

CHAPTER V.

THE REALITY OF SUPERPHYSICAL LIFE.

IT seems difficult for those who are accustomed only to the ordinary and somewhat materialistic lines of thought of the nineteenth century, to believe in and realize fully a condition of perfect consciousness apart from the physical body. Every Christian, at any rate, is bound by the very foundations of his creed to believe that he possesses a soul; but if you suggest to him the possibility that that soul may be a sufficiently real thing to become visible under certain conditions apart from the body either during life or after death, the chances are ten to one that he will scornfully tell you that he does not believe in ghosts, and that such an idea is nothing but an anachronistic survival of an exploded mediæval superstition.

If, therefore, we are at all to comprehend the work of the band of invisible helpers, and perchance ourselves to learn to assist in it, we must shake ourselves free from the trammels of contemporary thought on these subjects, and endeavour to grasp the great truth (now a demonstrated fact to many among us)

that the physical body is in simple truth nothing but a vehicle or vesture of the real man. It is put off permanently at death, but it is also put off temporarily every night when we go to sleep—indeed the process of falling asleep consists in this very action of the real man in his astral vehicle slipping out of the physical body.

Again I repeat, this is no mere hypothesis or ingenious supposition. There are many among us who are able to perform (and *do* perform every day of their lives) this elementary act of magic in full consciousness—who pass from one plane to the other at will; and if that is clearly realized, it will become apparent how grotesquely absurd to them must appear the ordinary unreasoning assertion that such a thing is utterly impossible. It is like telling a man that it is impossible for him to fall asleep, and that if he thinks he has ever done so he is under a hallucination.

Now the man who has not yet developed the link between the astral and physical consciousness is unable to leave his denser body at will, or to recollect most of what happens to him while away from it; but the fact nevertheless remains that he leaves it every time he sleeps, and may be seen by any trained clairvoyant either hovering over it or wandering about at a greater or less distance from it, as the case may be.

The entirely undeveloped person usually floats close above his physical body, scarcely less asleep than it is, and comparatively shapeless and inchoate, and it is found that he cannot be drawn away from the immediate neighbourhood of that physical body without causing serious discomfort which would in fact awaken it. As the man evolves, however, his astral body grows more definite and more conscious, and so becomes a fitter vehicle for him. In the case of the majority of intelligent and cultured people the degree of consciousness is already very considerable, and a man who is at all spiritually developed is as fully himself in that vehicle as in this denser body.

But though he may be fully conscious on the astral plane during sleep, and able to move about on it freely if he wishes to do so, it does not yet follow that he is ready to join the band of helpers. Most people at this stage are so wrapped up in their own train of thought—usually a continuation of some line taken up in waking hours—that they are like a man in a brown study, so much absorbed as to be practically entirely heedless of all that is going on about them. And in many ways it is well that this is so, for there is much upon the astral plane which might be unnerving and terrifying to one who had not the courage born of full knowledge as to the real nature of all that he would see.

Sometimes a man gradually rouses himself out of this condition—wakes up to the astral world around him, as it were; but more often he remains in that state until someone who is already active there takes him in hand and wakens him. This is, however, not a responsibility to be lightly undertaken, for while it is comparatively easy thus to wake a man up on the astral plane, it is practically impossible, except by a most undesirable exercise of mesmeric influence, to put him to sleep again. So that before a member of the band of workers will thus awaken a dreamer, he must fully satisfy himself that the man's disposition is such that he will make good use of the additional powers that will then be put into his hands, and also that his knowledge and his courage are sufficient to make it reasonably certain that no harm will come to him as a result of the action.

Such awakening so performed will put a man in a position to join if he will the band of those who help mankind. But it must be clearly understood that this does not necessarily or even usually bring with it the power of remembering in the waking consciousness anything which has been done. That capacity has to be attained by the man for himself, and in most cases it does not come for years afterwards—perhaps not even in the same life. But happily this lack of memory in the body in no way impedes the

work out of the body; so that, except for the satisfaction to a man of knowing during his waking hours upon what work he has been engaged during his sleep, it is not a matter of importance. What really matters is that the work should be done—not that we should remember who did it.

CHAPTER VI.

A TIMELY INTERVENTION.

