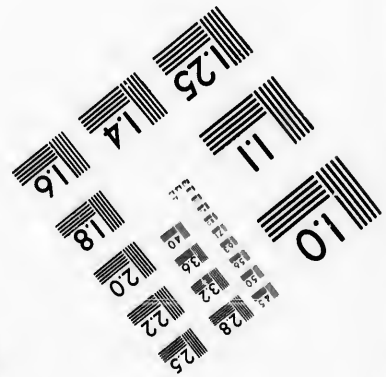
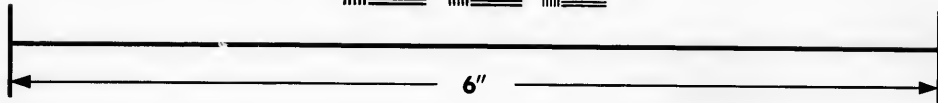
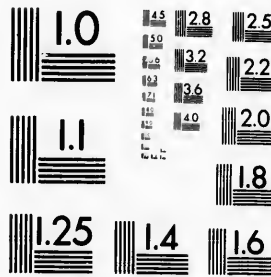


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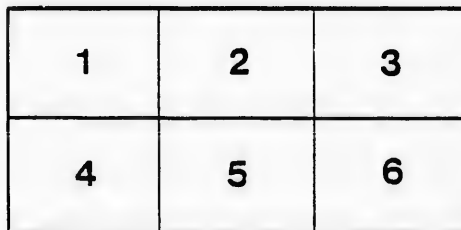
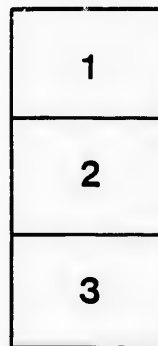
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L

A. Adlard Guimet & Co  
Septembre 1880

LETTERS FROM HEAVEN.

1454

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*Translated from the German.*



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1888

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1888 LETTERS FROM HEAVEN.

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*McKenzie*

*(Fr. Can.)*

I.

YOU still remember the day on which I died. The night, my last on earth, had been long and solitary. I spent it in the spare room of your parsonage. I had suffered and struggled much, my breath was laboured, my mind filled with apprehension. Then I called upon the Lord and prayed for my release, but I was also prepared for a long illness if it should be His will.

With dawning morn my strength revived, and my tormenting cough suddenly ceased. I came to you all, as you may remember, and was enjoying along with you the bright sunshine, which had reappeared for the first time after so many dark days, when all at once I felt a seizure—my heart seemed contracted with intolerable pain, and I sank into your arms. And while you gently laid me on the sofa, I knew that I was about to die. To die, to die now! A great pang passed through my soul, but did not last long, for I could pray.

We had but a short time since sung together in church what was now the cry of my heart:—

“For Jesus’ sake I ask of Thee  
That blessed and calm my end may be.”

And I was heard. I already felt that my limbs refused to obey me, my eyes no longer saw, I could not



stretch out my hand to you and your wife. Only my ear could still hear. I heard you sadly exclaim: "Our mother is dying!" I heard you praying with and for me.

But in proportion as my bodily eyes refused their service, the inner eye began to see. The room no longer bound my vision. I saw a light floating about me, and heavenly forms hovering downwards from azure heights, and placing themselves around my bed. It seemed to me as though a hand was laid under my head, and another hand wiped the death-dews from my brow. I know not if they were yours or the angel's, but the sound of your words died away, and silence was around me. A happy silence, a hovering upwards—then a dazzling glory before my eyes, a rapturous feeling of freedom and deliverance. I was dead, and the angels were carrying me to heaven. I was conscious that I was taken from my children and the beautiful earth; it was certainly a painful feeling to have gone from you without a farewell, and that my other children had not been able to stand around my dying bed, but this pain was quite different from what I should have felt in the covering of the body. I might compare it to the feeling I experienced, when your father took me as a bride from my father's house, when I wept, but yet was so happy and left so willingly. I would not either then or now, have gone one step backwards even if I could.

And now I was in heaven. I say nothing to you of my first impression. I cannot. I have no words

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for it which you would understand ; indeed, how should you be able to conceive what lies so far beyond all human conception, even if I could express it ! Put together all the rapture which can at supreme moments make man's heart happy, blend together all those emotions of happiness and bliss, which sometimes and for a brief space pass like the golden clouds of evening across the sky of an earthly life, and then you will have some notion of my experience when I could say to myself : " In heaven and saved ! "

I was not alone. But my dazzled eye could not as yet see. I could distinguish nothing of what was about me, and was so taken up with myself—myself, that no longer wore its corruptible body, and had put off all the weaknesses of its poor earthly life. Then something nestled up to me, but much more closely and affectionately than is possible on earth, even soul to soul, and a voice cried, " Mother. " I knew that voice, I should have known it out of millions, though almost forty years had passed since I heard it last. A little brother of yours, who went home before your birth, was then lying in the height of fever in the little room where your bed afterwards stood ; he stretched his little hands out of the bed towards me, and cried out in the agonies of death, with a choking voice : " Mother ! " And now I had my child, my child that I had lost, back again. When I saw him smile—(oh, that I could describe how the saved smile !), and heard his words, which were the words of a child, and yet on the other hand so much more

lovely and intelligent, I then for the first time understood what it meant, when I spoke on earth of my happy child. Absorbed in beholding my child, I had not yet noticed that another form, venerable and grave, was standing near me, and bending on me looks full of affection. Your father! When he bent down to me with a loving greeting, me whom he had not seen for so many years, he stroked my grey hair—for the soul wears the appearance of the body—and asked after you all and your children, and whether you also knew the way to heaven. And before I could answer, my mother, who has been already long in heaven, was there also, and the aged woman was surprised to see her child as an elderly woman. My brother, too, who died of grief for the death of his child who was drowned, and the body never recovered, approached; the child was now hovering about him, and all tears were wiped from the father's eyes. I easily recognised them, although their appearance was so different from what I had preserved in my memory. They had remained there with many traces of pain and sorrow, such as the earthly countenance wears amidst the weakness and infirmities of old age, or with the death-like pallor which they had in the coffin. And now all, even the aged, looking so blooming, so youthful, so transfigured. Many more whom I had loved in life drew near. You know that love unites, and to love means to be united. It exercises a power of attraction, whose influence extends to the uttermost parts of heaven, and brings together all that are united by

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love. On earth the limitations of space keep asunder. It is different in heaven, where space no longer separates.

But for this very reason I lacked one thing. Another mighty attraction of love had seized my soul, and I felt that my heart was not satisfied by meeting again with my dear ones. "Let me see God," cried I. Your father replied, "Not yet may you behold the thrice Holy, but come to Him whom once even the poor earth was allowed to look upon, and who is our Saviour and Brother! And I went with him, to speak in the language of earth, with a beating heart. Very soon marvellous harmonies fell upon my ear, to which all the blessed silently listened. And I beheld a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, peoples, and tongues, clothed in white garments, with palms in their hands. I was drawn through their hosts to the throne, on which was seated the Lamb of God, the Son of man. And when He turned on me a look of infinite mercy and Divine love, and stretched out His hands over me my heart burned within me, and I fell down and worshipped.

## II.

**I**F salvation offered nothing beyond the communion, the close, uninterrupted communion of those who love and belong to one another, even this would be enough to make one forget all the pleasure and beauty of earth. I often felt lonely on earth in spite of your love. God indeed graciously spared me a long illness, and allowed me to remain among my children till my last hour, but nevertheless, I was not spared the solitariness which is the lot of all the aged. More and more graves were ever being closed behind me on my path of life, old friends departed, and the old times also. It is different in heaven. Not as though I had the same friends about me, as formerly on earth. Here, where the soul neither can nor would hide what it feels and thinks, where there are no deceptions, not even deceptions of courtesy, many keep at a distance to whom I thought myself near on earth, while an inward mutual affection unites me with many, from whom I was separated on earth by insurmountable barriers. You remember the lady of the manor of our village, the dear countess as we called her, who was always very ill, even during your childhood. She used to be driven sometimes on fine summer days to our house to stay for a short time in our garden, where she liked to talk to your father about last Sunday's sermon, and when she was pretty well, you children were allowed to go to

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the castle to play at her feet. Her suffering condition, and also the certain amount of respect which we owed her on earth, were hindrances to more intimate intercourse. You will certainly also remember the old man, who came once a week for soup, and who read the Revelation of St. John so much, that even your father was sometimes puzzled by his strange applications of Scripture. Both are noble and much tried souls, infinitely above me, but who yet deign to bestow their intimacy upon me.

There are, indeed, many whom I always regarded as friends, whom I do not see. Are they not in heaven? I do not know; but I may certainly meet many of them yet, for the hosts of the blessed are innumerable, and in our Father's house are many mansions. But if not, I shall have to conclude that we are not entirely united by the cords of love, and in that case it would be of no use to meet them. Or, are they in hell? As yet I know nothing of hell. I am told that, quite at the end of Paradise, is a great gulf fixed, which it is not permitted even the saved to pass over. It is said, that sometimes sighs and groans are heard resounding from its other side, but I have no wish to hear them.

You will, perhaps, ask me whether this attracting power of love does not make me long also for communion with you, my children still on earth. Certainly it does, but not below in your cold, dark world. A little while, and you too, when God graciously permits it, will come to us. Hence I have not forgotten you, nor yet the earth, which indeed conceals

my body. Once too I looked over at it. Shortly after my entrance into heaven, your father took me by the hand and said: "Come, I will show you your grave." He pointed out the direction in which I was to look. For what the soul earnestly desires to see, it sees; distance is no impediment. I gazed at the innumerable host of stars, a lovely sight even for the blessed. Some were shining brightly, while others pursued their course with fainter light. A feebly shining star became visible; it grew plainer, and as it were larger, the longer my eyes were fixed upon it. The land, which was framed by the bluish sea, and lay in sunshine, appeared. I was almost shocked at its scanty light, pale colours, and many shadows. A town with high towers emerged, my glance traversed a forest, through which passed the white thread of the road, and next I saw your native village with the old church, by the wall of which I perceived a newly filled up grave, my grave. I saw the numerous flowers and palms with which it was covered, and also my own body lying in the sleep of death. Do you know why I looked for a long time towards the place? Because I shall there one day again put on in its glorified form that now sleeping body, for it is sown in corruption, but will rise in incorruption. Hence, notwithstanding its decay, the grave is sacred to me, and what you call corruption we call germination. The time is not yet come, but perhaps it is near, though of that day and hour knows none but God the Father only. It is true that there is in heaven a general presentiment, that the consumma-

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tion will soon take place. Those who have been already long here have told me, that at times the dawn of a far brighter day, than we already have, appears on the horizon of heaven, a day which shall shine upon the new heavens and the new earth. Then may I, then must I, hasten to earth, where my soul is to find its house, that is eternal in the heavens.

