

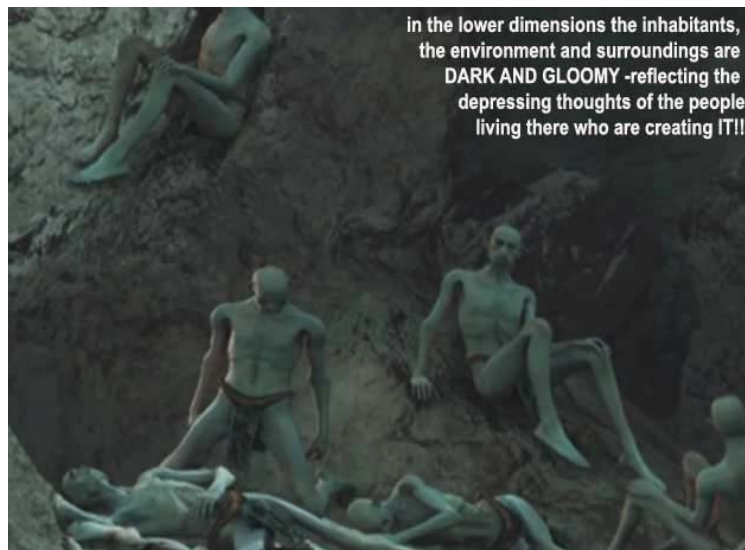
**Rev. G. Vale Owen**



extracts from:

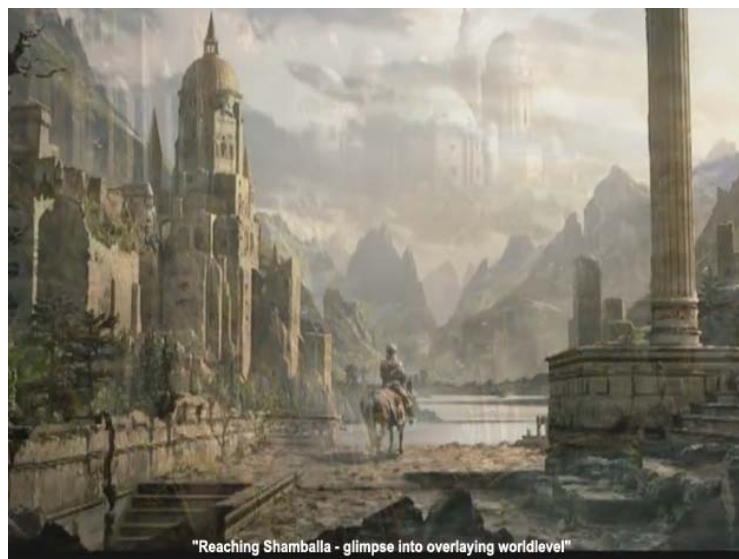
## **Paul and Albert**

*first published 1924- and still available through Greater World Spiritualist Association for ca2eng.punds*



in the lower dimensions the inhabitants,  
the environment and surroundings are  
**DARK AND GLOOMY** -reflecting the  
depressing thoughts of the people  
living there who are creating IT!!

**on the astral - the surroundings are DIRECTLY reflecting the inhabitant's thought-quality  
as this little book also dwells with**



"Reaching Shamballa - glimpse into overlaying worldlevel"

*(illustrations used here was not in the printed book)*

[link to german below](#)

## Preface

The "Paul and Albert" inspirational script was received by Mr. Vale Owen from the band of spirit communicators who had previously contributed the first three volumes of "The Life Beyond the Veil"; but in this instance "Sister" )\* was leader (see Glossary). The intermediary between the band and the recipient of the narrative was Kathleen, through whom, therefore, the actual form of the narrative came.

)\* "SISTER," born a Breton on earth, has charge of several Rest Houses in the Borderland. She visits Paul, after his passing-over from earth into this gloomy region, and consigns him to Albert's care.

Kathleen in earth life was a seamstress who lived in Anfield, Liverpool, and passed over in about the year 1893, at the age of twenty-eight.

"Paul and Albert" is complete in itself, and in character differs greatly from the rest of the Vale Owen Script. **Although the names of the people are fictitious, the narrative itself is true**, that is, as true as is possible when giving a picture of the Other Life in language of Earth.

The communicators, Kathleen explains, have transmitted this story with deliberation and purpose. Those who lead dainty and delicate lives, regardless of their obligations to less fortunate people, will read in the pages following what kind of life awaits them soon. And if its portrayal, she says, toned-down though it be, is not sufficient to deter these selfish ones, they would not be bettered were the wickedness and horror more fully described.

The mission, then, of these communicators seems to be to underline with no uncertain hand the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Reading this account of Paul's wanderings through, the hells reminds one forcibly of Dante's "Inferno, since the same atmosphere of terror surrounds both. Their differences, however, are fundamental.

Readers of the Divine Comedy will remember that above the entrance to Inferno the great poet reads the sentence: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." That is its keynote. In "Paul and Albert," however, there is no room for such despair. **Hope is possible even for those in the lowest hells.** No soul is utterly lost, nor is there any wastage in the great Economy of the Creator. Another Paul wrote, centuries ago:

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire."

The "burning," then, is remedial, a purifying; and hell is a purgatorio.

The torment there is self-inflicted, and the essential folly of wickedness emerges unmistakably. Paul's anguish is the natural result of his actions during his life on Earth. Having entered the next stage of existence, a continuation of this, he still bears on his lack the burden of a selfish life. He lives there, as are, under the same laws, urged by the same motives. The only difference is that the crust of pretence, *so carefully built around himself on Earth, is stripped off him at a stroke.* It follows that unseen influences, in obedience to those laws, impinge upon his naked soul with greater and more terrible intensity.

At every step in his descent he may turn back if he will. Yet, while fearing the threat of anguish, he embraces it; and, although at first the stench of hell nauseates him, he inures himself to its horror. Each moment is a crisis; each action the result of free choice. Yet at every fresh step he degrades himself, sinking lower and lower, till the evil within him is exhausted.

Then he realizes that wickedness is another name or folly.

It will be interesting to the reader to notice how punishment fits the crime in the Hereafter.

Paul's chief fault, during his life on Earth, was selfishness, which often took the forms of avarice and cruelty. After he has entered the Afterlife, he finds that all his gains, so carefully hoarded, are gone, his clothing is merely rags, and his body is shrunken like that of a miser.

Drawn by an unresisted attraction, he joins different communities, each made up of people as selfish and false as himself, till he reaches the point when he despises and fears them.

Before that crisis comes upon him, his sensuous nature also is allowed full play. He discovers, however, that far from satisfying his desires, he is so tormented by them, that he sickens of the condition into which they have driven him.

Hypocrisy was another of his weaknesses. So, we find him at the old Chateau, strutting and preening himself like a gallant of old, one of many posers. Yet all the while he knows how trivial is this finicking pretence; also, an important point, he is uncomfortably aware that the others know it too.

It is easy for a hypocrite to gain some satisfaction from his acting among honest people, who expect honesty from him, and seem to get it. No satisfaction, however, can be gained when those whom he meets are laughing up their sleeves, because, being students of hypocrisy themselves, they see through the farce, and are positive they can do it much better.

Thus each flame of Paul's fire of wickedness is damped out, leaving nothing but ashes.

Full realization is the turning-point of his career. He begins to return towards the light he left so precipitately. But, swift as the descent of a human soul can be, the re-ascent is always slow and arduous. And Paul is but the wreck of his former self.

Weary and broken, shorn of self-respect, and of respect for others, he faces the greatest crisis of all his experience.

Hope comes to him at last. Certain words, forgotten in the excitement of his frenzy, come to the forefront of his memory and help him now. Albert and "Sister," who had spoken them, still wait for him with inexhaustible patience and love. Resolution surges within him; he will get back, back to the friends he had foolishly spurned.

He scales the ascent, so steep and heart-breaking. By dint of that innate determination he had ill-used hitherto, he fights his way upward to the Borderland, from whence he had wandered. There Albert at once takes him in charge, and they two together, gaining in strength and joy with every step, pursue a nobler path, which leads to the Land of the Dawning.

The above is only a cursory Summary of a remarkable narrative, which must be read carefully, and not too quickly, to make a just impression of the great theme it contains. The word-pictures will be found very vivid, and its atmosphere pronounced.

The Glossary at the end of the volume may assist readers in remembering characters and the main points in the story.

## **EDITOR**

## **HOW THE MESSAGES WERE RECEIVED**

Mr. Vale Owen gave a description, published in a previous volume, "The Outlands of Heaven," of how it came about that he acted as amanuensis, and the way in which the Script came through his mentality. His account is as follows:

"There is an opinion abroad that the clergy are very credulous beings. But our training in the exercise of the critical faculty places us among the most hard to convince when any new truth is in question. It took a quarter of a century to convince me-ten years that spirit communication was a fact, and fifteen that the fact was legitimate and good.

"From the moment I had taken this decision, the answer began to appear. First my wife developed the power of automatic writing. Then through her I received requests that I would sit quietly, pencil in hand, and take down any thoughts which seemed to come into my 'mind projected by some external personality and not consequent on the exercise of my own mentality. Reluctance lasted a long time, but at last I felt that friends were at hand who wished very earnestly to speak with me. They did not override or compel my will in any way-that would have settled the matter at once, so far as I was concerned but their wishes were made ever more plain.

"I felt at last that I ought to give them an opportunity, for I was impressed with the feeling that the influence was a good one, so, at last, very doubtfully, I decided to sit in my cassock in the Vestry after Evensong.

"The first four or five messages wandered aimlessly from one subject to another. But gradually the sentences began to take consecutive form, and at last

I got some which were understandable. From that time, development kept pace with practice. When the whole series of messages was finished I reckoned up and found that the speed had been maintained at an average of twenty-four words a minute.

"On two occasions only had I any idea what subject was to be treated. That was when the message had obviously been left uncompleted. At other times I had fully expected a certain subject to be taken, but on taking up my pencil the stream of thought went off in an altogether different direction.

"The effect of what, perhaps, we might term the more mechanical operations, as these impinge upon the organism of the human brain, the transmitters themselves describe in some detail.

"Vibrations, initiated by them and projected through the Veil, find their target in the mentality of the human instrument and are reproduced, on this side in what is, in effect, a kind of inner clairvoyance and clairaudience . . . That is, he sees these scenes in his imagination as he, by a similar process, is able to visualize his garden or house, or other well-known face, when at a distance.

"The words of the messages seem to travel on a celestial-mundane telephonic current. He can hear them interiorly in much the same manner as he is able to hum over a well-remembered tune, or to reproduce speech he has heard with all its inflections and cadences, pathetic or uplifting all this interiorly, and without himself uttering a sound.

"In addition, however, there is a deeper content in the operation. It is that effect upon the human instrument produced by the more or less intimate contact of spirit with spirit. This is actual "Spiritual communion," and is recognized in the Creed of Christendom in the article 'The Communion of Saints.'

So intimate and so perfect must be the sympathy and affection existing between transmitter and receiver, that whenever any thought comes through which seems to be at variance with what is true, immediately a shock is felt, and the instrument faces about, as it were, with a query in his mind, which on the part of the communicator is as immediately observed and noted."

The transmitters of "Paul and Albert" were a band of spirit communicators, including Kathleen, and led by "Sister"; and the "human instrument," mentioned above, was the receiver, Mr. Vale Owen.

## CHAPTER I

### **THE RECKONING BEGINS**

**Tuesday, January 14th, 1919, 5.50 to 6.52 p.m.**

Not long ago a man came over here who had been a doctor of medicine in the earth life. He had a London practice, and died suddenly after going his daily round of visits. He had a rather nice house and a comfortable income, which had lately been increasing quickly, and he was therefore much surprised on awaking to find himself in a miserable/ dismal room, ill-lighted and not over clean, lying on the floor in a corner.

He sat up and looked about him, and the first thing which came into his mind, when he had once realized that he was not asleep and dreaming, was -"Kidnapped! But why?" He sat there for a long time trying to think the matter out, and so much was he taken up with his surroundings that it was only after a considerable period, that he thought of looking at himself. Then he was shocked to find that he was attired in a suit of dirty coloured calico, (printed cotton fabric) - much shrunken and ragged. The coat was baggy and shapeless, and much too large for him, and the trousers reached only to his knees where they ended in tatters. He also observed that, whereas he had been a finely-made man with stalwart limbs, now his arms and legs were shrunken and bony, and his body, he realized, was in like condition; and that, altogether, he was smaller than he had been.

He sat there wondering how this had come about and almost began to doubt his own identity. This he was unable to do, however, *for he knew he was himself and no other*. He also knew he had been unconscious, but was now awake and alert enough. So he tried to remember what had happened before he lost consciousness. Still there was nothing in his recollections to account for his present condition. The last thing he remembered was his arrival home and asking his wife what there was for dinner. Then he went to have a wash and to change his coat. Here his memories were suddenly cut short and he remembered nothing further.

At that moment the door opened and a woman entered. She was dressed in a garment of the same colourless hue as his own-an armless tunic reaching to the knees. She went to another corner and lay down without noticing him in the least. Then another woman and a man entered and, behind them, a third woman came.

They spoke neither to him nor to each other, but all, except the last to enter, lay down as if they were very weary, and had only one object in view, and that was to go to sleep; not so much to rest their bodies as to sink into mental oblivion. For their faces were haggard and their eyes were but the windows of tortured souls.

The one-time doctor sat with his back against the angle and gazed on them in surprise and, presently, in horror. For the longer he looked at them the more hideous and malevolent did their faces, and even their attitudes, appear. There was, in some indefinable way, a sense, an atmosphere, of wickedness, hate and agony in the room; and this had become intensified as each had entered, so that it had now become intolerable. But the strange thing about this feeling was that the wickedness and malevolence seemed to be not so much theirs as his own, reflected back to him. So he resolved to go outside and see if it was any better there. But when he tried to rise he found himself so weak as to be quite unable to do so.

He sat there gazing at his companions, therefore, and, by and by, he began to realize that none of them was asleep. As they lay there on the ground they were all looking at him and, even in that gloomy semidarkness, he could see their eyes as if they were lighted from behind with an inner flame, incandescent.

Then gradually he became more and more afraid until he could scarce keep his limbs from

shaking with terror. But he strove to do this, for he felt that if he moved they would all spring at him. This effort, too, was torture, but better, he told himself, than even being addressed by such hideous, bestial people as these seemed to his disturbed mind to be.

Then there came over him once again the remembrance of the scene he had just left. It could not have been more than a couple of hours or so since he was in his own comfortable, well-warmed and well-furnished home just about to sit down to a good meal after a long day's work. It seemed to him actually about ten minutes. He had been figuring out what he had made in that day, as he motored home in his comfortable car with his chauffeur in front. He had been idly gazing at the chauffeur's back and the quaint thought had come into his mind that, if the man had about, say, thirty shillings in his pocket, and his watch had cost three pounds, and his underclothes, say, two pounds-the uniform had cost about five pounds ten shillings complete-well, he had made just about one and three-eighths of what would buy the man as he sat there. And it had not been an extra good day, so far as remuneration went. Now I tell you this because it was typical of the man. Kind actions he had done now and again. But his real object in life was not a high one, and certainly not altruistic.

After that he remembered his arrival home and then --all was blank. And here he was, sure enough. But how had he come here? Not of his own will he was certain. Then another thought flashed upon him. Mad! Yet he had never shown any signs of madness that he was aware of. Nor was insanity in his family.

I have said that he dreaded his companions. But so great was his terror at the uneasy silence and their continued motionless staring at him that, at last, against his will, he suddenly cried out, "Why don't you speak, some of you? Why do you lie glaring at me like that? Is this your home and, if so, how do I come to be in it?"

Then the three women looked at the other man and he rose and went and stood a few feet away from the doctor and said, "There's no hurry, my friend; plenty of time for everything here": and he laughed in a mirthless way. Then he continued, waving his hand towards his companions, "We have come together here, but this is not our home. This is your home. Ours is not far away. ***But we were informed of your arrival and were sent to greet you.*** As I said before, here is plenty of time for everything and, therefore, we have not forced the pace."

Then ensued this conversation between the two men:

"But this is not my home."

"Oh, is that so? And which is your home, if this is not it?"

The doctor gave the address.

"Oh, I see. So that's your home. Yes; so it is. That's where I remember coming to consult you once. I was a patient of yours. Just have a good look at me.... No? Well, well; your memory seems to have failed you somewhat. That's too bad. I thought you would have a niche in your memory for an old friend."

Suddenly the doctor uttered a loud shriek of agony. The nose of the man had been broken and badly set, and he recollected the case at once.

Then the other continued, "Ah, I see you have a glimmering of my identity, at any rate. You remember this nose, don't you? That is why I was informed of our coming."

Now, I must explain that when this man had sustained a bad accident he had been attended by this same doctor and had, later on, come to his residence for further treatment. When the bandages were at length removed, however, it was found that the nose was shapeless, and his face disfigured for life. He did not suspect *then* that it was intentional, but afterwards found that the doctor had been carrying on an intrigue with his wife and, in order to lessen her esteem for her husband, had adopted these means.

**Wednesday, January 15th, 1919. 5.35 to 6.50 p.m.**

So the doctor was very much afraid, and cowered back in his corner. But the other said, "I see you remember me now. Well, you will also realize that you are no longer in a position to do to others as you did to me. You have quitted your body and, with it, your home and all that helped to make life comfortable for you. Now you have to start again, as I had to do when I came here; and you seem to have about as much chance of making it bearable as I had - less, I should judge."

"But where am I? Where is it you live?"

"Oh, a little way down the street. I'm going to take you there shortly. But first these ladies," he added with a sneer, "wish to renew your acquaintance -or, in other words, they have been ordered to do so."

We will not go into all the sordid dealings which were brought back to his memory as he recognized two of them. Once was a young woman whom he had lured into vice, and then cast aside. She had lingered a few years making a living as he had first taught her to do, and then had passed on after a very painful illness in an isolation hospital.

Another was also young, but of a different aspect. She was not coarse in feature, nor so ill-clad, and her form was even comely. She stood in the background and did not take part in the proceedings. It was she who had entered the room last and alone, and, indeed, the others seemed scarcely aware of her presence.

p6

The third woman was past middle age. Her hair was nearly white, her face hard and fierce. She came to him and bent over him, glaring into his eyes in silence. Then he murmured, "Madame Blescombe!"



At this she smiled grimly, and answered, "Oui! I am glad monsieur knows 'me again. We shall now renew our good comradeship. Many an hour we shall kill with reminiscences of the old days at the Chateau, eh, monsieur?"

She had kept a gambling club at her chateau in France, having squandered her father's fortune left to her at his death. She had never married, having preferred her free life of vice and swindling. Gambling, blackmail, bribes for various shameful services had been her means of livelihood. The doctor was not unknown to her circle, and always a welcome guest. Now he shrank from her for, in a flash, the inner woman was revealed and somewhat of the fate to which her former manner of life had brought her. For that he cared but little. *What troubled him was the fact that it revealed at the same time the probable destiny in store for himself.*

After a while the man spoke again. "Now," he said, "get up and follow me. Your first

destination is my own desirable residence." And when the wretched man hesitated to rise, being now almost paralysed by terror, he added more sharply, "Look here, doctor, we may as well understand one another at once and finally. Listen.

"I have been through hell. I will not describe my experiences to you; you will be able to sample them in your own person shortly. Suffice it to say that there were extenuating circumstances in my case which will not be found in your own, poor devil! These have been pointed out to me, and I have had sense enough to take advantage of them. The result is a rapidity of transit through those dark halls and gloomy caverns which otherwise would have been much prolonged."

Here he paused a moment, as if memory paralysed utterance; and then continued in a subdued tone - it was as if he had caught the faint sound of a distant voice of admonition and warning; "I have come through it more quickly than many do. But I am only through the very worst of it. You have but to look at me to see I am still in hell. I am only not so deep in it as I was. Indeed, I have seen a faint gleam of light, and it has helped - oh, there you are, my good friend. I thought I heard you whisper to me just now. Was that so?"

He had caught sight of the young girl who had entered last.\* She had come forward quietly and stood at his left hand. She answered him, "Yes, I did send you a little word to restrain you. You were forgetting, were you not? Now let me explain the rest to this poor fellow."

\* Kathleen speaks of her as "Sister"

Then to the doctor she said, "This man has called you doctor. That office is no longer yours; *for you have not used it well*. As to your medical skill, I will only say that it was not nearly so great as either you or your unfortunate patients considered it to be. For it was based on material science, and even the bodies of your patients are more than mere matter. You took no account of the fact that those bodies were permeated through and through with spirit; which being withdrawn animation ceased.

**"What made the affair so much worse - I still speak in a medical sense - was that your motive in chief was the making of money. The curing of your patient was not the aim, but only an aim; it was not the principal aim you had in view.** It took a subordinate place. You would not have admitted this, even to yourself. You would have been shocked at the suggestion. That, however, is the first thing you have to recognize here, for until you have done so there is no hope of progress for you.

p8

"You do not accept my words now. They will come back to you in the midst of your agony and will be of help to you then. *That is why I have spoken in this way to you.*

"So, instead of 'Doctor,' you will be called 'Paul'; for you are little of stature and, at present, of little worth. Stand up and verify my words."

He dared not disobey her quietly-spoken command. But when he stood up as she had bidden him he was staggered at the fact that, while she was just fairly proportioned, the crown of his head was only on a level with her shoulder. In earth life he would have been much taller than she.

"Now you see what I mean," she continued. "Remember that, although that name is yours henceforth, yet it has been borne by good and bad in the history of earth. Fix your mind, when you are able to do so, on the good, and on the most famous of all, who one day may be able to help you if you show your worthiness in the end to bear his name. Yes, you can do this; but your pilgrimage will be a long and weary one.

"This man has come that way, too; and has in part learned his lesson. You are committed



into his keeping for the present time, until you begin to descend the Valley of the Rocks. Do not take alarm. You will not be driven there. When you go, you will go of your own will, and not until you drive yourself that way will you go. Meanwhile, this man has you in charge. It is a test and a task for him, and according as he performs this task will his next steps lie towards or away from peace. He is called 'Albert'; for no particular reason - he chose it himself. *It happened to be his name on earth and, until earth influences are done away, he prefers to retain it.* I am going to leave you now. Is there any question you would like to ask me before I go?"

"Yes. I want to know by what right you have consigned me to the care of this man?"

"The question is not one of right, so much as of love. ***You do not understand that, for love has found little place in your heart, being crowded out by selfishness.*** I, therefore, reply as will best help you, thus: The first thing you had better do is to grapple with *the fact that you are completely in the power of the evil rulers of these realms, except for the help of such as I.* If you do not admit this of your own free will you will be ground down and crushed into submission - not by me, nor by any of my Order - but by those same dark rulers and their subordinates. Under their power you must pass, ***for you paid your allegiance to them in your earth life, although you little realized that fact then.*** But, while you have this short respite, I advise you to cultivate the ability in yourself of accepting what help I and Albert are able to give you. For such a link made now, will bind us to you when you are down there.

"When you are no longer willing, and indeed able, to stay in these parts, and leave for the darker places, then I will come to you once again. At that time also this man will give account to me of his dealings with you."

Then she turned to Albert and said solemnly, and with a touch of tenderness: "Albert, my little child snatched from those red worlds below, I have gone through much travail for you, and you are not yet fully born into the light of His Presence. Remember this and my love for you and your loved one. She is penitent now, and her love for you has returned to her and is breaking her heart for sorrow of the grief she caused you. She will soon be coming out of earth's troubles to grapple with what penance she has stored up here. But she will not come so far downwards as this, for she is already working out her salvation in grief and repentance and love for you. Be careful, therefore, that your account to me of your dealings with this unhappy man be such that I may be able to take you a little way onward where you may meet her when she comes. In that case you and she shall travel together, helping one another on towards the light. Remember."

Then intently she looked at Paul, as we must now call him. But there was no sign of softening in his face. So she slowly turned, walked to the door and went forth. And as she went the air seemed to become more chill, and what little light there was changed somewhat; and whereas before there had been a slight rosy hue blended in it, that was now withdrawn, and it was very gloomy without it.

