

IN THE WEIRD LIGHT

By EDWARD EVERETT WRIGHT
and RALPH HOWARD WRIGHT

*"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar."*

—Wordsworth.

"But tell, O restless main!
Who are the dwellers in the world beneath,
That thus the watery realm cannot contain
The joy they breathe.

* * *

"'Tis vain the reckless waves
Join with loud revel the dim ages flown,
But keep each secret of the hidden caves
Dark and unknown."

—Anonymous.

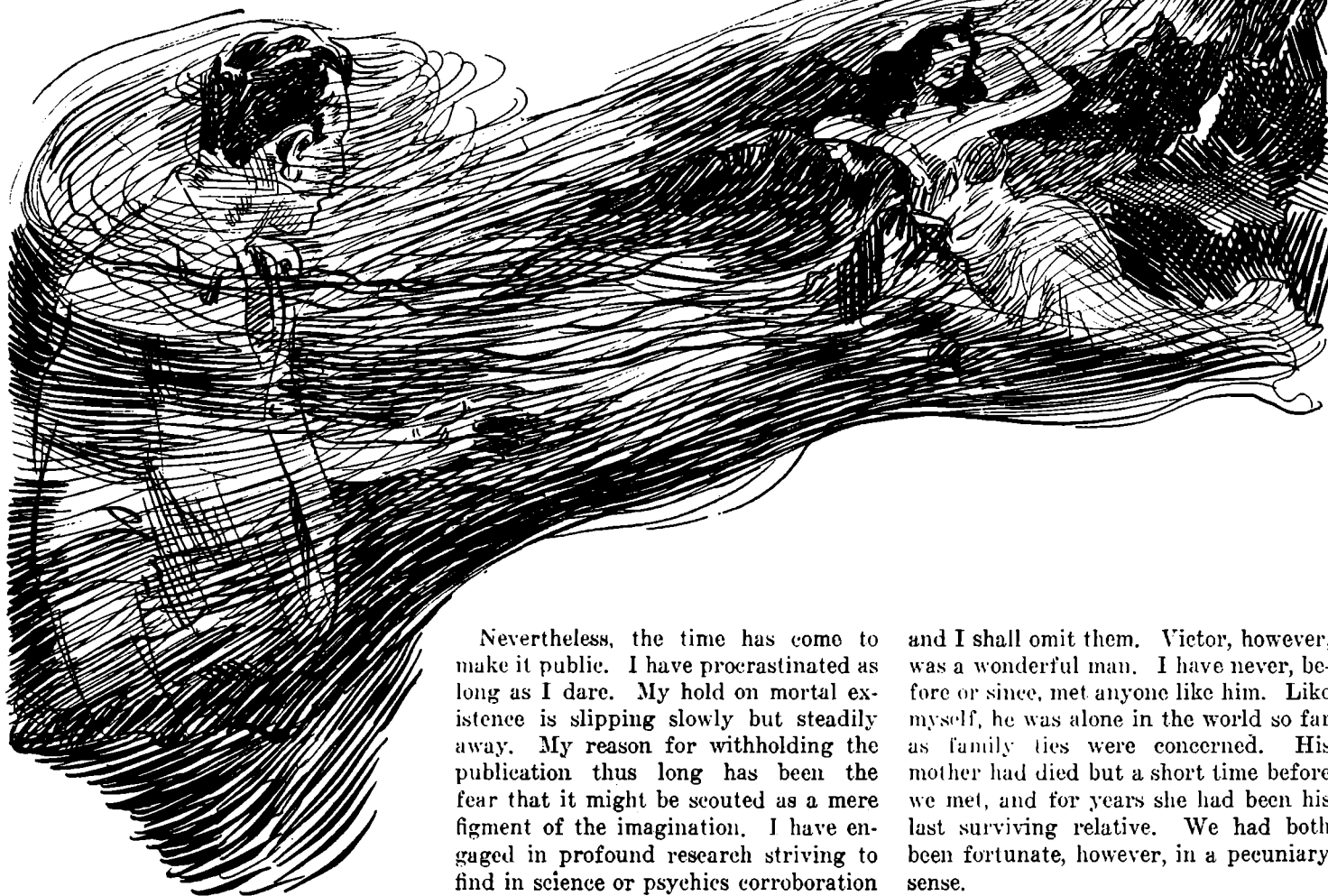
CAVERN OF LIGHTNINGS.

CHAPTER I.

WHETHER it really happened, or whether it was a dream—partly vivid and partly confused—I have asked myself a thousand times during the past two years. But why? It must have happened, for I have not only the evidence of my own senses, but evidence of a still more substantial nature. It lies now on the desk before me in the shape of a roll of manuscript containing in shorthand the words of a decidedly unique revelation. If it is difficult for me to accept it—me, the chief actor in its procurement—what can I say to guard against credulity on the part of others?

of some of the statements therein set forth, but in vain. The world may judge of its merits.

Permit me to introduce him who was at one time my most intimate friend and companion—Victor. Surnames will be of no consequence in this connection.



Nevertheless, the time has come to make it public. I have procrastinated as long as I dare. My hold on mortal existence is slipping slowly but steadily away. My reason for withholding the publication thus long has been the fear that it might be scouted as a mere figment of the imagination. I have engaged in profound research striving to find in science or psychics corroboration

and I shall omit them. Victor, however, was a wonderful man. I have never, before or since, met anyone like him. Like myself, he was alone in the world so far as family ties were concerned. His mother had died but a short time before we met, and for years she had been his last surviving relative. We had both been fortunate, however, in a pecuniary sense.

We met at college where our kindred tastes, and lack of other friends, had drawn us together. His was a stronger and more forceful character than mine.

He led me where otherwise I should not have gone. Fond of philosophy he permitted himself to grope to the profoundest depths of thought without fear of the consequences, whence I would follow hesitatingly so far as I was able, but never could penetrate to the points reached by him.

His personality was agreeable and prepossessing to a degree. Tall, well-formed, and graceful, with noble air and commanding mien, people were wont to pause and look back at him when he passed. But that which caused his face to glow with unusual radiance I believe to have been his purity of character. His soul was above an ignoble thought. Religion was his favorite study. He regarded it as the topmost pinnacle of all research. His demeanor was such that not even the remotest stranger would dare voice an impure expression in his presence.

I believe it was largely owing to this intense purity in which his mind habitually dwelt that he could bring himself into closer communication with the unseen than can the ordinary mortal. He said at one time that he believed he was destined to receive a greater knowledge of the truth than is ordinarily vouchsafed to members of the human family.

On one occasion, when our investigations had led us to London, we met in the rooms of a philosophical society a young woman of a most interesting type. Her appearance was positively ethereal. A bewitching figure, with blue eyes and golden hair, her skin was so transparent, her voice so sweet, and her smile so radiant, that one could scarce believe oneself addressing an earthly creature, when in conversation with her. I heard her called Athalie, but learned nothing further as to her name or history. But I took advantage of every opportunity to bask in the eloquence of her speech. Athalie proved to be a student like Victor. I must admit that I never met two persons whose mental tastes were more on the same plane than were theirs. They became so profoundly interested in one another that I took a second place to each in the other's estimation. This I did not resent, as I was less interested than they in their favorite topics, so frequently strolled away, leaving them together.

At length we decided to return to New York. For several days prior to our departure from London, we had not seen Athalie, and were compelled to start for

the steamship without bidding her good-bye. Her address was unknown to us.

It was not until we were well out at sea that I was startled at meeting Athalie walking alone on the deck of our great steamer. She seemed surprised, as well as pleased. Asked how she happened on board, she explained that she had been seized with an uncontrollable impulse to visit America. She had, therefore made immediate preparations and thus been enabled to catch the celebrated boat which was making her maiden trip. She had no previous knowledge of our being on the steamer. Knowing Victor's attainments in the art of telepathy, I was not at a loss to account for her presence.

Our companionship, however, was destined to be of short duration, so far as I alone of we three was concerned. On a memorable Sunday night the ill-fated steamer collided with an iceberg, and sank. The harrowing story in all its awful details has been heralded throughout Christendom. I shall, therefore, confine my remarks to our own experiences. Victor and Athalie were successful, at the last moment, in getting into a boat—a collapsible boat—alone together. Victor had expended his strength and energy in saving others. It was our intention that the three of us should take this boat. On account of Victor's exhausted condition, I prevailed on him to go next after Athalie, by absolutely refusing to move until he did so. For Athalie's sake he complied, thinking I still would have ample time to join them. But a sudden lurch of the steamer, as it plunged downward, thrust the boat away, and a few moments later, I was struggling in the water. In a drowning condition I was pulled by a strong hand into a boat, and resuscitated. But it was not the boat of Victor and Athalie.