But now you will further ask me whether I do not also desire to see you and yours, or still more to seek your society? I will confess that at the beginning of my heavenly life I was seized with a certain longing after you. I would willingly have gone with the angels, who hasten to and fro as God's messengers between heaven and earth. When once I asked your youngest child's angel about you, he answered me as follows :—

“Yesterday evening they were all sitting round the lamp in the sitting room. A ray of light fell upon your picture, which was hanging on the wall adorned with a wreath of immortelles. They were talking about you. They cannot yet realize that you are taken from them. They do not grudge your body its rest, nor yourself the peace of eternity, but they feel so lonely and forsaken. They had so much they wanted to say to you, and would so like to give you pleasure. The children, especially, cannot understand that you will always stay in heaven, and console themselves with the thought, that you will certainly come at Christmas, when it is dark, and the Christmas-tree is lighted up. They hope that you will then bring them beautiful, shining, heavenly gifts.”



Then I began to feel a sort of home sickness towards earth. But the longing soon vanished. I perceived that it was a remnant of earthliness still cleaving to the soul, and which it must put off in heaven. For longing is painful, and where God wipes away all tears from our eyes there is no more pain. Besides, in heaven we only will what lead God wills, and it is not His will that the blessed should re-visit the earth.

While I was yet in the body, I often wondered why no blessed one ever appeared from heaven to give information about the things above, and to testify that the fellowship of love still continues. I had in my youth a very dear friend, a serious, religious girl. We were walking together by moonlight one fine evening, at the season when roses are in bloom. We were talking together girl-fashion, and thought how pleasant it would be to die now, and to soar past the full moon and the silver-edged clouds to Paradise. I learnt in later life, while yet on earth, that such supposed longing after heaven was in me nothing better than a morbid, immature freak of emotion, and that I was then anything but ready to die. However, we promised each other that whichever died first should appear to her friend. My companion really died a happy death soon after, and I expected her to appear. Often, when rays of moonlight entered my little room, I fancied I could see her form, and in my dreams I thought I heard her voice. Still she never came. I might have known than it is written: "They have Moses and

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the prophets. If they hear them not, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." And now I fully perceive, that what the Scripture tell us of heaven is not only enough, but that it is all that could be told in language, and to earthly understandings. These communications of mine, too, are nothing else than the carrying out into details of what is already written in Scripture.

You will not then be surprised, that I am seized by no desire to descend to earth, or to behold what is earthly and transitory. But this does not make the ties of love, by which I am united to you, the looser. Only I already look upon you as those who are destined for heaven, and the life and lot of your souls is of more interest to me than earthly existence, which is subject to such perpetual change. A little while, and you too will die ; and so to me, who have passed beyond time, your life is compressed into a short span. Only the end is of importance to me. The changing events of the day, the alternations of prosperity and affliction, the cares and hopes of life, are to me like the uniform undulations of the sea, which one beholds without emotion. As you can remain composed, when your children tell you of their little cares, nay, can even smile at their tears, which nevertheless mean a whole world of trouble to them, so do I look at your earthly cares and also at your hopes or prosperity in the light of the words, "A little while."

### III.

I WAS vividly reminded of earth and its sorrows as I was once standing at the gate of Paradise, and beholding the host of departed souls, who were coming from the world. Thousands, indeed, die every earthly day, hence the train of souls, that issue from the mists to separate at the gate of Paradise, is a never ending one. Some advance in groups, some come singly, the angels of God escort many. Each soul wears the form in which its body appeared at death. The body, indeed, and all those earthly matters, which served either to cover or adorn it, are no longer really present, still they live on in the imagination of the soul, and the mental vision and recognition of souls depends on the fact, that what they imagine comes into sight, and is beheld as real. Hence the soul appears clothed like the body, and it depends upon itself what it will have and wear. The clothing, indeed, conceals nothing; the life of the soul, which on earth was hidden, shows itself distinctly in eternity, so that its very heart may, so to speak, be read. All hypocrisy and pretence cease here; they would naturally appear as nothing but wretched masks. It is, therefore, very easy to distinguish between believers and unbelievers.

The Saviour when on earth, compared faith in the parable of the ten virgins, to a lighted lamp. Think

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then, of faith as a light, which imparts to the soul a kind of heavenly brilliancy, while plainly as their nature and character may be discerned, a dark shadow is spread over the souls of the unbelieving. Only those souls, which are themselves children of light, are able to endure the heavenly light which streams forth towards them at the gate of Paradise. It hurts and dazzles all others, and they cannot but turn from it and flee. Thus a preliminary separation of souls is self-affected. No cherub is needed at the gate of Paradise, those who are not destined to enter it turn towards the darkness of their own accord. Diseased plants and such as have no root suffer from the light of that same sun, to which the healthy gladly turn.

You know from your Bible that the soul may, even in the hour of death, lay hold on the grace of forgiveness through the blood of Christ; in such a case He Himself kindles in it the spark of faith which lights the soul to Paradise.

This procession of death presents a strange spectacle, one which would be fearful and dreadful to the dwellers on earth; while to us, who know our wills to be one with the will of God, it is not even disquieting. Some float on in their nightdresses, their faces drawn and pinched by lengthened suffering on a sick bed, and their souls bearing the traces of prolonged conflict. Others come snatched suddenly out of life, their thoughts still set upon the work or the pleasures of their earthly lot. Many appear with the evident impress of the agonies of

death upon their countenances ; some have composed, nay indifferent features ; some the peaceful look of sleep. Yonder comes a man of mature years, with a face which betrays long intellectual labours. I read in his soul that he, after long struggling between faith and unbelief, violently destroyed the impressions of a pious education and suppressed the strings of conscience. He said to himself thousands of times : " There is no God and no eternity, there cannot be ! " And in this belief he died. Now he covers his eyes with his hands to shield them from the flood of light which he cannot endure. Despair takes possession of his soul, and he sighs : " It cannot be. " And yet it is, poor soul ; only there are no tears, nor prayers here—they are over !

Another comes, who died forsaken and alone, but through his own fault. His hand convulsively grasps a few keys, the keys of his money boxes. There is little to read in his heart, it is a pauper soul. There is not even a trace to be found in it of earthly love, which leaves behind it, even in the souls of the lost, a reflection of light, though faint and fading away. Money, wealth, and an unquenchable thirst for more, is what fills this soul—and these are over !

A young woman appears with bloody hands and dripping hair, as though she had come out of the water. She murdered her child and drowned herself. She did it in full consciousness, she had nothing more to hope for in heaven or on earth ; it is night in her heart, she does not even look towards the light of Paradise, she knows that she is lost—that all is over !

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A noble looking youthful form, with a deep and bleeding wound, hovers this way, he died in a duel. For a long time he sought for his adversary, who had trodden his honour under foot, for a long time he thought of nothing but his honour and its restitution. His opponent killed him, and now he is hovering forth from the mist, his head erect, as though he expected commendation for his chivalrous deed, or must excite the admiration of the inhabitants of heaven. But none take notice of the poor fool ; he soon perceives that the tinsel of earthly honour does not glitter in the light of heaven, he bows his head, he turns away—it is all over !

There is a beautiful girl in a ball dress, torn and dirty, a disordered wreath of flowers hangs down over her face, and her plaited hair is unbound. She was struck with heart disease in the midst of violent dancing. Her heart looks even more wretched than her external appearance ; she shudders when she sees the light of Paradise, it is no longer the light of the ball-room that shines around—that is all over !

A noble female form comes in sight. She is of aristocratic rank, and an acquaintance of mine. She was well reported of on earth, a friend to the poor, famed for benevolence and praised for her piety. Is she not saved ? How much the inhabitants of the earth are deceived by appearances ! Certainly much was said at her grave of her happy end, and of the good works that followed her, and yet they were all hypocrisy and mere outward show, her heart is dark and empty—all is over !

But now look this way with me and see how the saved approach. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, then were we like to them that dream." And they are at first like them that dream; that give themselves up to some pleasant dream-image, that behold it without stirring or wishing; but when they become conscious that it is indeed no dream, but full and fair reality, then the rest of the verse is fulfilled, and their mouth is filled with laughter, and their tongue with praise. Some stand shyly at a distance, as though they would contemplate from afar a glory which was not appointed for themselves; others lift up their hands imploringly to the blessed, as if to entreat their assistance to lead them into Paradise, while with other elect souls the triumph song of their happy death bed continues without intermission, even into heaven. It is true that even these souls are not perfect, they, too, come from the world of sin, and their bodies were born of the flesh. Sin and weakness may be read in their hearts also; but all is covered by the blood of the Lamb, the handwriting that testified against them is still there, but it is done away with. The light of faith is often still very weak in their hearts, but it is there and where there is but a spark there may soon be a flame. Hence there are distinctions and degrees among the saved: the murderer, who was converted in the last hour of his life is indeed with his Lord in Paradise, but he stands at the entrance, and is not on a level with the martyr, who sealed a faithful and devoted

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life with his blood. He has still to grow and advance. The beginning of the work must take place on earth, but there is room for its continuance and perfection in heaven. Thus you perceive that there is a work to do in heaven also, not a work done in the sweat of the brow, in sorrow and trouble and in constant conflict with sin, but a holy and happy work. It often reminds me of the play of childhood, which is indeed the unconstrained, spontaneous activity of the mind freely working out that to which it is disposed and appointed. Earthly work on the contrary, however much liking men may entertain for it, always bears the stamp of constraint and compulsion. For it is not given to any one to do only what he likes, and to leave undone what is not agreeable to him, while the work on his own soul cannot go on without self-conquest and self-control. The actions of the blessed are again as free as those of little children, the only difference being that they subserve a great, a Divine object; for we are to be perfect, as our Father is perfect. We are advancing towards that great day, when the Lord will cast the ungodly into eternal darkness, and say to the righteous, "Come ye blessed of my Father."

The day of judgment is before us also. Do you ask whether we fear it? There is no fear in love and how should we, who are under the good Shepherd's care, fear? Or, whether we have absolute assurance of standing in that day? That would mean that we were already judged. As to whether it is possible for the light of faith to decrease instead



of increase in heaven, or even to be extinguished, or whether perchance some souls may come over to us from the other side of the abyss, souls in whom a merciful God may kindle the light of faith even in hell, because they plunged ignorantly and unintentionally into sin and sorrow—of all this I know nothing. If much is as yet hidden from even the angels of God, every day brings fresh knowledge. This alone we know from the beginning of the heavenly life, that if His will is done, whatever is done, is well.

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#### IV.

**M**Y son, there remaineth a rest for the people of God, a Sabbath rest, glorious, holy, unceasing. It is your mother who is permitted to enjoy this rest and to keep this eternal Sabbath, who teils you so. How tired do hands and hearts grow in the pursuits of earth, and how little is earthly rest often able to satisfy them! For the resting times of earth are so short they are really only momer.ets in which the soul can rest, and then the work and care, and often the pleasures and joys of earth, draw it again into the whirl. I am in peace, and my happiness is enchanted a thousand-fold by the comparsons I can make between now and then. Do not then wish me back on earth! Speak not of the joys which might yet have awaited me there, for if you could bestow thm on me, it would be like lighting a candle for one who is in perpetual sunlight. Do not say that I should have liked to share in your welfare, and that of your family. I have overcome, call me not back to the battle!

