have sought suffering and grief that I might be able to aid men folk. Thou, who seemest to be the King of Pain, bring pain to me.”

“And He smiled. “Thou hast asked a hard thing, yet shall it be given unto thee. Wrench forth the nails which fasten My hands and feet, and set Me free.”

“Then I arose and strove to grasp the nails, but couldn’t, for they were material, and I immaterial. And as I strove my utter helplessness filled me with a new sensation, and it was grief. For, strive as I might, I could do nothing to help that gentle sufferer.

“And the grief grew to an intensity of pain which is indescribable.

“Then again He spoke. “It avails not, thou canst not help Me, and yet in the striving thy request has been granted. Go, and My love for man go with thee.

“Then the vague desire to help man grew into a burning passion, and I went from the spot and strove to help them. And now it seemed that I was changed in spirit, or I comprehended their griefs and also how to help them.

“So I comforted the heavy-hearted in the dark watches of the night, and I guided the erring ones into the safe road. I strove with the wayward, and warned the foolish till my work was accomplished. Then I came back to the fairy folk, and told them what had befallen me, and many others, following my example, went forth likewise to earth, and some there be who are even now labouring, and others there are who rest from their labours with me in this fair city, and yet others there are who are here and have passed on to the spirit plane, for there are many roads, and the same path is not used by all. Yet it seems to me that though for us the life on earth will not be needful, it will yet be necessary for us to dwell on one of the less material planets, for though I have learnt to suffer, yet have I never learnt to die, and I think none can become perfect till that experience has been endured.’

“He paused for a moment, and then continued: ‘I am wise, wiser perhaps than men folk, and the lore of this realm is an open book to me, and if it were for thy good, I would gladly reveal to thee much wisdom. As, indeed, I have done when on earth but the simpler lessons are for thee, my son, and enough has been said already for, of even that which I have told thee, much will appear a mystery. Only remember that without suffering there is no completion of soul and without love there is no peace.’

“Then his fair queen spoke, and what she told me corresponded very closely with what the king had said. In one point, however, it differed strikingly, for she learnt suffering through the anguish of a woman whose love forsook her for another.

“When she had finished, the king of the high fairies told us that, if we wished we could return by a different route, which would enable me to see the seventh division of the astral plane allotted to men. I, he explained, must pass quickly through but the children could remain there as long as their progress entitled them to do so. As to the Wizard, he left us, and returned to the fairy folk.”

Here R.L.W. stopped and I left and returned to earth.

Chapter XXII

The Seventh Dimension:
The Vales Of Paradise*February 4th, 1918*

I sped rapidly to where R.L.W. was awaiting me, and after greeting all three, asked R.L.W. to continue.

“The king placed us in charge of another fairy messenger, who took the children and myself out of the palace by a different gate from that by which we had entered.

“We passed through wonderful gardens and parks, across open country, past other cities and palaces, till at length we came to a high wall which seemed to me made of amber. In this was a gateway and the gate appeared to be made of ivory, with hinges and locks of gold. There were sentries on duty, and one who seemed to be the captain of the guard unlocked a postern, and we passed through. We turned round as the gate closed, and I at least expected to find that it had vanished; but no, it was still there.

“We were accosted by a sharp command: ‘By what right do you enter these vales by the ivory gate and gold?’

“I handed the inquirer a letter from the king, and while he read it, I took note of him.

“He was plainly an ordinary astral man, not a fairy, the difference was unmistakable, but he was far more advanced than I had seen any in the sixth division.

“A faint blue aura played about his head, at times seemed to flash from his fingertips, but, otherwise, he was much as we are. But here and now, I think, I ought to say that, whereas on all other divisions of the astral plane I found both good and bad mingled together, in this seventh division they were all advanced beings, and, as we learnt later from H.J.L., from this division they usually passed direct to the highest division of the spirit plane, and never to anything below the second division.