When we were rescued by a steamer on the following morning, they were not among those who had been taken on board. I feared the worst. When we reached Halifax, I elected to remain there for a time. I could not bear the thought of coming on to New York alone. I devoured every item of the news in regard to the disaster in the hope of learning something of Victor and Athalie, but in vain. Their collapsible boat must have followed the steamer to the bottom of the sea. That was the gist of my conclusions.

As a result of my sufferings I was seized with a violent fever, during which, in delirium, I constantly saw Victor and Athalie in their frail boat tossing on the waves of a tempestuous sea. During my convalescence, when I became able to

go about, I would walk up and down on the sands of the seashore, thinking of my lost chum and his fair companion.

Finally I was seized with an impulse. From former experiences I judged it to be a call from Victor. A steamer was about to sail for Norway, and I could not refrain from taking passage thereon. For what purpose, I knew not. On landing at Halifax, prior to my illness, I had arranged my financial affairs by correspondence, so that all I had to do was to satisfy my whim, which I did. On reaching Christiania, I concluded to transfer to a steamer that was to traverse the coast northward to Bergen and Molde.

One who has taken this trip is always prone to dwell on the peculiar beauty of Norwegian scenery. I am no exception to the rule. I must mention Mount Hornelton that rises perpendicularly from the edge of the water to a height of nearly three thousand feet, under the overhanging projections of which our vessel was compelled to pass on the way from Bergen to Molde; the dangerous Stadt, where there is no protecting bulwark of islands to guard against the wild tossings of a restless ocean; and the little city of Molde, in its bewildering beauty, which reminds one so much of fairyland that it is difficult to conceive of its situation in so northerly a latitude. It lies nestled in the heart of romantic and picturesque surroundings, looking outward on the green islands across the channel on the one hand, on another reflected in the transparent fjord that lies beneath it, while the lofty range of the Romsdalfjelde, with its many snow-capped peaks, almost surrounds the remainder of the town.

Landing at Molde, I went ashore and procured lodging. Here I again became ill. I was told afterward that my life had been despaired of for a time. As at Halifax, when I grew better, I would walk out alone, but for some unaccountable reason, when I reached my hotel, which I always succeeded in doing, I never could remember exactly where I had been. As I always returned sooner or later, my absence was not noted, and sometimes I would wander about for two or three days.

Finally an occasion came when I ventured farther than usual. I seemed to have no prompting to return. I proceeded overland to a tremendous fjord, and seem to have a distinct recollection of coming to a mountain where I saw lightnings flashing from the mouth of a cavern far up in the rock. It occurred to me that I must reach the opening from whence those lightnings issued. At first the idea seemed a mad one, as it had

the appearance of being inaccessible. After many trials and difficulties, however, lasting possibly for several days—my mind was in no condition to note time—I found myself at the coveted point. One thing is certain: I have no recollection of having seen a single person during my endeavors to reach the place. I was high up, on the side of a rugged mountain from the cavernous recesses of which issued the fires I had seen. I retained a sense of having struggled to get there; at the same time, however, I felt that I might have been partially aided to it by an unseen power. I stood on a narrow ledge of rock projecting out from a terrible precipice. The surface of the ledge was scorched and blackened. I could assign no other reason for it than its frequent contact with the mysterious fires that had probably passed over it for ages. This caused me to feel somewhat nervous, and a little dubious as to the effect the lightnings might have on me if I should come in direct contact with them.

Notwithstanding my misgivings, I faced about and entered the cavern, when I was startled violently at hearing a human voice.

"So you have come at last in answer to my calling! Permit me to congratulate you on your perseverance and ultimate success."

It was Victor's voice, and so clear and distinct were the words that I fully expected to see him standing somewhere near me.

As if my thoughts had been divined, the next words were: "We shall not be able to see each other. A hundred miles of subterranean passageway lies between us, and it cannot be traversed. But so long as the wind is from the east, we can hear each other with perfect distinctness. It is Victor who speaks to you."

"I recognize your voice," I replied, "but where are you?"

"Your question implies too much to admit of a direct answer, but the information you seek shall be unfolded gradually. Stenography was formerly one of your accomplishments. If you are still in practice it will assist you greatly now. When I am ready to relate the entire story in sequence, I should advise your taking shorthand notes of my words. But first let us indulge in a social chat. I presume you recollect the circumstances of our separation?"

"I shall never forget them," I assured him.

"Athalie is at this moment standing beside me. She will be pleased to greet you."

"How-do-you-do?"

I recognized the same sweet silvery voice I had heard for the first time in London.

"I am quite well, I thank you," I replied, "considering the ordeal through which I have passed in trying to get here."

"I have no doubt you encountered many obstacles, but if you could know how glad we are to hear your voice once more, I am sure you would never regret it. You will realize my meaning fully when I tell you that yours and our own are the only mortal human voices Victor and I shall ever hear again. We hear other voices in the same manner that Socrates, St. Paul, and Joan of Arc heard them."

"I am astounded!" I replied. "I cannot possibly comprehend your situation."

"Victor will explain," she answered.

Here Victor again began speaking.

"The sounds of our voices are conveyed to one another by means of escaping electricity on the same principle that the telephone transmits sound along the wire. When a fusion occurs you will be unable to hear me. These fusions are the result of a contact of the escaping electricity with the atmosphere at the mouth of the cavern. Whenever they meet in undue proportions this is bound to occur. The flames you see will not injure you if you keep clear of the center of the cavern. But the reverberations that accompany them will be so deafening that you will be unable to distinguish my words. At such times I shall stop, and you will be compelled to wait until I begin again. When you are fully prepared to receive it, I shall begin a communication which you have my consent to publish, and which, believe me, will prove to be the most wonderful revelation, concerning the hereafter, that has ever been received by mortal man. Words are inadequate to express my gratification at the privilege thus afforded me of communicating this information to my fellow-mortals."

After some further conversation relative to the best method of procedure, I seated myself on a gently reclining bank of earth where I was amply protected from the flames as they passed through the cavern. Here I could write easily whether in a sitting or reclining posture, and here, with pencil and notebook my invariable companions I took, as it were, from Victor's own lips, the message that he desired to communicate and which I certainly desired to receive. There were frequent interruptions, and sometimes Athalie and he would converse with me during prolonged intervals. I have no idea of the time the work con-

sumed. I experienced no hunger until I emerged from the cavern after the work had been completed. I then relapsed into my former condition during which I wandered about until I found myself again in my rooms in the hotel at Molde, where I was informed that I had been absent nearly a month, and that searching parties had been organized to seek for me. They had failed to find me, however, and I am sure that, if left to my own devices, I could never start out from Molde again and find the place where I received the communication. Apart from a vague recollection of having wandered, the details of my journey to and from the place have been completely blotted from my memory, while all that happened when I was actually in the cavern remains distinct in my mind.

In my research amongst scientific works since, I happened on the following:

"A very strange phenomenon, as yet unexplained, is the appearance of those lightnings that dart from time to time from certain caverns in the Norwegian coast."

When I read this, it thrilled me with joy unspeakable, because, to a certain extent it substantiates my memory of the experience. But nothing in the realm of scientific progress would serve to throw a ray of light in a direction that might tend to substantiate the subject matter of the communication.

The following, with the exceptions of divisions, which I have taken the liberty to make and arrange systematically, and the poetical selections, which I have considered appropriate for the headings of chapters, is a verbatim record of the message as it was conveyed to my ears from the bowels of the earth through the medium of electricity. When this is read, I shall have passed away. My identity need not be made manifest. I have no theories to propound—no opinions to express. Each may judge for himself.

CHAPTER II

A VOICE FROM THE THRESHOLD

The Present: The Tie That Binds.

"I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright;—
And round beneath it, Time, in hours, days,
years,
Driven by the spheres,
Like a vast shadow moved, in which the
world
And all her train were hurled."

—H. Vaughan.

WHEN separated from you by the sudden plunge of the steamer, our boat was given an impetus that sent it entirely outside of the circle of craft that

clustered about the scene of the disaster. Being sent in the direction in which the regular waves of the sea were rolling, it was carried on and on. It had either been robbed of oars, or left unprovided, and we were, therefore, powerless to row or manage the frail vessel. It drifted either with wind or tide—whichever happened to be the stronger. When morning dawned nothing was to be seen but water, and floating icebergs. No trace of a vessel of any kind was in sight. At first, whenever we were caught in the trough of the sea, I thought we would surely capsize, but the boat seemed of that peculiar construction which always enabled it to lift itself out right side up. We soon became fearless of any such result and devoted our time to watching and praying, in the hope that some vessel might appear. Neither of us feared death, but felt that our life's work was not yet finished, and we both possessed the utmost faith in prayer. Our confidence has been rewarded better than we dared hope.