When I let my past life pass before my eyes, I do not seek in vain for presentiments and anticipations of the heavenly Sabbath rest, only the Sabbath bells seldom chimed fully and clearly; their music always seemed to sound from a distance, and when I tried to press nearer to it, it stopped. That is the way indeed with all happiness on earth. Its

star, like the sun, in high latitudes, only appears on the horizon. On earth you know only the dawn and after glow of happiness. Ah, how very often did even the much loved Sunday bring but little Sunday rest and quietness. Your father needed much waiting on and helping in his difficult office, our parsonage-house was seldom empty all the day long, and I used to take many cares with me to church and to bring them back again. Saturday evening was really my proper holy time. When everything was in order in the house, and you children in bed, a wonderful quietness settled on our house. I would hear your father's step overhead as he went up and down in his study, learning his sermon by heart; no one disturbed either him or me on Saturday evening. We all knew the Gospel for the following Sunday; your father always read and explained it at family prayer. The clouds of care and sadness, which might perhaps have lowered round my heart, were dispersed by its light,—and my soul kept holy day. But still more heartily did I keep this preparation of the Sabbath on the eves of the great festivals, and on none more gladly than on the eve of Christmas. What a pleasant time Christmas Eve was at our parsonage! The important preparations were always completed by noon. Before the sun sank to rest we were already awaiting the sacred time. Do you still remember how you used to stand, even before sunset, with your hymn-books in your hands ready to go with me to Christmas vespers? How you watched from the window the course of the snow-flakes, and rejoiced at every

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shadow which fell upon the village, and how evening came at last, and the lights in the church cast their brightness upon the churchyard and towards us, and how the bells then burst forth, and Advent was over and Christmas come!

Then your father came in his robes, every one took a light in his hand, which on quiet evenings we lighted directly, and then went past the snow-covered gravestones into the church, which was decorated with a large tree, the brilliancy of whose tapers made our lights superfluous. We keep indeed much happier Christmases in heaven, and the song of the angels, which they sing now as on the first Christmas Eve, sounds far more lovely and solemn than the earthly: *Glory to God in the highest!* I feel an infinite compassion, not for those who desire to keep no holy day on earth and avoid the rest of the Sabbath, because they fear that the voice of an awakening conscience might drown the sound of the bells, but for those who are by the fault of others deprived of the blessing of the Sabbath rest. For when the hand can never rest till it sinks fatigued in the evening, the heart, too, gets no resting time. Oh that men would only reflect that they make no one happy, while they deprive countless multitudes of eternal happiness! The names of those who are striving to restore their Sabbath to the people, and of those who are taking care that the light of eternity shall in one way or another shine into the constant obscurity in which so many earthly callings are followed, are blessed in heaven as well as on earth.

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An old man, who had on earth been a railway-guard, came here a short time since. He had been till nearly the last a stranger to the Gospel. He certainly had sometimes had his Sundays free, but tired out with the labours of the past week, he had given them partly to sleep, and partly to his own affairs, for which on week days he had not an hour to spare either by day or by night. On the day of his death, which was a Sunday, he received in the morning from a pious person a little book, containing a text and a short address adapted for railway employés. Sitting on his elevated seat, he turned over its pages. The text attracted him and he went on reading. He had sped through the district on many a Sunday, the sound of bells which reached his ear from every quarter had left him indifferent. To-day it was otherwise. To-day the bells helped him to hallow the Sabbath. The whole worthlessness of his past life passed before his mind, and for the first time the words: "God be merciful to me a sinner," fell from his lips. His heart experienced also the full happiness contained in those comforting words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Just then he saw at the end of the train a slight column of smoke, announcing that some danger was threatening, arise from one of the carriages. Mindful of his duty, he rose from his seat, forgetting that in that part of the line the train had to pass under a bridge, the arches of which left only room for sitting—one moment and his body lay shattered on the piers of the bridge. He is with us in heaven, and I wish I could find

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words to describe to you the man's gratitude to His Redeemer!

Life in the rest of heaven is constant worship, but we also hold our special public worship, and it is my greatest joy to hear your father preach. Preach! you say, preaching in heaven! Yes indeed, and quite true preaching there only. Did I not tell you that there are stages and degrees among the blessed in proportion to their knowledge and perfection? And for this very reason there are also efforts to advance in both, and holy labours which consist partly in promoting the welfare of our souls, and partly in helping others. They, who on earth had made progress in the knowledge of heavenly things, which is one of the treasures that rust and moth do not corrupt, are capable of preaching in heaven. Not about conversion. The urgent cry: "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts," is not sounded in heaven, nor are there any thoughtless or sermon-hardened hearers. Preaching no longer calls upon us to believe, but leads us to vision, to ever deeper and more perfect vision. And this is our most blissful enjoyment. Infinite is the depth, infinite is the breadth, which is opened to the spirit that dives into the Divine ideas of creation and redemption.

There are many preachers in heaven, many, too, who were never such on earth. There are also congregations. Many faithful souls, whose bodies your father buried on earth, have gathered round him again and unite with him in Divine worship in

the great cathedral; in that cathedral where He Himself is in the midst of us, to whom our songs of praise are addressed, where His holy spoken word takes the place of the reading of the Scriptures on earth, and lasting visible communion with Him, that of the sacraments. You think perhaps that it must be difficult to preach in the Saviour's presence, but you forget that this has to be done even on earth. Preaching however, with us is nothing else than praising and giving thanks on the one side, and on the other, showing, *i.e.* leading to vision. Of the hymns of praise which resound in the worship of heaven, where the angels of God form the choir, I can tell you nothing. If even the language, which the blessed speak, is quiet different from the languages of earth, the notes of heaven's hymns of praise have certainly never reached the ear of man. The shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem were allowed at most to hear from a distance such heavenly sounds, but they could give no description of them to any one. Go on then rejoicing in the imperfect harmonies of earth, and let them be to you a prophecy of the far more glorious harmonies of heaven.

Though the Sabbath and festivals of heaven are not interrupted by days of labour in the sweat of the brow, yet heaven, too, has its special days of festival and joy. When a sinner repents on earth, and a lost soul lets itself be found by the Good Shepherd, the rejoicings of heaven resound with redoubled exultation. The angels who bring the glad-tidings heavenwards, begin the strain, and all the company of heaven

rejoice with them. Men often die on earth in poverty, or even detested by their fellow-men. Their bodies are buried in some obscure spot, and no bell tolls for their funerals; but the Saviour Himself meets the soul that has repented at the last moment, and the celestial choirs welcome it with triumph. Many a one, who has even incurred the penalty of capital punishment, has entered into our peace, while many a one at whose grave much has been spoken about a happy departure, is known to none in heaven.

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## V.

THE Saviour when on earth was more grieved at the unbelief of men than at anything else. Not only because His eye could see the darkness of their hearts, which would one day separate them forever from heaven; but because He could also see how much peace and happiness they forfeited even on earth. I too now see this in a clearer light than formerly. It is sad that so many, even of those who call themselves active Christians and boast of their more mature knowledge, so unbelievably oppose plain and definite words of God, or at least suffer them to have no influence upon their life and thoughts. How many earthly cares would cease, if the dwellers on earth would give its due weight to the saying: "Cast all your care upon God, for He careth for you," or would take to heart the Saviour's warning against anxiety? It is really necessary to assure you from heaven that such words of God are quite true, that the hairs of your head are really numbered, that all your affairs are open to the eye of God, and that it is His holy and gracious will to make all things work together for your good? Yes, it is still a mystery to myself how so many hours of care and anxiety were possible in my life, a mystery, like everything connected with human sin.

Even here in heaven, my dear son, I have often thought about that great care, which has so long

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been the burden of your heart, that care which we had so often to share on earth. At first I could not yet understand the reason of it, any more than you can now. So I once spoke of it in the Saviour's presence, not with anxious fear after the manner of mortals, but impelled by that faithful maternal affection which does not cease in heaven. My words may, however, have sounded like a request for help. For He regarded me with a look of holy seriousness, to which indeed love is not a stranger, with such a look as He once regarded His mother at Cana, when she said to Him: "They have no wine!" He did not say to me: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" but He did say: "I have long known it, My hour is not yet come." And he laid His hand upon my eyes, just as He used to do upon the eyes of the blind upon earth, and I then saw what was previously hidden from me. I beheld the wondrously glorious meaning of your lot. I saw all its threads combining towards a blissful end, and in spirit I already heard you offering glad praise and thanksgiving for that very sorrow which you now find so grievous a burden. You cannot yet understand it, but ought it not to be enough for you to know that the Saviour knows all, and will make up for all?

Of many indeed, who on earth bear heavy burdens, it may be said, that they do not desire to be free from them. Not that they look upon them as their cross, which they willingly take up for the Lord's sake, but that they never talk to Him about them, that they do not pray. They so soon forget, or it is

not as vividly impressed upon their souls as it should be, that it is their sacred right to have constant intercourse with heaven by prayer. Earth with its sin and misery is separated from heaven, but prayers pass over the chasm and are a power here. Effectual, fervent prayers on earth are events in heaven, which the blessed talk of and rejoice at. All that is called force and power in the world cannot raise the slightest ripple here, while the prayer of a pious child can raise mighty waves, which extend throughout all heaven. And when any one prays, who is in complete union with the will of God, and rises to real prayer in the name of Jesus, then all heaven, which ever bows before the will of God, bows itself. It is as though the praying soul were lifting itself upwards from the earth and reaching towards the Lord, and He were bending Himself downwards to meet it—until the flesh again draws the soul downwards, and the stream of heavenly life, which had begun to flow into it is again interrupted. A short fervent prayer is often of the greatest consequence in heaven. The cry: Lord have mercy on me! which man utters in grievous temptation or trouble, that he may lay hold on the Lord's garment and keep his foot from stumbling, causes such power to go out from the Saviour as once proceeded from Him on earth, when the sick woman sought to touch the hem of His garment that she might be made whole. There is indeed much praying of which heaven knows nothing. I am not thinking only of the desecration of the Lord's prayer. A whole congregation will often say

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the Church prayers, which indeed comprise all that a Christian has to pray for, for himself and the Church, and not a soul among them move heaven by its prayer. Prayers that seem hearty and fervent are often said, and yet are mere words ; there is spirit in them, but not the Holy Spirit. Why are so many men ashamed of prayer ? I have seen a party ready to sit down to dinner and yet hesitating. One looked in perplexity at another, it was easy to see that they were still accustomed to say grace at home, though perhaps the custom was the only scanty remnant of prayer retained, as if the Lord Jesus could now only be wanted for the purpose of blessing food and drink, each was ashamed of the other, and at last they sat down without prayer. Why are men ashamed of prayer when they rejoice in every other manifestation of power, and are proud of their other privileges ? It is because such men well know that their prayers are no real prayers, but consist of mere words which mean nothing and affect nothing, and of which they truly ought to be ashamed.

It is surpassingly pleasant to hear the ancients bear testimony to the hearing of their prayers. They can best do this, not merely because they prayed far more frequently and fervently than the present generation, which is not healthy and vigorous enough to take in deep breaths of the atmosphere of heaven, but also because they are in a position to see more perfectly the manner in which their prayers have been heard. My prayers on earth—why should I deny it, since I need not be ashamed of it even in

heaven—chiefly referred to you, my children, to your bodily and spiritual welfare. I do not as yet see the granting of all my prayers, though, according to the custom of heaven, I also call denial granting. The ancients, however, who can overlook and know whole generations of descendants, whose destiny is already happily achieved, are also in a position to perceive how God, beyond their desire or understanding, arranged and guided to such an end all that was once the subject of their prayers. For be very certain that no human life can be lived for itself alone, nor understood by itself. The soul is indeed in its chief concern placed upon its own foundation, but our greatest help to salvation comes from our connection with our family, and it is from this that we also experience the greatest damage to our spiritual life. Many a man has been supported by the prayers of his belongings—what a mother's prayers have already effected you know well—but many a one has also been burdened with a curse laid upon him by his ancestors. How in the latter case also the guilt of the individual remains, you will one day learn in heaven. I only want to show you, how the blessing of prayer extends its circle even to after generations.