“When the warder of the gate had read the letter, he summoned another attendant, who led us along a broad grass road through open forest glades, till we came to a wonderful garden which seemed to stretch for miles and miles.

“Amid the gardens, surrounded by trees and covered with roses and other flowering creepers, were numbers of little cottages.

“Into one of them he took us, and introduced us to an elderly couple who lived there, and who told me their life-story.

“It was just a simple story of duty done, and two souls knit together in genuine love and affection. After death they had come straight to the seventh division, and had seen nothing of the other divisions of the astral plane. There they awaited the passing on to the spirit plane, not without, however, a certain amount of trepidation since they feared they would have to separate.

“I (R.L.W.) told them all I had learnt from H.J.L. about the spirit plane, but as I felt sure they would go to the highest division, of which I knew least, I felt it was not of much real value to them.

“I asked how it was that they had not been separated by death, and the old lady, for they were both over sixty, replied, ‘When I died, my husband was so broken hearted that he died within twenty-four hours. My spirit had been waiting near him trying to comfort him, but as soon as he emerged from his physical body we went away hand in hand to this place, led here by two beautiful angelic beings whom we often see here, and who are, I think, our guardian angels.’

“They were a delightful pair, but as I found they knew little about even their own division, I asked the messenger to take me to someone who did.

“As he was leading us away, he said, ‘That pair are characteristic of many in this division, which is a place of rest, of meditation, and refreshment, preparatory for the more active life which will recommence for them in the spirit plane. In short, this is the meditative division of the astral plane, and as such you should always consider it. Nevertheless, there are active souls who devote themselves to other interests, and I am now about to introduce you to one.’

“We had now reached a city, beautiful and unlike any in the other divisions. ‘This city,’ the messenger said, ‘is not the astral form of an earth city, but one raised here. See how it is done.’

“A building was being erected by a large number of men, under the guidance of one whom I can best describe as the architect. There were curious machines at work, which appeared to be drawing the astral elements out of the air and converting them into building material, but in certain cases I noticed that the same process seemed to be carried out solely by the exercise of the will-power of some of the workers. They appeared, however, to have some set formula, similar to a magical ritual, and the messenger told me that these rituals were to assist the operators to concentrate the mind.

“The material was generally moulded into the required forms by the will of the sculptor, but I noticed some preferred to use ordinary tools. In short, side by side two entirely different processes were going on, one in which astral matter was being changed in form by astral tools, and the other in which the will alone was sufficient to change the form of the astral elements.

“I asked why it was that all did not use their wills for this purpose and he replied, ‘Even here all men are not equal in spiritual development and will-power. Only those who have achieved considerable strength of character are able thus to affect matter, even astral matter, and therefore the others are obliged to adopt these other expedients.

“I asked the architect the purpose of the building, and he replied, ‘It is to be a university for the study of science. There will be laboratories, lecture rooms, and so forth. Our object is twofold. (1) To learn still more of the secrets of science, and especially of the nature of astral matter, and (2) to endeavour to inspire men on earth to devote more study to the astral elements enshrined in the physical, whether organic or so-called “inorganic.” We intend that pure research and applied science shall go hand in hand, although in most cases different types of men (astral men he meant) will be required.’

“We then left the new building, and entered a picture gallery, attached to which were numerous studios. Here the astrals similarly fell into two groups, some drawing their colours by will-power from the astral elements, or, as one artist put it, from the sun, and the others who had to use more mechanical means to obtain their paints.

“In no case, however, did they use the astral form of paints which had originated on the earth. They told me several times that such paints were lacking in lustre, fire, and vitality; and to prove the point, one woman showed me a painting she had brought from the sixth division, and placing it beside a picture she had finished in the seventh division, pointed out the subtle differences.

“Briefly, the first seemed dead, while the other appeared to be alive, to change from minute to minute. It had a strange light in it and ripples of light seemed always to be passing across the picture.