After drifting about for several days, during which we suffered more from cold than from hunger and thirst, the sea became exceedingly rough and stormy. About the middle of one day a gloom gathered about us, growing more intense each moment. Suddenly we distinguished a roaring sound above that of the sea, and saw a water spout approaching. It was one of those ocean tornados, and bore directly down upon us. As it approached, and we realized that our seizure within it was inevitable, Athalie threw her arms about me. The next moment we were overwhelmed, and I clasped her to my breast. We were lifted bodily from the boat, and drawn upward into the very center of the seething mass of whirling waters. I remember a dizziness, a nauseous sensation, and a tingling like that produced by an electric battery pervading my frame; then I lost consciousness.

How long I remained in that state I know not, but I was awakened by a noise resembling the roaring of waters. Opening my eyes with an effort, I could at first see nothing save a pale, blue light, dancing and glimmering in whatever direction I looked. By the aid of the curious light I finally distinguished the form of Athalie seated at some distance on a slight elevation. The roaring which had awakened me continued, and seemed to be overhead.

"Where are we, and how came we here?" I asked.

"I do not know where we are," she answered, quietly, "but according to my recollection, we were brought here by a

water spout that took us up out of the sea."

Athalie had recovered consciousness an hour or two before, and was already recalling the immediate past. I soon remembered what had happened on the sea, but was at a total loss to account for our surroundings. We were evidently at the end of a cavern, and the continual roaring and lashing of waters that dinned in our ears indicated that the partition between the cavern and the body of water, whatever it might be, must be very thin. We could not see the other end of the cavern, but looking in the direction which we thought ought to lead to it, we observed that it was lighter than immediately about us. Suspecting that it came from an opening or outlet at the side or top of the cavern, we started to find it. Having traversed the cavern as far again as we supposed would be necessary, the light appeared to be as distant as ever, while the light about us retained the same bluish, wavering appearance that we had first seen. But knowing that it was useless to return to our first starting point, we continued to go forward, believing that the cavern must have an end somewhere, and hoping that we might ultimately find it, thereby effecting our escape. We perceived that our steps were tending downward, which did not impress us very favorably as to outlets. We observed, however, that the roaring grew fainter.

As we were proceeding onward we were suddenly enveloped in thick, black darkness. This circumstance led us to believe that we had passed beyond the opening through which the light must have been admitted, and that, by turning a corner, or rounding a curve, it had been shut from view.

We started to retrace our footsteps, but found ourselves unequal to the task. We were simultaneously overwhelmed with hunger and fatigue, though this was the first time that we had felt the need either of food or rest since awakening to consciousness. I fell asleep, and how long I slept, I cannot tell, but when I was awakened the pale, blue glimmering light again surrounded me. The sensations of hunger and fatigue had vanished. Looking on the opposite side of the cavern, I beheld Athalie lying with folded hands, still sleeping soundly. As I stood gazing upon her, she stirred and opened her eyes.

"Are you still faint and weary?" I asked, anxious to know whether her sensations corresponded to mine.

"Not at all," she answered. "I wonder," she continued, "if this strange light is sustaining?"

I had begun to think with her that it must be endowed with peculiar properties. It was also evident that the light was not admitted from without, for we were still at the place where we had been when the darkness had overtaken us. It was clear that our only hope was to follow the lighted cavern as we had been doing.

As we went on we perceived that the cavern was sometimes narrow, sometimes wide; occasionally low, and frequently very high, but ever of a downward tendency, and always large enough to admit of our walking abreast and upright. Twice more the light vanished and left us in awful darkness, and overpowered with the sensations of hunger, thirst and fatigue. Each time it threw us into a stupor that caused us to sleep, and when we were awakened the cheerful and sustaining light had returned.

Finally, after traveling what seemed an interminably long distance, our progress was suddenly checked by coming upon an opening at our very feet, beneath which the brightness was far more intense and beautiful than that which had hitherto surrounded us. We supposed it must be the fountain head of the light, or the receptacle from which it had been emitted. I knelt and peered into the strange apartment, which had the appearance of being without limit, and in which various colored rays and streaks of light constantly mingled and intermingled, ever varying and changing like an aurora borealis. I half suspected that we were on the verge of the molten interior of the earth, but felt no heat.

On attempting to rise from my kneeling position, an inadvertent movement precipitated me forward into the yawning pit beneath. Although this was an occasion for fright, I felt no fear, and was amazed at the gentle manner of my descent. It seemed as though the fall were checked by an invisible resistance, and in a short time ceased, leaving me standing upright beside Athalie, who had fallen at the same time. She had seized me in an attempt to save me, but had been dragged into the opening as I fell.

We gazed at one another in astonishment.

Looking around, we found that we were in a great circular cavern which was filled with that strange intermingling radiance that we had observed from marble, and the light beautifully reflected in them. This was what had deceived me when looking in from above, as these reflections had given the bottom the appearance of a sea of light without limit. The opening through which we

had fallen appeared above us like a semi-circular window.

After contemplating this wonderful and spacious cavern for sometime, we began to speculate as to what course to pursue further. The apartment seemed to have no visible limit as a passageway. We started to walk along the smooth glassy way, not knowing in what direction we were going, but had not gone far when a spectacle presented itself that caused us to recoil.

Two human bodies were lying near the center of the cavern just in front of us. They were the bodies of a man and woman lying side by side, arrayed in curious but seemingly elegant apparel. The man was large, well proportioned and strongly built, of fair complexion and Caucasian features; the forehead was high, and of an intellectual cast; the countenance calm and peaceful, and a long, glowing beard covered his breast. The woman, also resembling the Caucasians, was very fair, queenly in form, and beautiful in countenance.

For a long time we pondered upon this spectacle in silence, for we knew not whether we were in the presence of the dead or sleeping but as they were apparently motionless with no indication of breathing, I at last summoned courage, and grew bold enough to stoop and touch the man on the cheek, which I found to be cold and rigid, but at that moment I was startled by hearing a masculine voice speak the following words:

"Mortal, disturb not the sanctity of the dead. That body has lain there all but one of a hundred thousand years, and this is the first time that mortal eyes have looked upon, or mortal hand touched it."

At the first sound of his voice I had risen, and found that we were confronted by a man and woman, who in form and feature were the exact counterparts of the inanimate bodies that lay at our feet.

Notwithstanding the tone in which he spoke, they both smiled, and seemed to entertain none but kindly intentions towards us.

"You have nothing to fear from us," spoke the woman in a reassuring tone.

At this Athalie advanced to meet the woman, exclaiming, "Oh, how glad I am to meet once more with one of my own sex, and with people who speak our own language! Can you tell us how to escape from this terrible place?"

Suddenly, however, she fell back in amazement. She had approached the woman, and attempted to clasp her hand, but in seizing it, as she thought, had touched nothing but empty space.

"Be not alarmed," said the woman kindly. "Were I as you are, and as I once was, or were you as I am now, you could take my hand. The substance of which all life is composed is ethereal to the touch of mortals. As for language, all the language that now exists or has existed in the last thousand centuries on earth, it would be all the same to us. We knew you to be English-speaking for we heard you conversing as you came towards us."

Her manner was so reassuring that Athalie without hesitation, related our adventure in full, beginning with the disaster, and ending where we stood.

"Your experience has been a strange one. It admits, however, of scientific explanation," said the woman, when Athalie had finished. "You have come here by way of the Maelstrom, off the coast of what is now called Norway. You would be loth to believe that you were plunged headlong into that terrible abyss of seething and raging waters, and lived; but you were, and you passed from the surface to the very bottom of the ocean through the Maelstrom, and by the power of the electricity emanating from the current that fills this passageway in which we now stand, you were drawn into the beginning of the branch of this cavern. It is the action of the electricity seeking an outlet that gives rise to the Maelstrom. Were it upon dry land, flashes of lightning would be seen issuing from that cavern, but as it opens in the midst of waters, it causes that tremendous commotion for which the Maelstrom is noted and feared throughout the earth."

"I have read the legend," said Athalie, "of a youth diving into the Maelstrom after a golden goblet, which if he would obtain, he was promised the hand of the king's daughter in marriage. He never rose to the surface. If this be true, would he be in this cavern?"