Old S.—, whom you must certainly still remember, since he often came when he was old to our house, was a man of most fervent prayer and piety, but also one most deeply tried. He made a happy marriage, was surrounded by a troop of children, and saw them all growing up, the daughters marrying,

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the sons preparing for important positions. Then one child after another was taken from him. At last he stood by the sick bed of his youngest and favorite son. I have often heard him tell, how he prayed long and fervently at this son's death-bed, that the Lord would at least spare him this child. "Spare him to me," he cried, "for the support of my tottering faith; spare him, that he may remind me that Thou art gracious and merciful, and dost not keep Thy wrath for ever." The son died. The parents were left solitary; they lived on a long while, standing there like the last columns of a ruined building. Nor was their old age gladdened by a single grandchild. And when at last they departed shortly after each other, it was said in the melancholy manner on earth, that their whole race, nay, their very name, had now died out. Yes, on earth; but in heaven they have them all again, and through the Lord's special grace not one is missing in this circle of those once united on earth. No ties unite them any longer to the earth, so long as it wears the form of perishableness. There is a completed race, the history of which lies disclosed and completed before the eyes of its members, and one which has been allowed to experience beforehand that which will one day be the lot of the whole family of Adam. It has no longer any concern with the old earth, its history is finished, and it is waiting for a new heaven and a new earth. There are few in heaven who praise so heartily and with such fulness of rejoicing the God that heareth prayer, as these blessed ones, to whom,

humanly speaking, just their most fervent prayer was denied.

Therefore, my son, pray, and forget not that prayer is the only bridge, by which thy soul can draw near to heaven, its future home.

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## VI.

EACH soul of man is dear to the Saviour and should be dear to us also. In the heavenly life the innermost nature of each soul is indeed naked, and open to the eye, but there is none which is not worthy of our love. It is otherwise on earth, yes, even the believing soul sometimes wears a body which is repulsive to the prejudiced eyes of the dwellers on earth, and which hinders it from manifesting its real worth. To others again it is made so easy to win love, a beautiful form, a cheerful and pleasant nature often make even a poorly gifted soul agreeable. Even sin is more easily forgotten or overlooked, when it appears in one whom men call agreeable. For a charming face and graceful movements go a great way on earth, even with those whom we might expect to look deeper than the surface, but who, perhaps, without further reflection infer an amiable character from a pleasing exterior.

It is said, indeed, that the soul itself builds up its house the body, and thus impresses upon it its inmost peculiarity. I do not know whether this is true, but this much is certain, that it often finds before it only very rough hewn and angular shaped stones to build with and consequently is often obliged to inhabit a dwelling which it would willingly have other than it is. Even parental love is often deceived on earth, and an engaging child is preferred to another who



does not, to human apprehension, possess this happy gift. When I think of these things, a melancholy remembrance of my childhood arises before me. I had a sister, whom you never knew, for she died before you were born. Her countenance was plain and her figure ungraceful; her whole demeanour was clumsy and awkward. She trudged with heavy steps among the other children, and her rough and often shrill voice drowned those of the others. No one liked her, although we had nothing to complain of in her, for she was neither spiteful nor mischievous, but imperturbably good-natured. Even the constant teasing, which she had to endure did not harden her heart. And if she had in her brusque and rough way annoyed or hurt one of us she soon came and caressed him, asking pardon with tears in her eyes. Oh how I now perceive what I never fully knew on earth, even in my more mature years, how grievously we sisters sinned against the child! For her brothers understood sooner than we did how to take a right position towards her. She made herself useful to them in all manner of ways, and that at least prevented them from such rude demonstrations of dislike as we were too often guilty of. Our parents, especially our father, strove to be just towards her. She was punished, but with moderation, and only when she deserved or appeared to deserve it. But when we were all together in the evening, and our father was enjoying his time of rest, and we standing round and caressing and coaxing him, it often happened, that he would push Emily

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aside, when she too pressed upon him with her violent caresses and unrestrained joy, and that she would stand sobbing in the corner while we were allowed to circle round his knees; my mother, too, would reproach her angrily when she came home with her frock torn, or grinned and laughed loudly, which made her look so particularly ugly. She did not know that the child would then often run to her room and pray heartily to God to make her as good as her brothers and sisters. She has often told me, how bitter the days of her childhood were to her, and how often she wished to be grown up or not to live any longer. It was especially when she went to school, when she met with ridicule and sarcasm from the young teacher, that her troubles increased. She wrote indeed the worst of hands, and her awkward mouth had much difficulty in accomodating itself to the sounds of foreign languages. Many complaints were made of her to my father, who at first took his child's part, but he could not deny her faults and deficiencies. He tried what punishments would do, they were of no avail; he tried kindness, she was very sensible of it, but did not improve.

One hot summer day we went on an expedition to the forest with our parents. The girls were seeking for flowers at the edge of the wood, our parents sitting at some distance, when suddenly one of the girls cried out that an alder had stung her. Some stood about her lamenting, others called to our parents, but Emily rushed forward, knelt down by the wounded child, and sucked the poison from the

wound. She had heard at school that this was the best remedy for an adder's bite. The event turned out well for both parties. Emily was much praised—she was publicly distinguished at school, and for a time treated with great regard at home. She was herself extremely happy, but it was just in this happy and joyous humor that she all the more manifested her ungainly ways, and she never appeared more unattractive and unpleasant than then. “I was so happy,” she said, speaking of that time; “happy above all, because I had for once given satisfaction to my parents. I wished, I was obliged to express my happiness, but it was not my fault that its expression presented an appearance so different to my feelings. I meant to rejoice as you did, but you called my rejoicing a disagreeable noise; to laugh as you did, but you called it ugly grinning; I meant to skip and jump, but it seemed to you clumsy and unlady-like behaviour. Just when you most blamed me, I could least reproach myself, and my real sins were unperceived by you.” She grew on and had come to maturity. Our parents often declared that things could not go on as they were doing, and she often met with harsh treatment. Then her demeanor considerably altered, but she did not become more engaging. A shy reserve, nay, even bashfulness, took the place of her extravagance, and her awkward clumsy ways rather increased than diminished. She avoided intercourse with strangers; her anxious glance would wander shyly about the room when there were visitors, or her overgrown form

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bound away, and she was glad when she could escape from company and find something to do in the kitchen. Hence the greater and heavier part of the domestic work got gradually laid upon her shoulders; and in this she was indefatigable, and delighted her parents by the many loving services she rendered to them. The time came when young girls make their appearance in society, and take part in its amusements. Her elder sisters were famous and favorite dancers; but my mother's sense of justice would not allow them to enjoy a pleasure without her, though it would have been a quite sufficient one for Emily to prepare our garments, and to dress us for the gay party. And when in obedience to her mother, she would go with us in a gay dress, but with a serious countenance, to the festal scene, to take part in a pleasure which would be none to her, she would quietly hum to herself the old song: "My mother likes me spruce." And when the party was over she would go home with us quietly and without a word of complaint, and listen patiently while we were merrily exchanging our experiences.

About this time a sun-beam shone upon her life, but only for a short time. A young man of a susceptible, but fickle, disposition, paid her some attention. He felt a certain compassion for the solitary and neglected girl, and for the space of one evening treated her with marked preference. She had never either been warned, or had need of warning, and she took his ready words and unmeaning flattery for genuine coin, and thought herself loved. She now

really began to flourish : her eyes sparkled, she would take a cheerful share in conversation, and her words were revelations of a pure, a noble, nay, for I may use the word even in heaven, of a beautiful soul. Thus does the first sunny day of early spring melt the snowy covering on the flower beds, and the charming and many coloured flowers, which were already blossoming beneath, make their appearance. But presently the storm blew again over the flowers. She soon perceived that she was deceived, or had deceived herself. The butterfly—to use this inappropriate image, with which the world likes to cast the veil of poetry over the sin of wantonly toying with a human soul—flew to another flower.

She then became graver and quieter than ever, and announced her resolution of leaving her father's house, and taking a situation among strangers. Her parents did not withhold their permission. When away she wrote them letters of the tenderest affection, which enabled them to read in her soul more deeply than had ever been possible by oral intercourse. But a shy reserve hung like a veil over her letters also. And even among strangers she was not spared disappointment and pain. She had soon made herself at home in the family with whom she lived, she took with all her heart to the children, though their education was not one of her duties ; and she bore with patience their rough teasing, and their attempts to make her the butt of their humours.

One day the eldest boy had in his boisterous fun hung on to the basket of an old woman, who was

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carrying a heavy burden, had upset it and then made game of her.\* Then Emily, who had seen the occurrence, ventured to make serious representations concerning it to her master and mistress, and for the boy's sake, too, urged that he should be punished. She was abruptly refused, and reminded of her menial position. The servants, too, took part against her. The ink upon the page of her journal, on which she recorded this incident, is much blotted—many tears having fallen on it. In other respects, too, she was wanting in that worldly wisdom, which goes so far with the children of this world, who condemn faithful and loving devotion when it adopts a wrong policy, far more severely than sheer selfishness when dressed up in a few courteous phrases. The poor girl tried in vain to make herself agreeable, she was always just the reverse.

The marriages of her sisters obliged her to return to her parents' house. But she came home only to die. An affection of the lungs of long standing, whose further development she had managed to conceal for the sake of her parents, now showed itself decidedly, and threw her upon a sick and dying bed. My mother witnessed her departure. In the presence of death her character displayed a surprising beauty; her soul had taken the first step towards liberty. She humbly begged pardon of her mother for all she had done amiss in her past life; she also gave evidence of a wonderfully mature experience in her comprehension of the ways in which God had dealt with her, and went home to Him with a song of praise upon her lips.

Dear strong soul! you now stand before me in your true, your heavenly form. Nay, it was just because you were strong that God could lay upon you, what we could hardly have borne with the same submission and endurance without sinking or suffering shipwreck. You are wearing crowns of victory for faithfully sustaining conflicts such as we never knew, and are beloved by the Saviour and all the blessed. What joy still awaits us when we shall one day see you in the resurrection body, when what was sown in weakness shall be raised in power.

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## VII.

THE contents of my last letter probably made a melancholy impression; while to me there is absolutely nothing melancholy in contemplating my sister's history. This contemplation, on the contrary, fills me with profound admiration of God's glorious ways.

You are wont to speak so freely of a lost life and of lost happiness, without reflecting that nothing can be inferred concerning a man's happiness or unhappiness from the form assumed by his earthly life, that short preparatory school for his real life. We can indeed speak even in heaven of men enjoying their life on earth, but its true enjoyment is only possible when the thought of being obliged to leave it inspires no fear. And as men are so ready to preach the very virtues they do not possess—a fact very decidedly exemplified in the so-called preachers of toleration—so are their sages accustomed to invite to the enjoyment of a happiness, for which they have hitherto vainly striven, or which they have already lost.