“The messenger took me to a place where beautiful clothing was being woven. For the most part this was done by machines which drew the raw material from the atmosphere and converted it first into threads, which shone with a lustre more like fire than silk. These threads were afterwards woven into beautiful fabrics, many of which had an opalescent effect, and changed in colour under the influence of the light, as they were moved about or worn by the inhabitants.

“Many other things I saw. I listened to wonderful concerts; saw beautiful statues; heard splendid poems recited, and so forth. But before ending my brief account of this region, I must tell you of the only note of sadness which I struck.

“I came across a young man and woman, and some how knew they were not quite happy, so I asked them why, amid such pleasant surroundings, they were not happy; and the woman replied thus: ‘When we were on earth we had a strange delusion that to have children was gross and material, and therefore, though we were married so that we could live together without causing a scandal, yet we remained continent. Now we know we have missed the experience which the Supreme Being intended we should have. Never can I hold my own child in my arms; never suffer, that it might be born. We are incomplete, both in the lesser and the greater degree, and we know it, and are ashamed. If only I could undo that foolish act, if only to have one child to lavish my mother-love upon, I should be intensely happy, but it cannot be. Too late we have discovered our mistake, and all through eternity we must go on with that chill-hunger unappeased.’

“And then the man spoke: ‘Yes, I know what you are thinking: how foolish we were. Yes, yes, and yet, if ever two souls loved each other we did, but we know now that just as it is folly to allow the physical love to outrun the spiritual, it is equally wrong to allow the spiritual love to despise the physical. For, when we are on the physical plane we ought to comply with the laws thereof, which can be done without in any way degrading the spiritual. But man is always immoderate in all things. Some try to be too spiritual before their time, and others are too gross. So we suffer for having failed to comply with the physical laws when under them, just as we should now suffer, in another way, were we to defy the laws of this realm. Our one hope is that in due season, we may be allowed to return to earth in a new incarnation. Do you think this possible?’

“And I (R.L.W.) replied, ‘I cannot say for certain, but I think you will not yet, but in due course, for I am inclined to think that most of us here are not yet sufficiently evolved to pass into the higher planes of pure spirit; but, of course, I cannot say for certain.’

“So I left them, and the messenger took us to a house where the children (Joyce and Beryl) met those from whom they had been parted for a long while. I left them with deep regret, and went on alone with the messenger.”

But now I (J. W.) felt the earth pull, and so we separated

Chapter XXIII

R.L.W. Returns to the Sixth Division

February 11th, 1918.

On my arrival at the house where they dwelt, R.L.W. at once resumed his narrative.

“The messenger then took me through more gardens, past stately colleges and fine cities, till at last we reached a wood. The wood developed into a dark forest, and by degrees the ground rose into a chain of mountains.

“When we had climbed these for some time, we reached a narrow gully, and proceeding up this came to where it arched over and became a cave. As we penetrated deeper and deeper into this all light failed, but the messenger, who still accompanied me, seemed to shed a faint soft light which enabled us to pick our way amid the rocks and holes.

“Gradually I became aware of soft musical notes, at first pleasant, but by degrees these became harsh and strident, until they rose to a horrible clamour, unlike anything I had ever heard before.

“I turned to the messenger and inquired the meaning. ‘These are the last elements of passion left behind by those who have entered the seventh division from the sixth. Often the traveler wanders amid these caves for a considerable period, for until these elements of carnal passion are left behind he cannot find the way into the haven of peace which lies beyond them. Some, indeed, are so terrified by the noise of their own passions that they turn back and re-enter the sixth division. You are going the reverse way, and therefore obtain a strange distorted effect.

“The clamour grew fiercer and wilder, but we pushed on, till suddenly daylight appeared, and next moment we were on the brink of a precipice. There was only a narrow ledge, and beyond it was a deep ravine, impossible to scale. On the other side was a fairly well marked road, winding out of sight amid the foothills, but how to cross was the problem that puzzled me.