It was then Paul realized his abject poverty and degradation. He had been used to do much as he would with people hereto, and they seldom had stood against his dominating personality. Now a young girl scolded him and called him small and poor, and shamed him. She commanded him, this slip of a girl, and he dared not defy her; for he knew that, with all her sweetness, she was strong, and he was weak and poor. No friend, of all his many friends, was there, but only enemies who had just cause for vengeance.

He was there in the gloom and alone in his great weakness.

### **Thursday, January 16th, 1919, 5.45 to 6.20 p.m.**

The street into which they entered was but a single line of huts facing open country. It stretched away and downward until it became lost in the gloom. There was no horizon. Here and there flickered a lurid light like a small wood fire of green and copper-coloured flames. Most of the place was apparently bog-land, for there arose from it a stench of decaying matter which was borne about in fumes most revolting and suffocating. Paul gasped for breath and leaned against a fence for support. But it gave way as soon as he touched it and he fell



headlong into a muddy enclosure. Albert began to laugh, and then checked himself and, going forward, helped the wretched man to regain the pavement of cobble-stones.

***"For pity's sake," cried Paul, "what is this place; and is there no way to get out of it?"***

His companion now became very serious as he looked at him. He paused for a time, and then said:

"That plot is called a garden, but the best flowers it will grow are a kind of fungus /mushroom. It's a garden only by courtesy, or perhaps so called in deference to that cold cynicism, mixed with make-believe, of which you will find here more than a sufficiency. You see I am beginning to be able to stand aside from things and look at them from a partly-detached point of view. That, however, was not always so; and it is a sign of my progress. But I find I am not yet on very firm ground. I nearly laughed at your plight just now. That was a bit of the old devil in me which I thought I had left behind down there."

"I would rather have your ridicule than your pity, anyhow."

"Yes, I think I understand; sort of 'coals of fire' feeling, isn't it? But I want you to realize that my pity is quite sincere. No one who has been through what I have been through could help pitying one like you, who has even a worse hell-journey before him than I had."

Paul shuddered and peered through the gloom into his companion's face and asked: *"Why do you say that? Why tell me in advance?"*



"Not to add to your torture, as you are imagining. I cannot say I have quite forgiven you for what you did to me. I don't think I can do that until you come to me and ask for my forgiveness. But I am trying to get ready for that time. So what I do and say is only for

your good. I want you to bear that in mind. It will make things easier both for you and me. I told you of your fate in advance to help you to realize fact. For many years you have been trying to blind yourself as to what you really were and the future in store for you when you should come over here. If you will take the advice of one who has been through it, you will drop that insane attitude and own up to what you really are."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, what is your opinion of your life?"

"I have not lived the life of a saint. I never pretended to do that. I'm not a hypocritical local preacher."

"Not a local preacher, certainly; but a hypocrite - yes."

"How do you mean? I don't feel inclined to stand any lectures from you; and certainly not insults."

Albert again paused. "I am only just beginning my present work; it is quite new to me, and

I hardly know how to deal with you as I have been instructed to do. You seem to be rather a difficult case for me to start with."

"I wish you would explain, and not talk riddles like a fool."

"My poor fellow, you are adopting your old style - over-bearing, hard-faced and bullying. You were ever so, I remember. But here it is not only out of place in such as you; it is insolent, and I advise you to drop it, once and for all, and adopt a much humbler attitude. For you will presently find yourself in the company of such as will resent it in a way you will not relish very much."

"Is there no law in this place?"

"Look at yourself. In your shrunken, ugly figure, in the coarse rags which clothe you, you may read an open page of the book of that unerring law which is in operation everywhere - even here. **In earth life you were able to clothe your body with expensive clothes, and to mask your black soul with clever words or a smile or a money gift. Here you are what your appearance declares you to be - that exactly, and nothing else.**"



"Then this is really permanent-not just a bad dream, I mean?"

"It is neither one nor the other. Certainly it is real enough, as I have found, and you will find also. But I have lately come to believe that this state is not permanent. *There is a way out - I'm almost sure of it.*"

"Which is the way out? Can't we go to it? I am suffocating here. It is like drowning in a sea of bad slimy fog."

"Well, not fog exactly, because you can

see through it. Look yonder."

Paul looked and, far away, he saw a hill with a cleft in it. *Between the cleft there shimmered a glow which evidently came from a light which proceeded from some country beyond.*

"That is the way out, so I am told," said Albert. "Then let us make for it in double quick time."

***"Not so. That is the point I am slowly and toilsomely making for, and hope to reach some day. But I had to go by that darker road to get even thus far."***

He pointed in the opposite direction. As they stood there gazing out into the darkness, the whole dimly lighted country seemed so horrible that Paul shuddered as if he had an ague. Now and then a wail came out of the blackness, as of one who had lost all hope of betterment and was in much pain. Then a ruddy flash would leap up and, in its light, forms horrible were seen, some tearing each other in frenzied anger, or in attitudes loathsome and more horrible still.

Paul uttered a cry of terror.

"The more fool you," he cried. "I am not going to have any of that, if I can help it. You can stay here if you choose; you seem poor-spirited enough, anyway. I'm going straight for that cleft in the hill yonder, and," he added threateningly, "you are not going to stop me, either."

"No, I shall not try to stop you. I shall be waiting here for you when you return."

p14

Paul cast a doubtful glance on him, which turned gradually into one of contempt. Then he flung round and plunged into the darkness in the direction of the light between the peaks.

## Chapter 2

### LOST IN HELL

**Friday, January 17th, 1919. 5.45 to 7.15 p.m.**

There were two others who witnessed the departure of Paul into the darkness which lay toward the far-away light. I mean the two women.

The younger woman had been in the darkness since her passing over. At first her agony was very sharp indeed. But that soon passed into a state of continuous sadness and remorse which, in its turn, blossomed into repentance. *It was at this point that she was brought into contact with Albert.* I say "brought" for, although they do not fully know it, *even in those dark places they are watched by the bright ones* who report faithfully to their Leaders as to the conditions of each of the myriads scattered over those vast continents of gloom. Thus at the proper moment they were brought together.

That moment was when it was known that their mutual enemy, the doctor, was about to be called upon to render up his account That reckoning began with their entrance into his cell, which I have explained to you.

*(May I interrupt to ask, is this a true story or fiction?)\**

\* All questions put by Mr. Vale Owen are printed in brackets.

True enough, my friend, and, in essentials, repeated by the thousand times. But as regards this story in particular: Yes, it is a history of real persons, and the incidents I shall give you are true ones.

p15

But I must qualify that by saying that I can only give you as near a copy of the original picture *as it is possible with the material your earth language affords.* It is like asking a person to describe a very intricate problem in astronomical mathematics and limiting him to those words only that he will hear on a morning's visit to Billingsgate market-and no other. Do you get a glimmering of our task, good friend? **I will add, however, that the people I mention are all real personalities**, and that the transactions herein disclosed are all known at first hand to one or other of the Band who are using me as their instrument of transmission of these messages to you.

*(Thank you, Kathleen; I see what you mean.)*

Oh, of course. I know you mean that nicely. But, my friend, forgive me when I say your statement is a little too positive. You have only a faint glimmering of what I mean. In my question I used that word *designedly*. When you come over here you will understand. Now let us cease from this gossip and get to the real business.

*(You are a wee bit hoity-toity, aren't you, Kathleen?)*

Did you ever know such an amanuensis? My good friend, do please get to work and take down what I am able to get into your erratic consciousness.

(All right; I suppose you must have the last word.)

"Being a woman"-why don't you say it? It was in your mind, and you shirked writing it. You see, you are open to me like a book. Now I am copying a bad example and digressing also. Let us continue. It is a sad enough history, goodness knows; and all this levity is quite out of place.

(Yes, and I'd like-)

Now, my dear good soul, do please allow me to resume.

(Quite right, Kathleen; I was only about to venture, very meekly, the remark, how I enjoy your little swear-it was so human.)

Whatever do you mean?

(The "Goodness knows." It was quite a relief to me to get that.)

Pause of two minutes.

Yes; I did say it. I did not know I had done so. I have just asked and Sister - that is our present leader informs me, with a smile, that I have been kicking over the traces, as you would say. Your questions came in between me and those who were giving me the message, and then a little bit of me just slipped through

-the human me, as you truly said. I would advise you to cut out the whole passage, both questions and answers; it is neither elegant nor edifying.

(Not for worlds, dear lady. I've got it down, and there it sticks.)

As you please. Now to resume:

It was clearly explained to them why they had been brought together. They were both injured people, and both had taken their injury in the wrong way.

Listen. This is one of the most important lessons for people to learn while in the earth life. That qualification is emphatic. It is much more difficult to undo here any wrong committed, or wrong course taken, while on earth, than it is to do so in the earth life.

(Why?)

I don't know; but it is so invariably. One moment; I will ask.

Pause of a minute.

The best way to put it is this: *While in earth life the material body and environment make a much better background on which to build up your image.* Or, to vary it, thus: unspiritual people, on being deprived of their material body and its environment, find themselves in a spiritual body and surroundings governed according to spiritual laws operating in a larger dimension of space. Having sinned against, or neglected to study and use, spiritual quantities, they are at a disadvantage when those quantities are all they have to hand. This is the best we can do, I fear.

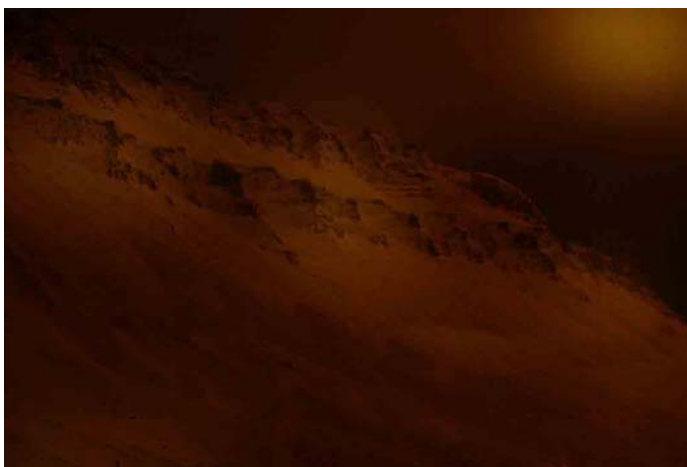
So the task and opportunity were put before them - the task of helping one who had cruelly wronged them both; the opportunity of definitely taking their turn-round towards the light by doing this service. *If they could carry this out, it would be their first definite step towards*

*those dark hills against which the light shone from the country, the Better Land, beyond.*

I have showed you how Albert had begun. Now he stepped aside for a while. It was Monica's turn. She followed Paul into the wilderness into which he had plunged headlong in his defiance and frenzy. *She knew the district fairly well, for it was here she had spent most of her time after her first sharp agony was over.*

It was the region of lesser darkness. The air, as the mountain range was neared, became of a somewhat lighter substance and less rank than obtained in the region behind. For this reason, the further she went, the more alert became she in brain and the more vigorous in body, being acclimatized, as it were, to that region.

But Paul, on the contrary, found that the further he went the more the blackness increased and the more difficult was it to breathe the less dense atmosphere about him.



*picture- on the astral levels and higher - the outer world surroundings are created by the collective thought-forms, but are REAL as long one is bound to this thought-climate, as the Danish Wiseman [MARTINUS](#) calls it. And in the lower levels, where selfishness are - it then creates this surroundings of darkness.*

He stumbled along with the grim determination of despair. He found that he was upon a hard and uneven path, evidently running along the side of the mountain. He could scarcely see, but with his hand he felt the rock surface on his right. Careful investigation showed him that on the left, the cliff fell sheer away into black depth. As he went on in his increasing blindness, he guided himself by touch alone. For the darkness became more dense and, at last, he could see nothing at all. His only guidance was the rock.

Feeling his way thus, he suddenly gave vent to a shriek of horror and fear. He had placed his hand, not upon the rock, but upon what felt like a wet and slimy thick rope hanging down the cliff. He was just wondering if this was a means of ascent, when the rope stiffened and squirmed, and a hissing came from a spot a few yards above his hand. He hastily withdrew and stepped back. But his cry had informed the monster of his whereabouts. So he fled back on the way he had come.

But when he retraced his steps, as he supposed, to the place where he had left the others, he paused and looked around him. ***He could see nothing; all was intense blackness.*** He carefully felt about him on hands and knees and found that he was still on the pass, with cliff on one side and abyss on the other. Then he sat down and wondered how he had first come upon that path. But he could not remember the moment when he had left the plain for these hills. Evidently he was in the midst of a mountainous district infested with reptiles; and what

other horrors he feared to speculate.

***He was alone-and lost.***

As he sat there he became aware of another horror - silence. Silence in the heavenly places is one of the most exquisite delights of all those sweet things which are stored in those golden Treasure Cities of the Blest. *In the hells it is horrible.*

The Name of God on the lips of the thousands of the Angelic Choir, which floats and pulses over the welkin of Heavens mountain, dale, grove, wherever it finds place and passage-ravishes those who hear it with joy unspeakable.

I have seen two people walking along an avenue in the forest when, softly murmuring, came the far distant echoes of the Angelic Hymn. They two paused and stood still, and their bosoms heaved in yearning, their cheeks glowed with the ecstasy of the sound; and at length, bereft of speech and overcome by emotion, both lowered the curtain of their eyes, fell on each other's neck, and there remained, the face of each laid on his companion's shoulder, silent and still until the music died away. It was a hymn of adoration to our only Benefactor, and a tribute of love to love's Fountain. It was a song of God.

But in the hells the speaking of any of His Names is forbidden by those who rule there, for it sends a thrill of agony wherever it is heard.

So it is with Silence. When none else stirs up sound, then God's Presence filling all the apparent void is more emphasized. That is why Silence in the Heavens is holy, and in the hells accursed.

Here on that lonely mountain-pass Paul felt this for the first time, and for the first time realized *his own vileness* - who a few hours before had returned home congratulating himself that he was a lucky fellow. He had purchased and furnished a beautiful house, was making plenty of money and - well, he is only one of many, as I sadly grieve to know. God help them, for it is a sorry lot in store for them, when they come over here.



*dark and selfish thoughts make the outer world  
similar on the astral*

**Friday, January 24th, 1919. 5.45 to 6.35 p.m.**

Paul sat there crouching upon the rough path in ever-increasing uneasiness of mind, till inaction became unbearable. He arose and was about to set forth on his return when he suddenly realized that he had lost all idea of the way by which he had come to that spot. So he felt for the rock-wall and another horror came upon him. His hand touched nothing. He felt on all sides, and there was nothing there.

Then he went down on his hands and knees and crawled, first in one direction and then in another. By this means he at last discovered the fact that he was on a ridge, or causeway, of rock - which seemed to be some dozen to eighteen yards wide. But from which point he had, come upon it and when, he could in no wise remember. His ever-increasing perplexity, bordering on frenzy, would not allow him any rest. so he walked in the direction of the length of the rock into the darkness.

*Still the awful foreboding silence oppressed him.* He felt that, in some indefinable way, it threatened him. On he went, and on, and the path did not end. He wondered why he did not fall off into the abyss below, on one side or the other. **But he always found himself on firm ground.** For this he had at first been thankful. But, as he toiled on and on, he became so weary of it all that he began to wish that an accident would happen to end his life, which he feared to take of his own will. Then, quite suddenly, a thought came to him and, once again, he sat down to think it out, in that black darkness and the silence of the void.

This is an epitome of his meditations.

**"Suicide? What use, when I have already died once, and have found myself alive and sensitive to pains I knew nothing of before, and in much worse case altogether?** Instead of my quite enviable position as a successful practitioner, *what have I suddenly changed into?* Perhaps I haven't changed at all, and was what I am now all the time, but seemed different? When I thought I was a man of money is it possible I was but a pauper? Perhaps it would be more true to say that I had the disposal of a certain fund which might fail at any moment. It did that, anyway; and now where am I, and what am I?"

"By the way, those fools I met in that hovel said something about it. What was it? The girl I did not know, said it; *something about my medical skill being more or less, a sham because I did not realize the existence of another body permeating the body of the flesh.* That is what I understood her - it to mean. **I wonder if she is right after all!** If she is, then medical science is on the wrong track, or partly so. At all events, here I am; and I understand those others to imply that I am dead - and yet I have a body still. *If that young girl was right, this must be the body she spoke of, I suppose.*"

p22

Then an access of frenzy came over him, and he stood up and shouted, "Ahoy there! Is there no one in this infernal wilderness? Ahoy!"

But there was no answer except the silence, which was eloquent as any voice could be. He listened awhile and then murmured, "Alone; and in eternity!" and sank upon the ground once again and, burying his face in his hands, wept long and loudly.

Long days, weeks and - - years, seemed to go over him as he sat there. The silence had the effect of swallowing everything into its gigantic maw. It swallowed time, and all reckoning was quite in vain. He had shouted loudly, and wept loudly, and yet in his ears he only heard the voice and weeping of a very weak child, as if from a great distance. That is what lent



despair to his thoughts when he had cried, "Alone; and in eternity!"

(some similar telling in the many transmissions from the other side / the some similar books of the Swedish [OSCAR BUSCH](#)- some are translated - or also in '[astral city](#)' - thru Chico Xavier -link)

At last he arose and, without aim, stumbled on and, as he went, he noticed that the ground had begun to rise. This at least was a variation to the awful monotony, and he welcomed it not a little.

Presently he heard a faint sound, and hurried on in the direction from which it seemed to come. He lost it again, and again it returned; by which he surmised that he was no longer on an elevated path, but in a kind of valley, and that the surrounding hills or cliffs shut off, or admitted, the passage of sound according to their formation and disposition. As a matter of fact, he was only partly correct.

He came at last to a place where a very faint light showed upon his right hand. He turned towards it eagerly and found it proceeded from a path which ran through a cleft in a cliff which, unknowingly, he had been approaching at an angle.

He turned down this pass between the overhanging rocks. On his left the cliff soon fell away and he became aware that he was standing upon a ledge of rock with the cliff behind him faintly illuminated, by a ruddy glow which had its origin in the plain below him.

At first he could not clearly see what kind of country it was on which he gazed. But presently his eyes became more used to the elusiveness of what answered for light, and he was able to get some idea of the panorama.



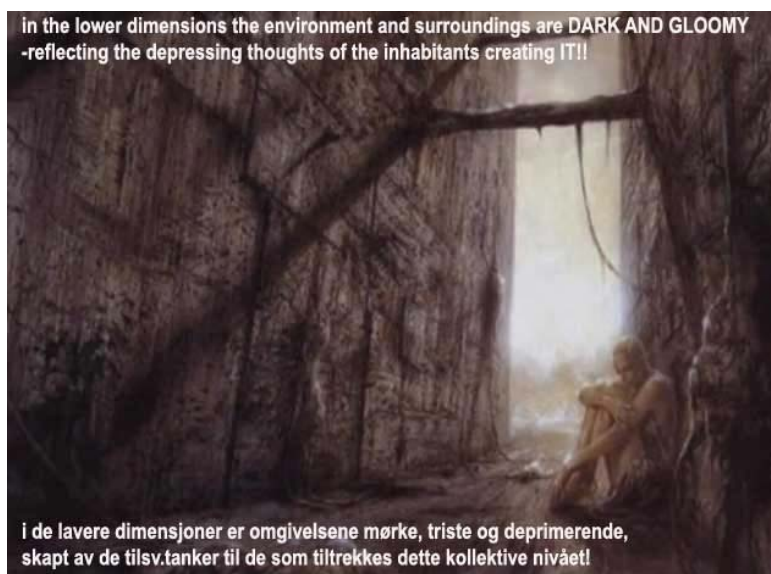
*at the time when this current book of Vale Owen was 'taken down' - was just the horrible ww1 ended with its millions of soldiers and civilians else killed/dead, and so suddenly - unprepared - brought over to the other side - often in complete confusion of what had happened to them, as described in the fantastic enthralling book SEVEN STEPS TO ETERNITY of Stephen Turoff. ([link](#) + [no/dk-link](#))*

### **Friday, January 31st, 1919. 5.40 to 7.30 p.m.**

He sat there long, looking over the scene lying before him. From the foot of the cliff on which he reclined, to the horizon of low lying hills, it was one undulating plain. Here and there he saw a tower, or a few scattered buildings, as if an attempt had been made by some community to establish a town. In every case failure seemed to have been the end of their efforts. A few scattered, stunted trees, a pool of dull-coloured water, or a cluster of rocks, were characteristic of the landscape. All was in semi-darkness, **and yet there was no mist to obscure**. What was visible was seen in sharp outline, but yet dimly. Only here and there was a more pronounced glimmer of light to be observed, as where some fire burned, or where some building was lighted from within. But such light as there was only served to emphasize the gloom of that truly desolate region, and was faint and ruddy. *There was not a ray of clear light anywhere to be seen.*

As to the sky, that was blackness, as if the great void of infinity held nothing in its abyss but dark emptiness.

Paul felt the same oppressing sensation of threatening from without, and shrinking from within, as had assailed him when upon the mountain pass. And yet he shrank more from the darkness behind him, than from the lurid horror of the land which lay before down there below. He arose at last and began to descend towards the lowland.



I will not stay to describe that descent. It was mostly made in the bed of what, in some fertile region, would have been a mountain watercourse.

p24

But, although water dripped from the black rock here and there in the course of his descent, yet it was evil and brackish and spread a slimy film wherever it came. From this fungus grew, which seemed to partake more of the animal and less of the vegetable substance than is the case on earth. It also rotted into a

sodden, spongy mass, and gave forth a fetid stench which was almost overpowering.

So he made his descent, and at length came in view of the plain once again. Turning a sudden corner of rock, he saw before him a cleft and, beyond that, the more level ground. He hastened forward and emerged into the open country.

Here he paused and, observing to the right, at some little distance, the glow of a fire, he turned towards it and soon arrived within the radius of its flickering light.

**Now the scenes he was destined to witness in this land of darkness are such as I cannot relate in all the horror of their squalor, blasphemy and shameless impurity.** What I do give you has been given to me. I have not been there myself. But those who have described it as being too intensely wicked and shameful to relate to any, like myself, who have not undergone the necessary training for such missionary work as those devoted souls

undertake for love of their fellow men and women.



from the film NOSSO LAR / astral city, where the "dead doctor" André Luiz first experience this on the other side; the purification and life-review pulls him first down to the "hell-levels"

What they do give, however, as they tell me, they give with deliberation and with purpose. It is that those among you on earth who are living dainty and delicate lives, regardless of their obligations to their poorer brothers and sisters, may read what kind of life awaits them soon and surely. Selfishness is cruelty; cruelty is a denial of love; and Love is God. That is why such as these suffer so terribly when they come over here.

Having quite frankly stated the purpose of those who are giving this to me to hand on to you, my friend, I will continue my narrative. Whether those who shall read accept it or reject it is not my burden or yours. Write it down as I am able to transmit it to you, toned down and modified as it is, both as to its horror and its anguish. Those who are able to receive it will receive it. Those who are not able to do so will know some day. This much even I know who sign myself

- *Kathleen.*

At the foot of a high cliff there was a crowd of people gathered in front of a platform of rock. It stood about five feet high and was some dozen yards square. On either side there was a fire burning which threw the stage into semi-relief. Upon the stage stood a man and woman facing the audience. The faces of them both were crafty and cruel, and their restless eyes darted glances here and there in never-ceasing motion, as they addressed their audience. One would speak a few sentences, and then the other would take up the theme.

Before them the people lay or sat upon the ground listening; and an onlooker might observe that, although their faces bore a look of fear, suspicion and apprehensiveness, yet they were clearly unable to depart from the spot. It was as if a magnetic bond was about them and held them together in sympathetic evil.

As Paul drew nigh and stood on the outskirts of the crowd, the woman was speaking, the man taking up the cue with her alternately thus:

"And yet it is not of the scientific of which we would speak to you, but rather of the ideal. Science, as you know, is orderly, and this is a disorderly land; that is its glory. For in order there is no freedom. Disorder is free."

"She speaks not of her outer garments, ladies and, in especial, gentlemen - which fastidious persons might, quite unjustly, describe as disorderly. It is of the inner of which my sister, my wife, or by whatever honourable office you would name her, is seeking to expound to you its aesthetic beauty. That is the freedom of which she speaks.

p26

Freedom of mind begets freedom of action and - well, need I say more to the present idealistic audience who so well know how that freedom may, or should be, used?"