In my opinion, the fate of those who have lost their earthly, and often their eternal, happiness also, by the fault of others, must be a far sadder subject of contemplation than that of a human life whose happiness is forfeited, and that indeed only in appearance, through a higher will. In the former



case their own fault and that of others are so inextricably mingled, that only the Eternal Judge can distinguish them.

You were once, while I was still among you, reading "Faust" aloud. Perhaps I undervalue the earlier portions of this poem, with their philosophical reflections, or can, now that I am in possession of the blessedness which has been bestowed upon me as a gift of grace, no longer understand those Titanic struggles which would win heaven by their own power, but that part of the work which is usually called "The Gretchen Tragedy," still appears to me unique. For by placing before our eyes the history of a victim, it represents so simply and yet so powerfully a great portion of human misery and grief, which in the contemplation and description of human greatness is elsewhere so willingly overlooked. Faust finds Gretchen, and is happy in her love, but only for a short time. He struggles and presses onwards; his love for Gretchen is only an epoch in his life, but hers is her ruin; it becomes to her a catastrophe. All earthly greatness has such epochs, which becomes catastrophes to others. They who would rise above their fellow-men must trample on them. Such victims, such Gretchens, are numerous. Do not think that in heaven unfortunate love appears a martyrdom—the martyrs we speak of are of quite another kind—or that a Gretchen is happy here, because she was deceived by a Faust; but think if it must not be very sad for a human heart on earth to see how many victims human struggles cost,

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whether the struggle be for fortune, fame, honour, or power.

How strangely different history looks in the light of heaven. Apart from the fact that many of the so-called great events appear in our sight very petty and insignificant, the halo, with which you have crowned it, falls off from so many a worldly greatness. Here, where what was hidden from the earthly sight is disclosed, and where things are recognized in their true connection, the victims also, through whose devotion earthly greatness has been achieved, are seen and appreciated. Thus we learn to recognise a heroism which no earthly history records, and to perceive that to be guilt, tremendous guilt, which human observation chooses to regard as a necessary point of transition. Human greatness is often composed of nothing else than the sacrifice of others—sacrifices either willingly offered in self-denying love, or extorted by fraud and deception.

Hence it is a dangerous and very responsible matter to strive after earthly greatness, for it means to require victims, and to advance is mostly to trample under foot. Do not envy those their responsibility, whose earthly vocation involves the demand of victims; and do not forget that the development of the kingdom of God, in which they that humble themselves shall be exalted, requires no such victims. It does indeed rest upon sacrifices and is founded upon the greatest sacrifice ever offered, but upon the free sacrifices of love, which are offered to the Lord Himself, and which are neither extorted nor obtained by either fraud or flattery.

It is most fatal to make others the victims of our struggle, when they are thereby deprived not only of earthly, but also of eternal happiness; for suffering may lead a man to loss of true faith and to despair, and many unhappy souls, downtrodden by others, do not again find either inward support or the way to peace.

Quite lately an aged man came to us in heaven. The light of his faith still shed but a feeble light; he had only attained to faith during the latest period of his life on earth. He seemed to be seeking, but not finding, a soul among the blessed to welcome him. Listen to his history, which he had no need to relate.

He was the son of a countryman of moderate property, and together with his sister had inherited a cottage and a small piece of land. His parents died early. The village school master finding considerable talent for the boy, prepared him for a seminary. He went through its curriculum also, but the modest part of a teacher of the lower classes did not content him. A boundless ambition urged him onwards, a persevering diligence sustained him, and he so far succeeded as to be able to devote himself to study. But this would not have been possible without the assistance of his sister. He had long ago spent every penny of his share of the value of their father's property. He required more, nay, it was not till his studies were completed, that he was really in need of money to make an extensive literary journey. He wanted to investigate certain voluminous archives, for he had laid the plan of a work, which was soon

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to make his name famous. He requested money from his sister. He would soon repay it with good interest, for he should be well able; he should not only be famous, but rich also. The sister had meantime engaged herself to a young man who would not hear of the little property being any further encumbered, and threatened to break off the engagement; for a rustic loves not only the girl of his choice, but her property also, and those who remain faithful to a girl, even when she has lost it, are indeed met with in rural tales, but not in actual life. The girl gave her brother what he required, the suitor sulked and maintained a policy of uncertainty. The brother set out on his travels. A letter soon after arrived from Italy, in which he declared that he was quite near to the attainment of his object, but that he wanted money once more. He called up all the affection he could towards his sister, he represented to her that it was in her hands to make him happy or miserable, and promised her heaps of gold within a short time. The sister believed him and borrowed the last capital that could be raised upon the little property.

And he did attain his object. His work came out and he was famous; while still upon his travels he received a call to a university at a distance from his native place. Then the question was to settle himself, and to live according to his position. He earned much, but had nothing in hand, and least of all for his sister. He had not forgotten her, but he left her without information of either his residence or welfare. He liked neither dunning nor begging

letters, the time would soon come when he should be able to keep his promise without being dunned, and thus years passed away.

At home what could not but occur took place. Scarcely had her suitor heard of her last fatal step than he broke off the engagement. They ought to have married long before, for she needed the help of a man to manage the property. For this she was no longer able to pay; the little farm went backwards, it was soon evident that it must be sold. She had written several letters to her brother, and sent them to the same address as she had sent the money. They were returned with the remark, that the abode of the person addressed was not known.

Then the bitterest despair seized the poor girl. You know what it means to the child of a peasant proprietor to be turned out of the parental property as a beggar. The derision of the neighbours, who had always called her affection for her brother, unwarrantable indiscretion, aggravated her position; her former suitor had found a girl with money. It was said that he aspired to become the possessor of the property to be disposed of, and thus her rival would be mistress in the very place where she had hoped to be happy with him. It was more than she could bear. Poor human nature so quickly thinks it cannot endure a misfortune. On the last day of her sojourn in her home she turned the portraits of her father and mother, which hung over the table, with the faces to the wall—they should not see what happened—and hanged herself on the door.

The brother learned all this much later. He sent every year a small sum to keep up his sister's grave, and continued to live for literature. A long time after, in his solitary old age, he had been brought to the faith by means of an event, which was a great shock to him, and died happily. He is now here, and is seeking his sister. I do not know where she is, or whether he will find her. But he has not yet seen the Saviour. He will lay His hand upon his heart, and then he will at least no longer seek his sister.

### VIII.

**I**T is Eastertide on earth. The sound of the Easter bells reaches us, and they ring in a festival to us as well as you. For we too keep Easter, if only because we are still hastening towards a great Easter Day, which will fulfil the last, and at the same time the most blessed, hope which we still cherish. I am standing with my son at the gate of Paradise, we are looking across towards earth, and I am showing him the house where he was born and died. He does not recognise it. He has but few memories of earth; only the room where he suffered is still clear to his mind and calls back the remembrance of the last agony. "Do you know nothing of our sitting-room," I asked, "where you used to sit with us with your playthings, where you so often looked at the picture of the Lord Jesus hanging on the wall, and asked who was the man with the beautiful, good face?"

"Ah, no," he said; "I only remember the little dark room, the hard walls which obstructed my sight, only your and my father's pictures are still in my mind."

"And do you no longer remember how the angel lifted you up from your bed of pain and flew with you to heaven? It was a moonlight night. Did you not look down at the houses and towers over which he carried you?"

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"I only know that the pain all at once ceased. You had often comforted me by telling me it would soon be over. And when soft arms were about me, I thought they were yours, and I was so glad to be able to sleep once more. All of a sudden I was here in this beautiful heaven."

"Yes, my child, you were saved by our Saviour, who rose on Easter day and gained eternal life for you also. He conquered death and the grave."

"Was then my coming home death? Ah, then, what a happy thing it is to die. But what is the grave?"

"The little bed in which lies the body which you put off when you left the earth, and which will rise again on the great day of the Lord for you to put it on again."

"Will it be happier then than now?"

"Certainly, my child."

"And when will that day come?"

"The day and hour knoweth no man, but our Father in heaven. But to hope for that day is one of the joys of heaven; it has the same significance in heaven as the joy of Christmas has on earth."

Then your father approached. He saw that my looks were turned towards earth. "Do you still keep in mind," he said, "the many tears you shed when the child was taken from us, as we then said? You now know why it was; that you might have it in heaven. The stone is rolled away for you from his grave, at which you wept so much; just as so many other grave-stones are rolled away by Him



who is risen. This is the first Easter you have kept in heaven. Are not all those graves open, which you had according to the will of God to dig and close on earth, even those too which contained no human corpses. For our pilgrimage on earth was over graves to graves. Did we not have to bury many a hope and many a success? Were not countless germs planted in our life, which had to be destroyed? Nay, was it not well that many a vital germ was hidden in the grave, to be developed in a better atmosphere and under a warmer sun, instead of being artificially reared on earth to fade prematurely?"

I heard him in silence, it was a great, sacred Easter joy for me, to perceive how right he was.

He continued: "The poor dwellers on earth have indeed to dig many graves in which no Divine seed is laid, and for which there is therefore no resurrection morning. What their sin and folly bring forth, so often quickly returns to the grave. Hence many a life is a constant funeral procession and yet ends without an Easter Day. In my younger days, before I married you, I kept, as you know, an educational establishment. I was heart and soul a schoolmaster, and yet I cherished a firm assurance that I should get rich through my calling. For years I incessantly entertained this hope, little as the result justified it. It had long been a decayed branch, while I was still taking it for a living one, which must bear fruit at last. I buried the hope, it was no Divine seed, and its grave remains closed.

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I entered the ministry in the full possession of the vigour of manhood, not without self-consciousness and with the assurance of possessing certain gifts. The simple village benefice was to be only the first stage in a career of fame. I fulfilled my duties with zeal and ardour, I preached with fervour, and as I believed not without eloquence, I could not fail to be soon famous. At last, at last I saw that I was nothing better than many others. As a mother carries about yet awhile her dead child, so did I still drag about this hope with me, till at last I dug it a grave. It was no Divine seed, and the grave remains closed."

But I replied, "Many graves have been opened to you, and young and vigorous life has arisen from them."

"Yes," he said, "blessed be God, who lets nothing, that He has planted, die. I had while even a child a talent for, and delight in music. I felt myself urged by an irresistible inclination, melodies and harmonies resounded in my soul, and I felt that I only wanted the necessary cultivation to give form and expression to what was hovering as a finished image before my inner sense. But my parents had good reason for dissuading me from the career of a musician. I had to content myself with a little pianoforte playing. The older I grew, and the more the labours of my calling and the instruction of children estranged me from this certainly soulless instrument, the less did what my hands could produce upon it answer to my ideals—and

now? Music on earth so often begins to lament just when it means to be serious and solemn, and many of its deepest creations are but paraphrases of the Easter complaint: Who shall roll away the stone from the grave? When too it strikes notes of joy, it so easily becomes sensuous and draws the spirit downwards instead of elevating it. The music of earth resembles its Æolian harps, which wail in ever unresolved discords, while the music of heaven knows only full pure concords, and abundant and varied as it is only one text: *Hallelujah.*"

While your father thus spoke I was thinking how magnificently he plays on the heavenly harp, from which, under his hand ever fresh and charming melodies are poured forth. But he is right, all these melodies need only one text: *Hallelujah!*

"It seemed just as hard to me," continued he, "to lay aside, when circumstances compelled me, all serious literary study. My thirst after knowledge was not quenched, but access to libraries was at my lonely country parish either difficult or impossible. With the expense entailed by the education of my children, the payment of heavy booksellers' bills was out of question, besides I was mostly too tired and exhausted by my professional labours to be able to undertake serious studies—and now? ah, what abundant compensation I have, now I am always studying—to use this poor word—without books, without parchments, and also without fatigue and disappointment."