“I noticed that all along the opposite bank were the remains of what were obviously the beginnings of various bridges. Some even overhung the ravine for a considerable distance, but none reached far enough for me to be able to spring on to them.

“The messenger explained. ‘Every soul must build its own bridge if it wishes to enter the last division and meditate in peace. No one can use the bridge built by another. See, over there is one who is hard at work.’

“Sure enough, a woman was slowly building out a bridge across the ravine. I watched her for some time. Again and again portions of masonry fell away, but still she persevered.

“‘She will complete it in time,’ the messenger said.

“R.L.W.: ‘How was it I was able to discover that other route via Fairyland, and how was it the children were permitted to stay after coming by that route instead of this?’

“The Messenger. ‘There are other routes besides these two, but the one you now see is the most usual one. You were able to enter Fairyland because there is still in you a great deal of the child nature, but because of your other nature you could not remain in the seventh division.

“‘You were permitted to visit and return that you might fulfill the task which you had set yourself of informing the world of some of the conditions of life beyond the

grave. This is a task which the “enlightened ones” approve; but now it is for me to assist you to return.’

“So saying, he began to make strange passes, and as he did so a bridge grew out from our side of the ravine and touched the other side.

“Farewell! he said and I hastened across. On turning round I perceived it slowly fading, and next moment it had gone. For one instant he stood there looking towards me. I saluted, and then he turned into the mouth of the cave and was lost to view.

“I slowly and painfully picked my way down the rough path, till after many turns and twists it led out into open country. In due course I worked my way back into this city, in which I now am.”

He ceased, and H.J.L. spoke. “I think now you have a fairly good idea as to the general conditions of life on the astral plane. In any case, as much as you will be able to publish in a book. Therefore I think we had better revert to friendly meetings only. These will keep open the door, please us, and at the same time prevent you being overburdened with matter.

“In due course, if you wish, we can make further investigations into the higher divisions of the spirit plane. I shall return there soon for I must again take up my work of preparing myself for passing on to the second division.”

Mother then spoke. “I seem to be spending rather a useless life here. I must find something to do, and I think I shall devote myself to the children. There’s quite a number here, as Rex has discovered, though at first he did not realise it. I love children and, from Rex’s account, I can see that the path to the seventh division through Fairyland is pleasanter and more suitable than the other route. Of course, it’s not open to us adults, but I can see how I can help. I shall tell the children fairy tales, and particularly about the real Fairyland. So many children have lost all belief in the fairies, and will otherwise merely grow up as ordinary men and women on the astral plane. Well, if I can start them on this journey through Fairyland into the seventh division, as did Beryl and Joyce, I’m sure I shall be doing a useful piece of work, and I shall enjoy it too. I always loved children.”

Then I rose, and, after bidding them good-bye, returned to earth. Since then we have met each Monday for mental recreation but as most of it is of purely private interest, I have not recorded it.

Chapter XXIV

The Armistice in the Astral Plane

November 15th, 1918.

On visiting R.L.W. and mother on the astral plane, I was surprised to find H.J.L. and the Officer there. The former told me he had come down specially from the spirit plane because of the armistice. I first inquired how he was getting on in the spirit plane, and he told me he hoped to pass to the next division before very long. I then asked the Officer and Rex to describe the effect of the armistice on the astral plane.

The Officer: "Well, we knew that it was coming some time before, of course, because the battle between evil and good powers in the lowest division has been going all in the favour of the good powers. But one word of warning. The evil powers are not yet beaten. They are shifting their ground, but before long they'll break out elsewhere. On earth, it will take the form of anarchy, as in Russia. But it won't stay there. Germany will have a good dose of it; so will Austro-Hungarian. She'll split up. Italy may also have a touch of it, too, if she's not careful. In fact, this armistice, of which you think so much, will be followed by risings all over the world, India and Egypt, for instance.