"And yet, although you know this so well, both in theory and in practice, my confreres, example is better than all theory; and there is a newcomer, I have just noted, on whom our experiments have not yet been made, and who should afford some fresh points worthy of observation."

Then the man bowed in Paul's direction and, pointing to him, said, "It is you, sir, whom the lady addresses, and you will no doubt observe that it is a lady who addresses you. You will not refuse the invitation of so refined and beautiful a creature who, as you observe, is waiting to receive your salutation. Come straight hither, sir. The crowd will not mind your walking over them. If they do it will not matter. They are used to it - quite used to it, I assure you."

As this discourse had proceeded, Paul had not failed to mark, beneath the affected formality and elegance of address, the underlying note of cynicism and evil suggestion, with a sickening sense of nausea.

But when the man thus addressed him directly, was horror-struck. For while they had been speaking it had come to him with increasing conviction that these two were evil, and maliciously evil; also that they were the two dominant spirits of the whole of that company of, perhaps, a thousand or twelve hundred souls.



from the film NOSSO LAR / astral city, what the "dead brazilian doctor" André Luiz first experience on the other side; the purification and life-review pulls him first down to the "hell-levels" as a result of his lower sides- together with similar people

He further realized that he was numbered with them; that he was powerless among them; that his once imperious will was turned to water, with no stability in it, and no shape in it, now that the vessel which once had held it was removed. It seemed as if, his material body and its environment having disappeared, the spiritual body *was too weak to contain a powerful brain and strong will*, whose activity would have shattered it into pieces.

He, being new to the place and its evil powers, hesitated to obey the summons. On which the woman addressed him direct, "Come hither and mount this platform. You have a public duty to perform for the benefit of the community into which you are to be initiated. Come,

and come quickly!"

His last shred of self-respect vanished with the last shadow of his independence as he hastened forward and, arriving at the stage, was lifted upon it by those who were nearest. They handled him roughly and, as the two speakers stepped apart from each other, those who held him took the obvious hint and literally threw him into the centre of the platform.

I do not give you in detail what then ensued. No publisher would publish it, and no one would read it without feeling it was unneedful. I give you the proceedings in outline merely.

Paul was informed that he was to play the part of model in an anatomical lecture. That had been his line of interest in his earth life, and he would now, no doubt, be not the least interested among those who should listen to the wisdom of these two very learned idealistic scientists. This was explained to him by three assistants as they stripped him of every rag which had clothed him, and bound him naked to a stake which was fixed into the rock a little to the rear of the centre of the stage.

Then the lady proceeded to deliver her lecture, while the man illustrated her points, from time to time, on the body of Paul. In order to do this he used two tools. One was a sharply-pointed lancet with a long handle. With this he indicated the precise spot in Paul's anatomy of which the woman was speaking. He did this by plunging it deeply into the flesh.

When some internal organ was mentioned he used the other implement. This was an immense scalpel, with which he cut open the body and laid the flesh aside in order to exhibit the organ discoursed upon. In these operations the man and woman took turn and turn about.

<sup>p28</sup>  
But while the torture thus inflicted was terrible enough, the fact that, so far from his losing consciousness, his intellect became more alert as his bodily suffering increased, added agony to agony.

The crowd below frequently cheered the speakers with a weird kind of howling noise, in which the note of fear was very easily detected, while the lecturers proceeded with their discourse.

The like of it he had never heard before. Every sin in his life seemed to be known to them. One after another, they brought them forth and, with ribald words, couched in mock-scientific phrases, and with an assumed courtesy, laid bare his innermost thoughts, his secret deeds, sins long ago forgotten and, as he had thought, lost in the void of the past. These were now, with shameless relish, retailed in detail in his hearing before the public audience who cheered and howled.

As each item was reproduced and recited to them, it was explained that these acts were the direct result of a certain action of one bodily organ or another, or the combined action of two or more. All these points were illustrated by the eager use of the lancet or scalpel.

I leave you to imagine the possibilities inherent in such a subject dealt with by such lecturers as these, and before such an audience.

In the end, lacerated and wounded in a hundred places, but without emitting one spot of blood, he was carried, still conscious and acutely suffering, to a cave in the cliff. Here he was thrown down upon the stony floor and left to recover as he was able.

## CHAPTER 3

### AT THE OLD CHATEAU

**Saturday, February 1st, 1919. 6.10 to 7.20 p.m.**

While Paul lay in the cave, thoughts came to him of a kind he had never had before. His recent experiences were such as he had not pictured when, on earth, the life beyond intruded itself upon him from time to time. *He asked himself now what he had really imagined that life would be, or had he ever really believed in the future beyond the grave.* In his present confused and embittered frame of mind, he could not bring his faculties into focus. He was bemused and conscious only of his awful loneliness in the midst of people of whom he knew nothing, except that they were cruel and evil.

He had not, at that time, grasped the fact that all was the result of perfect order working out in sequence of cause and effect. He had lived a life utterly selfish in principle. Now he was left with that self for company, and his loneliness emphasized the fact, *As he had sowed, so he was reaping.* That one great fact burned itself into his brain, and he turned from it in his utter misery.

He began to speculate on the kind of body it was on which those torturers had wrought their will so cruelly. It was too dark to see any wounds, but he felt himself carefully over with a practised hand. He found none. His body was whole and unwounded. Yet he had suffered intense agony while on the platform, and remembered the grinning crowd and their delight at his writhings.

He was suffering still. But it was rather a curious kind of suffering. It was what he would have described as bodily, and yet the seat of it was not in his body; it was in his brain.

p30

And yet again, was not that the case with bodily suffering in earth life? He theorized on the matter and got as far as postulating that the body he now had must be the medium of contact between the flesh-body and consciousness.

He could get no further. He had lost his old strong intellectuality and was fatigued bodily, mentally, spiritually. So he lay there helpless, alone, lost in a region shut in on every hand by darkness; a land to him unknown and full of terrors.

He was roused out of his reverie by the appearance of someone standing outside the cave entrance. He lay quite still, fearing another monster might be seeking him to his hurt. He watched the figure, alert and ready to do battle if necessity should arise. Thus he presently saw that it was the figure of a woman, and that she stood with her back to him, looking out over the plain.

There appeared to be no difference between her and the other women he had seen, except that her dress reached well below the knees and was a little more full and shapely than those others.

Assured he had nothing to fear, he crept slowly and silently to the entrance, and then rose and advanced to the right of the woman as she stood there. But although she must have been aware of his approach, she made no sign, and continued gazing across the plain, still and unmoving.

He advanced a little more until he was able to get a perfect side-view of her face, and



started back with an exclamation of surprise and pain. It was Monica.\*

He uttered her name in a subdued voice; but she did not answer. He went closer and saw that her eyes were full of tears. Then she bent her head and covered her face with her hands and wept.

"Monica," he repeated. His voice was subdued. He felt a certain awe in presence of one who could weep in that accursed land.

So he knelt on one knee, laid his arm across his thigh, with his hand hung downward and, bending his head nearly to the ground, instinctively did reverence to this young unhappy girl who he had so cruelly wronged.

\* MONICA, during her earth-life, was lured into vice by the doctor, and had been in the darkness since her passing-Over. At first her agony was sharp, but that soon passed into a state of continuous sadness and remorse which, in its turn, blossomed into repentance. Brought by the bright ones into contact with Albert, their reckoning with Paul (the doctor) begins at their entrance into his hut. She follows Paul into the wilderness, whither he plunges headlong in his defiance. She meets him again outside the cave, where he has been flung after torture, and tries to lead him back to Albert. Paul turns upon her in a fury and tries to fell her to the ground; but he is forcibly restrained by "Sister," who takes Monica away, and leaves him to his self-inflicted fate. She and "Sister" take charge of the poor pantomime, the girl whom Paul brutally kicked insensible.

Presently he heard her speaking.

"Paul," she said.

Her emotion was but partly subdued, and her voice was full of sadness. He could not raise his face to hers. He felt that, in spite of all the sin she had waded through, yet in her presence he was abashed and ashamed, as if he stood, with all his guilt, before the Madonna herself.

But she now turned and came near to him, and stood over him. Thus he noticed that the robe she wore was of somewhat finer texture than his own and those of the people he had met. Also, unlike theirs, it had no rent and, more noticeable still, it showed a faint narrow hem of embroidered bramble with thorns, done in violet.

Beneath this, her feet showed many scars, and her ankles and legs were bruised as if she had come on a long journey in a country she did not know, and in the darkness.

*His selfish heart lost a little of its great bitterness and resentment with which his late treatment had filled him and, in its place, came one tiny ray of pity.* He was much surprised, moreover, when she spoke again.

"Paul," she said. "I have awaited that. I could not proceed until that came."

At this he raised his head and asked, "I don't understand."

"No," she replied; "not yet; but you will some day. Did you not feel just one wee thought of kindness as you looked at my poor wounded feet?" And when he made no reply in his bewilderment, she continued:

"That enables me to proceed with my mission. I came to seek you."

"Me?" That was all he could utter.

"Yes; that is my present mission. I was sent to seek you, and I have found you. I came

when you were over there."

She pointed towards the torture-stage, now forsaken, and seen only in dark outline at the foot of the cliff. He glanced that way and asked in a voice full of fear: "Where have they gone? 'Where are they now?'"

"They have climbed the cliff to what they call their Cathedral. It stands a little way inland, on the tableland; and they have gone to hold a Thanksgiving service there."

"A Thanksgiving service in this accursed land? Why, Monica" he broke off in confusion. There was something in the utterance of her name which savoured of sacrilege.

But she replied: "Yes, call me still Monica, while I have that name. I am told I may have another soon, if all goes well - if all goes well," she repeated, as if lost in meditation and filled with a wistful sadness, the reason of which Paul could not understand.

"I was going to ask you what the Thanksgiving is about," he said.

"You have heard the saying - I will not name the One, Who said it, here and now - that there is joy among the Angels over one sinner repentant?" He did not answer, but listened eagerly, and she continued, "So also, Paul, the obverse is true: there is fiendish joy when one sinner comes to his own place down here, and is annexed by the inhabitants as one of themselves."

She paused, and he bent his head lower still as she said, very quietly and sadly: "You are that sinner, Paul."

### ***Monday, February, 3rd, 1919. 6.10 to 7.28 p.m.***

When Paul had thoroughly grasped the significance of her reply, he put to her a question: "You mean that there is a Festival to be celebrated in my honour?"

The state of his mind was, at that moment, a strange one. He loathed the region itself. But he felt that here might possibly be a means of at least a partial escape from those terrors which he felt around him. He endeavoured to persuade himself that what he had passed through had been a kind of test; that he had endured it with at least some credit, and that now these people were about to make some amends for his sufferings.

But his hopes were dashed from him by Monica's reply: "Not to your honour, Paul; but to your greater dishonour, unless

"Unless what?"

"Unless you have the will to resist."

"Monica, I feel that my will has been pulverized. But tell me some more about this affair. First, what of the Cathedral you mentioned? Have you been within it?"

"I have been within the porch; but no further. I once stayed awhile when passing, for I heard noises proceeding from the interior, and I wondered what was afoot there."

"Well, tell me what happened. I want to know more about it."

"I will tell you as we go on our way."

"But where do you want me to go?"

"Back to Albert, who is waiting to renew his mission with you."

"Monica, I would rather go to the devil himself than return to that blithering fool. It seems to me I have at least found a chance of something exciting here, and I am not at all sure, now that they have got their torture-test over with me, that I shall not be able to make a few friends among them. I don't love them, but I think they promise some sport, anyway."

p34

Monica paused awhile and then replied: "Paul, when first I came here, I had thoughts very similar to those you have just expressed. My previous life seemed to urge me to throw in my lot with them. But, as I stood at the great door of that Cathedral and watched what was going on within, I reasoned it all out, made my resolve and turned away, determined, wherever I



might have to wander, whatever I might have to endure, to break, once and for all, with those poor vile wretches and their evil life.

"Listen. I cannot tell you all I saw there; but I will tell you enough to give you some idea of what they do.

"They call it a Cathedral. It is a very large building, somewhat Gothic in character. But there ends all likeness to churches as we knew them on earth. There is an arcade on either side the nave, formed by two rows of gigantic carved nude figures, on the one side of men, on the other of women. Their legs extended form the arches. The altar is raised high at the east end. It is a large table spread for feasting with some cups, flagons and other vessels. Here, during the so-called service, sit the most powerful of both sexes in the colony. The nave also is filled with tables similarly furnished.

"Above the altar is a large Latin Cross inverted. At every Festival they crucify a person on that Cross, head downwards. The sexes furnish the victim each in turn. Beneath the table there is a door, and a flight of steps leads down into the earth. The passage enters this cave at the further end. You did not notice it because the cave itself is deep and the exit to the passage in dark shadows."

She paused awhile and allowed her companion to think on what she had told him. He was silent; so she added, "The last victim was a woman."

The truth flashed on him suddenly and, with an oath and cry of fear, he seized her wrist, and, in a whisper, inquired: "Do you mean that they will soon be seeking me in this cave for their next victim?"

"That is so. That is why they threw you there."

In his fright he assumed a threatening manner, and bade her haste to lead him away from the vicinity of the cave-mouth to some place of safety.

She did not reply, but led him along the front of the cliff for some distance, and then turned to the right and made for the open plain. They passed between two low hillocks and turned leftward where a gully deepened into a ravine along, which he heard the noise of a torrent dashing along the narrow bed below the path on which they walked. He could just see her robe as she walked a little ahead, and so was able to follow without mishap. At last they came suddenly to the open country once again, where the water dispersed itself into streamlets, and lost itself in the expanse.

Here she paused, and Paul said roughly: "Now, look you here, Monica, my girl. You've got to get me out of this. I don't mind their way of life so much, if only I can insure myself against their cruelty. Now, you seem to know the country fairly well. You've been here longer than I have. Show me where I may live without being bullied and tortured, and I'll try to settle down till something better turns up."

"Albert still awaits you," she said.

A sudden fury seized him and, with a curse, he caught up a broken branch which lay near and rushed upon her, aiming a blow at her head which should have felled her to the ground. He was surprised, however, to feel an arm suddenly extended above his head from behind, while the hand grasped his wrist and held it immovable in the air; his left arm also being seized in a strong grasp, so that he was unable to stir.

He was held thus for some minutes, his captor preserving silence. At length, trembling with fear, he dropped the weapon. Still he was held in that irresistible grip. Then he felt himself being slowly turned about and, at last, released, and face to face with the lady he had met in the hut on his arrival - "Sister."

She looked upon him not unkindly, but sternly and steadily, as she said, "This poor lamb has fought the fight of a lion. You helped her, headlong into this region of gloom and sorrow. But she has overcome the death which is the portion of those who dwell here, and has begun

the ascent towards the Borderland, beyond which lies the Land of Lesser Gloom and, beyond that, the region of Twilight Brightening into the Dawn. She has a long way still to go, and the road is toilsome. But she who won in that hard battle, is able for the journey.

"She was given her choice to proceed, or to linger here. She knew you were coming over and, although she has no love for you above others, yet in pity she asked to be permitted to wait, if by any chance she might be of help to you, to save you from the worst. *That help you have refused by your hardness and selfishness.* It is but self you consider; you fear for self, and seek for self alone.

"Monica has done what she could. She must now leave you lest ill befall her from contagion of your company; for she is not immune from temptation yet. Brave as her fight has been, and great her victory, it is not final, nor complete.

"You now shall find, of your own leading, what way they go who go your way. There are those who may be purified only by fire. When you are so purified, I will show myself to you again."

Then she went slowly and, taking the ample folds of her mantle in her hand, she threw it over the head and shoulders of the trembling girl and, putting her arm about her, said softly, "Come, dear"; and they departed, leaving Paul once more in solitude.

### ***Tuesday, February 4th, 1919. 5.45 to 7.30 p.m.***

He stood watching them depart into the gloom, and then sat down upon a boulder to think on his position. It was a rather hopeless situation in which he found himself. But he had made one great discovery.

He had found that the region was not all black solitude. Parts of it at least were inhabited. The people were not altogether desirable. Still, if they could live there, so could he. *Further, that horrible blackness of hell, that utter, terrible darkness had been left behind, and there was a modicum of light; only a little, but that was a relief.* And the inhabitants seemed to have mastered the problem of adding to it by artificial means; for he had seen fires.

There did not appear to be any very strict code of law established in that quarter. But, in some respects, that was an advantage. He remembered, with a grim smile, how often, in his earth life, he had been compelled to circumvent the law. Monica, for instance. That had been irksome. There was to be no more of that kind of trouble now.

There was one thing he must do, however. He must, at all costs, train himself back into his old habit of domination - bullying, if you will. If he could do that, he stood a very fair chance of becoming feared, if not respected. Then he would turn the tables on those coarse blundering fools. He would become the torturer instead of the tortured. But a refined torturer, whose methods should awake admiration by reason of their ingenuity. He rather relished the idea as he sat there alone shaping out his future.

He was startled out of his reverie by a noise of singing. He arose, but could not tell from which direction it came until he climbed upon the rock on which he had been sitting. Then he noticed that, in the plain on the other side of a hillock, which had hitherto shut in his view, there was a large mansion. Here and there the windows were lighted, and there were lights among some trees which formed a small grove at a little distance from the house. It was part of an attempt made by the residents to create a parkland, but the trees were rather bare-looking, with little foliage, and the gardens overgrown with weeds.

It was all in keeping with the perpetual twilight in which the whole country was shrouded.

Nothing could grow to perfection, and the artificial light, however it was produced, was everywhere dim and flickering.

Very cautiously he rounded the hill and made his way towards the company who sat beneath the grove. He managed to get within a few yards of them and paused behind the trunk of one of the outermost trees to reconnoitre. He saw that there were gathered in a circle a band of men and women to the number of a score or so. They were witnessing a performance being enacted by a woman who stood on a pedestal about six feet high, placed in the centre of the ring. She was enacting the part of pantomime, such as delighted the Romans in the days of their decadence.

So absorbed did he become in the performance that he failed to notice a figure descending the flight of steps from the mansion.

It was a woman long past middle age, but bedecked with tawdry finery and tinsel jewellery, and with painted face, and hair done high and tied with bright-coloured ribbons. She aped the resilience of youth in her springy walk, and was altogether hideous in her poor attempt at grandeur and beauty.

She did not join the circle, but skirted round it unobserved and came close behind Paul, as he stood peering round the tree at the proceedings. Softly she laid her hand upon his arm and he started and turned upon her, in doubt as to whether a friend or enemy were at hand. But she smiled upon him, and then cast down her glance demurely, as she awaited his salutation.

"Madame Blescombe!" he cried in amazement.\*

\*She had, while on earth, kept a gambling club at her Chateau in France, having squandered her father's fortune left to her at his death. She had never married, preferring her free life of vice and swindling; gambling, blackmail and bribes for various shameful services had been her means of livelihood. The doctor was always a welcome guest in her circle. On their first meeting in the Borderland he shrinks from her, because the inner woman is revealed by her aspect. But after his mad revolt he finds himself in the neighbourhood of her Chateau, where, amongst her coterie, she is called "Countess". She welcomes him, and he joins her circle of friends. The reasons why she has assumed the title of "Countess" are given by "Sister", where other affectations of the mock-genteel order, amongst the members of that community, are also explained.

"Why, yes; but surely you came hither with intent, did you not?"

"I came here with no intent, Madame," he said with some severity; for he knew her character only too well - as she knew his - and he mistrusted her motive in seeking him now.

"Did you not know, my dear, that this is my Chateau, and these my grounds? Surely my friend of old days has come to renew his acquaintance with my hospitality. By the way, I hear you have now a new name - the other was not good enough for the society hereabouts. Well, my dear Paul, come and I will show you my home - and company."

"Madame," he said, "I distrust you. I have reason, as you will understand, if you will search your memory."

"That, my friend, I do not choose to do more than I can help. Now and then it is brought back to me - the old life - by such a meeting as this, for example. And while we can meet as old acquaintances, yet I am glad to call you by a new name - it serves to veil the past in some little measure. For which reason I should take it as a kindness, on your part, if you would call me also by the name I bear in this country."

"And what is that?"

"The Countess; the Countess merely. And now come, and I will do you the honours of my poor home. You will understand, my dear friend, that although the house has some pretension to dignity, both in size and appointment, yet this country is not a rich one and we all have to live in, more or less - shall I say? - straitened circumstances."

"At any rate, you will see presently," she replied, with a mirthless laugh. "Now come; I

will make you known to these friends first."

She then hailed those who sat with the others and, with elaborate mannerisms, aping the grand mode of the old nobility, introduced him to each member of the circle as she led him round.

They were all dressed in rags, but these were so arranged as to parody the ancient style as near as possible, and the speech and gestures were suited to their assumed characters. But beneath each and every exterior there lay coarseness, sensuality, loutishness, which peeped out and betrayed itself in every word and glance, even in those attitudes which they assumed in their endeavour after some classical and graceful pose. But all this veneer was in vain. The within shone through its outer covering and stood confused.

Last of all, he was led to the pedestal and introduced to the performer. On the advent of the Countess, the attention of her audience had been distracted, and she had ceased her posturing. She now sat with her feet dangling from the small platform, elbows on thighs, and hands quietly clasped between her knees, waiting until the ceremony of introduction was over.

She was looking intently at him as he approached, as if uncertain of his identity. When he was within three yards of the foot of the pillar she suddenly realized that she was correct in her surmise.

She scrambled up, stood for a moment on the platform to gain her balance, and then leapt off her perch, alighting with her heels full in his eyes. The force of her spring bore him to the ground, and, before he could rise, she was down upon him, her knees on his chest and her nails buried in his scalp, as she bit first his ear, then his cheek, using teeth and nails like a frenzied young tiger.

The crowd did not interfere. It was to them merely an interlude, quite impromptu, and interesting in its novelty. So they reclined and conversed together, following the details of the fight with a languid interest meant to be polite and dilettante.

By and by Paul managed to throw off the girl, and kicked her body some few feet away. Seeing she intended to return and renew the fray, he repeated the operation from time to time until her naked body rolled beyond the circle and down a small slope into a ditch, where she was left to recover alone.

The victor of such a contest, it might be thought, would have displayed some sense of shame. Not so. He saw in the faces of his audience what was expected of him and played to their lead. He bowed, as a conquering knight might bow who had met his man in the lists. And they clapped hands daintily, and applauded him victor.

The Countess sealed their approval by coming forward and apologizing for the ill manners of the pantomime.

"She is young," she explained, "and ill used to our society. And," she added, with a leer; "she once was pretty, poor thing. She must have mistaken you, my friend, for someone she had met before somewhere-sometime, somehow."

The three adverbs were spoken with a pause between, each one a poniard of memory

plunged into the heart of this newcomer, who strode along by her side with proud and defiant mien. He had won his footing to their respect and deference, and he was determined to maintain it before them all.

Meanwhile the girl lay in the ditch, mud-stained and sobbing in her misery of shame and loneliness. The party had gone, and the twinkling lamps, which had decked the trees, were out. Distressed and wearied with her hardships and her late exertions, she at last fell into a state of coma.

Then, in the silence there came out of the darkness, which enshrouded the plain, two figures. \* One held her left hand raised forward, and on the palm was a globe which emitted a soft golden light. The other followed where she saw the light lead the way until they came and stood over the prostrate form.

\* "Sister" and Monica.

The leader spoke in sad, quiet tones. "She has suffered enough. The last necessary episode has been played. She has met him Monica. We will take the poor erring lamb with us and tend her well."

She paused and looked wistfully at the form lying there unconscious, and murmured to herself, "Yes; of such is the Kingdom, even of such as you, poor fragile flower. You shall have careful tending, sweet soiled lily as you are, and you shall be all white once more, some day."

*Then she looked up into the blackness above her in silent prayer. And while she prayed there came speeding through the air a small company of men whose garments were so bright that the gaunt trees of the woods stood out clearly in their rays.*

They came swiftly and, before Monica could realize what was happening, both she and the girl were taken up and wafted away from the scene. She lost all sense of location. She only saw around her a company of strong, good faces and beautiful forms radiant with light which was all about her, and in which she travelled as in an enclosed pavilion.