VARIED as is this work on the astral plane, it is all directed to one great end—the furtherance, in however humble a degree, of the processes of evolution. Occasionally it is connected with the development of the lower kingdoms, which it is possible slightly to accelerate under certain conditions. A duty towards these lower kingdoms, elemental as well as animal and vegetable, is distinctly recognized by our adept leaders, since it is in some cases only through connection with or use by man that their progress takes place.

But naturally by far the largest and most important part of the work is connected with humanity in some way or other. The services rendered are of many and various kinds, but chiefly concerned with man's spiritual development, such physical interventions as are recounted in the earlier part of this book being exceedingly rare. They do, however, occasionally take place, and though it is my wish to emphasize rather the possibility of extending mental and moral help to our fellow-men, it will perhaps be well to give two or three instances in which

friends personally known to me have rendered physical assistance to those in sore need of it, in order that it may be seen how these examples from the experience of the helpers gear in with the accounts given by those who have received the supernormal aid—such stories, I mean, as those which are to be found in the literature of so-called “supernatural occurrences.”

In the course of the recent rebellion in Matabeleland one of our members was sent upon an errand of mercy which may serve as an illustration of the way in which help upon this lower plane has occasionally been given. It seems that one night a certain farmer and his family in that country were sleeping tranquilly in fancied security, quite unaware that only a few miles away relentless hordes of savage foes were lying in ambush maturing fiendish plots of murder and rapine. Our member's business was in some way or other to arouse the sleeping family to a sense of the terrible danger which so unexpectedly menaced them, and she found this by no means an easy matter.

An attempt to impress the idea of imminent peril upon the brain of the farmer failed utterly, and as the urgency of the case seemed to demand strong measures, our friend decided to materialize herself sufficiently to shake the housewife by the shoulder and adjure her to get up and look about her. The

moment she saw that she had been successful in attracting attention she vanished, and the farmer's wife has never from that day to this been able to find out *which* of her neighbours it was who roused her so opportunely, and thus saved the lives of the entire family, who but for this mysterious intervention would undoubtedly have been massacred in their beds half an hour later; nor can she even now understand how this friend in need contrived to make her way in, when all the windows and doors were found so securely barred.

Being thus abruptly awakened, the housewife was half inclined to consider the warning as a mere dream; however, she arose and looked round just to see that all was right, and fortunate it was that she did so, for though she found nothing amiss indoors she had no sooner thrown open a shutter than she saw the sky red with a distant conflagration. She at once roused her husband and the rest of her family, and owing to this timely notice they were able to escape to a place of concealment near at hand just before the arrival of the horde of savages, who destroyed the house and ravaged the fields indeed, but were disappointed of the human prey which they had expected. The feelings of the rescuer may be imagined when she read in the newspaper some time afterwards an account of the providential deliverance of this family.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "ANGEL STORY."

ANOTHER instance of intervention on the physical plane which occurred a short time ago makes a very beautiful little story, though this time only one life was saved. It needs, however, a few words of preliminary explanation. Among our band of helpers here in Europe are two who were brothers long ago in ancient Egypt, and are still warmly attached to one another. In this present incarnation there is a wide difference in age between them, one being advanced in middle life, while the other was at that time a mere child in the physical body, though an ego of considerable advancement and promise. Naturally it falls to the lot of the elder to train and guide the younger in the occult work to which they are so heartily devoted, and as both are fully conscious and active on the astral plane they spend most of the time during which their grosser bodies are asleep in labouring together under the direction of their common Master, and giving to both living and dead such help as is within their power.

I will quote the story of the particular incident which I wish to relate from a letter written by the elder of the two helpers immediately after its occurrence, as the description there given is more vivid and picturesque than any account in the third person could possibly be.

“We were going about quite other business, when Cyril suddenly cried, ‘What’s that?’ for we heard a terrible scream of pain or fright. In a moment we were on the spot, and found that a boy of about eleven or twelve had fallen over a cliff on to some rocks below, and was very badly hurt. He had broken a leg and an arm, poor fellow, but what was still worse was a dreadful cut in the thigh, from which blood was pouring in a torrent. Cyril cried, ‘Let us help him quick, or he’ll die!’