"No," replied the woman. "He was drowned. So would you have been had you not been brought in a tornado. It was that which saved you. When caught up in it, you were by some rare and peculiar freak of nature bundled into the midst of the ball or mass of electricity and magnetism which forms the center of the storm, and held there within its environs as securely as if encased in a hollow ball with a metal shell, and as invulnerable to the action of the other elements; cold could not chill, nor heat overcome, nor waters drown you. You were separated from them by the electricity that surrounded you, and were as inanimate human forms hermetically sealed.

"Yours is the only instance wherein human beings or any other objects ever entered into that cyclonic center. The force that emanates therefrom, owing to the whirling motion, usually repels rather than attracts, it being a reverse form of the current, and it is the force emanating from this central globe that gives the cyclone its terrific power. It was therefore a curious freak of nature that thus entangled you, and a very fortunate one for you, else your lives would have been lost. You must have been caught into it quickly, else your clothes would have been stripped from your persons; it was the manner in which the current struck you that prevented such a result."

"I wonder how we happened to be plunged into the Maelstrom," remarked Athalie.

"The water spout that caught you up in it from the sea is the counterpart of a tornado which catches up people and objects on the land. You were evidently not far from the Maelstrom when overtaken by the water spout which was moving toward it, attracted by the properties of the current with which you are now surrounded. When it reached a point directly over the Maelstrom, the electric ball in its center, encasing you, as I have explained, attracted by the kindred current here, seeking an outlet, was drawn downward into and through the waters, and into the cavern that lies beneath, where you were safely deposited. Then the mass that formed the ball containing you, separated, to commingle with its kindred element that filled the cavern."

"Why do not the waters pour into the cavern," I asked, "if we could come through them into it?"

"Because," answered the man, "the power of the electricity at the cavern prevents them, and that is why they forever whirl and seethe and boil above it."

"What was the meaning," I asked, "of the darkness that enveloped us several times on our way through the cavern?"

"Those were lulls in the passage of the current," he replied. "Sometimes the force with which it emanates from here is not sufficient to carry it to the end. The current lights the passageway, and when it failed to reach you, darkness fell upon you."

"Is there a lull in the waters of the Maelstrom at such times?" I asked.

"Waters in such wild commotion," he answered, "cannot stop at once. Before time is given for that, the current reaches them again, and so they boil on forever."

"May I inquire your names?" asked Athalie.

"As mortals," she answered, "his name was Arlo, mine Mera; they may sound strange to you, but you must remember that that was many centuries ago, as you are accustomed to reckon time."

They talked so much like people we had always known, that I had almost forgotten that they had been discriminating between themselves and mortals. In fact, I believed that I was asleep and dreaming. In order to make sure I made bold to ask if we were not dreaming.

"Not at all," was Arlo's quick reply. "You are in the midst of realities, but such realities as no mortals except ourselves have hitherto been permitted to experience."

"And what was your experience?" asked Athalie, addressing the woman.

"It occurred a long time ago," was the answer. "A hundred thousand years will scarce cover the period, when we two passed through a parallel adventure."

Athalie and I exchanged significant glances of amazement.

"You may regard it as strange," proceeded the woman, who had observed us. "Nevertheless, all I say is strictly true. We were husband and wife as mortals; we still remain husband and wife, though immortal."

"My father was a retired capitalist in his time, and lived in one of the large cities, the ruins of which are still to be seen in portions of the countries now known as Mexico and Central America. A bayou now covers the spot where that palace stood on what is now termed the peninsula of Yucatan. My father's palace had a curious phenomenon connected with it. People of those days were not so superstitious about those things as mortals of earth now are and have been for the past several centuries. When the excavation for the underground apartments of the palace was made, the workmen accidentally discovered an opening in the earth, from which at night a blue, wavering light was emitted, and would rise flickering and glimmering, frequently continuing all night long. An attempt was made to shut it out by walling up the opening, but the light still continued to rise between the stone blocks with which the underground apartments were laid, and would frequently fill every room in the building at night, causing it to appear from the outside as if illuminated; but though phenomenal, it was attributed by the people to natural or scientific causes.

"I was married to Arlo clandestinely, because my father disliked him, and I remained at home afterwards. The fact of our marriage was discovered, and I was forbidden to leave the house. Arlo came after me, and I was compelled to secrete him in one of the underground apartments. A servant betrayed his hiding place, and I flew to warn him, fearing that he might be murdered. As I reached him, the blue light began to mount from the floor, reminding me of the excavation. I told Arlo, and being a strong man, he hastily pried up the stone blocks and sprang into the cavern beneath. I saw my father descending in terrible wrath, and through fear I also leaped into the opening.

"I fell only a short distance, and by the dim light followed the course of the cavern and soon overtook Arlo, who was waiting for me, believing that I would follow.

"We remained there a long time, and then stole cautiously back, only to find that the opening had been filled in and walled up with heavy masonry, fastening us in what the perpetrators had probably thought would prove a living grave. We made no effort to remove the obstruction, but turned and followed the lighted cavern, and from that time on our experience was a similar one to that you have detailed as your own, from the time you awoke to consciousness after having been plunged through the Maelstrom. Although we came through a different cavern, it was similar to the one you have described in every detail."

I was glad to meet these people, or rather souls, for several reasons. You remember my passion for Mexican antiquities, and that it was my intention to visit Mexico and Central America. Much more satisfactory it has proven to meet souls of the very persons who once inhabited those populous and prosperous cities of ancient times, for they gave me information that far exceeded all I might have learned by visiting the ruins.

"And what has been your experience since that you have detailed?" I ventured to inquire.

I addressed myself to Mera, but was answered by Arlo.

"That would make a long story," he began, "covering a period as we have told you, of more than a hundred thousand years. I presume that seems to you like a long time. My body has lain there just as you now behold it for ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine years. I was twenty-five years of age when we came here as mortals, and was disembodied at the age of seventy, thus making the length of time that has

intervened since coming here a hundred thousand and forty-four years, and one hundred thousand and sixty-nine years since my birth.

"Mera's corpse has lain there as long, less seven years, she having been eighteen at the time of the incident that brought us here. She also died at the age of seventy, which was seven years after my death. During the remainder of her life after my death we were parted only as you and we are now parted—a separation of the mortal from the immortal—but we could see each other and talk together as you and we can talk. When she knew her hour had come, she came to my corpse and placed herself there in the position you see, that our mortal remains might lie together undisturbed as long as earth might last."

"And we are really conversing with spirits?" I remarked interrogatively.

"We are disembodied souls," returned Arlo. "we prefer the word 'soul,' as it implies the surviving personality of the human being. 'Spirit' has so many meanings; 'soul,' only one."

To alternate our glances from one to the other—the dead bodies and the ethereal beings standing over them—we could see no reason for disbelieving their statements, in so far at least as resemblance was concerned. Still we were considerably puzzled and mystified.

"And were those bodies embalmed, that they should be preserved for such an enormous length of time?" I inquired.

"Embalmed? No"; was the reply, "except by the properties of the current with which they are surrounded, and that will preserve them forever."

"And why are we able to see you now, when prior to coming here, such an experience was never vouchsafed to us?"

"Being surrounded by the ethereal atmosphere in which only ethereal beings are supposed to dwell, the properties of the current enable your vision to pierce it equally with that of immortals! But it is your soul that sees us. Not the organs of your body."

When seeking information Athalie was inclined to be outspoken.

"What do you mean by this current?" she inquired.

"It is the tie that binds the heavenly bodies—the suns and planets of the universe," replied Mera gently. She usually answered Athalie's inquiries as Arlo did mine. "It enters the earth," she went on, "at the South Pole, and at a distance of a hundred miles beneath the surface, divides into two streams. These pass around the center of the earth in opposite directions, always approximating a distance of a hundred

miles below the surface, sea level being the standard. They unite again at the northern end of the earth's axis, at the same distance beneath the surface, where the current has its exit into space through an opening similar to that by which it enters at the southern end."

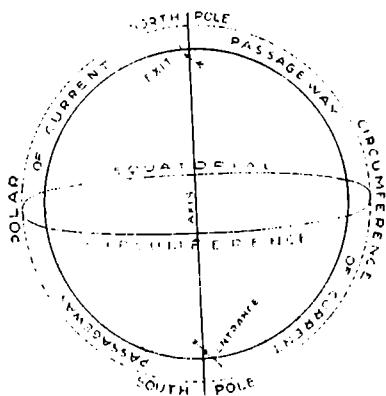
"Then is the entrance directly at the South Pole, and the exit directly at the North Pole?" I asked.