### **Wednesday, February 5th, 1919. 6 to 7.20 p.m.**

It is not our intention to pursue the history of Paul as he descended lower into the darkness of the hell-world. We have given you enough to indicate, as a sign-post, the way he went; and the manner of life there obtaining we have shown you. It is unnecessary and undesirable that we should further analyse its ingredients. They are not savoury. It suffices that those who read should have *knowledge of the broad outlines of life as it is in those regions of gloom*. There are worse and darker realms than that of which we have spoken. *Our object is missionary in your world, as our quest has been in this of spirit*. If what we have portrayed, eked out by that faculty of imagination which all possess in varying measure, has not deterrent force sufficient, then the reader would not be bettered were we to dilate on the greater wickedness and horror of life in communities of lower grade.

For a long season Paul remained in darkness. He went from one evil state to a worse until the limit of his frenzy was bottomed and then, with much travail and agony, he retraced his steps to that place where Albert awaited his coming.

But he came a broken soul, all his arrogance gone, all his pride flattened, tired out with

evil-doing, despair, a gleam of hope, testing, struggling, backsliding, a flicker of sorrow for his sinfulness, penitence, more of testing and trying, sacrifice and labour and, at last, return to that same dim land from which he had fled, hoping to escape the payment of his debt, the reaping of his sowing.

Abject he came, at long last, but of more acceptable temper than that with which he first had come. Then he came from the environment which surrounds and deludes and blinds so many men of talent and riches in the earth life. Now this same man came from the depths of that abyss where he had found his real place in God's great family. He came ready to take the lowliest position at the feet of one whom once he had treated as a spoil-sport little to be accounted of.

*(There are a few questions I would like to ask you, Kathleen, if I may. First, I noticed a difference in the style of the above from that of previous sittings, I think.)*

That may be so. There is no special reason for any marked difference. Sister is taking rather more part tonight in the actual transmission of the message. That is all.

*(Why is she doing that?)*

While the narrative part was in process of transmission, she had to stand aloof more or less, in order to get en rapport with those conditions by which she came into contact with the events of those darker regions as they stand in our records.

p44

She had, as it were, to go there in order that she might, with the help of our little band of workers present here, reproduce in your imagination - or what is sometimes called interior vision - the scenes which we were at the moment describing. That done, she has been able to relax the tension necessary to do that and to turn her mind more wholly on the message itself as it is handed on through us to you.

As you seem to be interested in this matter I will put it in another way: Hitherto her back has been turned to us and we have seen her face in a mirror. It is that reflection we have handed on to you. She has now, for the time being, laid aside the mirror and turned her face our way. We give you now, not the reflection of her countenance, but the picture direct. Or for "face" you may substitute "mind." Do we make our meaning clear, my friend?

*(Yes; I think you do, Kathleen. But why do you now speak in the plural?)*

To continue the use of our image of speech: While her back was turned to us it was necessary that our party distribute the work in hand among themselves. Some looked at the mirror and read it carefully. Their reading they handed on to another section, turned, half of them towards the mirror, and half towards myself. These sent the message to me and I transmitted it to you. Now we all face towards you, and Sister is nearer to you and to us than she has been hitherto, because she has not to go to that spot where the mirror will catch the ray - shall we say the infra-red? - needful for the reading of the records, in order that they might, in turn, be read by our band from their reproduction in the varying expression of her countenance as seen in the mirror. The mirror shows her the scenes to be described. It shows us her countenance.

*(Thank you. I understand this, of course, merely as an analogy. But it helps me to understand something of the matter, anyway. Would you, please, tell me who is she of whom you have spoken as "Sister"?)*

She is identical with the lady who came to the help of Monica and, with Monica, to the rescue of the poor pantomime of whom we told you last night.

You are wondering after her proper name. We will call her Sister; it will suffice.

I see in your mind another question. I will answer it here. **She is one who has charge of several Rest Houses on the Borderland between the region of gloom and that of twilight.** You might, perhaps, call it the entrance-land to the hells; a buffer state, or neutral land, between the depths and the surface, but far away from the Summerland withal.

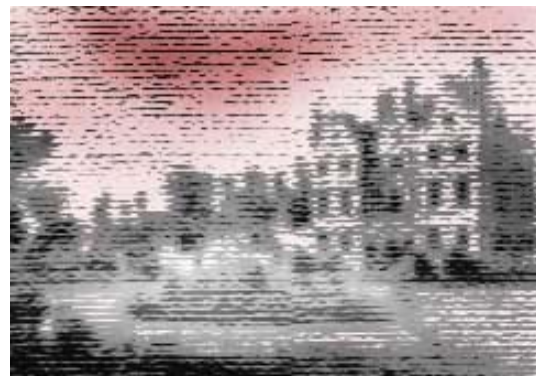
*(Are there in your band some who lived on earth a long time ago?)*

No. You ask that because of the old-fashioned wording which slips through here and there - "withal," for instance. As a matter of fact, that does not actually come from this side. We are now using what store of words we find in your mind, and that is one which, with others, was left over by your previous communicators, some of whom date their earth life some centuries ago. Leader is one who does so.. \*

\* In "The Life Beyond the Veil," Vols. I to V

*Talking of olden times, why do the people of Madame's Chateau ape the old French nobility? Mme. Blescombe could not have been of those times, for you told me she knew Paul on earth, and he is evidently modern.)*

That is so. Sister is taking up the answer in somewhat direct fashion. It is direct through me - if that is not a contradiction: - It is not many buildings which stand in that dark world for a long time. *That Chateau is an exception.* Those who founded it were what you would say "thorough-going" in their convictions, and they clung to them when they came here. The Chateau took on their department. Is not that so in your English? My meaning will be clear, I trust. So the house stood firm when many who had founded it, and laid out its demesne, had departed, some up and a lesser some down. New people come continually. Some pass by. It is not to their liking. Some stay and inhabit. Very well. Years pass and the old fashion still remains, but lingers, dragging along.



as told in the book of Franchezzo, the once "grand castles" are only as ruin-copies on the low astral

## **IN THE GREY LANDS**

**Thursday, February 6th, 1919 5.45 to 6.40 p.m.**

At the foot of the hills which may be viewed from the borderland between the regions of gloom and of the twilight, there is a recess. It runs into the range a little to the right of the cleft through which the valley finds exit into the brighter plain beyond.

In this recess there grow large ferns and coniferous trees, not very large, but of more comely aspect than those in the Netherlands. Bracken also grows there and, after journeying through those tracts of gloom of which we have told you, it is a spot of refreshment and peace for the weary ones who progress that way towards the uplands which lie beyond.

In this chine there stands a large Church. It is not of stately aspect, nor is it elaborate of design. But it is clean and comely, and within it the light is perpetual.

This light proceeds from a large Cross above the Altar with which those are in contact who send their influence across the hills from the colonies on the other side. In this way the interior is illuminated; not equally, for there are patches of shadow at the west end, as you would call it, and, here and there, some alcove where those spirits who are still unaccustomed to so much radiance even as this may retire for meditation and prayer until they become strong enough to join the general congregation.

There are no aisles; it is all one large, open space except for the niches, or alcoves, of which I have spoken.

p48

There is a Chancel raised a little above the nave and, in the nave itself, some few yards from the south side of the Chancel arch, stands a roomy pulpit. There is little more furniture in the Church.

*(No organ?)*

No, my friend. No music is possible on that side of the hills; conditions do not admit of that. You may see for yourself some day. *Music is of harmony and well-poised vibration. That region is not so far advanced as to provide vibrations of such a character as is required for the production of music.*

Nor do the congregation sing. It has been tried a few times when some minister had charge of the proceedings who was one of the more progressed; one of the inhabitants of that region. But the result was a failure. They did their best, poor things; but the discord was painful, even to some of that dull-sensed company. So singing is rarely attempted now.

The Church is used for instruction and an elementary effort after worship; but teaching is the main work which goes on there. That is found more helpful than anything else to those who meet from time to time to rest there from their toiling, and to receive refreshment to enable them to go forth again in their endeavour to progress away from the darkness toward the light.

Ask your question - or, do not trouble. I see you hesitate; and I know what is in your mind. The answer is, Yes; you have helped there yourself on more than one occasion.



*(I can only think of one instance which might be one to which you refer. That was in my sleep-time.)*

**In your body's sleep-time. You do not sleep. You have been there several times; but the memory faded on your return to earth-consciousness.**

Do you remember, when you awoke one morning, hearing a long-drawn, weird and wailing Amen?

(Yes; I shall never forget the awful hopelessness of that Amen.)

That was a second instance. I can well enter into your description of it. But had you heard some of the sounds which torment the ear in the deeper hells you would be able to detect in that Amen more than one ray of hope.

Again, do you remember a friend writing to you to say she had met with a minister on one of her journeys into those grey lands?

(Yes.)

You were there at work when she saw you. That makes three times.

(On the occasion first referred to, I was in the pulpit teaching them the truth about the Apostles' Creed, I remember. But the whole Church was in gloom except for a few yards around the pulpit. Yet you say the light in that Church is perpetual.)

On that occasion the light from the Altar was shaded, or, more properly speaking, suppressed, for the time being, so that the congregation might be the less distracted from you and your teaching. Nor was it re-illuminated for some time after you had been called away again; or that would have driven much of your sermon from their minds. They are of so feeble a character that it is necessary to deal most carefully with them; so frail are they in their hold on anything elevating. So the Church was kept in semi-darkness until they had dispersed.

At certain rare intervals those who are ready to make their journey through the Gate into the uplands beyond are brought together there. Then the building is illuminated to its full capacity, and one from a higher sphere comes and stands in the Chancel, and his own native light helps the brightness of the place. He speaks to them lovingly and helpfully, and they get their first glimpse of what the people are like who live beyond the hills, and among whom they themselves will one day be numbered.

The beauty of such a visitor is a great joy to them, and they gaze on his form as if he were a god, instead of an angel from one of the lower Heavens.

Sometimes the angel is of one sex, sometimes of the other, according to the company there assembled, and the nature of the work in hand. If the majority are women the angel is usually one of the Mothers who have charge of the Rest Houses, or the Children's Homes.

On these occasions, as on all in that Church, proceedings are quite informal. There is no ritual there; and speaking on the part of the congregation is not only permitted but encouraged. Especially are they enticed to ask questions. Methods have to be adopted to the low status of those who form the assembly.

At our next meeting I wish to tell you of one of these services. It is with that intent I have given you this description to-night.

## **Friday, February 7th, 1919. 5.45 to 7.20 p.m.**

The congregation was a larger one than usual, for word had gone forth that there would be present no less than three visitors from beyond the hills. I will describe the service briefly; it will give you an idea of what is the highest form of spiritual exercise in that drear land.

Before the Altar stood an old, venerable-looking man. His beard was white, and reached to the girdle encircling his long robe of a colour which I would describe as deep cream colour. That is as it appeared to the audience. ***None of the visitors, as they manifest themselves in those regions, are seen by the inhabitants in their normal condition, either as to form, features or clothing.*** You must bear in mind that the account I now give you is from the viewpoint of the congregation, as they saw things; as they were meant to see them.

p52

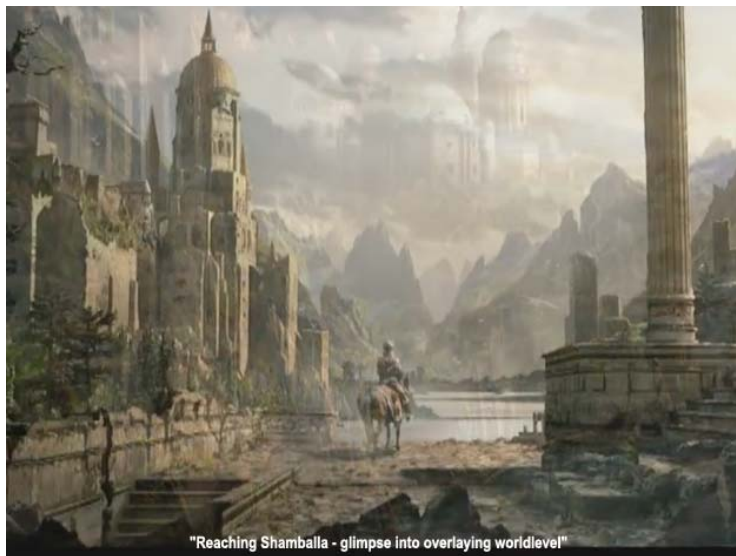
To the rear of him, on the north side of the Altar, stood a young woman, in garments of like material and, over them, a mantle. Similarly attired was another woman, a little older, who stood on the south side of the Altar. On the Altar itself stood a model of a dwelling-house.

The Missioner, by which name we will call the old man, spoke to the congregation in this wise:

"You may be glad, my children, that you have so far progressed as to be able to come together like this to meet us who have journeyed from beyond the Gate. You are not so far from that Gate yourselves at this moment and, when you have worked a little longer, and are able to remain in such nearness permanently, then we will see if it is not possible to lead you through to the other side.

"Meanwhile, I have a few rather interesting things to show you. I brought them with me for that purpose, so that you would be able to picture for yourselves, to a certain degree, what life is like there.

"I can assure you it is well worth working for, very well worth it. Even just a short journey from the Gate the people have houses like this and, mark you, many of those people have come, not direct from earth life, but from this land where you now live. This is not a very happy country to live in, is it? Ah well, never mind that; live in the future, and you will soon be able to go ***yonder and, after a time, to come back and help your mates whom you have left behind.***



"Now, isn't that worth a bit of patience and endeavour?"

"Yes, it is!" shouted out a man in the congregation.

"Damn well worth it, too!" added another, more enthusiastic.

"Very well," continued the Missioner. "Now, that's the sentiment I want to see universal among you-unanimous. I'll tell you why. Those two brothers have shown by their words a very decided streak of altruism. Now, there must be some here who remember what altruism means."

There was a pause of silence when this invitation was given while the audience did a very strenuous bit of mental exercise.

"Now let me digress here a little in order to explain. Many in that crowd, when in the earth life, were men and women, not only of refined tastes, but of considerable culture. Let me tell you a few who may, or may not, have been there on that occasion, but whom I knew as inhabitants of that region, and who have been, from time to time, to one of the gatherings held in that Church. Some have now progressed; others are there still.

Here is a short list: A financier who dealt with millions sterling; a colonel of cavalry, with a country seat ancient and beautiful; a doctor of divinity; three doctors of medicine; a lady who had a fine mansion a few miles out of town, and whose town house was the centre of politics and art; she was one of the leaders in a philanthropic effort to raise a fund for the building of a sanatorium for indigent society people; a millionaire who left many large bequests to charity; a number of lesser lights in earth life, but intelligent, educated people. In addition to these, rulers and princes are there, and legislators, some still remembered and honoured by the people of earth.

To such as these the Missioner spoke in simple terms such as would be suited to a Sunday School class of junior children, and yet keeping in mind ever as he spoke, the experiences through which they had passed.

The truth is these people had, while on earth, spent their time in assimilating the wrong kind of knowledge, or knowledge employed in wrong ways, or from wrong motives. Their refinement also had been outward and not spiritual refinement, which is saintliness. The consequence was that when they cast off their earth bodies and came over here, they found themselves as little children in real knowledge - for they had to begin to unlearn nearly all they had counted worth knowing - in body weakly and unsightly, and in mental endowment bemused and bewildered.

p54

When they had somewhat recovered from their initial perplexity, some were of such strong character that they were able to do one of two things, according to their choice: either to face the situation honestly and admit their errors with more or less humility, or to adopt an attitude of defiance, and deliberately set themselves to become great in evil. These latter eventually become the rulers of the dark regions. (as told in the part2-3 in the book A WANDERER IN THE SPIRIT LANDS of Franchezzo, taken down thru A.Farnese for ca 120years ago [link](#))

Those who choose more wisely, are helped in their endeavour to banish what store of knowledge they have into the background of their minds - until, having progressed sufficiently to be beyond the probability of backsliding, they are gradually encouraged to bring it forth again, viewed now in right perspective and motive.

There are, however, no cast-iron rules in the matter. **Everyone is endowed with free will, which is never taken away; and, if the will be free, you cannot bind it by rules and regulations.**

What I have given you above, therefore, is the general condition of affairs in which, from time to time, exceptional cases arise and set all precedents awry.

When the Missioner mentioned the word "altruism" he was applying this principle to his hearers. The word lay in the back of the brains of not a few but, between it and the present moment, there lay a whole series of bitter experiences in the hells, which had obliterated their earth life from their memories; *for there is no altruism in the deeper hells*. Now it was being called forth, here and there a little; and not so much or so vividly as to create a danger of relapse

very real danger at that stage of progress, and a difficulty perpetually present in the mind of those who work among them.

To return to the Church. One arose and, with an air of pride, gave an explanation of the

word. The Missioner took it up and skilfully used it in his teaching. Then he pointed to the model of the house of which he had spoken previously, and which was standing upon the Altar.

He told them that the house was such as they would inhabit when they had made the next stage of their journey toward the land of brightness. There were many homes like it, some already completed, others nearing completion, and which would be ready before his hearers were, so that they would be able to take up their abode in them when they arrived.

"Who builds them?" cried one of his hearers. This was what the speaker had been angling for, and immediately he seized his opportunity.

"Well," he said; "there are several classes of people who build those houses. But the delightful thing about it all is that they do not build them for themselves. They have their own houses to live in - and, between their other regular duties, they employ their spare time in erecting these for you. That is really what came to my mind when the brother yonder uttered his exclamation.

"These builders find some of their greatest pleasure in that same altruism, as these houses bear witness. *The longer they live in their bright land the more they realize the pleasure of doing something for others who, as they know, will not be able to repay them.*

"Of course, I need hardly mention Who it was Who taught that, both by His life and words. So these friends come towards your country, until they arrive beyond the Gate there, and there they do a spell of building, and return home, to come again when they have a bit of leisure."

"Damn good sort they must be, too!" cried out the enthusiast who had spoken before. He stood up to make his remark the more emphatic. Just in front of him was a woman who had not lost her veneer of affected puritanism. She turned, looked at him and very markedly turned back again and settled herself down, with a shrug of the shoulders which was very significant of her disdain.

p57

The man, who was bubbling over with eagerness, had looked at her with a delighted grin upon his face, expecting her approbation. But he saw her disgust and, in doubt as to what had happened, looked from her to the Missioner, like a perplexed schoolboy, his smile becoming uncertain, and then flickering away.

Seeing the whole episode, the Missioner said, "I fear, my friend, you were rather emphatic, and that lady was a wee bit startled. Your words were somewhat spontaneous, weren't they? But the sentiment itself was such as to do you credit. I would like to talk it over with you after our meeting, if you will walk a little way with me toward the Gate as I return. You will not be able to go very far, I think. We shall see, anyway. But I do think you will be able to go farther than you have done before. And I am wondering if I might not perhaps manage to show you just a glimpse of those houses in the distance."

The smile had returned to his face once more, and he replied;

"Well now, that's what I call real kind. And, Missioner - not to interrupt you too long -

what about her? It mightn't do her any harm if she could come and have a look at them -brighten her up a bit, so to speak."

"Well, your thought is a kindly one; but I fear she could not bear the journey yet awhile. After a little, perhaps; but not just yet.

"But I may add this: I think I shall not have much difficulty, after all, in taking you where you will get a very good view of those brighter homes."



**Monday, February 10th, 1919. 6.10 to 6.50 p.m.**

The man who had created this diversion was a horse breeder in a large way in the earth life, a man of great wealth. To see him now, his friends of those old days would have been somewhat surprised. He turned about and surveyed the audience with a smile and the attitude of a pleased schoolboy.

Then he sat down well contented. He was of a nature unprogressed rather than malicious - a low type of the human species. There are many such. ***They do not descend to the lower hells on leaving the earth. They just go to their own place; which is where we have seen him, on the borderline between light and shadow.***

Here they are very unhappy for a time, but the same lack of spiritual conception which places them there, acts also as a counter-irritant. They soon begin to adjust themselves to their environment, and find more or less of ease because it is in sympathy with their own character. So long as there is no active hatred, or other wickedness in their hearts, they make progress, slowly but steadily, and in that find satisfaction.

They are incapable of any great good or any great evil. They are, of course, of higher intelligence and spiritual content than even the highest of the animals; but they are among the least developed of humankind.

They may have been sharp-witted enough in earth life to have grown rich. That, however, avails them here very little; and I have known a definitely wicked man; - once he has paid his debt in the darker hells, repented and turned toward the light, to make more rapid progress than such as these.

An intelligent horse, with his many endearing qualities, has much in common with the nature of such as he of whom I have just spoken. *Indeed, it was that fact that first turned him*



*towards that animal in affection and, later, enabled him to convert his affection into much gold.*

The Missionary resumed his address, his theme being the brighter conditions of life beyond the hills - towards which he endeavoured to lure them. With this object in view, he exhibited to them the articles which entered into the life of that land.

He showed them baskets of fruit which grew in the more advanced provinces of that region, books which were written by spirits in the spheres beyond, but made and bound there in the Land of the Dawning, pictures of scenery, and of ceremonies enacted there.

All these he used as models in an object-lesson very skilfully; answering their questions with patience and geniality. They thoroughly enjoyed it, and, when the time came to disperse, and then only, did he touch on a deeper theme. He asked them to kneel while he made a short simple prayer, and then dismissed them with his blessing.

While they were dispersing he conversed with the two women who had stood by the Altar during the meeting. Presently one turned aside and left the Chancel by a side-door, returning



shortly with Albert. To him the Missioner said a few words, and he left the Church by the great door through which the congregation had made their exit. In a few minutes he returned, with another man whom he led up the nave and placed before the Missioner.

This man was Paul, but greatly changed. His face was furrowed and full of sorrow; but there was no longer arrogance there, nor frenzy. These had given place to despair, and utter prostration of mind which, at this time of his return, was just giving place to humble, almost pathetic, dependence on the guiding of others.

He had gone from one madness to another more mad, and had drunk to the dregs, the bitter cup of his defiance of the good. At last he had found that nothing there availed to satisfy his innermost nature, and he began to weary of the horrible life of the hells, and then to long for respite from the continual torture it inflicted.



At last a glimmer of light entered into his soul. He seized and held on to the gleam, and, at the proper time, help came and he was guided by some invisible influence to the place where, at the head of the valley, Albert awaited him. He was lodged in the same hut to which he had been assigned on his first entrance into spirit life, and it was from that lodging he had now been brought.

## **Tuesday, February 11th, 1919. 550 to 6.50 p.m.**

Paul knelt before the steps at the top, of which stood the Missioner, and buried his face in his hands, with his forehead upon the ground. For a time they remained thus, Albert standing beside his charge.

At last the old man spoke in a voice at once soothing and invigorating: "My son, you have paid some of your debt due to your own highest nature. I want you to know that. It is not to God to Whom you have made recompense. We who come from the brighter spheres, know only a little of Him Who in Himself encompasses infinitude. But we have learned so much as to know this at least: that it is not possible to make recompense to Him of Whom is all that is, and we His children. That were presumption. As you go from one form to another higher in the school of instruction, you will come to understand that nought else would avail, other than that you have endured, if you would one day come to be truly yourself as you are potentially even now.

"Know this also; that you who have learned humbly through great pain and anguish of evil, are capable of endeavours as great in the service of the Good. For to you have been given such talents as are not found in the characters of many who pass through this twilight land.

"It is therefore I may speak to you as I may not speak to those who have but lately listened to me here in this place so gladly. They are young children in capacity, and so must be dealt with in tenderness. You are of other sort, and I speak to you as man to man. Rise to your feet, my brother, for it is time for you to put out your strength for the work you have to do."

For some short time Paul knelt in silence. Then slowly he arose and stood before the Missioner, who continued, "So intense has been your suffering that, in your fight to become freedman, you have not noted the changed aspect which has come upon you. When first you entered this life of spirit, you were small of stature. Compare now your height with that of Albert."