“In emergencies of this kind one has to think quickly. There were clearly two things to be done; that bleeding must be stopped, and physical help must be procured. I was obliged to materialize either Cyril or myself, for we wanted physical hands at once to tie a bandage, and besides it seemed better that the poor boy should *see* someone standing by him in his trouble. I felt that while undoubtedly he would be more at home with Cyril than with me, I should probably be more readily able to procure help

than Cyril would, so the division of labour was obvious.

“The plan worked capitally. I materialized Cyril instantly (he does not know yet how to do it for himself), and told him to take the boy’s neckerchief and tie it round the thigh, and twist a stick through it. ‘Won’t it hurt him terribly?’ said Cyril; but he *did* it, and the blood stopped flowing. The injured boy seemed half unconscious, and could scarcely speak, but he looked up at the shining little form bending so anxiously over him, and asked, ‘Be you an angel, master?’ Cyril smiled so prettily, and replied, ‘No, I’m only a boy, but I’ve come to help you;’ and then I left him to comfort the sufferer while I rushed off for the boy’s mother, who lived about a mile away.

“The trouble I had to force into that woman’s head the conviction that something was wrong, and that she must go and see about it, you would never believe; but at last she threw down the pan she was cleaning, and said aloud, ‘Well, I don’t know what’s come over me, but I must go and find the boy.’ When she once started I was able to guide her without much difficulty, though all the time I was holding Cyril together by will-power, lest the poor child’s angel should suddenly vanish from before his eyes.

“You see, when you materialize a form you are changing matter from its natural state into another—temporarily opposing the cosmic will, as it were; and if you take your mind off it for one half-second, back it flies into its original condition like a flash of lightning. So I could not give more than half my attention to that woman, but still I got her along somehow, and as soon as she came round the corner of the cliff I let Cyril disappear; but she had seen him, and now that village has one of the best-attested stories of angelic intervention on record!

“The accident happened in the early morning, and the same evening I looked in (astrally) upon the family to see how matters were going on. The poor boy’s leg and arm had been set, and the great cut bandaged, and he lay in bed looking very pale and weak, but evidently going to recover in time. The mother had a couple of neighbours in, and was telling them the story; and a curious tale it sounded to one who knew the real facts.

“She explained, in very many words, how she couldn’t tell what it was, but something came over her all in a minute like, making her feel something had happened to the boy, and she *must* go out and see after him; how at first she thought it was nonsense, and tried to throw off the feeling, ‘but it

warn't no use—she just had to go.' She told how she didn't know what made her go round by that cliff more than any other way, but it just happened so, and as she turned round the corner there she saw him lying propped up against a rock, and kneeling beside him was the 'beautifullest child ever she saw, dressed all in white and shining, with rosy cheeks and lovely brown eyes;' and how he smiled at her 'so heavenly like,' and then all in a moment he was not there, and at first she was so startled she didn't know what to think; and then all at once she felt what it was, and fell on her knees and thanked God for sending one of his angels to help her poor boy.

"Then she told how when she lifted him to carry him home she wanted to take off the handkerchief that was cutting into his poor leg so, but he would not let her, because he said the angel had tied it and said he was not to touch it; and how when she told the doctor this afterwards he explained to her that if she *had* unfastened it the boy would certainly have died.

"Then she repeated the boy's part of the tale—how the moment after he fell this lovely little angel came to him (he knew it *was* an angel because he knew there had been nobody in sight for half a mile round when he was at the top of the cliff just

before—only he could not understand why it hadn't any wings, and why it said it was only a boy)—how it lifted him against the rock and tied up his leg, and then began to talk to him and tell him he need not be frightened, because somebody was gone to fetch mother, and she would be there directly; how it kissed him and tried to make him comfortable, and how its soft, warm, little hand held his all the time, while it told him strange, beautiful stories which he could not clearly remember, but he knew they were very good, because he had almost forgotten he was hurt until he saw mother coming; and how then it assured him he would soon be well again, and smiled and squeezed his hand, and then somehow it was gone.

“Since then there has been quite a religious revival in that village! Their minister has told them that so signal an interposition of divine providence must have been meant as a sign to them, to rebuke scoffers and to prove the truth of holy scripture and of the Christian religion—and nobody seems to see the colossal conceit involved in such an astonishing proposition.