"No," answered Arlo. "The opening is at a considerable distance from the pole in each case. They are somewhere within a line drawn from the magnetic center to the pole. They are not likely to be discovered by explorers unless an expedition should visit their vicinities during the Polar night when the sun is below the horizon. In such an event the light of the current might be distinguished rising from the openings. However, if human beings should enter the substance of the current at either opening, their experience would be such as ours has been, and as yours is destined to be."

"Why is our sense of touch different from the senses of sight and hearing?" asked Athalie. "We cannot touch you, but can see and hear you."

"Because touch is more of a bodily or animal sensation," was the reply. "Seeing and hearing are functions of the soul, and not of the body, this being as true of mortals as of immortals. It is not the eyes that see, or the ears that hear, but the soul within that sees and hears through the eyes and ears."

(NOTE.--Here Victor directed me to make a drawing representing the course of the current through the earth, the result of which is shown in the following cut. It may be crude, but kindly take into account the circumstances under which it was done.)



"This current travels throughout the regions of space to the limits of the universe, and every heavenly body in the universe has a passageway through it similar to this, through which the current also travels. It is supposed to emanate and receive its power from the center of the universe, and from it the

sun and planets receive life and animation. It contains the essence of light and life, and for this reason a mortal who breathes the substance of which it is composed, is enabled to live and retain health and strength without food or drink, the only natural requirement being regular sleep, which comes of its own accord eight hours out of every twenty-four, and cannot be delayed at will. This you will soon learn for yourselves.

"In the branch cavern or outlet through which you came, as I have already told you, the substance of the current is not continually emitted, but only superfluous charges thrown off at intervals, and during the lulls or lapses in which there is none of the substance surrounding you, the fatigue becomes overpowering as you have described, and causes sleep. For this reason sleep does not come at regular intervals until you reach this main passageway. The current here is composed principally of electricity and magnetism, containing in a condensed form the essences of both."

We were dumfounded at this intelligence. Our impressions can better be imagined than described as we reflected upon this singular information. We had unwittingly, and through circumstances beyond our control, entered into the very body or current that performs the marvelous office of connecting the suns and planets of the universe, thus rendering it one grand harmonious whole, each part bearing a distinctive relation to all other parts.

But our curiosity was not half satisfied.

"How do you happen to be clothed," asked Athalie, "considering that you are immortal beings?"

"We are clothed by your own thoughts," answered Mera. "It is impossible for your minds, since they are influenced by the properties of the current, to conceive of human personalities otherwise than as clad in some kind of raiment. It is in our power to make you see us clothed, as we desire, and the reason for your seeing us now in these costumes is because we wish you to see us as we appeared in mortal life. It is also in your power to clothe us by your thoughts. Visualize us in modern dress, and so we will appear to you. You may likewise visualize flowers, trees, hills, valleys and all manner of objects and scenery at will."

We found this to be a beautiful truth.

"And do none of the inhabitants of the outer earth know anything of this passageway and current?" I asked.

"No mortals inhabiting inner or outer earth, except yourselves," replied Arlo.

"Yet," he continued, "they frequently see the effects of this current."

"How?" I asked quickly.

"Have you ever seen the Aurora Borealis?" he asked.

I replied in the affirmative.

"The polar auroras," he explained, "are the results of the contact of the current with the atmosphere of the earth's surface at the exit and entrance."

"Why are the auroras sometime brilliant; at other times faint; sometimes visible long distances; often invisible?" I asked.

"Their intensity depends wholly upon the condition of the atmosphere with regard to moisture," was his reply.

"How are we to get back to where we came from?" asked Athalie.

"You cannot," answered Mera. "You may go to the northern or southern opening, and step out on the earth's surface, but you can never leave the current after having once come within its influence. You can go as far as it extends, but no farther."

This should have been a stunning piece of intelligence, but, strange to say, I did not take it to heart. I had no control of my feelings, and was as buoyant and light-hearted in the face of this calamity as I had ever been under any circumstances in my life. I had expected Athalie to turn pale and possibly faint, but her expression lost none of its cheerfulness. She remained perfectly calm and unruffled. The strangeness of the situation and of the truths we heard, had driven all thought of escape from our minds.

"You are surprised at your own feelings," cried Mera, divining our thoughts. "but you cannot give way to sadness or sorrow here. Such sensations are unknown in the midst of the properties of this current."

"But joy can be known here?" I queried.

"Joy, pleasure, and happiness only are experienced," answered Arlo. "Their negatives are unknown."

"Why may we not leave the current?" I inquired.

"Ethereal beings may roam at will," he replied, "but material objects are held firmly within its influence, through the power of attraction. In walking through this passageway you will come to openings here and there of branch caverns like that through which you came, but you cannot enter into them try ever so hard, even though they be at your very feet, as they will be at times. This is governed by the respective positions of the earth in its daily revolutions. If you should walk from the North to the

South Pole, and were enabled to look through the passageway and see your track, it would resemble the thread of an auger, covering, during every twenty-four hours of your walk, all sides of this circular apartment. This is what enables you to come to those openings similar to that through which you entered; that identical opening may be at your feet the next time you see it, instead of above your head."

"How far is it from here to the North Pole?" I asked.

"Not very far," was the response. "You ought to be able to calculate the distance. We are now standing nearly beneath the 68th parallel of latitude, according to the reckonings of earthly geographers of today. We are also a hundred miles below the earth's surface. Thus you see it would not be a very great journey. We would advise you to lose as little time as possible in making it, for, once there, you will behold wonders of which you little dream at present."

We had chanced to be traveling in the proper direction when we met them. Arlo and Mera then left us to ourselves, and we continued our journey. Many times, however, they met and accompanied us long distances, on which occasions they dispelled the monotony by explanations in regard to our surroundings.

On one of these occasions, Athalie turned to Mera and said:

"We have been taught that the interior of the earth is a mass of heated and molten matter, existing at a much less distance beneath the surface than that at which you tell us this passageway is located."

"Excluding the space occupied by the current's passageway, and the walls surrounding it," answered Mera, "that theory is true. Beyond the thickness of the walls, above, below, and on either hand, there exists an ocean of burning, molten lava, but the walls themselves are miles in thickness, and the properties of the current which moulded them, being all-powerful, render them impregnable as against the pressure. Neither earthquakes nor convulsions of any other kind can affect them. This passage will remain as it is so long as earth exists."

"But why is it not insufferably hot?"

"Because the properties of the current are stronger than fire and counteract the heat as it approaches through the wall."

"And does this current," I asked, "with its subtle elements of electricity, magnetism and other powerful properties, animate the earth as well as all other heavenly bodies?"

"So we have told you," responded Arlo.

"Then has the moon a passageway, and is it also thus animated?"

"No," he replied. "In speaking of the heavenly bodies, we do not speak in a sense that includes the moon or any other of the satellites. They are merely masses of matter that have been hurled from the planets, and the animation which comes from the current, and which supplied those particular masses that have now been resolved into satellites, discontinued to animate them after a time, and separated from the matter, leaving it practically cold and dead, while the mass of animation, consisting of the substance of the current, assumed after the separation a certain shape and a visible form, wandering through the regions of space without regularity as to orbits. These separated portions of the inter-stellar connecting link or electromagnetic current are known to the inhabitants of earth as comets. Each comet is a mass of the properties of the current that once animated a portion of some planet in the universe that was subsequently separated and became a satellite. There are many of these satellites in our own solar system, while the countless numbers that may be in the combined systems of the entire universe cannot be estimated, and naturally the result of each must be a comet. The comets are composed of exactly the same matter as that with which we are surrounded, save and except the life-giving portion, that having returned by attraction into the main current."

"Then there should also be a comet for each planet," I suggested, "as it has been determined by astronomical science that the planets themselves were formed by having been thrown off in like manner from the sun and that they are gradually losing their animation by cooling from their surfaces downward."

"That is but an incorrect theory," said Arlo. "The planets are fixed institutions in the all-wise order of creation. They form a part, both of the mortal and immortal existence of life."

CHAPTER III

The Past: A Thousand Centuries Ago.

"Those ages have no memory—but they left
A record in the desert—columns strown
On the waste sands, and statues fall'n and
clef

Heaped like a host in battle overthrown;
Vast ruins where the mountain's ribs of
stone

Were hewn into a city; streets that spread
In the dark earth, where never breath has
blown
Of heaven's sweet air, nor foot of man dares
tread

The long and perilous ways—the Cities of
the Dead."—*Bryant.*

"What was the condition of the outer earth at the time you lived?" I asked, on one of the occasions of our journeyings with the two souls.