Paul, who was standing side by side with his companion, turned and looked at his shoulder, for he was still ashamed to look upon his face. This doing, he found that himself was but a little shorter in stature, and that his limbs were almost as well developed. Then he raised his eyes to his face - greatly daring, and yet afraid. But when he saw that face brightened with a smile of glad joy and forgiveness, he could forbear no longer. Slowly he turned to him; slowly he raised his hands and laid them one on each arm; slowly he slid his hands up to his shoulders and, bending forward, laid his head, as a tired child would do, upon the bend of Albert's neck, and fell to weeping.



Albert did not stir, but let him rest while the old man looked upon them in silence; into whose eyes there came a gleam of great love, as a mother looks upon her babe asleep, and stirs not lest she awakens him out of his dreaming.

At last Paul drew apart and raised the left hand of the other to his lips, holding it there for a moment; then he quietly released it, turned to the Missioner and awaited his further direction. No words were spoken between the two friends; both understood, and all was well.

Then the old man spoke again, "And now, Paul, you shall go forth with your friend, who will instruct you where you next shall go, *and also of your first duties*. May our Father give you His strength, for it is His work you have to do."

So they went down the nave and into the open, and here they turned to the right and walked along the path which led to the road. This was the highway of the Valley. It passed through the distant group of huts where Paul's lodging had been, traversed the Valley and, passing through the Gate of the Hills, emerged into the Land of Dawn beyond.

Neither spoke as they went and, when they reached this highway, they paused, still full of thought, and silent. Paul waited for his friend to lead the way; but Albert stood there waiting also.

At last, seeing the other in doubt which way to go, he said, "Well, Paul, my friend, which way-left or right?"

His companion looked to the left, which led to the settlement from which he had come; and to the right, where the brighter glow came from beyond through the Gate, and touched the hilltops on either side of it.

At last he turned to Albert and said, "Once I essayed this road before-and lost myself in the awful darkness. It was in defiance of your advice I went that time. I failed to reach this far. I must have turned off somewhere soon after I left you, and strayed into the bylands. But this time you have brought me safely almost to the Gate itself. We came at great speed also."

"And do you think you are able to continue onward through the Gate and endure the greater light beyond?"

"I will do my best-if you will lead me, Albert," he replied.

So they turned to the right, and along the broad highway. And as they went, the light became more mellow and, when they entered the pass between the hills, there were small shrubs and mosses and, here and there, a little rill beset with ferns. No stately trees were there, no beautiful flowers, but it seemed to Paul, after his long sojourn in those deep hells, as if the Gate they were approaching, must be that of Paradise, and the road they trod the Avenue of Bliss.





## **THE LAND OF THE DAWNING**

### **Thursday, February 13th, 1919. 5.50 to 6.40 p.m.**

As they proceeded, the cliffs which bordered the highway on either hand took on a more verdant aspect. The vegetation which grew there became of a more luxuriant kind, and the light brightened with every step of the way.

At last they came in view of the Gate itself, through which they would pass into the brighter country beyond. It stood at the top of a rise in the road, and, as they went, they could see only the hills which lay at a great distance from the Gate itself. Of the intervening land they could see nothing.

While they were still some few miles away, Albert said to his companion, "Paul, I have been to yonder Gate once before and was enabled then to take a view of the country beyond. I was then still unfitted to travel further. They who keep the Gate told me I should pass through when another should come with me. Meanwhile I was enjoined to be careful of my progress in order that, when the glad time came, I should be able to spare a little strength for my friend, who would not be quite so strong as I. Then we should be enabled to pass the Gate together. Let us rest awhile, and then we will continue our journey onward."

So they found a moss-grown ledge of rock, and sat down side by side together. Paul was very happy in anticipation, but a little excited, and even disturbed, in mind, because of the uncertainty of his ability to adjust himself to the new conditions which awaited him beyond the brow of the hill, where stood the Gate.

62

of the Pass. So they sat in silence. And as they sat there Paul put out his hand and, taking that of his friend, laid it on his knee and held it there beneath his own. Albert felt the pressure, and it expressed a sense of growing humility and gratitude on the part of Paul. And as they so continued they grew together in affection; all enmity had departed and forgiveness on the part of the one responded gladly to the silent entreaty of the other. So absorbed were they that they did not notice the approach of a woman from the direction of the Gate until she paused and stood before them.

As they lifted their eyes, she said, "So I have found you as I had been hoping to find you, my two poor sufferers. But that is over now, and peace has followed hard upon the heels of reconciliation. You notice the results, do you not?"

They looked at her in surprise, not understanding her. Then she laughed gladly and right heartily, as she stepped forward and, taking each by the arm, raised them to their feet and turned them about to confront each other.

"There," she said. "Now what do you think?"

They had both continued to gaze upon her in their surprise at her coming, and doubt as to her purpose. Still looking inquiringly into her face, Paul said, "Sister, I am thinking that, for a young woman, your grip is only equalled by the quality of your muscles."

At this she laughed the more, and addressed the other:

"Albert, my son, cannot you find something to say just a little more to the point than your friend's remark?"

"Well," replied Albert, "he is certainly right, Sister, and I can quite understand Paul's surprise. You see, he interprets your age and experience by your appearance, which is that of

quite a young girl. He is not aware how long you have been here, nor the fact that your proper Home is some spheres beyond. That is why he is surprised at your strength."

p64

"My good friends," she answered, "what dullards you both are! Look at each other, and not at me, and tell me what, - oh, at last you catch my meaning. Well?"

"Sister," answered Albert, "I can scarcely put it into words, but certainly Paul's dress has changed since we came from the Church yonder."

"Yes," she replied; "I was much amused that neither of you had noticed it. Let me explain to you. You did not imagine you could enter into respectable society in the rags you wore over there, did you? I want you to realize that beyond the Gate the people are quite different from those among whom you have lived hitherto. The dress you at present wear consorts with theirs, and you will be able to mix with them now on equal terms."

"What made them change like this?" inquired the still perplexed Paul.

"They have been changing ever since you made your decision when, on coming to the highway, you took your courage into your hands and turned hitherward. As you go forward on your way from strength to strength you will learn that the clothes you wear express the correspondence you are able to make to your environment. That is the scientific way to speak of it.

"In other terms I would express it thus: Your robe is made of the vital exhalations of your individuality and embroidered with your aspirations after further holiness. The present result is the effect of the climax you have attained as you came on this last journey of yours; the crown of your repentance and endeavours after the good.

"But now we must be going, for friends await you a little way ahead, and will be hardly patient of our delay if we tarry further. Let us go forward together."

### ***Friday, February 14th, 1919. 5.55 to 7.0 p.m.***

The Gate stood on the brow of the hill up which the road mounted from those darker regions which lay

away to the west. As the roadway rose towards this gap the cliffs fell away until, when the Gate itself was reached, there was but a wall of rock on the north side of the highway some five or six feet in height.

On the south side stood a bluff, about a hundred feet high. But when the Gate was passed this ceased, for the road here gave on to an open stretch of parkland which dipped down to a valley. Through this valley a broad river ran from the north and wound round into the hill country, disappearing among the woods which grew right up to the rocky boundary as it stretched away on either side of the Gate.

The Gate itself was simply the gap formed by the rocky walls of the highway. But it was flanked on either hand by a high tower where watch was constantly maintained. The object of these Watch Towers was two-fold. That on the south stood on the summit of the bluff, and was in touch with the far-stretching region of the Land of the Dawning, and also with that smaller hilly shire which lay between it and the Church to the west and south.

The other kept watch over the highway, and also those dark regions which stretched away to the north and west, where Paul had wandered for so long a season.

This is by far the larger of the two structures, and the work which is done there is very

strenuous, and not a little difficult. Of all the millions who inhabit those drear lands below, the history and present location of each is registered. So it is known what help is needed in any district, and also the most competent way in which such help can be given. It was from this Tower that Sister was summoned when she was sent, at one time to the help of Monica, and at another time to the Château.

(Do you mean that the Tower is in touch with all the hells, however deep?)

No, no. There are other stations in the further regions of anguish; and those are in contact, not with either of these Towers, but with Councils of very powerful Officers in the Higher Spheres.

The work here is just local, and concerned only with the region of which we have written. It is a very extensive one, nevertheless, and has a large, if mostly scattered, population.

(Any towns?)

No; those are further ~way, and in a still darker sphere. In this land of gloom there are communities, some numbering a few hundreds, others a dozen or so. But there are no large towns.

(Why?)

Because here the people are varied in character in a greater degree than is the case with those who gravitate lower and further away. This is, as you would probably describe it, one of the upper hells. It is where those go who are bad, but who have in them such redeeming features as will enable them to turn towards the light without the necessity of still more deeply descending into the darkness. The more pronouncedly evil go further away and, because there is not so much mixture of good with the evil in them, they are able to band together-to pool their wickedness; perhaps you will understand what I mean.

But here the blends of good and evil in the individual soul vary so much in the nature and proportion of the ingredients that they find little material of so substantial a nature as to make co-operation possible. So, instead of eternities, these people spend but a few years in this region. That suffices for what amount of frenzy there is in them to make its folly manifest; they tire of it all, become utterly weary, and begin to long for better things. Paul and Albert are good examples of the class of whom I speak.

(How long do the people remain there?)

I speak, of course, according to your earth time, as I have spoken of the locality in terms of the

compass. Their probation usually lasts from one to seven or eight years. Some have been there a hundred years, or even longer. But such cases are rare in this particular country. In the lower hells there are those

who have been there for thousands of years. When~ eventually they are rescued they do not pass through ~ this district. They go by another way.

But we have spoken enough of the darkness. Let us turn now to the Dawning.

Paul was lost in admiration of the scene before him. There were islands dotted about the river's course on which were kiosks and summer-houses, and on one larger island a music

pavilion. Here was an orchestra which made music that floated over the lawns and flower-gardens and houses, and bathed all in a flood of melody. It brought a sense of restful content to the two weary newcomers who stood there rapt in ecstasy. So great was the contrast, and so sudden had it been sprung upon Paul, that he forgot his companions and stood rapt in silent wonderment.

At last his lips moved, as to himself he murmured, "Yes, God lives."

It was the first time that Name had been on his lips since he had left the earth life. He paused for a few moments, still in a deep rapture of solemn meditation; then added: "-and loves."

Then he remembered he was not alone, and, as he turned to Sister, she noticed there were tears in his eyes.

"Paul," she said, "you are thinking this is Heaven. My poor tired friend, to you it must seem so. But, believe me, this is not even Paradise. It is but the Land of the Dawning. The light to you here is mellow, and the air is full of peace. But over yonder hills there are beauties far greater than any you see here. This is but a resting-place for pilgrims such as you. It is not your Home."

"Do you live here, Sister?"

"No; no one lives here permanently. They rest, and pass on to brighter places beyond the hills; or wait here for some friend with whom they may journey onward in company.

"Now let us go down towards the Gardens, and I will introduce you to some of those we shall find there."

They descended and, at the foot of the rise, they found a large stretch of parkland and gardens intermingled. There were lawns, groves, arbours, beds of flowers, and wild flowers growing among the trees and in the wooded vales; rills of water also where ferns grew and, here and there, a dwelling-house.

They turned down a by-path, in the wood, which was flanked with thickly-growing bushes on either hand. Suddenly they found themselves opposite an open pavilion, which stood back a little from the road, with a path, a few yards in length, leading up to its open entrance.

Here Sister paused and bade the two men wait while she went within. When she returned, she led by the hand two women, who came forward with radiant faces, and took each her husband within her arms.

"And now," said Sister, "go forward together. The light brightens over the horizon yonder. Peace lies beyond the hills, and there I will meet with you once again.

THE END

*From all Blindness of Heart;  
from Pride,  
Vain-Glory and Hypocrisy;  
from Envy, Hatred and Malice,  
and all Uncharitableness,  
Good Lord, Deliver Us.*

Anglican litany.

## GLOSSARY OF CHIEF CHARACTERS

PAUL, a doctor of medicine, dies suddenly one day on returning from his round of visits, and finds himself lying on the floor of a hut in the gloomy Borderland of the Afterlife; a neutral land, between the region of gloom and that of twilight. His shrunken body, ragged clothes and clouded mind reveal the sordid soul he so cleverly concealed while on earth. He is met by Albert and Monica, two of his victims, and by Mme. Blescombe, a vicious associate of former days. With them is "Sister," from a higher sphere, who has charge of Albert and Monica. She explains to Paul that his future relationship with them, and theirs with him, will largely determine their destinies. He is committed to Albert's care, but no sooner do they begin their journey than he rebels against the guardianship of the man he has wronged. In a fit of frenzy he leaves the road they are treading, and plunges defiantly into the darkness.

After a 'mad career through the horrible life of the hells he returns, weary and broken, to the hut where Albert awaits him.

Ms. BLESCOMBE, while on earth, had kept a gambling club at her Chateau in France, having squandered her father's fortune left to her at his death. She had never married, preferring her free life of vice and swindling; gambling, blackmail and bribes for various shameful services had been her means of livelihood. The doctor was always a welcome guest in her circle. On their first meeting in the Borderland he shrinks from her, because the inner woman is revealed by her aspect. But after his mad revolt he finds himself in the neighbourhood of her Chateau, where, amongst her coterie, she is called "Countess". She welcomes him, and he joins her circle of friends. The reasons why she has assumed the title of "Countess" are given by "Sister", where other affectations of the mock-genteel order, amongst the members of that community, are also explained.

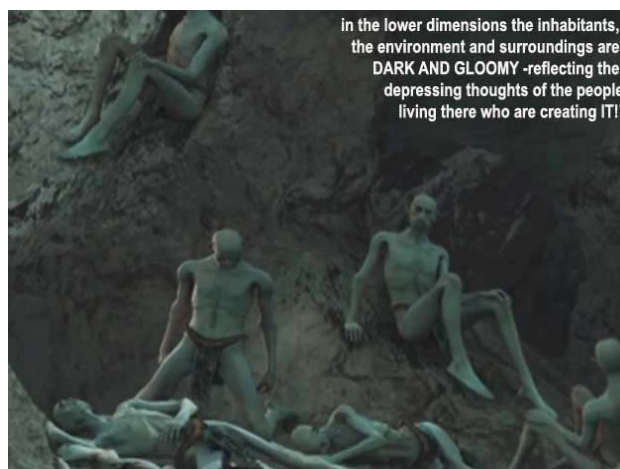
MONICA, during her earth-life, was lured into vice by the doctor and had been in the darkness since her passing-Over. At first her agony was sharp, but that soon passed into a state of continuous sadness and remorse which, in its turn, blossomed into repentance. Brought by the bright ones into contact with Albert, their reckoning with Paul (the doctor) begins at their entrance into his hut. She follows Paul into the wilderness, whither he plunges headlong in his defiance. She meets him again outside the cave, where he has been flung after torture, and tries to lead him back to Albert. Paul turns upon her in a fury and tries to fell her to the ground; but he is forcibly restrained by "Sister," who takes Monica away, and leaves him to his self-inflicted fate. She and "Sister" take charge of the poor pantomime, the girl whom Paul brutally kicked insensible.

ALBERT, during his earth-life, sustained a bad accident to his face, and was attended by the doctor. This doctor (Paul) was secretly intriguing with Albert's wife, and saw an opportunity to lessen her esteem for her husband. Accordingly he purposely bungled the treatment of the case, with the result that his patient became permanently disfigured. Paul, therefore, is terrified when he meets his victim in the Borderland. Finding himself in Albert's charge, he defies him, breaks away, and wanders through the dark hells. Albert patiently waits until Paul returns, when he takes him to a Church near the hut, in which those of their condition may find rest and guidance. There they meet a Missioner, a visitor from a higher sphere beyond the hills, who points out the progress they have both made, and blesses them for their future work. On leaving the Church, in a short time they arrive at the road where they had parted company earlier in the narrative. Bitter experience has taught Paul humility. He

now puts himself under Albert's guidance. So instead of turning aside, he accompanies Albert along the broad highway that leads to the pass between the hills.

"SISTER," born a Breton on earth, has charge of several Rest Houses in the Borderland. She visits Paul, after his passing-over from earth into this gloomy region, and consigns him to Albert's care.

During Paul's mad rebellion she rescues Monica from his fury, and takes charge of the poor girl he had ill-treated at Mme. Blescombe's Chateau. When Paul and Albert have met again and once more begun their journey toward the Land of the Dawning, "Sister" meets them as they sit resting by the roadside. She opens their eyes to the improvement in their appearance-the result of endurance and repentance-and guides them into the Land of the Dawning. There Paul and Albert are reunited to their wives in happy reconciliation.



German translation:

Von medium;  
G. Vale Owen:  
aus dem Buch ‚Paul and Albert‘

(January 14th, 1919)

„Paul und Albert“

*Die in Dunkel und Finsternis saßen, gebunden in Elend und Eisen, weil sie den Geboten Gottes getrotzt und den Ratschluss des Höchsten verachtet hatten;  
deren Herz durch Mühsal gebeugt war, die strauchelten, ohne dass einer aufhalf;  
die dann zum Herren schrien in ihrer Not und denen er aus ihrer Drangsal half;  
die er aus Dunkel und Finsternis herausführte und deren Bande er zerriss:  
Sie sollen dem Herrn danken für seine Güte und für seine Wunder an den Menschenkindern,  
dass er die ehernen Pforten zerbrochen und die eisernen Riegel zerschlagen hat.<sup>2</sup>*

Die Abrechnung beginnt

Es ist noch nicht lange her, dass ein Mann hierher kam, der im Erdenleben Arzt war, ein Doktor der Medizin. Er hatte eine Praxis in London und starb unvermittelt, nachdem er seine täglichen Krankenbesuche gemacht hatte. Er hatte ein sehr schönes Haus und ein komfortables Einkommen, das in der letzten Zeit besonders schnell zugenommen hatte, und er war deshalb sehr überrascht, als er sich beim Erwachen in einem trostlosen Zimmer fand,

schlecht beleuchtet und nicht besonders sauber. Er fand sich dort in einer Ecke auf dem Fußboden liegen.

Er setzte sich auf und blickte um sich, und das Erste, was in seinen Sinn kam, als er feststellte, dass er nicht schlief und träumte, war - „Entführt! Aber warum?“ Er blieb eine lange Zeit sitzen und versuchte, seine Lage zu klären. Er war so intensiv mit seiner Umgebung beschäftigt, dass er erst nach einer längeren Zeit daran dachte, sich selbst anzusehen. Da war er völlig schockiert, denn er war sehr abgemagert und zerlumpt und hatte 2 Psalm 107, Verse 10-16. Text nach der Zürcher Bibel (1980)

einen Anzug von schmutzfarbenem Kaliko an. Die Jacke war ausgebeult, formlos und viel zu groß für ihn. Die Hose reichte nur bis zu seinen Knien und hing von da an in Fetzen hinunter. Auch stellte er fest, dass jetzt, obwohl er ein wohlgestalteter Mann mit kräftigen Gliedern gewesen war, seine Arme und Beine eingeschrumpft und knochig waren. Auch sein Körper zeigte die gleiche Veränderung, denn insgesamt war er viel kleiner als er zuvor gewesen war.

Es saß da und überlegte, wie das zugegangen sein konnte und begann fast, an seiner Identität zu zweifeln. Das gelang ihm aber nicht, denn er wusste ganz sicher, dass er es selbst war und kein Anderer. Er wusste auch, dass er zeitweise bewusstlos gewesen war, aber jetzt war er aufgewacht und ganz munter. So versuchte er sich zu erinnern, was gewesen war, bevor er das Bewusstsein verloren hatte. Immer noch konnte er sich an nichts erinnern, was seine gegenwärtige Situation erklärte. Die letzte Sache, an die er sich erinnerte, war seine Ankunft zuhause und dass er seine Frau gefragt hatte, was es zum Abendessen gäbe. Dann war er gegangen, um sich frisch zu machen und sich umzuziehen. An diesem Punkt endeten plötzlich all seine Erinnerungen.

In diesem Augenblick öffnete sich die Tür und eine Frau kam herein. Sie war bekleidet mit einem Gewand in demselben farblosen Ton wie sein eigenes, in eine ärmellose Tunika, die bis zu den Knien reichte. Die Frau ging zu einer anderen Ecke des Raumes und legte sich hin, ohne ihn im Mindesten wahrzunehmen. Dann kamen eine weitere Frau und ein Mann, und hinter ihnen kam noch eine dritte Frau.

Sie sprachen weder zu ihm noch untereinander, aber alle, die herein gekommen waren, außer der letzten, legten sich hin, als wären sie sehr müde, und schienen nur ein Bedürfnis zu haben, und zwar zu schlafen; nicht um ihren Körper auszuruhen, sondern eher in eine mentale Vergessenheit zu versinken. Denn ihre Gesichter wirkten abgehärmt und ihre Augen waren nur die Fenster gequälter Seelen.

Der einstige Doktor saß mit dem Rücken gegen die Wand und starrte sie an, erst überrascht und dann erschreckt. Denn je länger er sie ansah, umso scheußlicher und böswilliger schienen ihre Gesichter wie auch ihre Haltung zu sein. In einer irgendwie undefinierbaren Weise lag eine Atmosphäre von Bosheit, Hass und Schmerz in dem Raum; und diese wurde mit jedem neu Hinzugekommenen intensiver, so dass sie jetzt unerträglich geworden war.

Aber er fühlte etwas ganz Merkwürdiges, nämlich, dass die Bosheit und die Feindseligkeit nicht so sehr von den anderen ausging, sondern eher aus ihm selbst hervorkam und von den Anderen auf ihn zurückgeworfen wurde. So entschloss er sich, hinaus zu gehen und zu erkunden, ob es

draußen angenehmer wäre. Aber als er versuchte aufzustehen, fand er sich so schwach, als wäre er dazu völlig unfähig.

Er blieb deshalb sitzen und starrte auf seine Genossen, und so nach und nach begann er zu erkennen, dass keiner von ihnen schlief. Sie lagen dort auf dem Boden und blickten ihn an. Selbst in diesem düsteren Halbdunkel konnte er ihre Augen sehen, als wären sie von hinten mit einer von Innen hell strahlenden Flamme beleuchtet.

Allmählich entwickelte sich in ihm eine zunehmende Angst, bis er kaum seine Glieder ruhig halten konnte, die voller Schrecken zittern wollten. Aber er bemühte sich, sie fest zu halten, denn er fühlte, dass sich alle auf ihn stürzen würden, wenn er sich bewegte. Diese Bemühungen waren eine Tortur für ihn, aber er sagte sich, das wäre besser, als von solchen scheußlichen ordinären Leuten, wie diese ihm in seinen verwirrten Gedanken vorkamen, angesprochen zu werden.

Dann kam über ihn nochmals die Erinnerung an die Szenerie, die er gerade verlassen hatte. Es konnte nicht länger her sein als einige Stunden, seit er in seinem komfortablen, gut geheizten und schön eingerichteten Hause gerade dabei war, sich nach einem langen Arbeitstag auf ein gutes Abendessen vorzubereiten. Es schienen wirklich nicht mehr als etwa zehn Minuten gewesen zu sein. Er hatte versucht, sich zu erinnern, was er an diesem Tag gemacht hatte und wie ihn sein Chauffeur in seinem komfortablen Auto nach Hause gefahren hatte. Er hatte müßig auf den Rücken des Chauffeurs geblickt und der kuriose Gedanke war in seinen Kopf gekommen, dass, wenn der Mann, sagen wir, etwa dreißig Schilling in seiner Tasche hätte, und seine Uhr hätte etwa drei Pfund gekostet, und seine Unterwäsche, sagen wir - zwei Pfund - die Uniform hatte komplett etwa fünf Pfund und zehn Schilling gekostet - gut, dann hätte er gerade Eindreiaachtel der Summe verdient, die der Mann kostete, der da vor ihm saß. Und es war kein besonders guter Tag gewesen, soweit es das Einkommen betraf. Nun, dies wird hier berichtet, weil diese Gedanken für diesen Mann typisch waren. Er hatte zwar hin und wieder gute Werke getan, aber in seinem Leben waren seine wirklichen Ziele nicht sehr erhaben und gewiss nicht uneigennützig.