“But the effect on the boy has been undoubtedly good, morally as well as physically; by all accounts he was a careless enough young scamp before, but now he feels ‘his angel’ may be near him at any

time, and he will never do or say anything rough or coarse or angry, lest it should see or hear. The one great desire of his life is that some day he may see it again, and he knows that when he dies its lovely face will be the first to greet him on the other side."

A beautiful and pathetic little story, truly. The moral drawn from the occurrence by the village and its minister is perhaps somewhat of a *non sequitur*; yet the testimony to the existence of at least something beyond this material plane must surely do the people more good than harm, and after all the mother's conclusion from what she saw was a perfectly correct one, though more accurate knowledge would probably have led her to express it a little differently.

An interesting fact afterwards discovered by the investigations of the writer of the letter throws a curious side-light upon the reasons underlying such incidents. It was found that the two boys had met before, and that some thousands of years ago the one who fell from the cliff had been the slave of the other, and had once saved his young master's life at the risk of his own, and had been liberated in consequence; and now, long afterwards, the master not only repays the debt in kind, but also gives his former slave a high ideal and an inducement to morality of life which will probably change the whole

course of his future evolution. So true is it that no good deed ever goes unrewarded by karma, however tardy it may seem in its action—that

Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience stands He waiting,
With exactness grinds He all.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STORY OF A FIRE.

ANOTHER piece of work done by the same boy Cyril furnishes an almost exact parallel to some of the stories from the books which I have given in earlier pages. He and his older friend, it seems, were passing along in the prosecution of their usual work one night, when they noticed the fierce glare of a big fire below them, and promptly dived down to see if they could be of any use.

It was a great hotel which was in flames, a huge caravanserai on the edge of a great lake. The house, many stories in height, formed three sides of a square round a sort of garden, planted with trees and flowers, while the lake formed the fourth side. The two wings ran right down to the lake, the big bay windows which terminated them almost projecting over the water, so as to leave only quite a narrow passage-way under them at the two sides.

The front and wings were built round inside wells, which contained also the lattice-work shafts of the lifts, so that when once the fire broke out, it

spread with almost incredible rapidity, and before our friends saw it on their astral journey all the middle floors in each of the three great blocks were in flames. Fortunately the inmates—except one little boy—had already been rescued, though some of them had sustained very serious burns and other injuries.

This little fellow had been forgotten in one of the upper rooms of the left wing, for his parents were out at a ball, and knew nothing of the fire, while naturally enough no one else thought of the lad till it was far too late. The fire had gained such a hold on the middle floors of that wing that nothing could have been done, even if anyone had remembered him, as his room faced on to the inner garden which has been mentioned, so that he was completely cut off from all outside help. Besides, he was not even aware of his danger, for the dense, suffocating smoke had so gradually filled the room that his sleep had grown deeper and deeper, till he was all but stupefied.

In this state he was discovered by Cyril, who seems to be specially attracted towards children in need or danger. He first tried to make some of the people remember the boy, but in vain; and in any case it seemed scarcely possible that they could have helped him, so that it was soon evident that this was

merely a waste of time. The older helper then materialized Cyril, as before, in the room, and set him to work to awaken and rouse up the more than half-stupefied child. After a good deal of difficulty this was accomplished to some extent, but the boy remained in a half-dazed, semi-conscious condition through all that followed, so that he needed to be pushed and pulled about, guided and helped at every turn.

The two boys first crept out of the room into the central passage which ran through the wing, and then, finding that the smoke and the flames beginning to come through the floor made it impassable for a physical body, Cyril got the other boy back into the room again and out of the window on to a stone ledge, about a foot wide, which ran right along the block just below the windows. Along this he managed to guide his companion, half balancing himself on the extreme edge of the ledge, and half floating on air, but always placing himself outside of the other, so as to keep him from dizziness and prevent him from feeling afraid of a fall.

Towards the end of the block nearest the lake, in which direction the fire seemed less developed, they climbed in through an open window and again reached the passage, hoping to find the staircase at that end still passable. But it, too, was full of flame

and smoke; so they crawled back along the passage, Cyril advising his companion to keep his mouth close to the ground, till they reached the latticed cage of the lift running down the long well in the centre of the block.