"Physically, it was very different from its present state," replied Arlo. "The land and the water areas were in about the same proportion as now, but there was a different distribution. The land, with the exception of a few small islands adjacent to the coast, the Antarctic Continent, and a small, circular island in the vicinity of the North Pole, in the center of which is the opening of the passageway through which the current has its exit, and regarding which you will learn much from personal observation very soon, was all in one body—one enormous continent—washed on all sides by the sea. That was prior to the time that the glacier swept downward from the North which catastrophe was occasioned by a tremendous convulsion of nature.

"This great body of land comprised all the continents and islands of today in one mass, which by that convulsion that occurred about a century later was broken and scattered, and the separated masses were drifted long distances apart by the waters that rolled between them. The ocean that is now called the Atlantic had no separate existence of its own prior to that convulsion, and the space now occupied by it was then the interior of this great continent. The eastern shore of the western continent now existing, and the western shore of the eastern continent of today, were then joined from the northern to the southern extremities, thus rendering what are now the coasts or limitations of these continents the interior of the great—the one continent, that interior having its location in what is now the midst of the Atlantic Ocean, the continents having been pushed or drifted in opposite directions by the inundation of the water after the eruption. This was the principal and most important of the many separations.

"The next chief separation was the displacement of that body of land known as Australia, the location it had occupied with reference to the continent giving place to that portion of the sea now known as the Indian Ocean. Mortals ought, by consulting maps of the world in this age, to be able to discern at a glance that such was once the condition of the earth's surface. Nothing can be plainer to the observation than that the projections on the coast of each continent correspond with the indentations on the coast of the other."

I knew this to be true, and was now convinced as to how many things had

occurred that had hitherto been unaccounted for except on unsubstantial theories: for instance, the traces of ancient civilization found in American countries, and their identity with similar discoveries in Europe and Africa. The fact that they had at one time all been united in one country—one body of land—was a full and complete explanation.

"What of the people, their customs and government, that populated the earth in your age, prior to that great convulsion?" asked Athalie.

"The people of that time were principally of a high order of intelligence, and, as the land surface of the earth was in one body it was considered one country, and placed under one government," answered Mera.

"How were the people affected by the convulsion that separated the world into continents and islands, and by the glacier that afterward swept across a part of those divisions of land?" I asked.

"The majority of the people were destroyed by the convulsion," answered Arlo, "and most of those who escaped direct destruction, perished shortly afterward from the effects of hunger, cold and heat—climatical changes to which they had been unaccustomed—before the coming of the glacier. The latter swept from the face of the earth all human and animal life that remained as far as it proceeded, with the exception of a select few residing in the Caucasian mountains in Asia. These persons took refuge in caves and dens among the mountains, where they had made ample provision for sustenance, and thereby escaped. From those people sprang what is called the Caucasian race as it now exists. You may be surprised when we inform you that the people prior to that time all bore the same characteristics that now mark the Caucasian.

"The people that escaped with their lives in other portions of the land were largely influenced both physically and mentally by the change of climate, and their surroundings were also thus influenced, so that they not only became different in structure and color, but also in disposition, habits and languages. Hence the division into races and nations that now characterizes the inhabitants of the earth."

"What was the prevailing religion of your day?" asked Athalie.

"Religion was a theme of discussion then, as now," replied Mera. "Mankind were puzzled to know from whence they came, and whither they were trending; hence many doctrines were promulgated and had their followers. None of them were similar, however, to the doctrines of today, except in the two great prin-

ciples: Belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, and in a hereafter. But everyone was allowed the full enjoyment of his opinions with respect to these matters. While differences of opinion were frequently discussed, they were not made a subject of bloodshed, as has been the custom during the last thirty or forty centuries."

"What manner of government was in existence at that time?" I asked.

"The government of the world, at the time we lived in it, was similar to the form of government in vogue in the different republics of the earth today. There were many necessary differences, owing to the fact that the world being comprised in one government, one nation and one country, there was no such thing as intercourse with nations, giving rise to numerous international affairs and customs. People had reached a high stage of civilization, enlightenment and culture, but until the adoption of a new law, the secret of the necessity of absolute equality between man and man under the protection of the government had not been discovered and practically applied to life.

"I shall relate briefly what brought about that change. You will understand that the times, ideas, customs and language were far different from those of the present, but I will tell it from a modern standpoint, so that you may the more clearly comprehend.

"The government was supposed to be of the people, by the people, and for the people. That was the original intention in establishing it in that form. There were two great political parties, who nominated men for the high offices of rulers of the land, and the offices were secured by means of elections, thus placing the chosen leaders of one party or the other in power; they were about equally divided, so that sometimes the administration was by one party, sometimes by the other. Men only were permitted to vote.

"As time progressed these parties became corrupt to a certain extent, and finally grew to differ only in name. For campaign purposes alone they pretended to differ in a few minor points, which, however, were not salient, and made no particular difference one way or the other, so far as the welfare of the people under either administration was concerned.

"Wealth became the controlling power, and the centralization of wealth began to assume dangerous proportions. The parties leagued together in the interests of capitalists, and against the interests of the masses, composed of laborers, mechanics and tillers of the

soil—in short, of the wealth producers. Officials catered to the wishes and whims of capitalists. Pernicious and unwholesome legislation was effected, designed to make the rich richer, and the poor poorer.

"In order to counteract this, organizations began to be formed among the masses, and soon it became a question of organized labor against organized capital. The latter, though recognized by the laws of the country refused to recognize the laborers' and wealth producers' organizations, and by means of bribery succeeded in having their position sustained by the government. They legislated to cheat the farmers out of their crops, the mechanics out of their skill, and the laborers out of their toil. Courts, judges, juries and professions became the merest tools of capital. Combinations, such as corporations, rings, monopolies and trusts flourished, and governed the world.

"The people finally rebelled and were about to rise in their might, when it was wisely decided to experiment with woman suffrage. Woman was accorded the God-given right of representation in the administration of governmental affairs, when peace immediately resumed sway and no wiser government, and more prosperous, happier and better people ever existed than did those of that period immediately preceding the convulsion and glacier."

CHAPTER IV

The Future: The Realm of Disembodied Souls.

"Oh, sacred star of evening, tell
In what unseen celestial sphere,
Those spirits of the perfect dwell,
Too pure to rest in sadness here.

"Roam they the crystal fields of light,
O'er paths by holy angels trod,
Their robes with heavenly luster bright,
Their home the Paradise of God?

"Soul of the just! And canst thou soar
Amid those radiant spheres sublime,
Where countless hosts of heaven adore,
Beyond the bounds of space and time?"
—Peabody.

On a memorable occasion, after having traveled steadily during a number of days, Arlo and Mera appeared to us with the welcome announcement that we were nearing our journey's end, and that a few minutes' further walk would bring us to the portal to the outer world through which the current has its exit into space. They requested us to continue to the opening, and there explore our surroundings to our complete satisfaction, after which they would again join us. They then disappeared.

We immediately beheld a different light a short distance beyond. The passageway, instead of becoming larger, had diminished in extent after the reuniting of the streams of the current, and continued to taper as we progressed. It was now very small, but we were informed that the properties of the current increased in strength in proportion to the space it occupied. Zephyrs of a more familiar atmosphere fanned our cheeks. In a short time we found ourselves standing in the center of a small circular island at the outer rim of the opening through which we had come, and which resembled a crater, with the ground sloping away in all directions, leaving the summit of the eminence probably the highest point within the Arctic Circle.

What was our astonishment to find the sky blue and serene, the air mild and filled with the fragrance of blooming flowers, and feathered songsters flying hither and thither, filling the soft and balmy atmosphere with the melody of their blended warblings. The island resembled a park decorated with trees, shrubbery and flowers. It was light but the sun was not visible.

"There must be some mistake!" exclaimed Athalie. "This cannot be in the midst of Arctic regions!"

Looking across the waters I described a white boundary line with jagged and irregular projections.

"There are ice-fields in the distance," I ventured.

"How strange and incomprehensible!" she murmured.

Looking directly below us what was our amazement to see two vessels with masts and rigging, apparently anchored at the water's edge; and on the opposite side of the island, which was not more than a half mile in diameter, we saw another vessel hugging the shore. Hitherto we had overlooked these by looking above them.

"We can leave this place!" cried Athalie.