At these words I was still thinking of a large

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grave, before which he had often stood on earth with the Easter complaint: Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? In it lay his fruitless labour. How often had he lamented the religious indifference of his well-to-do parishioners, the cold and apathetic manner in which people, whom custom still brought regularly to church, listened to sermons in which he had put his whole heart; the lack of diligence in works of Christian love; the deterioration of morals in the midst of external churchmanship. On earth he had often had his hours of deep despondency, when like Elijah under the juniper tree he sighed:

"It is enough; Lord, take away my life."

When I reminded him of this grave he smiled and glanced at the souls of former parishioners, who were just now near us and listening to our discourse.

"Many a mistake, also," said he, "lies in this grave. Many are called, but few are chosen. In my lawful, nay, enjoined, endeavor to bring the word to all, I so easily forgot, that on not one page of Holy Scripture is the hope held out to us that all, nay, that even the greater part will accept it. It is just we village pastors, who have managed to keep our flocks within the limits of churchmanship and may perhaps have also seen them walking in the ways of legal respectability, who were so apt to confound this flock of ours with that great flock, which is to be gathered to the Good Shepherd. We were so exacting as to require more than the Lord Himself, who did not attain to being of avail to all. Beside, we judge men far too much according to our own pattern. We thought

we were applying to them the standard of Christianity, and were all the while measuring them with the measure of a culture and civilization entirely strange to them; in short we deceived ourselves at every turn, and most of all where we thought ourselves most certain. Blessed be the Lord, who has enlightened even this darkness with His Easter light."

A large company of the blessed had now assembled around us. I recognised the face of many a faithful friend, whom I had formerly seen in our village church. And while we were thus talking the risen Saviour Himself stood in our midst and said: "Peace be unto you." Then were we glad when we saw the Lord.

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IX.

**M**Y letters are indeed specially addressed to you, my dear son; but I should rejoice if others also had knowledge of their contents. The fact that I write them from heaven, frees me from the reproach of beholding the affairs of the world with a narrow horizon, or viewing them from a limited, perhaps the pastoral stand-point. But as for yourself, so long as you are still on earth, put up quietly with this reproach of your office, nay, I might say that you can scarcely escape it in your intercourse with the so-called cultured of earth, if you mean to keep your proper place. Hold your office in honour, blessed of God and excellent as it is, and bring up at least one of your sons a clergyman. I say educate him for this vocation, and then he will in time have a desire for it, and you will escape the sad experience of many a clergyman, that his sons are certain about nothing else, than that they will not be theologians.

We stand on a limited stand-point chiefly when we disjoin the earthly life from that heavenly one, from which alone it can be understood. It is not possible to judge of the part, when the whole is ignored.

All worldly-minded men commit this fault. You know this indeed best, and we have often spoken of the folly of finding the object of the earthly life in the earthly life itself, and of regarding the so-called

advance in culture of humanity as its only aim. This is a truly limited stand-point. I still know indeed right well, that on earth I too sometimes took part in the song, which men so delight to sing in their own praise, and whose never-ending refrain is, what splendid progress they have made. Now I know that real and important progress in the earthly life took place only in the sphere of the kingdom of God, or was brought into the sphere of secular life by means of the kingdom of God. That man has made a certain degree of progress in his natural task, the subdual of the earth, is a matter quite self-evident, and does not deserve our admiration in the degree that this is accorded on earth.

I have lately become acquainted with a Christian Roman woman, who lived on earth in the second century of the Christian era. The conversation of the blessed does not in general turn chiefly on earthly things. This young woman, who with her husband immigrated to Rome as a heathen, was there converted to Christianity, but obliged to flee in one of the great persecutions, and to find a sad end in her flight, was very well informed concerning the condition of the kingdom of God in the nineteenth century, while quite ignorant of merely secular events. I told her much about the earthly life of the present. To her question, whether men still launched forth as in her times into exaggerated praises of the century in which they themselves lived: I informed her, how whole countries were now traversed in the shortest time upon iron roads; how by the help of a mysterious power of nature

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words and thoughts could be carried with speed from one end of the earth to the other; how machinery took in various forms the place of human labour, without thereby exciting in her any special interest. And when I referred her to the important and marked changes which had been produced in the social and individual life of man by these inventions and discoveries, she asked with a gentle smile: "Do men still feed upon the produce of the field and the flesh of beasts? Do they still build houses of stone to protect themselves from the cold? Do they still express those thoughts which they have no opportunity of uttering by conventional signs drawn upon a tablet? Is the art of perserving a diseased life still a doubtful one, or at any rate dependent for its results upon many assumptions?" And when I had answered all these questions in the affirmative, I was obliged to own, that the progress of mankind, with respect to the long series of years they had passed through, and the power they were endowed with of subduing the earth, was not without further ceremony to be regarded as quite astonishing; but, considering their innate instinct for research and action, a thing which might fairly be expected. When she next referred me to the facts, that the greater portion of the inhabitants of the earth were still heathen, that the savage brutality and barbarism of whole nations had for centuries been well known, but that, instead of trying to obviate them, men had preferred to take advantage of them for their own gain and profit, nay, that not until pious men had begun to bring



the Gospel to them, had people in general entertained the idea that such nations also belonged to their common human nature, and had then endeavoured at the best to force civilization upon them, I was entirely silenced.

It is by no means the object of these communications to mislead you or any one who may read them, to contempt for the world, nor to a depreciation of the duties laid upon you as dwellers upon earth during the time of your earthly pilgrimage. What great cause you too have to enjoy life, I will speak about another time, and will now only say that vigorous, cheerful work, in your God-given calling, and faithful heartfelt interest in the lot of others, may be very well combined with the heavenly calling; nay, are found in the highest degree just where the eternal vocation is most cared for. Only avoid that hollow self-admiration, which finds in an often very moderate knowledge and some slight experience in the things of external life, a compensation for the most sacred possessions of mankind, and persuades itself, that we can really know nothing of heavenly things. When eminent geniuses boast of their knowledge, and place the boundaries of the knowable just where their own capacity of knowing ceases, this may to a certain degree be accounted for; though I can by no means understand, how such inquirers are able to avoid upon their path of investigation, God and eternity, which are everywhere pressing upon them. But it is especially sad, when the mass, with its average or half the average culture, will bow before any one who calls himself a

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master on earth, to reverence his wisdom, but not before Him who is the Master of us all.

You still remember your cousin Charles, the refined and cultured town-gentleman, who sometimes visited us at our parsonage. I was always rather nervous when he announced an intended visit, not that I was ashamed of our rustic menage before a spoiled inhabitant of a city—a village pastor's wife is too proud for that—but because I was vexed at his shameless though aristocratic indifference to Christianity and the Church, and foresaw sooner or later exciting scenes between him and my husband. They never took place, however, my cousin's refined tact, to do him justice, was able to prevent them. I too suffered more by his presence than your father, who went on quietly in his accustomed way, conducted his family worship, made you children sing your hymns, and never by a single step acted in a manner unbecoming a Christian householder.

Charles never ventured upon your father, but he only the more frequently played off the light of his city culture upon me though this was perhaps done by only a smile. One Sunday during afternoon service I was alone with him at the parsonage. He had, in compliance with a courteous invitation of your father's, been present at morning service—of course he stayed at home in the afternoon and thus obliged me to do the same. I took up a book, and when he perceived that I did not care for conversation, he laid hold of a periodical which was lying on the table. It was a missionary report; he put it back with a smile, went to the little book-case hanging on the wall, and read

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off monotonously the titles : " Bible," " Hymnbook," " Book of Devotions," " The Model of Prayer," " Psalter and Harp," " Palm-leaves," etc.—he fidgeted about a little and then turned to the piano. He sat down and played fantasias and operas—the sound could not fail to be heard in the church close at hand, where the sermon was now being preached. I pressed him to leave off and told him the reason of my request, and when he got up willingly and without a word of displeasure, I thought it a favourable opportunity for appealing for once to his heart and conscience. I chose this time, if only that your father might not be obliged to share in an explanation, which might subsequently take place. He listened quietly, and then said coldly : " Cousin, you know that I like to come and see you, my only relative. Perhaps I am not so bad as you think, since I keep up a hearty affection for you, who think so differently. But I do not choose to talk of such things, and excuse me, I also wish to hear nothing about them !"

" Are you not then a Christian ?" asked I.

" I am scarcely able to answer your question, at all events I keep my Christianity to myself." In fact we never spoke again of such things.

His wife, who was much beloved by me in after years, died happily ; she hopes, that he too will one day find the way to heaven, But she has confirmed what I feared, that till her departure from earth he continued an unbeliever. Others may be deceived, but a wife, a faithful pious wife, will find an opportunity of looking into the depths of her

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husband's heart—especially a much loved husband's. She soon perceived, that he did not possess that mature scientific knowledge, which might have given him an apparent compensation for faith. He read much, but only such books as did not touch upon the province of religion; and also such as made no special demands upon thought. But his kind and gentle nature, and above all the marked family affection which distinguished him, for a long time kept up in her the delusion, that there must be something in his religion, which he declared he kept to himself. Soon, however, she could not fail to perceive that everything about him of an externally Christian kind was the result of a pious and strict education, while his inmost heart—his own province I must call it—was dead. He once confessed to her himself that he had no wish to be saved, and had nothing to reply to the question: Did he then wish to be lost, but: "Time will show." Yes, the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. But, my son, is not this darkness a limited standpoint?

**H**EAVEN is a world of endless extent; but it is also a house, our Father's house. A world and a house, what contrasts to an inhabitant of earth? How often does he look longingly out from the confinement of a house at the blue chain of hills that bound his horizon! When the bird of passage, in anticipation of short and gloomy days, begins its flight towards light, warmth and freedom, he gazes after it and would like to depart with it. "My heart is longing for the distant land," he cries. And when he is afterwards in a distant land, and far from home, he wishes himself back in the narrow, familiar house, and home-sickness attacks him with the same force as did formerly the impulse to go to a distance.

We are always at home, being always in our Father's house. And yet the glorious length and breadth of Paradise is ever open to us. Since no frost threatens, no need of sleep detains, and no night alarms us, the dwellings, of which there are so many in our Father's house, are nothing that remind us of protection or refuge; they are only homes, nay, after all, this whole great Paradise is our home and abode.

Paradise is like earth, a creation of God, but a much more glorious and perfect creation. It is, however, easy to see that both were designed by the same Architect. And since the earthly and the heavenly creation resemble each other, in somewhat the same manner as the original resembles its

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inperfect copy, one can speak of the glories of Paradise even to an earthly understanding. Just take from the earthly creation all that reminds of death and corruption, imagine all traces of the perishableness manifested by all that grows and blooms removed, let all colours be brighter, all blossoms more fully developed, all perfumes more exquisite, let it be always May, and then you will get at least some faint notion of the glory that surrounds us.