The lift of course was at the bottom, but they managed to clamber down the lattice work inside the cage till they stood on the roof of the elevator itself. Here they found themselves blocked, but luckily Cyril discovered a doorway opening from the cage of the lift on to a sort of *entresol* just above the ground floor. Through this they reached a passage, which they crossed, the little boy being half-stifled by the smoke; then they made their way through one of the rooms opposite, and finally, clambering out of the window, found themselves on the top of the veranda which ran along in front of the ground floor, between it and the garden.

Thence it was easy enough to swarm down one of the pillars and reach the garden itself; but even there the heat was intense, and the danger, when the walls should fall, very considerable. So Cyril tried to conduct his charge round the end first of one, then of the other wing; but in both cases the flames had burst through, and the narrow, overhung passages were quite impassable. Finally they took refuge in one of the pleasure boats which were moored to the

steps of the quay at the side of the garden next the lake, and, casting loose, rowed out on to the water.

Cyril intended to row round past the burning wing and land the boy whom he had saved; but when they got some little way out, they fell in with a passing lake steamer, and were seen—for the whole scene was lit up by the glare of the burning hotel, till everything was as plain as in broad daylight. The steamer came alongside the boat to take them off; but instead of the two boys they had seen, the crew found only one—for his older friend had promptly allowed Cyril to slip back into his astral form, dissipating the denser matter which had made for the time a material body, and he was therefore now invisible.

A careful search was made, of course, but no trace of the second boy could be found, and so it was concluded that he must have fallen overboard and been drowned just as they came alongside. The child who had been rescued fell into a dead faint as soon as he was safe on board, so they could get no information from him, and when he did recover, all he could say was that he had seen the other boy the moment before they came alongside, and then knew nothing more.

The steamer was bound down the lake to a place some two days' sail distant, and it was a week or so before the rescued boy could be restored to his par-

ents, who of course thought that he had perished in the flames, for though an effort was made to impress on their minds the fact that their son had been saved, it was found impossible to convey the idea to them, so it may be imagined how great was the joy of the meeting.

The boy is still well and happy, and is never weary of relating his wonderful adventure. Many a time he has regretted that the kind friend who saved him should have perished so mysteriously at the very moment when all the danger seemed over at last. Indeed, he has even ventured to suggest that perhaps he *didn't* perish after all—that perhaps he was a fairy prince; but of course this idea elicits nothing but tolerant smiles of superiority from his elders. The kârmic link between him and his preserver has not yet been traced, but no doubt there must be one somewhere.

CHAPTER IX.

MATERIALIZATION AND REPERCUSSION.

ON meeting with a story such as this, students often enquire whether the invisible helper is perfectly safe amidst these scenes of deadly peril—whether, for example, this boy who was materialized in order to save another from a burning house was not himself in some danger—whether his physical body would not have suffered in any way by repercussion if his materialized form had passed through the flames, or fallen from the high ledge on the edge of which he walked so unconcernedly. In fact, since we know that in many cases the connection between a materialized form and a physical body is sufficiently close to produce repercussion, might it not have occurred in this case?

Now this subject of repercussion is an exceedingly abstruse and difficult one, and we are by no means yet in a position fully to explain its very remarkable phenomena; indeed, in order to understand the matter perfectly, it would probably be necessary to comprehend the laws of sympathetic vibration on more

planes than one. Still, we do know by observation some of the conditions which permit its action, and some which definitely exclude it, and I think we are warranted in saying that it was absolutely impossible here.

To see why this is so we must first remember that there are at least three well-defined varieties of materialization, as anyone who has at all an extended experience of spiritualism will be aware. I am not concerned at the moment to enter upon any explanation as to how these three varieties are respectively produced, but am merely stating the indubitable fact of their existence.

1. There is the materialization which, though tangible, is not visible to ordinary physical sight. Of this nature are the unseen hands which so often clasp one's arm or stroke one's face at a *séance*, which sometimes carry physical objects through the air or make raps upon the table—though of course both these latter phenomena may easily be produced without a materialized hand at all.

2. There is the materialization which though visible is not tangible—the spirit-form through which one's hand passes as through empty air. In some cases this variety is obviously misty and impalpable, but in others its appearance is so entirely

normal that its solidity is never doubted until some one endeavours to grasp it.

3. There is the perfect materialization which is both visible and tangible—which not only bears the outward semblance of your departed friend, but shakes you cordially by the hand with the very clasp that you know so well.