So hatte er sich an seine Ankunft zuhause erinnert, und dann - alles war leer. Und jetzt war er hier, ganz sicher. Aber wie war er hierher gekommen? Er war sicher, dass er es nicht von sich aus getan hatte. Sofort blitzte ein anderer Gedanke in ihm auf. Verrückt! Doch er hatte nie ein Zeichen einer Verrücktheit gezeigt, das er bewusst erkannt hätte. Auch lag eine derartige Krankheit nicht in seiner Familie.

Es ist bereits erwähnt worden, dass er vor seinen Genossen in diesem Raum Angst hatte. Und seine Angst über die nervöse Stille und ihre fortdauernde Bewegungslosigkeit, in der sie ihn anstarrten, wurde so unerträglich, dass er schließlich gegen seinen Willen plötzlich ausrief: „Warum spricht keiner von Ihnen? Warum liegen Sie da und glotzen mich so an? Ist das Ihre Wohnung, und wenn ja, wie kommt es, dass ich hier bin?“ Daraufhin blickten die drei Frauen zu dem anderen Mann. Dieser stand auf, blieb in einigem Abstand vor dem Doktor stehen und sagte zu ihm: „Es hat keine Eile, mein Freund; hier gibt es viel Zeit für alles“, und lachte in einer freudlosen Art. Dann sprach er weiter und wies mit seiner Hand zu den drei Frauen: „Wir sind hier zusammengekommen, aber dies ist nicht



unser Daheim. Das ist Ihre Wohnung. Unsere ist nicht weit von hier entfernt. Aber man hat uns über Ihre Ankunft informiert und wir wurden hierher gesandt, um Sie zu begrüßen. Wie ich schon gesagt habe, gibt es hier viel Zeit für alles, und deshalb haben wir das Tempo nicht forciert.“

Daraufhin entspann sich eine Unterhaltung zwischen den beiden Männern:

„Aber dies ist nicht meine Wohnung!“

„O, meinen Sie? Und wo ist Ihre Wohnung, wenn es nicht diese ist?“

Der Doktor gab ihm seine Adresse.

„O, ich sehe. So ist dies Ihre Wohnung. Ja, so ist es. Ich kann mich erinnern, dass ich Sie einst einmal konsultiert hatte. Ich war einer Ihrer Patienten. Sehen Sie mich genau an. ... Nun? Gut, gut, ihr Gedächtnis scheint Sie irgendwie im Stich zu lassen. Das ist aber schlimm. Ich dachte, Sie würden ein Plätzchen für einen alten Freund in ihrem Gedächtnis behalten.“ Plötzlich stieß der Doktor einen lauten Angstschrei aus. Die Nase dieses Mannes war gebrochen gewesen und schlecht wieder eingerichtet, und er erinnerte sich sofort an den Fall.

Dann sprach der andere weiter: „Ach, ich sehe, Sie haben jedenfalls einen Schimmer von meiner Identität. Sie erinnern sich an diese Nase, nicht wahr?“

An ihr liegt es, dass ich über Ihre Ankunft informiert wurde.“

Jetzt muss folgendes erläutert werden: Als dieser Mann einen schlimmen Unfall erlitt, wurde er von diesem Doktor behandelt und war später für weitere Behandlungen in seine Praxis gekommen. Als die Verbände schließlich entfernt worden waren, wurde erkennbar, dass die Nase ganz unförmig war und somit sein Gesicht für sein ganzes weiteres Leben entstellt war. Er hegte nicht den Verdacht, dass dies bewusst so geschehen war, aber später fand er heraus, dass der Doktor ein Verhältnis mit seiner Frau hatte und dieses Mittel genutzt hatte, um ihre Zuneigung für ihren angetrauten Gemahl zu verringern.

Darauf bekam der Doktor große Angst und kauerte sich in seine Ecke zurück. Aber der andere sagte: „Ich sehe, sie erinnern sich an mich. Gut, Sie werden auch erkennen, dass Sie nicht länger in einer Position sind, Anderen das anzutun, was Sie mir angetan haben. Sie haben Ihren Körper verlassen und, mit ihm, auch Ihr Haus und all das, was dazu gedient hat, Ihnen das Leben komfortabel zu gestalten. Jetzt müssen Sie von Neuem anfangen, wie ich es auch musste, als ich hierher kam; und Sie scheinen etwa genau so viel Möglichkeiten zu haben, es erträglich zu gestalten wie ich — eher weniger, möchte ich sagen.“

„Aber wo bin ich? Und wo leben Sie?“

„O, etwas die Straße hinunter. Ich werde Sie bald dorthin mitnehmen. Aber erst möchten diese Damen“, ergänzte er mit einem höhnischen Lächeln, „Ihre Freundschaft mit Ihnen erneuern - oder, anders ausgedrückt, sie wurden dazu verpflichtet, es zu tun.“

Wir wollen nicht auf all die schmutzigen Handlungen eingehen, die in sein Gedächtnis zurückkamen, als er zwei von ihnen erkannte. Die eine war eine junge Frau, die er einst zu Lastern verführt und dann von sich gestoßen hatte. Sie lebte einige Jahre so, wie er es ihr beigebracht hatte,

siechte dahin und war nach einer sehr schmerzhaften Krankheit in einer Isolierstation gestorben.

Die zweite Frau war ebenfalls jung, aber in anderer Hinsicht. Sie war nicht so grob in ihren Zügen, noch war sie so schlecht gekleidet; ihre Gestalt war sogar recht hübsch. Sie stand im Hintergrund und nahm an der Unterredung nicht teil. Sie war es, die den Raum zuletzt und allein betreten hatte, und in der Tat, die anderen schienen kaum ihrer Gegenwart bewusst zu sein.

Die dritte Frau war jenseits der Lebensmitte. Ihre Haare waren fast weiß, ihr Gesicht hart und grimmig. Sie kam zu ihm, beugte sich über ihn und starrte stumm in seine Augen. Daraufhin murmelte er: „Madame Blescombe!“

Als Antwort lächelte sie boshaft und sagte, „Ja! Ich freue mich, dass Monsieur mich wieder erkennt. Wir sollten jetzt unsere alte Freundschaft erneuern. Wir können uns manche Stunde mit den Erinnerungen an die alten Tage im Chateau vertreiben, nicht wahr, Monsieur?“

Sie hatte in ihrem Schloss in Frankreich eine Spielhölle betrieben und dabei das Erbe ihres Vaters, das er ihr nach seinem Tode hinterlassen hatte, verschleudert. Sie war nie verheiratet gewesen und hatte stattdessen ein ungebundenes, lasterhaftes und betrügerisches Leben gelebt. Spiel, Erpressung und Dirnen für verschiedene schandbare Dienste waren die Grundlage ihrer Lebensführung. Der Doktor war in ihrem Kreis nicht unbekannt und immer ein willkommener Gast gewesen. Nun schreckte er vor ihr zurück, denn in einem Blitz enthüllten sich vor ihm das Innere dieser Frau und einiges von den Schicksalen, die sie sich durch ihre frühere Lebensweise aufgeladen hatte. Aber darüber machte er sich nur wenig Sorgen. Was ihn störte, war die Tatsache, dass ihm zugleich sein eigenes zukünftiges Schicksal enthüllt wurde.

Nach einer Weile sprach der Mann wieder. „Jetzt“, sagte er, „stehen Sie bitte auf und folgen mir. Ihr erstes Ziel ist meine eigene reizvolle Residenz.“ Und als der deprimierte Mann zögerte, aufzustehen, weil er vor Schrecken fast gelähmt war, sprach der Mann etwas schärfer: „Passen Sie auf, Doktor, wir sollten uns von jetzt ab und für immer gegenseitig gut verstehen. Hören Sie mir gut zu. Ich bin durch die Hölle gegangen. Ich will Ihnen nicht alle meine Erlebnisse beschreiben, Sie werden sie bald selbst erfahren. Es genügt zu sagen, dass in meinem Falle mildernde Umstände gegeben waren, die in Ihrem Falle nicht vorliegen, Sie armer Teufel! Dies ist mir erklärt worden, und ich habe genug Mitgefühl, sie zum Vorteil von uns beiden zu nutzen. Das Ergebnis ist ein gewisses Tempo beim Durchschreiten dieser dunklen Hallen und düsteren Kavernen, das ansonsten sehr viel länger dauern würde.“

Hier machte er eine kurze Pause, als würde die Erinnerung seine Worte lähmen, und dann fuhr er in einem gemäßigten Ton fort — es war, als hätte er den zarten Klang einer entfernten Stimme aufgefangen, die ihn ermahnte und warnte — „Ich bin schneller hindurch gekommen als viele andere. Aber ich bin bisher nur durch die schlimmsten Bereiche gekommen. Sie müssen mich nur ansehen, um zu erkennen, dass ich immer noch in der Hölle bin.

Ich bin nur nicht mehr in ihren Tiefen wie zuvor. In der Tat, ich habe ein schwaches Glühen von Licht gesehen, und es hat mir geholfen — o, hier

bist du, meine gute Freundin. Ich dachte, ich hörte, wie du mir gerade eben etwas zugeflüstert hast, nicht wahr?“

Er hatte das junge Mädchen bemerkt, das als Letzte eingetreten war. Sie trat ruhig vor und stellte sich an seine linke Seite. Sie antwortete ihm: „Ja, ich habe dich angesprochen, um dich mit einem kurzen Wort zurückzuhalten. Du warst etwas vergesslich, nicht wahr? Jetzt lass mich diesem armen Kerl den Rest erklären.“

Dann sagte sie zu dem Doktor: „Dieser Mann hat dich als Doktor angesprochen. Dieses Amt hast du nicht mehr, denn du hast es nicht ordentlich genutzt. Zu deiner medizinischen Kompetenz will ich nur sagen, dass sie nicht annähernd so groß war, wie du oder deine unglücklichen Patienten sie eingeschätzt haben. Denn sie beruhte lediglich auf einer materiellen Wissenschaft, und selbst die Körper deiner Patienten bestanden aus mehr als nur Materie. Du hast die Tatsache nicht berücksichtigt, dass diese Körper durch und durch mit Geist erfüllt waren; und wenn dieser entfernt wird, dann ist das Leben beendet.“

Was die Sache so schlimm macht - ich spreche immer noch in einem medizinischen Sinne - war, dass dein Hauptmotiv das Geldverdienen war. Die Heilung deiner Patienten war nicht dein Ziel, sondern nur ein Mittel; es war nicht das dominante Ziel, das du im Blick hattest. Die Heilung deiner Patienten war für dich eher nebensächlich. Du hättest das nicht zugegeben, selbst dir gegenüber nicht. Du wärest bei dieser Unterstellung schockiert gewesen. Das ist jedoch die erste Tatsache, die du hier erkennen musst, denn bis du das nicht erkannt hast, gibt es für dich keinen Fortschritt.

Du nimmst jetzt meine Worte nicht an. Du wirst dich in der Mitte deiner Leiden an sie erinnern und sie werden dir dann hilfreich sein. Deshalb habe ich in dieser Weise zu dir gesprochen. So, anstatt Doktor wirst du jetzt ‚Paul‘ genannt, denn du bist klein von Statur und gegenwärtig von geringem Ansehen. Steh auf und bestätige meine Worte.“

Er wagte es nicht, ihrem ruhig gesprochenen Befehl nicht zu gehorchen. Aber als er aufstand, wie sie ihn gebeten hatte, war er von der Tatsache erschüttert, dass, während sie von ganz normaler Größe war, sein Kopf nur bis zu ihren Schultern reichte. Im Erdenleben wäre er viel größer als sie gewesen.

„Jetzt siehst du, was ich gemeint habe“, sagte sie weiter. „Denke daran, obwohl dir dieser Name zukünftig gehört, ist er in der Geschichte der Erde von Guten und Schlechten getragen worden. Bringe dein Denken in Ordnung, und wenn du es kannst, richte es auf das Gute und denke an den berühmtesten Paul, der eines Tages in der Lage sein könnte, dir zu helfen, wenn du schließlich wert bist, seinen Namen zu tragen. Ja, das kannst du tun, aber dein Pilgerweg wird lang und mühsam sein.“

Dieser Mann hier neben mir ist diesen Weg auch gegangen und hat seine Lektion bereits zum Teil gelernt. Du bist für die nächste Zeit in seine Betreuung gegeben, bis du anfängst, von diesen Felsen in das Tal hinab zu steigen. Rege dich nicht auf. Du wirst nicht hinabgestürzt. Wenn du gehst, gehst du aufgrund deines eigenen Willens und bevor du dich nicht zu diesem Weg aufmachst, wirst du ihn auch nicht gehen. In der Zwischenzeit betreut dich dieser Mann. Es ist eine Prüfung und eine Aufgabe für ihn, und

je nachdem, wie er diese Aufgabe erfüllt, werden seine nächsten Schritte in Richtung Frieden gehen oder in die entgegengesetzte Richtung. Er heißt ‚Albert‘; es gibt keinen besonderen Grund dafür — er wählte ihn sich selbst aus. Es war auch sein Name auf Erden, und bis die irdischen Einflüsse verblasst sind, zieht er es vor, diesen Namen zu behalten. Ich werde euch jetzt verlassen. Gibt es noch Fragen, die ich beantworten soll, bevor ich gehe?“

„Ja, ich möchte wissen, durch welches Recht du mich der Betreuung durch diesen Mann ausgeliefert hast?“

„Es ist keine Frage des Rechts, sondern der Liebe. Du verstehst das nicht, denn Liebe hat in deinem Herzen nicht viel Platz gehabt, weil sie durch deinen Egoismus verdrängt wurde. Ich möchte deshalb wie folgt antworten, weil es dir so am besten helfen wird: Du solltest dich zuerst mit der Tatsache befassen, dass du völlig der Macht der bösen Herrscher dieser Ebenen unterliegst, es sei denn, es kommt Hilfe von Wesen, wie ich eines bin. Wenn du unsere Hilfe nicht freiwillig annimmst, wirst du hinab getreten und unterworfen - nicht von mir, noch von einem Anderen aus meinem Orden - sondern von den dunklen Herrschern und ihren Helfern. Unter ihrer Macht musst du weitergehen, denn du hast ihnen in deinem Erdenleben deine Gefolgschaft gewidmet, auch wenn du diese Tatsache damals kaum erkannt hast. Aber solange dir diese kurze Frist gegeben ist, empfehle ich dir, deine Fähigkeiten zu kultivieren und die Hilfen anzunehmen, die ich und Albert dir geben können.

Denn eine derartige Verbindung, wie sie jetzt geknüpft wurde, wird uns an dich binden, auch wenn du dort drunten sein wirst. Wenn du aber nicht länger hier bleiben willst, obwohl du es könntest, und dich in die dunkleren Orte aufmachst, dann will ich dennoch wieder einmal zu dir kommen. Dann wird mir auch dieser Mann über seine Bemühungen für dich Rechenschaft ablegen.“

Danach wandte sie sich an Albert und sagte zwar feierlich, aber auch mit einem Anflug von Zärtlichkeit: „Albert, mein Kind, ich habe dich aus den dunklen Welten unten hervorgeholt und viel Mühe mit dir gehabt, denn du bist noch nicht völlig in das Licht Seiner Gegenwart geboren.

Denke daran und an meine Liebe zu dir und deiner Geliebten. Sie ist jetzt bußfertig, und ihre Liebe zu dir ist wieder zurückgekehrt. Ihr Herz bricht aus Sorge wegen des Schmerzes, den sie dir angetan hat. Sie wird bald aus der Trübsal der Erde hierher kommen, um sich ihrer Buße zu widmen. Aber sie wird nicht hier in diese Tiefen kommen, denn sie arbeitet schon in Schmerz und Reue und Liebe für dich an ihrer Erlösung. Bemühe dich deshalb und kümmere dich sorgfältig um diesen unglücklichen Menschen, damit ich dich ein kleines Stück nach oben mitnehmen kann. Dann darfst du mit ihr zusammentreffen, wenn sie kommt. In diesem Falle werdet ihr beide zusammen weitergehen und euch gegenseitig in das Licht helfen. Denke daran.“

Dann blickte sie nachdenklich zu Paul, wie wir ihn jetzt nennen müssen. Aber es war kein Zeichen der Bußfertigkeit auf seinem Gesicht. So wandte sie sich langsam um, ging zur Tür und verschwand. Und als sie gegangen war, schien die Luft frostiger zu werden und das schwache Licht schien sich etwas zu verdunkeln; und wo es zuvor mit einem zarten rosigen Glühen vermischt war, war davon jetzt nichts mehr zu sehen. Es war sehr düster geworden.

In diesem Augenblick erkannte Paul seine tiefste Armut und Entwürdigung. Denn er war so sehr daran gewöhnt, den Menschen seine Vorstellungen aufzuzwingen, weil sie sich nur selten gegen seine dominante Persönlichkeit aufgelehnt hatten. Nun schalt ihn ein junges Mädchen aus und nannte ihn klein und arm und beschämte ihn. Sie kommandierte ihn, dieser kleine Sprössling eines Mädchens, und er wagte es nicht, ihr zu trotzen; denn er fühlte, dass sie bei all ihrer Lieblichkeit stark war, während er schwach und arm war. Keiner seiner vielen Freunde war hier, sondern nur Feinde, die Grund zur Rache hatten.

Er war ganz allein in der Düsternis und in seiner großen Schwäche. Die Straße, auf die sie kamen, war nur eine gerade Linie, die sich im offenen Land an Hütten entlang zog. Sie dehnte sich weit vor ihm aus und fiel dann nach unten ab, bis sie sich in der Düsternis verlor. Es gab keinen Horizont. Hier und dort flackerte ein düsteres Licht wie ein kleines Holzfeuer mit grünen und kupferfarbenen Flammen. Der größte Teil der Gegend war anscheinend Sumpfland, denn aus ihm stieg ein Verwesungsgestank hoch, der sich in widerlichem und stickigem Dunst ausbreitete. Paul keuchte nach Atem und lehnte sich an einen Zaun, um nicht umzufallen. Aber sobald er ihn berührt hatte, gab der Zaun nach und er fiel kopfüber in eine schlammige Einfriedung. Albert begann zu lachen, aber dann riss er sich zusammen und half dem elenden Mann wieder auf das Kopfsteinpflaster zurück.

„Um Himmels willen“, rief Paul, „Was ist das für ein Ort? Gibt es keinen Weg, auf dem man hier herauskommt?“

Während er zu ihm aufsah, wurde sein Begleiter sehr ernst. Er machte eine kurze Pause und sagte dann: „Dieses Stück wird als Garten bezeichnet, aber die besten Blumen, die hier wachsen, sind eine Art von Pilzen. Nur aus Höflichkeit nennt man es einen Garten, vielleicht aber auch aus blankem Zynismus, vermischt mit einer gewissen Heuchelei, die du hier im Übermaß finden wirst. Du siehst, ich beginne Abstand von den Dingen hier zu gewinnen und sie aus einem etwas abgehobenen Blickwinkel zu sehen. Das war nicht immer so, und es ist ein Zeichen meiner Besserung. Aber ich weiß, dass ich selbst noch nicht auf festem Grund stehe. Ich habe über dein Missgeschick eben fast gelacht. Das war noch ein Rest des alten Teufels in mir, von dem ich gedacht hatte, ich hätte ihn hinter mir gelassen.“  
„Auf jeden Fall hätte ich lieber deine Heiterkeit als dein Mitleid.“  
„Ja, ich glaube zu verstehen; ein Gefühl wie ‚Kohlen aus dem Feuer‘, nicht wahr? Aber ich will, dass dir klar wird, dass mein Mitleid ganz aufrichtig ist. Niemand, der durch das durchgegangen ist, wo ich war, kann sich davor schützen, jemand wie dich zu bedauern, der noch eine schlimmere Höllenreise vor sich hat, als ich sie bestehen musste.“

Paul schauderte und blinzelte durch die Düsternis in das Gesicht seines Begleiters und fragte: „Warum sagst du das? Warum erzählst du mir das im Voraus?“

„Nicht um deine Qualen zu verstärken, wie du vermutest. Ich kann nicht sagen, dass ich dir ganz vergeben hätte für das, was du mir angetan hast. Ich glaube nicht, dass ich das tun kann, bevor du zu mir gekommen bist und mich um Vergebung gebeten hast. Aber ich versuche jetzt erst einmal mit meiner eigenen Aufgabe fertig zu werden. Denn alles, was ich

tue und sage, ist nur für dein Bestes. Ich will, dass du dir das merkst. Ich möchte die Dinge für uns beide einfacher machen. Ich habe dir von deinem Schicksal im Voraus erzählt, um dir zu helfen, den Tatsachen ins Auge zu blicken. Viele Jahre lang hast du versucht, die Augen davor zu verschließen, wie du wirklich gewesen bist und was die Zukunft für dich für die Zeit aufbewahrt hat, wenn du hierher kommst. Wenn du die Ratschläge von Einem annimmst, der das schon ausgestanden hat, dann wirst du deine ungesunde Haltung abwerfen und dir klar werden, wie du wirklich bist.“

„Was meinst du damit?“

„Nun, was denkst du über dein Leben?“

„Ich habe nicht das Leben eines Heiligen gelebt. Ich habe nie behauptet, das zu sein. Ich bin kein heuchlerischer Dorfprediger.“

„Kein Dorfprediger, aber ein Heuchler gewiss — ja wirklich.“

„Was glaubst du? Ich fühle mich nicht geneigt, irgendwelche Lehren von dir anzuhören; und noch weniger deine Beschimpfungen.“

Albert machte wieder eine Pause. „Ich fange gerade mit meiner jetzigen Arbeit an; sie ist ganz neu für mich, und ich weiß kaum, wie ich mit dir umgehen soll, so wie es mir erklärt worden ist. Du scheinst für mich ein sehr schwieriger Fall zu sein. Eigentlich zu schwierig, um mit ihm zu beginnen.“

„Ich möchte, dass du mir alles erklärst und mir nicht Rätsel erzählst wie ein Dummkopf.“

„Mein armer Bursche, du nimmst wieder deinen alten Stil an — arrogant, hartgesichtig und brutal. Ich kann mich erinnern, dass du immer so gewesen bist. Aber hier ist das nicht nur abwegig für jemanden wie dich; es ist unverschämt und ich empfehle dir, es abzulegen, ein für allemal, und eine bescheidenere Haltung anzunehmen. Denn du wirst dich bald in der Gesellschaft von Anderen wiederfinden, die dir das in einer Weise verübeln werden, die dir nicht sehr schmecken wird.“

„Gibt es keine Gerechtigkeit an diesem Ort?“

„Sieh dich an. In deiner geschrumpften hässlichen Gestalt, den groben Lumpen, die dich kleiden, kannst du eine offene Seite des untrüglichen Gesetzes lesen, das überall wirkt — selbst hier. Im Erdenleben konntest du deinen Körper in teure Kleider hüllen und deine schwarze Seele mit klugen Worten oder einem Lächeln oder einem Geldgeschenk verkleiden. Hier bist du, wie es deine äußere Erscheinung zeigt — genau so ist es und nicht anders.“

„Dann ist das wirklich auf Dauer — nicht nur ein böser Traum, wie ich hoffe?“

„Es ist weder das eine noch das andere. Sicherlich ist es real genug, wie ich es erlebt habe, und du wirst es auch so spüren. Aber ich bin inzwischen zu der Überzeugung gelangt, dass dieser Zustand nicht von Dauer ist. Es gibt einen Weg hinaus — ich bin mir fast sicher.“

„Wo ist der Weg hinaus? Können wir ihn nicht gehen? Ich ersticke hier. Es ist, als würde ich in einen See von schlimmem schleimigem Nebel getaucht werden.“

„Ja, allerdings ist es kein richtiger Nebel, denn du kannst durch ihn hindurch sehen. Sieh dort drüben hin.“

Paul blickte auf und weit entfernt sah er einen Berg mit einer Spalte. Aus

der Spalte schimmerte ein Glühen, das zweifellos von einem Licht kam, das von einem Land dahinter ausging.

„Dort geht der Weg hinaus, so hat man es mir erklärt“, sagte Albert.