Paradise is surrounded by purple mountain ranges, and the streams run down as bright as silver from the hills, while the light is refracted in them in an ever-changing and ever-charming iridescence. Just one ray of the brightness and glorious colouring of Paradise has reached the eyes of those, who have seen on earth the Alpine glow. But the mountains of earth, when you approach them, are dead, no, dying rock, are witnesses to violent and destructive forces, and prophets of a future destruction of the entire earthly creation. The heavenly hills are the more beautiful, the nearer you get to them, and are, separately and in detail, abodes of life. Charming meadows, interspersed with shady groves slope downwards to the valleys, while everywhere there is verdure, growth, and fragrance. Trees, plants, and flowers in harmonious interchange, and of every variety of colour are seen on all sides. No need for special nutriment distinguishes one plant from another, no night frosts check or kill the blossoms, or autumnal winds strip off the leaves and scatter them on the path. Everything is in the

vigour of perpetual youth, not a blossom is overblown, not a branch withers. Every change is only a transition to another form of beauty. The earthly blossom dies so quickly. It is only by dying that it brings forth the seed, which, after long waiting and hoping, again gives promise of blooming for a short period—an image of the earthly happiness, which, after long waiting and hoping, blooms for a short day only to pass away; nay, that it may pass away in order to afford a new hope. Heavenly flowers are always blooming, for this was the conception of God concerning flowers. A throng of joyous creatures fills this beautiful world. Creation no longer groans, but has its share in the liberty of the children of God. No bird prepares itself for flight, and no worm is crushed under our footstep. Everything breathes life. All creatures, the flowers and grasses, the butterflies, those flowers of the air, the birds of the forest, breathe life and thanks for life. Unsatisfied desire is no longer heard in the lay of the bird, but full perfect enjoyment of the present. We no longer listen to it in a dreamy, reflective, longing manner, its songs are the charming echo of our own songs, they are in wonderful accord with the harmonies of the blessed.

You know the story of the monk who once in a forest listened in a dream to the song of a bird from Paradise, and forgot a millennium over it, that story which a dear deceased friend related so charmingly to you. "The tones were so mournful, as if they were lamenting the past and the lost, but at

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intervals so glad and happy, as if they were telling of a now speedily approaching imperishable glory of the creatures," so said he of the song of the bird. But only to the earthly ear can the song of the bird of Paradise have aught of mourning and lamentation; to the blessed it laments for nothing, and predicts nothing more.

In the midst of heaven stands the City of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of the elect, and the chief place of devotion. As Israel flocked from every land to the temple, to approach at least once in the year the Holy place and the Holy of Holies, so do all souls go towards the New Jerusalem with the true and eternal Holy of Holies. There, too, do songs resound in loud chorus, when the troupes of pilgrims see the golden pinnacles of the holy city glitter upon the mountain. Their feet devoutly tread the golden streets, and approach the lofty temple, where no sacrifice is any longer offered, and there are not many priests waiting for the victim; where only one Priest, who was Himself a Victim, stands in the holy place: where no veil any longer conceals the Holy of Holies, and yet every head, knowing itself as yet imperfect and incomplete, is lowered before the glory which proceeds therefrom, and all lips love to join in the Seraphim's song of praise to the thrice Holy.

But I could also show you works of man's hands in heaven, if you will not misunderstand the word hands. As it is permitted to man on earth to use, to make changes in, the creatures of God, so is this



permitted to us in a far higher degree. Only in the heavenly world we are spared labour in the sweat of the brow; it is the thought and word that work. As creatures, our agency cannot properly speaking be called creative, but it is allowed to us as to you to mould and fashion matter according to our will. Every soul provides its surroundings in accordance with its own nature; it not only lives in, but forms its home. I have my flower-bed in heaven as I had on earth. And my favourite flower, mignonette, is still my favourite in heaven. Its brilliant, tender corollas remind me of many a happy hour on earth. It was mignonette that your father plucked for me, when shortly after I became acquainted with him, I was taking a walk with him in the garden. It was mignonette that you brought me when, having escaped the hand of the nurse, you went alone for the first time into the garden to get your mother a flower, and it was the scent of mignonette which reached me when, on the morning of my dying day, I looked out at the rising sun; you have also planted mignonette on my grave. Therefore, I rear it here too. Only to rear flowers in heaven no longer means to keep them from harm, or to promote their growth, but to understand them as masterpieces of God.

My favourite place is under the green jasmine harbour, thence my eyes wander to the lovely lake, whose sparkling waves are transparent to the very bottom. Water is the eye of the landscape. As we look into the eyes of a man to search into his soul's

inmost life and feeling, so on earth do we look reflectively and inquiringly into the water to fathom the inmost life of nature. But we are ever again disappointed, nature does not manifest herself through these her eyes. Hence the longing, anxious feeling which comes over the dwellers upon earth on the banks of rivers, hence those enticements of the mermaid in the poem, to come down and be safe.

The streams of heaven satisfy the desires of contemplative souls. Like eyes beaming with love, which fully and entirely show the life and feelings of the soul, they look at us and speak to us in clear and intelligible language, of the power and goodness of Him, who called the whole creation, the heavenly as well as the earthly, into existence, for the purpose of making the being made after His image happy.

And on the other side I look towards our church. Oh, that I could make plain to you what the inhabitants of heaven think of a house of God, a place for devotion! As yet, however, it is beyond your power to conceive of a building which is not chained to the earth by dead and heavy masses, which does not need boldly to stretch beyond arches and pillars in order to give expression to heavenward aspirations, which does not in all its parts point to a future world, but expresses the perfect feeling of a present glory.

And when you seek me in spirit and would like to know where I am, remember one thing, I am at home with the Lord, and glad to be at home. Do not wish you could find out the spot in the starry

skies which forms the abode of the blessed. For these starry skies are like a curtain which conceals a secret. You may know the curtain accurately observe its several threads, and analyse them into their component elements. But you cannot thereby look behind it. The milky way with its starry host, the seven stars and Orion, are the decoration of this curtain. When it is once drawn aside before your eyes, you see more than the curtain allowed you to see. But on earth, where you compute by paces and are inspired with a certain amount of dismay by an accurate conception of the distance between two neighbouring stars, you have no measure for the infinite and eternal. Be not afraid, only believe, and take care that you too one day come home.

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## XI.

**S**ALVATION is the free gift of God. Here in heaven, where our past life with all its shadows stands clearly before our eyes, and where we perceive, that anything we may have done right was the result of training, and therefore not at all to be regarded in the light of merit, there is no one who could entertain the notion of having earned salvation. On the contrary we thankfully acknowledge how much must have been forgiven for us to be saved. We are just creatures of God corporeally and spiritually, and are happy to be such. We are all guests at the table of the great and wealthy Lord, to whom we have given nothing, to whom here also we can give nothing. All alike loved, all alike happy. For though there are differences and degrees among the blessed, and though every fresh advance in knowledge and holiness opens ever new delights to the soul, and leads it into ever closer communion with the Lord, yet externally this difference is only shown by the fact, that ever greater tasks are placed before the advancing soul. To be happy is to serve. The more imperfect the soul is, the more claim it has to the service of others; the more perfect it is, the more capable it is of rendering it to others.

It is of great importance even to the earthly life to know that we are destined for service. If any will be chief among you, let him be your servant,

said our Lord on earth. The earthly calling is indeed regarded as a service ; but how often is the service of our calling performed merely for the purpose of ruling outside that calling, in other words for self. The impulse to self-dependence, which is in every man, is indeed quite justifiable, but this is nothing else than liberty to serve. It is said that this self-reliance is on earth so often regarded as a living for oneself, as a state of independence, and as such set up as an object of life. The poor world has to pay for this folly by the fact, that whole classes, nay, a considerable portion of mankind, talk with exasperation and discontent about the rights of man, while they care to hear nothing about his duties. Men are only too much convinced of the necessity of labour, but labour is to most only a means to an end, they work that they may soon attain to not being obliged to work, and forget that work is service and its own object. Service does not cease to all eternity, and to be able to work is happiness.

As long as I lived on earth as a clergyman's wife, in as active intercourse with the peasants and day labourers of our congregation, as with members of the so-called upper classes, and able by my position to know and to treat persons according to their inward worth, I scarcely perceived to the extent I now do, how much work properly so called, hard-work is undervalued on earth. Were not our Lord's disciples and favourites on earth handicraftsmen ? You divide so-called civilized mankind into two great castes, separated by a broad chasm. You persuade yourselves that it is education that divides them,

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and you place the educated and the uneducated opposite to each other. But does not the wealthy parvenu, who can perhaps scarcely write his name, take his place among the upper ten thousand? and to which class does the refined and well-educated daughter of the placeman belong, when orphaned and forsaken she is obliged to earn her living by the work of her hands? Oh that men would learn to honour work, and to regard it as service! Many a tear would thereby be dried. You hear daily the loud complaints of those who are discontented at having to work with their hands, but the quieter and quite as touching complaints of so many thousands, especially of the female sex, whom this prejudice debars from the use of their hands in faithful and diligent household service, and who desire to serve mankind only by their knowledge, which no one values—these you do not hear.

But to many it is still harder than rendering service to require it—to command. Do not be astonished that such things should seem of importance to me in heaven. Every human soul is of infinite value in our eyes, and if one of the least has been perplexed or embittered, and thereby led astray, it is in our estimation a matter of the greatest importance. Woman is indeed called to serve, and as one of your wise men has well said, service is her destiny. For the perfection of her nature consists in devoted personal service. But this very circumstance makes it also more difficult to her than to a man to command rightly; and a woman will only serve a

woman willingly and with true devotion, when each vies with the other in some common service. The industrious wife of the artisan knows less of the "servant nuisance," than the woman of the upper classes, who has no need to work. But the former more readily perceives that it is precisely our domestics who are, in both the literal and scriptural sense, our neighbours. Is there even in the parsonages on earth a consciousness of the sacred duties we have to fulfil to them? The centurion at Capernaum and his servant are preached about once every year, much is perhaps publicly done for the removal of "social evils," and yet many not merely Christian, but simply human, duties, imposed upon us by our living together in one house are neglected. The servants are often not looked upon as fellow-creatures with the same thoughts and feelings, and as having in their measure desires for the same enjoyments as ourselves. You know that young clergyman's wife who in our presence locked up after dinner the sweets which the servant had brought to the table, with the remark that such people must not be spoiled, while she had no such educational care for her children, and you must also still remember, how conscientiously our uneducated countrymen's wives took care that their servants should have their share in the little pleasures of life.

I write all this to make you understand one of the joys of heaven, one indeed which is not apportioned to me, but which I enjoy by heartfelt

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sympathy. You remember our countess, of whom I have already told you that I see a great deal. Even on earth, I esteemed and looked up to her as a sincere Christian; but not till I saw her in the light of heaven did I fully value her, because it was then I first learned what she was to her surroundings, to her servants. Those words of our Saviour, which will one day be the standard by which human souls will be judged, are before us as well as before you: "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." And she has thus done much unto the Saviour.