Now while there is a good deal of evidence to show that repercussion takes place under certain conditions in the case of this third kind of materialization, it is by no means so certain that it can occur with the first or second class. In the case of the boy-helper it is probable that the materialization would not be of the third type, since the greatest care is always taken not to expend more force than is absolutely necessary to produce whatever result may be required, and it is obvious that less energy would be used in the production of the more partial forms which we have called the first and second classes. The probability is that only the arm with which the boy held his little companion would be solid to the touch, and that the rest of his body, though looking perfectly natural, would have proved far less palpable if it had been tested.

But, apart from this probability, there is another point to be considered. When a full materialization takes place, whether the subject be living or dead,

physical matter of some sort has to be gathered together for the purpose. At a spiritualistic *séance* this matter is obtained by drawing largely upon the etheric double of the medium—and sometimes even upon his physical body also, since cases are on record in which his weight has been very considerably decreased while manifestations of this character were taking place.

This method is employed by the directing entities of the *séance* simply because when an available medium is within reach it is very much the easiest way in which a materialization can be brought about; and the consequence is that the very closest connection is thus set up between that medium and the materialized body, so that the phenomenon which (although very imperfectly understanding it) we call repercussion, occurs in its clearest form. If, for example, the hands of the materialized body be rubbed with chalk, that chalk will afterwards be found on the hands of the medium, even though he may have been all the time carefully locked up in a cabinet under circumstances which absolutely preclude any suspicion of fraud. If any injury be inflicted upon the materialized form, that injury will be accurately reproduced upon the corresponding part of the medium's body; while sometimes food of which the spirit-form has partaken will be found to have passed into the body

of the medium—at least that happened in one case at any rate within my own experience.

It would be far otherwise, however, in the case which we have been describing. Cyril was thousands of miles from his sleeping physical body, and it would therefore be quite impossible for his friend to draw etheric matter from it, while the regulations under which all pupils of the great Masters of Wisdom perform their work of helping man would assuredly prevent him, even for the noblest purpose, from putting such a strain upon any one else's body. Besides, it would be quite unnecessary, for the far less dangerous method invariably employed by the helpers when materialization seems desirable would be ready to his hand—the condensation from the circumambient ether, or even from the physical air, of such an amount of matter as may be requisite. This feat, though no doubt beyond the power of the average entity manifesting at a *séance*, presents no difficulty to a student of occult chemistry.

But mark the difference in the result obtained. In the case of the medium we have a materialized form in the closest possible connection with the physical body, made out of its very substance, and therefore capable of producing all the phenomena of repercussion. In the case of the helper we have indeed an exact reproduction of the physical body, but it is

created by a mental effort out of matter entirely foreign to that body, and is no more capable of acting upon it by repercussion than an ordinary marble statue of the man would be.

Thus it is that a passage through the flames or a fall from a high window-ledge would have had no terrors for the boy-helper, and that on another occasion a member of the band, though materialized, was able without any inconvenience to the physical body to go down in a sinking vessel (see p. 77).

In both the incidents of his work that have been described above, it will have been noticed that the boy Cyril was unable to materialize himself, and that the operation had to be performed for him by an older friend. One more of his experiences is worth relating, for it gives us a case in which by intensity of pity and determination of will he *was* able to show himself—a case somewhat parallel to that previously related of the mother whose love enabled her somehow to manifest herself in order to save her children's lives.

Inexplicable as it may seem, there is no doubt whatever of the existence in nature of this stupendous power of will over matter of all planes, so that if only the power be great enough, practically *any* result may be produced by its direct action, without any knowledge or even thought on the part of the

man exercising that will as to *how* it is to do its work. We have had plenty of evidence that this power holds good in the case of materialization, although ordinarily it is an art which must be learnt just like any other. Assuredly an average man on the astral plane could no more materialize himself without having previously learnt how to do it than the average man on this plane could play the violin without having previously learnt it; but there are exceptional cases, as will be seen from the following narrative.

CHAPTER X.

THE TWO BROTHERS.

This story has been told by a pen of far greater dramatic capability than mine, and with a wealth of detail for which I have here no space, in *The Theosophical Review* of November, 1897, p. 229. To that account I would refer the reader, since my own description of the case will be a mere outline, as brief as is consistent with clearness. The names given are of course fictitious, but the incidents are related with scrupulous accuracy.