"This whole period is going to be fairly uncomfortable, I'm thinking .. Still, the first stage is past, but I'm keeping my organisation going, and shall make it more international. Try and help the poor devils who are coming over from Russia. Talk about Hell! They've made a fair imitation of Hell on earth there.

"A peculiar thing about the evil powers is they can never make a stable government. Sooner or later, they always relapse into a state of anarchy, whether on earth or in the astral plane. Another thing, anarchy doesn't mean liberty or democracy. No, fear! It means tyranny, as in Hell.

"However, I don't want to damp your pleasure. The armistice has brought a big drop in the number of newcomers, though this spell of influenza had kept up the flow fairly well. Still, we haven't attempted to do much there. Got our hands full with soldiers.

"We had great rejoicings among the soldiers. Processions and all that sort of thing. Let them work off their excitement. Had some trouble with those who wanted to have a drink to celebrate the event, and all that sort of thing. Now we are beginning to settle down, though. The men are quite enthusiastic about the Russian idea. So we were quite despondent when they thought they'd lost their job. "A lot of the Russians of the worst sort are very difficult to deal with. Shall have to be fairly drastic, I think."

J.W.: "How did you get the news?"

The Officer: "The thought form sent up from almost the whole western world was so powerful that we could not fail to be aware of it. Actually, I became aware of it the instant it was signed. The thought form of the people actually involved reached me.

R.L.W.: "There were services by dozens in every church, and we had a church parade at headquarters. The Officer excelled himself, but ended up with: 'Remember, there is no armistice in the fight between good and evil. Neither in the fight which goes on within ourselves, nor in the greater struggle which is always raging. It shifts its ground, but does not disappear. Today the organised force of Germany has perished; tomorrow we shall have to deal with the evil wrought by anarchy. Our work is not done, but it will be different. Yet, since this chapter is closed, let us rejoice..

After more conversation of this sort, we drifted into discussing private matters, and in due course I left them.

Chapter XXV

Conclusion

April 20th, 21st, 1919

On arriving at the house where they dwelt, I reminded R.L.W. that this was the third anniversary of his death. He smiled, and said, "Then it is a good point to wind up this work on which we have been engaged. You see, we are all here tonight."

H.J.L.: "Next Monday I want you, Jack, to be present at my passing on to the second division of the spirit plane. I am ready, and my guardian angel has agreed that it should wait till then."

So it was arranged accordingly.

The Officer: "I, too, am returning to the spirit plane. My guardian angel has agreed that I have done good work here, and must return now to the spirit plane, so our young friend (R.L.W.) will be left alone. I have made all arrangements for my organisation to go on doing its work. For it has still plenty to do."

Mother. "As you know, I've been busy with the children. Several little bands have set out into Fairyland, and as they haven't returned, I think they must have reached the seventh division. R.L.W.: "I've made up my mind at last to help someone I hated. I've discovered a chap whom I really disliked. He was a fellow-officer, and my guardian angel agrees that he is a suitable person, so I hope before long to get to the seventh division, if no higher."

Suddenly we were aware of a celestial presence, and slowly my own guardian angel appeared. The light dissolved everything, even the bodies of my companions grew faint and vanished, and I could see only him. His face, more radiant than the sun, seemed to absorb me into him, and I cried: "What would you?"

Then, like the notes of a splendid organ, these words pealed forth. 'Your work on this plane is, for the time, finished. Give forth the message and the knowledge to the world. For the world is in travail, and much sorrow lies before her, as well as behind, ere she enters the haven of peace. For a new age is being born, and a new order arises. Old faiths perish, and only He the unknown remaineth immutable. But out of sorrow cometh forth joy, and out of war ultimate peace.

"For all things are of set design, and though the souls of men are ever moving forward, there is no stagnation or decay, but out of corruption arises incorruption, and out of death, life. Though darkness encompass the earth, yet the dawn is at hand and the new day shall be better than the old, for even the high power tremble at the might and the glory of the Supreme."

He ceased; and I fell amid the clash of warring worlds and the tumult of elemental chaos.