Hand in hand we approached the first two vessels in the belief that until now we must have been dreaming. We soon reached the seaside where we stood gazing upon the vessels. They were vacant, and still as the grave. Not a sign of life was visible, except here and there a bird perched upon a naked mast, or flitting through the dismantled rigging. But a thunderbolt falling at our feet could not have brought us to a more sudden standstill, nor more completely taken away our breath, than the sight of the names those partially defaced, printed letters indicated, the "*TERROR*" and the "*EREBUS*."

Having been familiar with the history of the Franklin expedition, one can easily imagine how it must have affected us to stand face to face with those ill-fated crafts. We already knew partially the fate of the noble crews that had manned those ships; but the mystery was how those vessels themselves chanced to be there hugging that lonely bank like grim skeletons, nothing remaining but the bruised and broken wood work, betokening many struggles with floating fields of ice, or contact with the ragged shores of glaciers.

Athalie was now willing to admit that we must be near the North Pole. Even though our island was smiling with flowers, and the air was alive with the songs of birds, we knew from the icebergs to the south of us, that we were standing on the northern shore of the Open Polar Sea; that sea which was discovered by Dr. Kane and his companions on the 22nd of June, 1854, when they stood on an eminence near Mt. Edward Parry looking northward. Had it been practicable for them to have launched their vessels in those waters, they would no doubt have met with an experience similar to ours.

As the vessels were accessible from the bank, we ascended to the deck of the "*TERROR*" with but little difficulty, and from thence beheld a scene enacted to the south of us, and round about, the glories of which were simply indescribable.

A large, dark segment of blue-black masses of cloud, lay upon the waters southward at a distance of perhaps twenty miles. From the center of the island or opening there approached an arc of light comprising such colors as we had noticed in the passageway. This curve of light passed over us, followed by another, still another, and yet many more each lending to the landscape a peculiar brilliance.

As these arcs of light approached, the thick stratum of cloud or vapor that lay to the south moved northward to meet them, after which they seemed to lie stationary above it. Each new curve rendered the succeeding brightness of the arch of light above the dark mass still greater. Soon it began to sparkle, vibrate and quiver like a flame shaken by the wind. The arches next began forming into symmetrical figures, mingling with the mass of vapors that rose into it, presenting strange and fantastic shapes and designs. Rays of colored light began to flash upward, reaching in a southerly direction, green at the base, golden yellow at the center, and red-purple at the extremity, while black or dark violet rays alternated with the rings of light,

producing a striking and beautiful contrast.

The whole spectacle originated from the contact of the dense, dark mass of vapor that lay upon the sea with the curves of light that came from the opening. It was an Aurora Borealis, and instead of viewing it as we had always done, from the south, we were behind the scenes, witnesses not only of the effect but of the cause also.

Electricity and magnetism are, as has been generally supposed by scientists and philosophers, the chief agents in its production. The magnetic center of the earth, continually varying within a limited space in the vicinity of the pole, it is at this point that the gathering vapor is drawn in such great masses as to form the dark cloud we beheld, which becomes charged with the electricity that is carried to it in the curves of light, till it is overcharged, and the fusion takes place that produces the wondrous and beautiful display. The light approaches in arches or curves, because the current's passageway is circular in form, and the electricity being emitted on all sides at once, creates that circular or ring-like form, as it is really a ring composed of the substance of the current, and surrounds the earth as it travels to meet the vapor.

It was, in all probability, a similar mass of vapors that was seen by members of the Greely Expedition on the 15th day of May, 1882, described by them as a low blue streak, resembling distant land, or a cloud.

We descended from the deck to the shore which we followed around the island until we came to the other vessel, which proved to be the "*ADVANCE*," that had been imbedded in the ice and hopelessly abandoned by Dr. Kane, after his discovery of the Open Polar Sea; another once stately ship, famed in history, but abandoned to a lonely fate.

We continued to follow the shore until it brought us to our starting point, where lay the "*TERROR*" and the "*EREBUS*." We had compassed the Auroral Island (as we have decided to call it), and from every part of the shore had witnessed the same auroral display upon the sea.

Returning to the entrance, we found Arlo and Mera awaiting us, and plied them with questions in regard to our recent discoveries.

They told us that, after the abandonment of the "*TERROR*" and "*EREBUS*" by the surviving remnant of the crews, in 1848, the vessels remained wedged between the icebergs for two years. In June, 1850, a sudden breaking up of the ice at that point had

opened a channel through which they floated northward until again caught and imbedded in the ice. A year later another break occurred that released them once more, and propelled them poleward with an impetus that had driven them into the ring of water surrounding the Auroral Island. They then entered into the magnetic circle, and by the attraction of the current, they, like the "ADVANCE," had been drawn northward to the shore of the island. These three vessels will skirt that shore forever, surrounded by an influence in which physical decay is impossible.

All honor to the brave polar explorers who have followed one another in a long succession, striving in the face of the most frightful obstacles and enduring the most dreadful hardships. Their quest has finally been rewarded, in our own day and age, by the respective discoveries of our own race, and citizens of our own and other countries.

I shall reserve the narration of the great event which here occurred until I have told you some of the amazing truths that were learned by us at this time and afterward through conversation with Arlo and Mera, as well as with other souls with whom we subsequently had the pleasure to meet and become familiar. It would require volumes to contain all these truths, but I shall confine my statements to the substance of the explanations that have been accorded us touching those matters which are subjects of faith or speculation with mortals. Your knowledge of my views regarding spiritualism, will enable you to better appreciate the sincerity of my statements.

The Abode of Disembodied Souls—of the earth as well as of all the other planets—comprises our entire solar system, including the different worlds and the intervening spaces, of which the sun is the grand center. They are privileged to roam among the mortals of earth and are often hovering near their loved ones, shielding them from danger by means of warnings, in dreams, and otherwise; sometimes actually restraining them by force from taking steps which would lead to ruin or death. This is sometimes realized by, or made known to, the mortal thus affected. It is very usual, however, for a disembodied soul to appear to a dying relative, friend, or acquaintance. How this is possible I shall explain later in another connection.

On the same principle that matter is never destroyed, but simply changes form, when subjected to various conditions, no life is ever destroyed, but simply changes form, when subjected to various conditions. no life is ever de-

stroyed, but merely changes form and location, and progresses. This condition is not limited simply to human life, but pertains to all life—animal and vegetable, as well as human.

The planets are all inhabited the same as earth, by vegetation and animals. These inhabitants present essential differences in appearance, character and disposition, characteristic of the planets on which they belong.

It is known to the disembodied souls of the Immediate Hereafter that each of the other solar systems of the universe is formed on the same principle as ours. As the planets revolve around, and depend upon given centers, these being their respective suns, so the solar systems likewise revolve around a given center. Then that great system composed of solar systems, together with other such great systems, has its common center, and so on. This great combination of systems within systems eventually has its limit, culminating in one glorious and magnificent center, the grand ultimatum of the progress of all souls.

In contrast to this magnificent center of the universe is that realm of space known as outer darkness. You will doubtless be surprised when I inform you that this realm of outer darkness is nearly always within your plain view, being nothing more nor less than the blue sky. Contrary to the general opinion, the universe is finite and circumscribed. Its confines are within the blue vault that surrounds it. Nothing is supposed to exist beyond this blue vault but gases—the material from which all the worlds have been constructed, and from which new worlds are constantly being constructed, through ignition caused by fiery bodies from the universe plunging into it. These new worlds first assume the form of nebulae, and finally of planets. In view of the many conflicting theories of philosophers as to what constitutes the sky, people are prone to take ideas for granted, and not to investigate for themselves. It is patent to any intelligent mortal being, if he merely stops to consider, that the sky is beyond the farthest star of the universe, no matter how many millions of millions of miles that star may be from our solar system. The sky is opaque. It is matter. Such matter intervening between a star and the earth would obscure the star from view. The philosophy of light waves, atmosphere, ether and dust particles, is erroneous and unfounded. The souls of the Realm can travel to the very outer limits of the Solar System, and from there, they inform me, the blue sky can be seen by them, and is to all

appearances as far away as ever. They can see stars—suns of other systems—that are far beyond the reach of the most powerful of earthly telescopes, and yet, the deep blue mass is beyond those farthest stars; otherwise these stars would be invisible. It was startling to me to learn, and will probably be startling to mortals of earth who stop to think of it, that people have always had directly before their eyes, and within easy vision, the substance that surrounds and circumscribes the universe.

A hundred thousand years is the average term of the sojourn of a soul in the Immediate Hereafter, at the end of which period an ascension is made, and the soul translated to a region beyond, of which it knows naught, except that it must be a higher realm in the scale of progression.