Our *dramatis personae* are two brothers, the sons of a country gentleman—Lancelot, aged fourteen, and Walter, aged eleven—very good boys of the ordinary healthy, manly type, like hundreds of others in this fair realm, with no obvious psychic qualifications of any sort, except the possession of a good deal of Celtic blood. Perhaps the most remarkable feature about them was the intensity of the affection that existed between them, for they were simply inseparable—neither would go anywhere without the

other, and the younger idolized the elder as only a younger boy can.

One unlucky day Lancelot was thrown from his pony and killed, and for Walter the world became empty. The child's grief was so real and terrible that he could neither eat nor sleep, and his mother and nurse were at their wits' end as to what to do for him. He seemed deaf alike to persuasion and blame; when they told him that grief was wicked, and that his brother was in heaven, he simply answered that he could not be certain of that, and that even if it were true, he knew that Lancelot could no more be happy in heaven without him than he could on earth without Lancelot.

Incredible as it may sound, the poor child was actually dying of grief, and what made the case even more pathetic was the fact that, all unknown to him, his brother stood at his side all the time, fully conscious of his misery, and himself half-distracted at the failure of his repeated attempts to touch him or speak to him.

Affairs were still in this most pitiable condition on the third evening after the accident, when Cyril's attention was drawn to the two brothers—he cannot tell how. "He just happened to be passing," he says; yet surely the will of the Lords of Compassion guided him to the scene. Poor Walter lay exhausted

yet sleepless—alone in his desolation, so far as he knew, though all the time his sorrowing brother stood beside him. Lancelot, free from the chains of the flesh, could see and hear Cyril, so obviously the first thing to do was to soothe his pain with a promise of friendship and help in communicating with his brother.

As soon as the dead boy's mind was thus cheered with hope, Cyril turned to the living one, and tried with all his strength to impress upon his brain the knowledge that his brother stood beside him, not dead, but living and loving as of yore. But all his efforts were in vain; the dull apathy of grief so filled poor Walter's mind that no suggestion from without could enter, and Cyril knew not what to do. Yet so deeply was he moved by the sad sight, so intense was his sympathy and so firm his determination to help in some way or other at any cost of strength to himself, that somehow (even to this day he cannot tell how) he found himself able to touch and speak to the heart-broken child.

Putting aside Walter's questions as to who he was and how he came there, he went straight to the point, telling him that his brother stood beside him, trying hard to make him hear his constantly repeated assurances that he was not dead, but living and yearning to help and comfort him. Little Walter longed

to believe, yet hardly dared to hope; but Cyril's eager insistence vanquished his doubts at last, and he said,

"Oh! I do believe you, because you're so kind; but if I could only see him, then I should *know*, then I should be quite sure; and if I could only hear his voice telling me he was happy, I shouldn't mind a bit his going away again afterwards."

Young though he was at the work, Cyril knew enough to be aware that Walter's wish was one not ordinarily granted, and was beginning regretfully to tell him so, when suddenly he felt a Presence that all the helpers know, and though no word was spoken it was borne in upon his mind that instead of what he had meant to say, he was to promise Walter the boon his heart desired. "Wait till I come back," he said, "and you shall see him then." And then—he vanished.

That one touch from the Master had shown him what to do and how to do it, and he rushed to fetch the older friend who had so often helped him before. This older man had not yet retired for the night, but on hearing Cyril's hurried summons, he lost no time in accompanying him, and in a few minutes they were back at Walter's bedside. The poor child was just beginning to believe it all a lovely dream, and his delight and relief when Cyril reappeared were beautiful to see. Yet how much more beautiful was

the scene a moment later, when, in obedience to a word from the Master, the elder man materialized the eager Lancelot, and the living and the dead stood hand in hand once more!

Now in very truth for both the brothers had sorrow been turned into joy unspeakable, and again and again they both declared that now they should never feel sad any more, because they knew that death had no power to part them. Nor was their gladness damped even when Cyril explained carefully to them, at his older friend's suggestion, that this strange physical reunion would not be repeated, but that all day long Lancelot would be near Walter, even though the latter could not see him, and every night Walter would slip out of his body and be consciously with his brother once more.