„Dann lass uns doppelt schnell dorthin gehen.“

„Nicht doch. Das ist der Punkt, zu dem ich mich langsam und mühselig aufgemacht habe, und ich hoffe, ihn eines Tages zu erreichen. Aber ich musste diese dunkle Straße gehen, und habe mich dabei noch weiter von ihm entfernt.“

Er deutete in die entgegengesetzte Richtung. Als sie dort standen und in die Dunkelheit hinaus starrten, schien das ganze schwach erhellte Land so schrecklich, dass es Paul wie in einem Schüttelfrost schauderte. Gelegentlich kam ein Jammern aus der Dunkelheit, als hätte jemand alle Hoffnung auf Rettung verloren und wäre in großen Schmerzen. Dann sprang ein rötlicher Blitz auf und in seinem Licht waren schreckliche Gestalten zu sehen, einige in rasendem Zorn aneinander geklammert oder in ekelhaften Haltungen und noch schrecklicheren Szenen.

Paul stieß einen Schreckensschrei aus.

„Du hältst mich zum Narren“, rief er. „Mir wird das nicht passieren, wenn ich es verhindern kann. Du kannst hier bleiben, wenn du willst; du scheinst auf jeden Fall schwachsinnig genug dafür zu sein. Ich gehe jetzt direkt zu dieser Bergspalte da drüben, und“, setzte er drohend fort, „du wirst mich dabei nicht aufhalten, niemals.“

„Nein, ich werde gar nicht versuchen, dich aufzuhalten. Ich werde auf dich warten, bis du zurückkommst.“

Paul blickte ihn zweifelnd an, und sein Blick war voller Geringschätzung. Dann wandte er sich schnell um und stolperte in die Dunkelheit in die Richtung des Lichtes zwischen den Gipfeln.

Verloren in der Hölle

Zwei Andere waren ebenfalls Zeugen von Pauls Abirren in die Dunkelheit, die in der Richtung des weit entfernten Lichtes lag. Es waren die beiden Frauen.

Die jüngere der beiden Frauen verweilte seit ihrem Übertritt in dieser Dunkelheit. Zuerst waren ihre Qualen wirklich sehr schlimm. Aber das veränderte sich bald zu einer ständigen Traurigkeit und zu Selbstvorwürfen, und dann entwickelte sich bei ihr eine gewisse Reue. Zu dieser Zeit wurde sie mit Albert in Kontakt gebracht. Sie wurde „gebracht“, denn, obwohl es ihr nicht klar war, werden sie selbst in solch finsternen Orten von den hellen Wesen beobachtet, die ihren Führern sorgfältig über die Situation jeder der Myriaden Seelen berichten, die in diesen unendlichen Kontinenten der Dämmerung verstreut sind. Von diesen wurden sie im geeigneten Augenblick zusammengeführt.

Dieser Augenblick trat ein, als bekannt wurde, dass der Doktor, ihr gemeinsamer Feind, abgerufen werden sollte, um Rechenschaft abzugeben. Diese Abrechnung begann mit ihrem Eintreten in seine Zelle.

In diesem Zusammenhang sollte bedacht werden, dass im Erdenleben der materielle Körper und die irdische Umgebung einen viel besseren Hintergrund bieten, auf denen man seine Vorstellungen abstützen kann. Oder, etwas anders ausgedrückt: Ungläubige Leute, die ihren materiellen Körper und ihre gewohnte Umgebung verloren haben, finden sich in einem geistigen Körper und einer Umgebung wieder, die den geistigen Gesetzen

entsprechen, die in einer weiteren Dimension des Raumes herrschen. Wenn man gegen geistige Dinge gesündigt oder es vernachlässigt hat, sie zu lernen und zu nutzen, ist es nachteilig, wenn nur noch eine solche Umgebung zur Verfügung steht.

So werden ihnen die Aufgaben und die Gelegenheiten bereitet — die Aufgabe, jemandem zu helfen, der ihnen beiden grausames Unrecht zugefügt hat; das schafft zweifellos die Möglichkeit, durch diesen Dienst ihren Sinn zu erhellen. Wenn sie dies tun, dann ist das ihr erster klarer Schritt zu den Bergen, hinter denen das Licht von dem dahinter liegenden besseren Land scheint.

Bisher wurde berichtet, wie Albert seine Aufgabe begonnen hatte. Nun trat er für einige Zeit zurück. Jetzt war Monika an der Reihe. Sie folgte Paul in die Wildnis, in die er voller Trotz und Hektik kopfüber eingetaucht war. Monika kannte die Gegend recht gut, denn sie hatte hier die meiste Zeit verbracht, nachdem ihre erste schlimme Qual vorüber gegangen war.

Es war eine Region schwacher Dunkelheit. In der Nähe der Bergreihe wurde die Luft etwas heller und weniger widerlich als in der Region darunter. Aus diesem Grunde wurde sie, während sie weiterging, im Geist wacher und im Körper kräftiger, denn sie passte sich dieser Region an. Aber bei Paul war es gegenteilig, je weiter er ging, umso mehr verdichtete sich die Dunkelheit und es wurde ihm immer schwerer, in dieser Atmosphäre zu atmen.

Er stolperte mit einer grimmigen Entschlossenheit und voller Verzweiflung weiter. Er stellte fest, dass er auf einem harten unebenen Pfad ging, der zweifellos am Fuß des Berges entlanglief. Er konnte kaum etwas sehen, aber mit der Hand konnte er die Felsen auf seiner rechten Seite fühlen. Sorgfältige Untersuchungen zeigten ihm, dass die Felsen auf der linken Seite senkrecht in die schwarze Tiefe abfielen. Als er in seiner zunehmenden Blindheit weiterging, tastete er sich nur noch durch Berührung weiter. Denn die Dunkelheit wurde immer dichter und schließlich konnte er überhaupt nichts mehr erkennen. Seine einzige Orientierung waren die Felsen.

Als er seinen Weg so weiter tastete, schrie er plötzlich vor Schrecken und Angst auf. Mit seiner Hand hatte er keinen Felsen gefühlt, sondern etwas, was sich wie ein feuchtes und schlammiges Seil anfühlte, das von den Klippen hinunter hing. Er überlegte gerade, ob dies ein Hilfsmittel für den Aufstieg sei, als sich das Seil versteifte und wand, und ein Zischen kam von einer Stelle, knapp einen Meter über seiner Hand. Er wandte sich hastig um und schritt zurück. Aber sein Schrei hatte das Monster über seinen Aufenthaltsort informiert. So floh er den Weg zurück, den er gekommen war.

Aber als er dorthin zurückgekommen war, wo er meinte, die Anderen verlassen zu haben, blieb er stehen und sah sich um. Er konnte nichts sehen; alles lag in völliger Dunkelheit. Er ließ sich auf Hände und Knie herunter und tastete sorgfältig um sich herum und stellte dabei fest, dass er immer noch auf dem Pass war, mit den Felsen auf der einen Seite und dem Abgrund auf der anderen. Dann setzte er sich hin und überlegte, wie er zuerst auf diesen Pfad gekommen war. Aber er konnte sich nicht an den Augenblick erinnern, an dem er die Ebene verlassen hatte und in die Berge gestiegen war. Offenbar befand er sich inmitten eines bergigen Bereichs, der von Reptilien bewohnt und mit anderen Schrecken versehen



war, die er allesamt fürchtete. Er war allein — und verloren.

Wie er da saß, wurde er eines anderen Schreckens bewusst — völlige Stille. Stille in den himmlischen Orten ist eine der köstlichsten Freuden, die in diesen goldenen Städten für die Seligen aufbewahrt sind. In der Hölle ist sie schrecklich.

Wenn der Name Gottes auf den Lippen der Tausenden in den Engelchören über das Himmelszelt fließt und pulsiert — über Berge, Täler, Haine, wohin er auch seinen Weg findet —, dann entzückt er die Hörer mit unaussprechlicher Freude.

Beispielsweise sind zwei Leute auf einer Straße in einem Wald gegangen, leise murmelnd, die in die weit entfernten Echos dieser Engelshymnen kamen. Die beiden hielten inne und blieben stehen, und ihre Brust hob sich voller Sehnsucht, ihre Wangen glühten voller Begeisterung über den Klang, und schließlich sprachlos und von Gefühlen überwältigt, senkten sie ihre Augen, fielen sich um den Hals und blieben so stehen. Ihre Gesichter lagen ruhig und still jeweils auf der Schulter des Gefährten, bis die Musik wieder erstarb. Es war eine Anbetungshymne für unseren einzigen Wohltäter und ein Tribut der Liebe zum Brunnen der Liebe. Es war ein Lied an Gott.

Aber in den Höllen ist das Nennen eines seiner Namen von den dort Regierenden verboten, denn es erzeugt ein qualvolles Erschauern, wo immer es gehört wird.

Genauso ist es mit der Stille. Wenn niemand den Klang aufrührt, dann füllt Gottes Anwesenheit all die scheinbare Leere, die sich dadurch noch verstärkt. Daran liegt es, dass die Stille in den Himmeln heilig und in den Höllen verflucht ist.

Hier auf diesem einsamen Bergpass fühlte Paul dies das erste Mal, und zum ersten Mal erkannte er seine eigene Schändlichkeit — derselbe, der einige Stunden zuvor heimgefahren war und sich gratuliert hatte, dass er ein glücklicher Bursche sei. Er hatte ein schönes Haus gekauft und ausgestattet, verdiente viel Geld und — gut, er ist einer von vielen, wie man traurig zugeben muss. Gott helfe ihnen, denn es ist ein trauriges Schicksal für sie vorbereitet, wenn sie hier herüberkommen.

In stetig wachsender Unruhe saß Paul dort, zusammengekauert auf dem rauen Pfad, bis ihm seine Untätigkeit unerträglich wurde. Er stand auf und wollte seine Rückkehr fortsetzen, als er plötzlich erkannte, dass er alle Orientierung verloren hatte und nicht mehr wusste, wie er an diese Stelle gekommen war. So tastete er nach der Felswand und ein anderer Schrecken befahl ihm. Seine Hand berührte nichts. Er tastete nach allen Seiten und nirgends war etwas. Dann ließ er sich auf seine Hände und Knie nieder und krabbelte, erst in eine Richtung und dann in eine andere. Durch diese Versuche erkannte er schließlich, dass er auf einem Berggrat oder einem Felskamm war, der zehn bis 20 Meter breit war. Aber an welcher Stelle er ihn betreten hatte, und wann, daran konnte er sich überhaupt nicht mehr erinnern.

Seine immer weiter zunehmende Verwirrung grenzte an Wahnsinn und erlaubte ihm keine Ruhe. So ging er in der Längsrichtung auf dem Felsen in die Dunkelheit weiter. Immer noch bedrückte ihn die böse Vorahnung der Stille. Er ging weiter und weiter und der Pfad endete nicht.

Er wollte wissen, warum er nicht in den Abgrund fiel, weder auf der einen Seite noch auf der anderen. Aber er fand sich immer auf festem Grund. Dafür war er zunächst dankbar gewesen. Aber als er sich weiter und weiter abmühte, wurde er all dem so überdrüssig, dass er einen Unfall herbeiwünschte, um sein Leben zu beenden, denn er fürchtete sich, es selbst zu tun.

Dann kam ihm ganz plötzlich ein Gedanke, und er setzte sich wieder hin und dachte in dieser schwarzen Dunkelheit und der Stille dieser Leere darüber nach. „Selbstmord? Was hat das für einen Nutzen, wenn ich schon gestorben bin, und habe mich dennoch lebendig gefunden und war sogar Schmerzen gegenüber empfindsam, von denen ich zuvor nichts wusste, und in einem weit übleren Zustand? Gegenüber meiner so beneidenswerten Position als erfolgreicher praktischer Arzt, wie habe ich mich plötzlich so verändert? Vielleicht habe ich mich überhaupt nicht verändert und war die ganze Zeit, was ich jetzt bin, aber es erschien mir anders? Während ich dachte, ich sei ein Mann von Geld - ist es möglich, dass ich nur ein Armer war? Vielleicht wäre es richtiger zu sagen, dass ich das Verfügungsrecht über ein gewisses Guthaben hatte, das jeden Moment hätte verloren gehen können? Und das ist jetzt irgendwie geschehen; und wo bin ich jetzt und was bin ich?

Übrigens, diese Narren, die ich in dieser Bruchbude getroffen habe, hatten etwas darüber gesagt. Was war es? Das Mädchen, das ich nicht kannte, sagte etwas über meine medizinischen Kenntnisse. Sie seien mehr oder weniger Scharlatanerie, weil ich nicht die Existenz eines anderen Körpers erkannt hätte, der den fleischlichen Körper durchdringe? Das habe ich verstanden. Ich möchte gerne wissen, ob sie nach all dem Recht damit hat. Wenn es wirklich so wäre, dann wäre die medizinische Wissenschaft auf dem falschen Weg, zumindest teilweise. Trotz allem, ich bin hier; und ich verstehe diese anderen, die durchblicken ließen, dass ich tot bin – und doch habe ich weiterhin einen Körper. Dieses junge Mädchen hatte Recht, dies muss der Körper sein, über den sie sprach.“ Dann kam ein Anfall von Raserei über ihn und er stand auf und schrie: „Hallo, dort!

Ist da niemand in dieser höllischen Wildnis? Hallo!“ Aber es gab keine Antwort als diese Stille, die so eloquent war, wie nur eine Stimme sein konnte. Er lauschte einige Zeit und dann murmelte er: „Allein, und in Ewigkeit!“ und sank wieder auf den Boden, vergrub sein Gesicht in seine Hände und weinte lange und laut.

Lange Tage, Wochen und Jahre schienen zu vergehen, während er dort saß. Die Stille hatte die Wirkung, alles in ihren gigantischen Rachen zu verschlingen. Sie verschlang die Zeit, und alle Berechnungen waren völlig vergeblich. Er hatte laut geschrien und laut geweint, und doch konnte er in seinen Ohren nur die Stimme und das Weinen eines schwachen Kindes wie aus einer großen Entfernung vernehmen. Das war es, was seine Verzweiflung ausgelöst hatte, als er geschrien hatte: „Allein, und in Ewigkeit!“

Schließlich stand er auf und stolperte ohne Ziel weiter. Während er ging, stellte er fest, dass der Untergrund allmählich anstieg. In dieser schrecklichen Monotonie begrüßte er dies durchaus als Abwechslung. Jetzt hörte er einen schwachen Ton und eilte weiter in der Richtung, aus

der er gekommen zu sein schien. Er verlor ihn wieder, und wieder kam er zurück; dadurch bildete er sich ein, dass er nicht mehr auf einem erhobenen Pfad war, sondern in einer Art Tal, und dass die umgebenden Berge oder Felsen sich geöffnet hatten oder je nach ihrer Formation und Wesensart die Töne entsprechend durchgelassen hatten. In Wirklichkeit hatte er nur teilweise Recht.

Er kam schließlich an einen Ort, wo auf seiner rechten Seite ein sehr schwaches Licht lag. Er wandte sich eifrig dort hin und sah, dass es aus einem Pfad kam, der durch eine Spalte zu einer Klippe führte, an der er plötzlich an einem Durchgang angekommen war.

Er ging diesen Durchgang zwischen den überhängenden Felsen nach unten. Auf seiner linken Seite fiel der Felsen steil hinunter und es wurde ihm bewusst, dass er auf einem Felssims stand, der von dem hinter ihm aufragenden Felsen durch ein rötliches Glühen schwach beleuchtet wurde. Dieses Glühen hatte seinen Ursprung auf der unten liegenden Ebene. Zuerst konnte er nicht klar sehen, welche Art Land es war, auf das er blickte. Aber mittlerweile hatten sich seine Augen mehr und mehr an die Unschärfe gewöhnt, und er konnte sich jetzt eine gewisse Vorstellung des Panoramas entwickeln.

Hier blieb er lange sitzen und beobachtete die Szene, die sich vor ihm entfaltete. Am Fuß der Felsen lag eine wellige Ebene, die sich bis zum Horizont erstreckte, wo niedrigere Berge standen. Hier und dort sah er einen Turm oder einige verstreute Gebäude, als wäre von einer Gemeinschaft der Versuch gemacht worden, eine Stadt zu errichten. In jedem Fall schien ein besonderes Ereignis zum Abbruch ihrer Mühen geführt zu haben. Einige verstreute, verkrüppelte Bäume, ein Teich von dunklem Wasser und eine Gruppe von Felsen waren charakteristisch für die Landschaft. Alles lag im Halbdunkel, und doch war es kein Nebel, der es verdunkelte. Was sichtbar war, konnte man in klaren Umrissen sehen, aber nur sehr schwach. Hier und da konnte man ein deutlicheres Glühen erkennen, als würden Feuer abgebrannt, oder als wären einige Gebäude von innen beleuchtet. Aber dieses Licht war schwach und rötlich und diente nur dazu, die Düsternis dieser wahrhaft desolaten Region zu verstärken. Nirgendwo war ein Strahl klaren Lichtes zu sehen.

Auch der Himmel war nur Schwärze, als würde die große Weite der Unendlichkeit nichts in ihren Abgründen halten als dunkle Leere. Paul fühlte das gleiche drückende Gefühl einer äußerlichen Bedrohung und schreckte zurück, wie zuvor auf dem Bergpass. Und doch schrak er mehr vor der Dunkelheit zurück, die hinter ihm lag, als vor dem gespenstigen Schrecken des Landes, das sich unten in der Tiefe vor ihm ausbreitete. Schließlich stand er auf und begann, in dieses Tiefland hinunter zu steigen.

Dieser Abstieg verlief überwiegend in einem Flussbett, das in einer fruchtbaren Region ein Bergbach gewesen wäre. Aber obwohl Wasser von dem schwarzen Felsen hier und da im Laufe seines Abstiegs heruntertropfte, war es schlecht und brackig und verteilte einen glitschigen Film, wohin es auch kam. Daraus wuchsen Pilze, die im Unterschied zu irdischen Pilzen eher Tiere als Pflanzen zu sein schienen. Sie vereinten sich auch zu einer glitschigen, schwammartigen Masse und strömten einen üblen Gestank aus, der ihn fast überwältigte.

So stieg er hinunter und schließlich hatte er wieder eine Sicht auf die Ebene. Als er um die scharfe Kante eines Felsens kam, sah er vor sich eine Klippe und dahinter einen flacheren Grund. Er eilte vorwärts und tauchte in das offene Land ein. Hier blieb er stehen, und als er auf der rechten Seite in der Nähe das Glühen eines Feuers sah, wandte er sich dorthin und kam nach kurzer Zeit in den Bereich des flackernden Lichtes.

Nun, die Szenen, die er in diesem Land der Dunkelheit bestimmt war zu erleben, sind so, dass sie hier nicht in all dem Schrecken ihrer Verkommenheit, Gottlosigkeit und schamlosen Unreinheit geschildert werden können.

Die Menschen unter euch auf Erden, die ein exquisites und angenehmes Leben ohne Rücksicht auf ihre Verpflichtungen ihren ärmeren Brüdern und Schwestern gegenüber leben, sollen lesen können, welche Art von Leben sie bald und sicher erwartet. Egoismus ist Grausamkeit; Grausamkeit ist die Verweigerung von Liebe; und Liebe ist Gott. Deshalb leiden diese so schrecklich, wenn sie hier herüber kommen.

Am Fuß eines hohen Felsens hatte sich vor einer Felsplattform eine Volksmenge gesammelt. Die Plattform war etwa 1 ½ Meter hoch und etwa hundert Meter im Quadrat. Auf jeder Seite brannte ein Feuer, das die Bühne in ein Halbre relief tauchte. Auf der Bühne standen ein Mann und eine Frau, die auf das Publikum blickten. Ihre Gesichter — beide waren verschlagen und grausam — und ihre ruhelosen Augen warfen hier und da Blicke in nie endender Bewegung, während sie ihr Publikum ansprachen. Einer sprach einige Sätze und dann nahm der andere das Thema wieder auf. Vor ihnen lag oder saß das Publikum auf der Ebene und hörte zu; und obwohl ihre Gesichter Zeichen von Angst und Besorgnis trugen, konnte man erkennen, dass sie eindeutig unfähig waren, sich von diesem Ort zu entfernen.

Es war, als würden sie von einem magnetischen Band umfasst und in geistesverwandtem Bösem zusammengehalten.

Als Paul näher kam und am Rand der Menge stehen blieb, sprach gerade die Frau, und der Mann nahm ihren Wink auf und beide sprachen abwechselnd wie folgt:

„Und doch ist es nicht die Wissenschaft, über die wir zu euch sprechen wollen, sondern eher von ihrem Ideal. Wissenschaft, wie ihr wisst, ist ordnungsgemäß, und dies ist ein ungeordnetes Land; das ist seine Herrlichkeit. Denn in der Ordnung liegt keine Freiheit. Nur Unordnung ist Freiheit!“

„Sie spricht nicht über Ihre äußere Kleidung, meine Damen - und insbesondere meine Herren — die anspruchsvolle Personen, ganz ungerecht, als unordentlich beschreiben würden. Es ist aus dem Inneren, aus dem meine Schwester, meine Frau oder durch welche ehrbaren Bezeichnungen ihr sie benennen wollt, euch ihre ästhetische Schönheit zu zeigen versucht. Das ist die Freiheit, von der sie spricht. Die Freiheit der Gedanken erzeugt die Freiheit der Tat und — gut, muss ich mehr sagen zu diesem idealistischen Publikum, das so gut weiß, wie Freiheit genutzt werden könnte oder sollte?“

„Und doch, obwohl ihr dies so gut wisst, sowohl in Theorie als auch in Praxis, meine Mitbrüder, Beispiel ist besser als Theorie und hier ist ein Neuankömmling, wie ich eben bemerkt habe, mit dem wir unsere Experimente bisher noch nicht gemacht haben, und bei denen er einige neue

Aspekte einbringen kann, die sich zu betrachten lohnen.“

Dann verbeugte sich der Mann in Pauls Richtung, und indem er auf ihn deutete, sagte er: „Sie sind es, mein Herr, den diese Dame anspricht, und Sie werden ohne Zweifel sehen, dass es eine Dame ist, die sie anspricht. Sie werden die Einladung eines solch kultivierten und schönen Wesens nicht ablehnen, die, wie Sie sehen, auf Ihren Gruß wartet. Kommen Sie direkt hierher, mein Herr. Der Menge wird es nichts ausmachen, wenn Sie über sie

hinweg schreiten. Und wenn es ihr etwas ausmachte, dann spielt das keine Rolle. Die Menge ist daran gewöhnt — vollkommen gewöhnt daran, das kann ich Ihnen versichern.“

Während dieser Ansprache hatte Paul nicht zu bemerken versäumt, dass unter der affektierten Formulierung und Eleganz der Rede ein unterlagerter Ton von Zynismus und böser Unterstellung lag, der ekelhaft und kränkend war. Und als ihn der Mann so direkt ansprach, war er vor Schrecken wie gelähmt. Denn während sie sprachen, war es ihm mit wachsender Überzeugung klar geworden, dass diese beiden böse und vorsätzlich böse waren; auch dass sie die beiden führenden Geister dieser ganzen Gesellschaft von etwa tausend oder zwölfhundert Seelen waren. Er erkannte weiterhin, dass er unter ihnen unterging, dass er unter ihnen machtlos war, dass sein früherer herrischer Wille zu Wasser geworden war, ohne innere Stabilität und ohne Form, jetzt, wo das Gefäß, das ihn einst zusammen gehalten hatte, entfernt war. Es schien ihm, als wären sein materieller Körper und seine Umgebung verschwunden, und als wäre der geistige Körper zu schwach, um ein kraftvolles Gehirn und einen starken Willen zu bewahren, deren Aktivitäten ihn in Stücke gehauen hätten.

Da er an diesem Ort und seinen bösen Kräften neu war, zögerte er, den Empfehlungen zu folgen. Daraufhin sprach ihn die Frau direkt an: „Komm hierher und steige diese Bühne hoch. Du hast eine öffentliche Pflicht zugunsten der Gemeinschaft auszuführen, in die du aufgenommen werden sollst. Komm und komm schnell!“ Sein letzter Fetzen von Selbstachtung verlor sich mit dem letzten Schatten seiner Unabhängigkeit, während er nach vorn eilte. Als er an der Bühne angekommen war, wurde er von denen, die ihr am nächsten waren, hochgehoben. Sie behandelten ihn rau und als die beiden Sprecher nach beiden Seiten auseinander gingen, nahmen die, die ihn hielten, dies als klaren Hinweis auf und warfen ihn buchstäblich in die Mitte der Plattform.