Disembodied souls of the realm can appear to mortals of earth only under certain conditions, but sometimes these conditions actually exist in such manner that they may appear. If by any chance a mortal being upon the earth, or any other planet, for that matter, becomes surrounded by the properties of the current in their completeness, it is possible for him to see and communicate with such immortals as may come within visible distance.

Again, if a portion of the brain of a living man becomes inanimate from an injury, disease, or otherwise, the life that had inhabited that particular portion of the brain begins at once to inhabit the Abode of Disembodied Souls, for the life continues to exist after leaving the body; and if that portion of the brain had contained some of the perceptive faculties, then the mortal is enabled to see and hear those things which are immortal. This is why an insane person speaks of visions during his waking hours. Here is the promised explanation of the phenomena of appearances of friends, who have passed away, to the dying, which so frequently occurs.

The chief end and aim of the disembodied souls in the Immediate Hereafter is to prepare by the pursuit of universal happiness, and the acquisition of universal knowledge for a loftier flight into the realm of the everlasting. How these pursuits are conducted, I can only know when I myself become a disembodied soul.

It consists largely of worship, and striving after knowledge is considered the highest form of worship, because it manifests an appreciation of the wonderful works of the Almighty. Their motto might be put in the words of Job: "Canst thou by searching find out God?" They accept evolution as the

grand order of creation. They regard the human beings of the different planets as the highest order of creation in the Solar System. Inanimate substances evolve into vegetation; vegetation into animal life; animal life, beginning with the lowest forms, evolves by rising degrees into humanity. Life constitutes the difference between inanimate substances and vegetation; mind constitutes the difference between vegetable and animal life; and the soul constitutes the difference between animal and human life. From what I have already related, the question of the survival of human personality after death is settled. The soul has an evolution, yet is essentially dependent for its growth upon the Supreme Being, whose non-existence would render evolution itself impossible.

All strivings for knowledge in the Immediate Hereafter are accompanied by prayer, and it is the general belief that the great finale of the soul is to become, through evolution—not a separate entity—but one with God.

CHAPTER V

Eternity: Greeted by Angels.

"While thus they spake, the angelic caravan,
Arriving like a rush of mighty wind,
Cleaving the fields of space, as doth the swan
Some silver stream - Halted before the gate."
—Byron.

As we still stood at the rim of the opening, conversing with Arlo and Mera, the aurora continued to play, growing every moment more magnificent in brilliancy and alternations of shade and color. It hung before us in space like a vast illumined curtain, swinging to and fro, draping and undraping; sometimes approaching, sometimes receding.

Finally the auroral curtain approached nearer than at any time before, and hung directly in front of us, seemingly almost within our reach; at the same time sounds of rare and entrancing music greeted our ears. As the music grew more distinct, a rift appeared in the center of the curtain, emitting a flood of golden light. The scene that followed baffles all attempts at description, for here it was that we two mortal beings were granted a glimpse of the Beyond.

A lovely landscape appeared before us, stretching seemingly from our feet outward into space until it mingled with the auroral display in the background, revealing hills and valleys, rivers and lakes, trees and flowers; while in the immediate foreground was a natural amphitheater, exceedingly spacious, formed by a terraced cove in a hillside.

Suddenly there came with a rush an immense concourse of spirits from all parts of the landscape, who began to fill the amphitheater, and continued to come until it was filled to overflowing. Their apparel presenting a mingling of all beautiful shades, colors and tasteful designs, among which many were strange to us, far excelling the stretch of our power of conception of beauty and figure. Beyond the amphitheater we could see many other ethereal beings moving hither and thither, alone or in groups. They seemed to glide rather than walk.

An immense concourse of singers clad in robes of purest white, moved forward, singing as they came, and occupied a position to the right of the center of the scene. At the same time a group of six persons—three men and three women—separated from the throng back of the center, and took a position to the left, opposite to, and facing, the singers.

Lost in awe and admiration, I stood gazing upon the panorama as one in a dream, when I was startled by a sudden scream from Athalie, who reached forth her hands, exclaiming: "Oh, my dear, dear father! There he is! It is he!"

Here two of the men and two of the women moved toward us. One of the later I immediately recognized as my mother. In another moment they had joined us. Those we had failed to recognize were Athalie's mother and my father, both of whom had died when we were infants. Here were both of my parents, and both of hers. The meeting can be easier imagined than described. I tried to take my mother's hand, but touched only empty space as Athalie had formerly done when she attempted to take the hand of Mera. But she greeted me with her sweet smile of yore and words of welcome, while Athalie and her father were expressing their happiness at the meeting which filled their cup of joy to overflowing. My own father and Athalie's mother were delighted beyond measure to see us in a position to behold them and converse with them, and told us with what fondness and solicitude they had ever watched over us since the days of our childhood.

My father beckoned to the remainder of the group at the left, when the remaining woman and man approached us. I wish I could see your face when I tell you the identity of these two beings. They were no other than your own parents. They regarded me almost as a son, owing to my comradeship with you. They await your advent with patience, but with fondest anticipations. They can observe your movements when they

choose to do so and have always regarded you with love and tenderness.

Words are inadequate to describe the affair in its entirety in such a manner as to impart to you the faintest realization of the actual scene. The music welled forth, at first softly, but swelling gradually into such a mighty volume of melody that I was reminded of De Quincey's Dream-Fugue, which you and I once read together. With it mingled the sounds of voices and laughter, joy and happiness. Following those of the group that surrounded us, others began to approach from among that ethereal audience of thousands upon thousands of immortals who had assembled together to receive us within their Realm. The first to greet us personally were relatives, after these came friends, and, lastly acquaintances. Thus we were enabled to meet again many departed souls whom we had known, and in whom we had been interested when they were in the flesh; many among them we had not met on earth; some had died before we were born, but we knew of them. We noticed particularly that no person whom we had known on earth as a desperately wicked character came forward to greet us. We learned afterward that these souls were undergoing a state of probation in which they were compelled to overcome all evil propensities before they were permitted to join the souls of the Realm. The more wicked they had been, the longer and more terrible the struggle.

We know not who else may have been in the throng from which our well-wishers came. All the souls of the Realm were not there. There may, however, have been many eminent historical and biblical characters among them. Being curious to know if the Saviour and His apostles, and the prophets of the Old Testament were inhabitants of the Immediate Hereafter, I later made bold to inquire, when I was informed that all sanctified spirits passed directly through this first Realm to the higher and grander Realms beyond. I learned moreover that many who had claimed sanctification on earth were found to be further from it than many who had made no such claim.

Can you in imagination dwell upon the scene that I have tried to picture? Can you see us standing upon the summit of that circular island, the center of an amphitheater bounded by auroras of indescribable splendor; the mighty crowds of immortals surrounding us; the hills and valleys, lakes and rivers, forests and meadows, stretching into distant space, all bathed in a soft purple and

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IN THE WEIRD LIGHT

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golden glory! Can you hear the exquisite anthems of the innumerable white-robed choristers? If so, you will be ready to renounce the earthly vale of tears at the first call to enter the magnificent Realm of which we have been accorded this glimpse—the first step towards eternal glory.

Finally the reception drew to a close, and the many bright immortals who had thronged the thoroughfares of space in our immediate vicinity betook their way to other parts of the Realm. Our parents, who were the last to depart, besought us, as they took their leave, to call on them for any enlightenment we might desire from time to time. Their presence would be forthcoming at our mental demand.

With their departure the glorious
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scene we had beheld, totally vanished. We are now on our journey through the passageway to the southern opening. On our arrival there we are promised another greeting by the souls of the Realm. Fate has decreed that Athalie and I shall spend our future mortal existence together in a purely spiritual companionship. At intervals we are accompanied by our parents; frequently by others; and, now and then, by Arlo and Mera, who remain faithful to us, but we shall soon lose them. Their terms in the Immediate Hereafter will shortly expire and they will ascend, as millions of others have done, and are continually doing, to higher regions in the mighty Realm of Eternity and Immortality. We shall miss them, and mourn their loss as we do the earthly friends who die.

And now, my dearest friend and comrade, my message is finished. Hereafter when you gaze upon the Aurora Borealis, that lovely celestial display, by whose fascinating and bewildering variations the northern heavens are flooded with mingled shades of light and color, creating luminous fires before which the fairest and most beautiful of other earthly scenes must pale and fade into insignificance, remember whose dwelling place is in the current from whence it originates, and think of Athalie and of me.

“Farewell!”

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