Hearing this, poor weary Walter sank to sleep at once and proved its truth, and was amazed to find with what hitherto unknown rapidity he and his brother could fly together from one to another of their old familiar haunts. Cyril thoughtfully warned him that he would probably forget most of his freer life when he awoke next day; but by rare good fortune he did *not* forget, as so many of us do. Perhaps the shock of the great joy had somewhat aroused the latent psychic faculty which belongs to the Celtic blood; at any rate he forgot no single detail of all

that had happened, and next morning he burst upon the house of mourning with a wondrous tale which suited it but ill.

His parents thought that grief had turned his brain, and, since he is now the heir, they have been watching long and anxiously for further symptoms of insanity, which happily they have not found. They still think him a monomaniac on this point, though they fully recognize that his "delusion" has saved his life; but his old nurse (who is a Catholic) is firm in her belief that all he says is true—that the Lord Jesus, who was once a child himself, took pity on that other child as he lay dying of grief, and sent one of His angels to bring his brother back to him from the dead as a reward for a love which was stronger than death. Sometimes popular superstition gets a good deal nearer to the heart of things than does educated scepticism!

Nor does the story end here, for the good work begun that night is still progressing, and none can say how far the influence of that one act may ramify. Walter's astral consciousness, once having been thus thoroughly awakened, remains in activity; every morning he brings back into his physical brain the memory of his night's adventures with his brother; every night they meet their dear friend Cyril, from whom they have learned so much about the wonder-

ful new world that has opened before them, and the other worlds to come that lie higher yet. Under Cyril's guidance they also—the living and the dead alike—have become eager and earnest members of the band of helpers; and probably for years to come—until Lancelot's vigorous young astral body disintegrates—many a dying child will have cause to be grateful to these three who are trying to pass on to others something of the joy that they have themselves received.

Nor is it to the dead alone that these new converts have been of use, for they have sought and found some other living children who show consciousness on the astral plane during sleep; and one at least of those whom they have thus brought to Cyril has already proved a valuable little recruit to the children's band, as well as a very kind little friend down here on the physical plane.

Those to whom all these ideas are new sometimes find it very difficult to understand how children can be of any use in the astral world. Seeing, they would say, that the astral body of a child must be undeveloped, and the ego thus limited by childhood on the astral as well as the physical plane, in what way could such an ego be of use, or be able to help towards the spiritual, mental and moral evolution of humanity, which we are told is the chief concern of the helpers?

When first such a question was asked, shortly after the publication of one of these stories in our magazine, I sent it to Cyril himself, to see what he would say to it, and his answer was this :

“It is quite true, as the writer says, that I am only a boy, and know very little yet, and that I shall be much more useful when I have learnt more. But I am able to do a little even now, because there are so many people who have learnt nothing about Theosophy yet, though they may know very much more than I do about everything else. And you see when you want to get to a certain place, a little boy who knows the way can do more for you than a hundred wise men who don't know it.”

It may be added that when even a child had been awakened upon the astral plane the development of the astral body would proceed so rapidly that he would very soon be in a position upon that plane but little inferior to that of the awakened adult, and would of course be much in advance, so far as usefulness is concerned, of the wisest man who was as yet unawakened. But unless the ego expressing himself through that child-body possessed the necessary qualification of a determined yet loving disposition, and had clearly manifested it in his previous lives, no occultist would take the very serious responsibility of awakening him upon the astral plane. When, how-

ever, their karma is such that it is possible for them to be thus aroused, children often prove most efficient helpers, and throw themselves into their work with a whole-souled devotion which is very beautiful to see. And so is fulfilled once more the ancient prophecy "a little child shall lead them."

Another question that suggests itself to one's mind in reading this last story of the two brothers is this: Since Cyril was somehow able to materialize himself by sheer force of love and pity and strength of will, is it not strange that Lancelot, who had been trying so much longer to communicate, had not succeeded in doing the same thing?

Well, there is of course no difficulty in seeing why poor Lancelot was unable to communicate with his brother, for that inability is simply the normal condition of affairs; the wonder is that Cyril *was* able to materialize himself, not that Lancelot was *not*. Not only, however, was the feeling probably stronger in Cyril's case, but he also knew exactly what he wanted to do—knew that such a thing as materialization was a possibility, and had some general idea as to how it was done—while Lancelot naturally knew nothing of all this then, though he does now.