Was dann geschah, soll nicht im Detail geschildert sondern nur oberflächlich und knapp berichtet werden.

Paul wurde erklärt, dass er die Rolle eines Modells in einer anatomischen Vorlesung spielen sollte. Das lag in seinem Erdenleben durchaus in seinem Interesse, und er wollte ohne Zweifel auch jetzt nicht der letzte sein, der in dieser Menge den Betrachtungen dieser beiden sehr gelehrten idealistischen Wissenschaftler zuhörten. Dies wurde ihm durch drei Assistenten erklärt, während sie ihm alle Fetzen abrissen, die ihn bekleidet hatten und ihn nackt an einen Pfahl banden, der etwas hinter der Mitte der Bühne an dem Felsen befestigt war.

Dann führte die Dame ihre Vorlesung fort, während der Mann, ihre Thesen von Zeit zu Zeit an Pauls Körper verdeutlichte. Dabei verwendete er zwei Werkzeuge. Eines war eine scharf gespitzte Lanzette mit einem langen Griff. Mit dieser zeigte er die genaue Stelle in Pauls Anatomie, von der die Frau gerade sprach. Er tat dies, indem er tief in sein Fleisch hinein stieß. Wenn irgendwelche inneren Organe erwähnt wurden, nutzte er das andere Werkzeug. Dies war ein riesiges Skalpell, mit dem er den Körper aufschnitt, das Fleisch auf die Seite zog, um das Organ freizulegen, über das gesprochen wurde. Bei diesen Operationen wechselten sich der Mann und die Frau ab. Aber obwohl die Tortur schlimm genug war, war Paul weit davon entfernt, sein Bewusstsein zu verlieren. Während seine körperlichen Schmerzen zunahmen, wurde sein Intellekt zugleich empfindsamer, und so häufte sich Qual auf Qual.

Die Menge unten jubelte den Sprechern mit einer verrückten Art von brüllendem Lärm immer wieder zu. Während die Sprecher ihren Diskurs fortsetzten, war darin allerdings ein ängstlicher Klang gut zu erkennen. Etwas Ähnliches hatte er nie zuvor erlebt. Jede Sünde in seinem Leben schien ihnen bekannt zu sein. Eine nach der anderen holten sie hervor und mit lästerlichen Worten, eingepackt in spöttisch-wissenschaftliche Phrasen und mit einer vorgetäuschten Höflichkeit, legten sie seine innersten Gedanken offen, seine geheimsten Taten, seine längst vergessenen Sünden, von denen er der Meinung war, dass sie in der Leere der Vergangenheit verloren gegangen seien. Diese wurden jetzt in diesem Vortrag in schamlosem Behagen vor dieser Öffentlichkeit im Detail wiedererzählt, die Beifall klatschte und dazu brüllte.

Als ihnen alle Szenen vorgeführt und dargestellt worden waren, erklärte man, dass diese Taten das unmittelbare Ergebnis einer gewissen Aktion des einen oder anderen Körperorgans war, oder die kombinierte Aktion von zwei oder mehreren. Alle diese Punkte wurden veranschaulicht durch die eifrige Nutzung der Lanzette und des Skalpells.

Zerfetzt und an hundert Stellen verwundet, aber ohne einen Tropfen Blut verloren zu haben, wurde er am Ende bitter leidend, doch weiterhin bei Bewusstsein, in einen Keller im Felsen getragen. Hier wurde er auf den

Steinboden geworfen und man ließ ihn liegen, damit er sich erhole, soweit er dazu in der Lage war.

Im alten Schloss

Während Paul in dieser Höhle lag, kamen ihm Gedanken von einer Art, die er zuvor nie gehabt hatte. Seine kürzlichen Erlebnisse waren von einer Art, wie er sie sich nicht ausgemalt hatte, als das jenseitige Leben auf Erden von Zeit zu Zeit auf ihn eingedrungen war. Er fragte sich jetzt, was er sich wirklich vorgestellt hatte, wie das Leben sein würde, oder ob er jemals wirklich an eine Zukunft jenseits des Grabes geglaubt hatte. In seinem gegenwärtigen verwirrten und verbitterten Geisteszustand konnte er seine Gedanken aber nicht konzentrieren. Er war verwirrt und nur seiner schrecklichen Einsamkeit inmitten dieser Leute bewusst, von denen er nichts wusste, außer dass sie grausam und böse waren. Zu dieser Zeit hatte er die Tatsache noch nicht erkannt, dass all dies das Ergebnis einer vollkommenen Ordnung war, in der Ursache und Wirkung miteinander verknüpft waren. Er hatte ein im Prinzip völlig egoistisches Leben gelebt. Jetzt war er mit diesem Selbst als Gesellschaft alleingelassen, und seine

Einsamkeit verstärkte diese Tatsache. Was er seinerzeit gesät hatte, erntete er jetzt. Diese eine große Erkenntnis brannte sich in seine Gedanken ein und er wandte sich in höchstem Elend davon ab.

Er begann über die Art des Körpers nachzusinnen, auf den diese Quälgeister ihren Willen so grausam ausgelassen hatten. Es war zu dunkel, um irgendwelche Wunden zu erkennen, aber er tastete sich mit einer geübten Hand sorgfältig ab. Sein Körper war ganz und unverwundet. Doch er hatte intensive Qualen gelitten, als er auf dem Podium stand, und erinnerte sich an die feixende Menge und ihre Freude, wie er sich in Schmerzen wand.

Er litt immer noch. Aber es war eher eine neugierige Art des Leidens. Es war etwas, was er als körperlich beschrieben hätte, und doch lag der Kern des Leidens nicht in seinem Körper, sondern in seinen Gedanken. Und doch wieder, war das nicht auch der Fall mit den körperlichen Schmerzen im Erdenleben? Er theoretisierte über den Fall und kam zu dem Ergebnis, dass sein jetziger Körper eine Kombination aus dem fleischlichen Körper und dem Bewusstsein sein müsste.

Er kam mit seinen Gedanken aber nicht weiter. Er hatte seinen früheren leistungsfähigen Verstand verloren und war körperlich, mental und geistig völlig erschöpft. So lag er hilflos da, allein, verloren in einer Umgebung, die auf allen Seiten von Dunkelheit eingeschlossen war; einem Land, das ihm fremd war und voller Schrecken.

Durch eine Person, die vor dem Eingang der Höhle erschien, wurde er aus seiner Träumerei gerissen. Er lag ganz ruhig, aber fürchtete, ein weiteres Monster würde ihn aufsuchen, um ihn zu quälen. Er beobachtete wachsam die Gestalt und war bereit zu kämpfen, falls sich die Notwendigkeit dazu ergeben würde. So erkannte er sofort, dass es die Gestalt einer Frau war, und dass sie mit dem Rücken zu ihm stand und über die Ebene blickte.

Zwischen ihr und den anderen Frauen, die er gesehen hatte, schien kein Unterschied zu bestehen, außer dass ihr Kleid über ihre Knie ragte und etwas dichter und hübscher war als die Kleidung der anderen. Da er sicher war, dass er nichts zu fürchten hatte, kroch er langsam und still zu dem Eingang, stand dann auf und stellte sich an die rechte Seite der Frau. Aber obwohl sie seine Annäherung gemerkt haben musste, machte sie kein Zeichen, blieb ruhig und unbewegt, und blickte weiter über die Ebene. Er trat etwas näher zu ihr, bis er in der Lage war, ihr Gesicht im Profil genau zu erkennen, und schreckte mit einem überraschten und schmerzvollen Aufschrei zurück. Es war Monika.

Mit unterdrückter Stimme nannte er ihren Namen, aber sie antwortete nicht. Er kam näher und sah, dass ihre Augen voller Tränen waren. Dann beugte sie ihren Kopf und bedeckte ihr Gesicht mit den Händen und weinte. „Monika“, wiederholte er. Seine Stimme war bedrückt. Er fühlte eine gewisse Scheu in der Gegenwart eines Menschen, der in diesem verfluchten Land weinen konnte. So beugte er sich auf ein Knie, legte seinen Arm um sein Bein, ließ seine Hand hinunter hängen und neigte seinen Kopf fast bis zum Boden. So zeigte er diesem unglücklichen Mädchen seine Verehrung, dem er so grausam Unrecht angetan hatte.

Jetzt hörte er sie sprechen. „Paul“, sagte sie. Ihr Gemüt war nur zum Teil



bedrückt, doch ihre Stimme war voller Traurigkeit. Er konnte nicht in ihr Gesicht aufblicken. Er fühlte, dass er trotz aller Sünde, durch die sie sich durchgekämpft hatte, in ihrer Gegenwart dennoch verlegen und beschämt war, als würde er mit all seiner Schuld vor der Madonna selbst stehen. Aber jetzt wandte sie sich um, kam ihm näher und blieb über ihm stehen.

So bemerkte er, dass das Kleid, das sie trug, von etwas zarterer Beschaffenheit war als seines und das der anderen Leute, mit denen er in Kontakt gekommen war. Auch hatte es keine Risse, und noch bemerkenswerter war, dass es einen schmalen Saum zeigte, der mit einem Muster von Brombeeren mit Dornen in violetter Farbe gestickt war. Ihre Füße zeigten viele Wunden, und ihre Fesseln und Beine waren zerquetscht, als wäre sie in einem unbekanntem Land und in völliger Dunkelheit einen langen Weg gegangen.

Sein egoistisches Herz hatte etwas von seiner großen Bitterkeit und seinem Ärger verloren, die durch die vorherige Behandlung entstanden waren, und an ihre Stelle trat ein schwacher Strahl von Mitleid. Überdies war er sehr überrascht, als sie von Neuem sprach.

„Paul“, sagte sie. „ich habe das erwartet. Ich konnte nicht weiter gehen, bevor sich das ereignete.“

Daraufhin hob er seinen Kopf und fragte, „ich verstehe nicht?“

„Nein“, antwortete sie, „noch nicht, aber du wirst es eines Tages verstehen. Hast du eben nicht einen winzigen freundlichen Gedanken gefühlt, als du auf meine armen verwundeten Füße geblickt hast?“ Und als er in seiner Bestürzung keine Antwort gab, sagte sie weiter: „Das ermöglicht mir, meine Aufgabe fortzusetzen. Ich kam, um dich zu suchen.“

„Mich?“ Das war alles, was er äußern konnte.

„Ja, das ist meine aktuelle Mission. Ich bin zu dir geschickt worden, um dich aufzusuchen, und ich habe dich gefunden. Ich kam, als du dort drüben warst.“

Sie deutete in Richtung des Podiums, wo er gequält worden war. Es lag jetzt verlassen da und war nur in dunklen Umrissen am Fuß der Klippen zu erkennen. Er blickte in die Richtung und fragte mit einer Stimme voller Angst: „Wo sind sie hingegangen? Wo sind sie jetzt?“

„Sie sind die Klippen hinaufgestiegen, an einen Ort, den sie ihre Kathedrale nennen. Sie steht auf der Hochebene etwas tiefer im Land; und sie sind gegangen, um einen Dankgottesdienst abzuhalten.“

„Ein Dankgottesdienst in diesem verfluchten Land? Warum, Monika?“ Er brach verwirrt ab. Es lag etwas in der Aussprache ihres Namens, was einen Beigeschmack von Entweihung hatte. Aber sie antwortete: „Ja, nenne mich weiterhin Monika, solange ich diesen Namen trage. Mir wurde gesagt, dass ich bald einen anderen bekommen würde, wenn alles gut geht — wenn alles gut geht“, wiederholte sie, als wäre sie in eine Meditation verloren und mit einer wehmütigen Traurigkeit erfüllt, deren Ursache Paul nicht verstehen konnte.

„Ich wollte dich fragen, was es mit dem Dankgottesdienst auf sich hat“, sagte er.

„Du hast den Ausspruch gehört — ich will den Einen nicht benennen, der

es hier und jetzt sagte — dass Freude ist unter den Engeln über einen reumütigen Sünder?“ Er antwortete nicht, aber lauschte eifrig und sie setzte fort, „hier aber, Paul, ist das Gegenteil richtig: Es gibt hier eine teuflische Freude, wenn ein Sünder an seinen vorgesehenen Platz hierher kommt und von den Einwohnern als einer der Ihren aufgenommen wird.“

Sie machte eine Pause und er beugte seinen Kopf noch tiefer, während sie sehr ruhig und traurig sagte: „Du bist dieser Sünder, Paul.“

Als Paul die volle Bedeutung ihrer Antwort begriff, stellte er ihr eine andere Frage: „Meinst du, dass es ein Fest ist, das zu meiner Ehre gefeiert wird?“

Der Stand seines Geistes war in diesem Augenblick sehr seltsam. Er war dem Ort abgeneigt. Aber er fühlte, dass es vielleicht ein Mittel geben könnte, diesen Schrecken teilweise zu entkommen, die er um sich herum fühlte. Er bemühte sich, sich selbst zu überzeugen, dass das, was er überstanden hatte, eine Art Prüfung gewesen war. Er hatte sie ausgehalten und erwartete jetzt zumindest eine Belohnung, und er meinte deshalb, dass diese Leute jetzt dabei waren, ihm eine Genugtuung für seine Leiden zu leisten.

Aber diese Hoffnungen wurden ihm durch Monikas Antwort zerstört:

„Nicht zu deinen Ehren, Paul, sondern zu deinen größeren Unehren, es sein denn ...“

„Es sei denn was?“

„Es sei denn, du hast den Willen, zu widerstehen.“

„Monika, ich fühle, dass mein Wille zerrieben ist. Aber erzähle mir etwas mehr über diese Sache. Erstens, was ist mit der Kathedrale, die du erwähnt hast. Bist du dort gewesen?“

„Ich war in der Vorhalle, aber nicht weiter. Ich blieb dort eine Weile, als ich vorüber kam, denn ich hörte einen Lärm aus dem Inneren, und ich wollte wissen, was dort geschah.“

„Nun, sage mir, was da vorging. Ich möchte mehr darüber wissen.“

„Ich will es dir berichten, wenn wir unseren Weg gehen.“

„Aber wohin willst du, dass ich gehe?“

„Zurück zu Albert, der auf dich wartet, um seine Aufgabe an dir fortzusetzen.“

„Monika, ich würde eher zum Teufel selbst gehen als zu diesem Vollidiot zurückkehren. Es scheint mir, dass ich zumindest eine Chance gefunden habe, etwas Aufregendes hier zu erleben, und ich bin mir nicht vollkommen sicher, jetzt wo sie ihren Quälversuch über mich hinter sich haben, ob ich nicht in der Lage wäre, einige Freunde unter ihnen zu finden. Ich liebe sie nicht, aber ich denke, sie versprechen immerhin einigen Spaß.“

Monika machte eine längere Pause und antwortete dann: „Paul, als ich das erste Mal hierher kam, waren meine Gedanken ähnlich denen, die du eben ausgedrückt hast. Mein früheres Leben schien mich zu drängen, mein Los mit ihnen zu teilen. Aber als ich an der großen Tür dieser Kathedrale stand und beobachtete, was innen vorging, habe ich das alles durchdacht, fällte eine Entscheidung und wandte mich ab, entschlossen, wo ich auch verweilen müsste, was ich auch erleiden müsste, ein für allemal mit diesen armen abscheulichen Wesen und ihrem bösen Leben zu brechen. Höre zu. Ich kann dir nicht alles berichten, was ich dort sah, aber ich will dir genügend erzählen, um dir eine Vorstellung zu geben, was sie

tun.

Sie nennen es Kathedrale. Es ist ein sehr großes Gebäude in gotischem Stil. Aber damit endet auch schon alle Ähnlichkeit mit einer Kirche, wie wir sie auf Erden kannten. Auf jeder Seite des Schiffes ist ein Säulengang, gebildet aus zwei Reihen von gigantischen nackten Gestalten, auf der einen Seite von Männern, auf der anderen Seite von Frauen. Ihre ausgestreckten Beine bilden die Bögen. Am östlichen Ende steht ein hochragender Altar. Es ist ein großer Tisch, auf dem für die Feste Becher, Flaschen und andere Gefäße ausgebreitet sind. Hier sitzen während des so genannten Gottesdienstes die beiden Mächtigsten beider Geschlechter dieser Kolonie. Das Schiff ist ebenfalls mit Tischen angefüllt, die ähnlich gedeckt sind.

Über dem Altar ist ein großes umgekehrtes Kreuz. Bei jeder Feier kreuzigen sie eine Person auf diesem Kreuz mit dem Kopf nach unten. Die Geschlechter liefern abwechselnd das Opfer. Unter dem Tisch ist eine Tür, und eine Treppe führt hinunter in die Erde. Der Weg tritt in diese Höhle ein am hinteren Ende. Du hast es nicht bemerkt, weil die Höhle selbst tief ist und der Ausgang in die Passage im Dunkel liegt.“  
Sie machte eine kurze Pause und erlaubte ihrem Gesprächspartner, über das nachzudenken, was sie ihm berichtet hatte. Er schwieg. Deshalb fügte sie hinzu, „Das letzte Opfer war eine Frau.“

Die Wahrheit stürzte plötzlich auf ihn ein und mit einer Verwünschung und einem Angstschrei packte er sie am Handgelenk und fragte flüsternd: „Meinst du, dass sie mich bald in dieser Höhle als ihr nächstes Opfer suchen werden?“

„So ist es. ... Deshalb haben sie dich hier hinein geworfen.“  
In seinem Entsetzen nahm er eine drohende Haltung an und bat sie, sich zu eilen und ihn aus der Nähe dieses Höhleneingangs an einen sicheren Ort hinauszuführen.

Sie gab keine Antwort, sondern führte ihn ein Stück entlang der Felsen, dann wandte sie sich nach rechts und ging in Richtung der offenen Ebene. Sie kamen zwischen zwei niedrigen Hügeln hindurch und wandten sich nach links, wo sich eine Rinne zu einer Schlucht vertiefte, aus der er das Geräusch eines Flusses hörte, der unterhalb ihres Weges in seinem engen Bett stürmte. Er konnte schwach ihr Kleid sehen, während sie etwas vorausging, und so konnte er ihr ohne Unfall folgen. Schließlich waren sie plötzlich wieder im offenen Land, wo sich das Wasser in Bächlein verteilte und in der Weite verlor.

Hier blieben sie stehen und Paul sagte ungefähr: „Nun sieh dich um, Monika, mein Mädchen. Du hast mich da herausgebracht. Mir macht ihre Lebensart nicht so viel aus, wenn ich mich nur schützen kann vor ihrer Grausamkeit. Du scheinst das Land recht gut zu kennen. Du bist länger hier gewesen als ich. Zeige mir, wo ich leben kann, ohne schikaniert und gequält zu werden, und ich werde versuchen, mich hier anzusiedeln bis etwas Besseres auftaucht.“

„Albert wartet immer noch auf dich“, sagte sie.  
Eine plötzliche Wut packte ihn und mit einem Fluch nahm er einen abgebrochenen Ast, der in seiner Nähe lag und stürzte sich auf sie, um ihn

auf ihren Kopf zu schlagen, was sie hätte stürzen lassen. Er war jedoch überrascht, plötzlich einen Arm zu fühlen, der sich von hinten über seinen Kopf ausstreckte, während eine Hand sein Handgelenk packte und es unbewegbar in der Luft hielt; auch sein linker Arm wurde in einem starken Griff gehalten, so dass er unfähig war, sich zu rühren. Einige Minuten wurde er so gehalten und der, der ihn so gefangen hatte, verhielt sich schweigend.

Vor Angst zitternd ließ er schließlich die Waffe fallen. Immer noch war er in diesem unwiderstehlichen Griff gezwungen. Dann fühlte er sich langsam herumgedreht, und zuletzt freigelassen und stand sich Aug in Auge der jungen Frau gegenüber, die er in der Hütte seiner Ankunft getroffen hatte. Sie blickte ihn an, nicht unfreundlich, aber ernst und fest, während sie sagte: „Dieses arme Lamm hat den Kampf eines Löwen geführt. Du hast sie blindlings in diese Region voller Düsternis und Sorge geholt. Aber sie hat den Tod überwunden, der das Los derer ist, die hier wohnen, und hat den Aufstieg in das Grenzland begonnen, hinter dem das Land der schwachen Dämmerung liegt und dahinter die Region des Zwilichts, das in die Dämmerung leuchtet. Sie muss noch einen weiten Weg gehen, und die Straße ist mühselig. Aber sie, die diesen harten Kampf gewonnen hat, kann nun auf diese Reise gehen.

Ihr wurde die Wahl gegeben, aufzusteigen oder hier zu bleiben. Sie wusste, dass du hierher kommen würdest, und obwohl sie keine besondere Liebe zu dir empfindet, bat sie dennoch voller Mitleid, hier warten zu dürfen, falls sie dir in irgendeiner Weise behilflich sein könnte, um dich vor dem Schlimmsten zu bewahren. Diese Hilfe hast du durch deine Härte und deinen Egoismus zurückgewiesen. Du denkst nur an dich selbst, du fürchtest um dich, und kümmerst dich nur um dich.

Monika hat getan was sie konnte. Sie muss dich jetzt verlassen, damit sie nicht dem verderblichen Einfluss deiner Gesellschaft unterliegt, denn sie ist der Versuchung gegenüber noch nicht gänzlich immun. So mutig ihr Kampf gewesen ist, so groß ihr Sieg, er ist weder endgültig noch vollständig.

Du musst nun nach deinen eigenen Vorstellungen den für dich geeigneten Weg finden. Viele können nur durch das Feuer gereinigt werden. Wenn du gereinigt sein wirst, will ich mich dir wieder zeigen.“ Nach dieser Rede ging sie langsam davon, nahm die weiten Falten ihres Mantels in die Hand, warf sie über den Kopf und die Schultern des zitternden Mädchens und indem sie den Arm um sie legte, sagte sie zart, „komm, meine Liebe“, und dann verschwanden die beiden und ließen Paul wieder einmal in Einsamkeit zurück.

Er stand und sah ihnen zu, wie sie in der Dämmerung verschwanden, und dann setzte er sich auf einen Felsblock, um über seine Lage nachzudenken. Er fand sich in einer sehr hoffnungslosen Situation. Aber er hatte eine große Entdeckung gemacht. Er hatte herausgefunden, dass die Region nicht vollkommen schwarze Einsamkeit war. Zumindest Teile von ihr waren bewohnt. Die Leute waren nicht gänzlich wünschenswert. Doch wenn sie hier leben konnten, konnte er es auch. Außerdem hatte er diese schreckliche Schwärze der Hölle, diese völlige fürchterliche Dunkelheit hinter sich gelassen, und es gab ein bisschen Licht, zwar nur ganz wenig, aber schon das war für ihn eine Erleichterung. Und die Einwohner schienen das Problem dadurch zu beherrschen, dass sie es durch künstliche Mittel

ergänzten, denn er hatte Feuer gesehen.

Es schien kein striktes Gesetz in diesem Viertel zu geben. Aber in gewisser Hinsicht gab es eine Verbesserung. Er erinnerte sich mit einem grimmigen Lächeln, wie oft er in seinem Erdenleben gezwungen war, das Gesetz zu umgehen. Bei Monika zum Beispiel. Das war lästig gewesen. Solche Probleme gab es hier wohl nicht mehr.

Aber eine Sache musste er doch noch schaffen. Er musste, egal was es kostete, sich wieder in seine alte Herrscherpose einüben – in eine gewisse Brutalität, wenn man es so ausdrücken wollte. Wenn ihm das gelänge, dann gäbe es eine echte Chance, dass er gefürchtet, wenn nicht sogar respektiert würde. Dann würde er den Spieß umdrehen gegen diese groben ungeschickten Dummköpfe. Er würde der Quälende werden anstatt des Gequälten. Aber ein raffinierter Quäler, dessen Methoden wegen ihrer Brillanz allseits Bewunderung wecken würden. Er war sehr begeistert von dieser Idee, als er dort alleine saß und seine Zukunft plante.

Von deuche *Heft Medium #78*

*Fortsetzung und Schluss folgen im Heft Medium 79*