In her house those more refined formalities of intercourse, which are in themselves an expression of our respect for our fellow-men, were pretty strictly observed. Your father and I were often at the Castle, and always rejoiced at the kind and considerate treatment which the servants experienced, without however finding any special differences, between this and other households. The countess never spoke of her servants, nor did she in the presence of her guests allow them any other privileges, than those usually granted them, in this as in other respects making as little show as possible of her practical Christianity. But in private she proved it above all by her behaviour to the members of her household. She was a mother to her whole establishment, not a petting and caressing mother, not one alternating unseasonable anger with immoderate demonstrations of kindness, but one full of faithful care and active love. She won all hearts, and retained them with-



out many words and without fussiness. Her people never took liberties with her, she never suffered any idle gossip in their intercourse with their mistress, but they had the most affectionate confidence in her, because they knew that she cared for the fate and the conduct of each individual among them. She knew how, with infinite tenderness, and quite unobtrusively, to remind people of their eternal interests, to wean them from faults and vices, and to train them in Christiana dispositions. Her husband never quite understood her, she had often to repair his errors, especially when he showed his weaknesses to his people, but he never put any hindrance in her way, and submitted to the power of her love.

How many women there are belonging to the circles called aristocratic, who trifle away their lives in empty idleness, or perhaps in some dabbling in art, the results of which yielded neither enjoyment or profit to any one. Or they lay claim to being thought specially religious by playing in a fussy manner with works of Christian love, about which there is much talk, much parade, and not much result. Our countess of course closed her hand against no demand made upon her in the name of Christian charity, but she knew well, that its duties are not fulfilled by contributions and collections alone. She did not ask, "Who is my neighbour?"

In heaven she is surrounded by a great number of those who served her on earth. She now indeed serves them, and they thank her for it by their faithful affection. Many too, of those who on earth

frequented in splendid uniforms, and with stars on their breasts, the house of the countess, where it was not merely her hospitality which they sought and valued, are in her circle here. They are no longer decorated with the insignia of their military vocation, or the badges of wordly honour—it is just these things that are quite foreign to heaven, but they learned in their vocation the meaning and importance of service. It is just their calling, which the language of the world willingly designates by the word service. Now they who served on earth, whether in livery or in the uniform of a general, gladly and peacefully serve one another, and thereby Him, who came not to be served but to serve.

**I**T is said that somnambulists have frequently during their period of somnambulism seen before them at one glance all the sins and transgressions of their past lives, and have, after awaking, still looked back with horror at the reflected image of their own souls. Ordinarily, even in the case of those seriously striving after holiness, a veil gathers, and that with salutary effect, over whole years and decades of the past, nay, conceals from them the whole night side of their own inner life. This veil is, however, for ever lifted from the soul, which no longer dwells in its earthly tabernacle. I think it must be hell enough for the unsaved to be always obliged to contemplate this picture of their own nature. The book, with its countless amount of debts, lies open before the blessed also—debts which witness against us, or rather have witnessed. They are still plainly legible, but blotted out, and paid with the blood of the Lamb. And our grateful joy that they are paid extinguishes our grief that they ever should have been incurred. As long as we live on earth we think that we know ourselves and are aware of our weak points; but it would be very salutary for men, if they could for a moment behold themselves and their lives in the light of eternity, or even of somnambulism. For our chief weaknesses are found just where we thought

ourselves strong. We do so much harm with just our supposed virtues—for how many virtues there are, which have but few points of contact with the Scriptural idea of humanity. The consistency of our principles, and our strict adherence to our maxims, are often the causes of much mischief, because they are at bottom nothing more than the passionately obstinate assertion of our own ego.

All the sins of my past life stand before me without palliation, just as they were, with all their evil consequences, and in their unfortunate concatenation with the sins of others. Thanks and praise be to God that I am able to read this book without pain and remorse, nay, that this contemplation contributes to my knowledge of the wisdom and mercy of God, who did not suffer many of these weeds to grow, and knew how to repair much that I had done amiss. I see there a host of inconsiderate or unkind words. The one saying: What do I care? stands before my soul. I made this answer once, when I was young, to a beggar whom I did not know, who had entered our house in an importunate manner, and who, dissatisfied with the alms bestowed, was still demanding more. When I refused to give him anything further, he spoke of his poverty, of his destitution, of the little compassion he met with from men, and threatened to go and drown himself. It was then that I spoke those words, and never thought again, either of the man, or of what I had said to him. Nor did I ever learn on earth that my cold words had made a deep

impression upon him and that he actually destroyed himself. I see the host of sinful inclinations and desires. I recognise the vanity which was a ruling passion in my youth, and to which my more mature age was not a stranger. I see not merely the vanity which in youth was fond of dress, and sought to excel others in finery and trifles, but also that which in after years, when I avoided finery and gew-gaws, showed itself in the very intention with which I did so; and then the endless multitude of sinful acts. My mother had forbidden me, as a growing girl, to read a book which she called dangerous to my inner life, and therefore locked it up. I managed to get it, and read it secretly with eagerness. The book poisoned my mind for years; I was, unconsciously to myself, under its pernicious influence; it made my prayers cold, it excited my sensuousness, and led me on paths in which but for the saving grace of God I should have been lost. Lastly, I see numbers of sins of omission. Happy as our marriage was, I refused your father in its earlier years many a loving service, or at least many a sacrifice, because a foolish wisdom had taught me that a married woman should not forego all rights, and should in domestic life adhere to the traditions of her own family. He suffered from it, but was silent from affection.

It would not be painful to me, but it would be so to you, my dear son, if I were to continue this subject. You will readily understand why I have told you this much, for every one has his account

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book, and it is during the period of his earthly life that it gets filled.

There is one doctrine of Holy Scripture which such a contemplation of human sin and its consequences helps one to understand, I mean the hereditary nature of sin. Human nature constitutes one great whole, and is intrinsically, connected in its several members. We see clearly how these members are joined to each other by a thousand ties, and how they are in alliance with each other; how single sinful inclinations and dispositions flow onwards, so to speak, in deep channels for generations, how they ramify in the members of a family, appearing here strongly, there feebly, sometimes seeming quite dried up, then streaming forth again the more powerfully. How dependant is the individual in all his acts and thoughts upon his parents, even if withdrawn from their educational influence. How dependent on his surroundings. He gets neither what is good and laudable in him nor his sins and faults from himself. Hence they are quite in the right who declare it impossible for a man to improve himself. There is no such thing as improvement for him, but only renewal.

What is generally called improvement on earth may be explained by advancing years, which weaken certain temptations and sinful attractions, by new influences, nay, by increased selfishness, which is prudent enough to avoid many sins for the sake of the earthly loss they entail. But he who is not renewed continues his old self, he remains a child of man who does not become a child of God.

When you find on strict self-examination, that your good dispositions, your capacities and powers are an inherited possession, nay, when you find, that genius so-called is but the development, promoted, and so to speak cherished, by favourable circumstances, of a natural capacity, which is in germ innate in every man, you will perceive, that very little that is his own is left to man except his faith. Faith and unbelief are not inherited. Much as religious or irreligious habits and views of life may be inherited, and important as may be the influence of education and companionship upon the inner life, still every man has individually to meet the question, whether he will hear and believe or not. Since, however, the presence or absence of faith is imperceptible to the earthly eye, it is impossible for you to perceive, whether a man is saved or not. There are in the world a considerable number of tolerably good, or at least well disposed, persons, in whom not a trace of faith is to be found. Their acts and opinions are not indeed their own. They are influenced by those Christian forces and currents, which circulate in Christian humanity just as sin flows through it. They are upheld by Christian customs, which they like to call their morality, and on earth they are perhaps called unconscious Christians, while in eternity they mostly recognise themselves as conscious non-Christians. But there are alas! very many also, who decidedly call themselves Christians, who talk and act in Christian fashion, and who are yet entirely devoid of faith.

Every believing soul must grow and increase much

in heaven before it is perfect. It is indeed extricated from all connection with the sin of the human race; but all good also, which was not the fruit of the faith produced in it by the spirit of God, falls off; indeed it never was its own possession. And what small progress in holiness do even earnest Christians make on earth, what a conflict with the flesh have they to maintain to their last breath!

I will take a glance at the soul of the scholar, of whom I wrote to you that he first became a believer in his old age, and shortly before his death. He was employed throughout his whole life in historical researches. He had laboured with unremitting diligence to give a correct picture of a past time of celebrated men. It was to the investigation of minutiae, often of no special interest even to the dwellers on earth, that he devoted infinite pains, always striving to depict them as perfectly, as clearly, and as impartially as possible. These labours had not been favourable to his inner life. He had never occupied a hostile position towards Christianity, nay he had always retained a certain amount of favour for the work of the kingdom of God. But he had regarded it not as a fellow-worker but as a spectator, and his heart was entirely unmoved by its power. He sometimes gave a contribution to Christian enterprises, he looked upon it as a tax which the educated and benelovent must impose upon themselves for the good of the community. He sometimes went to church. He thought it necessary from time to time to have his attention turned to his



faults, and to make efforts for his improvement ; he regarded immortality as a thing self-evident—and that was all. The mercy of God having in his latter days found and converted him, he is in heaven, but his soul is like that of a child. He knows nothing, he possesses nothing. He died indeed a repentant sinner, but it is in heaven that he has to become acquainted for the first time with that long series of sins, which were not forgiven till the very last. He must fully and plainly see what the Saviour has done for him, before he is able to appreciate the free gift of salvation. Then he will have to carry on the work of developing the Divine life, of which only the first beginning was effected on earth.

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### XIII.

**T**WO or three of us were lately walking under the lofty trees of a charming grove. Their tops were gently agitated by a slight rustling wind, such as sometimes on earth passes through the wood of an evening, when the sun has gone to his rest. The trees moderated but did not obscure the light, verdure was beneath our feet, growth around us, and lovely flowers the children of light, everywhere. Thus may it have been in Paradise when it was yet on earth. Thus may the first human pair—as yet untouched by sin—have wandered forth as we did, in earnest conversation, amidst the fresh undesecrated creation of God. A pious physician and naturalist was just about to explain to me the marvels of Paradise, and we had been joined by the honoured soul, released after protracted suffering, of a female friend of mine. She had passed her whole earthly life in a great city. She died at an advanced age where she was born. She had never been acquainted with the glories of nature. Her husband had been in business, and chained to the city. At the period when care for her children no longer prevented her from going into the country, she was ill; and thus she had passed her whole life among the desolate brick houses of the town. How thankfully and happily is she now enjoying in heaven, what she scarcely knew even in its weak imperfect copy on earth. Her soul now took in deep draughts of that forest air and fragrance,

which her body had never breathed on earth. She asked like a happy child about every flower, and admired every fresh group which offered itself to her enchanted eyes. I too listened with delight to the words of my friend, who had seen deeply into the mysteries of God's works, and was initiating us in the comprehension of their excellence. This cannot indeed be disclosed to the earthly mind, nor does earthly language, which arises from the observation of the senses, and can only designate the super-sensuous by the help of sensuous expressions, suffice to speak of it adequately.

I once heard of the difficulties which missionaries experience, when they try to explain the contents of the Gospel to heathen nations in their poor undeveloped languages, calculated as they are to express only their immediate wants. I was told how they were at first only able to say in the most defective manner what was most necessary, and how they had the feeling of not having said, what they really wanted to say. It is the same with me, when I speak in the language of earth and try to put the glory of heaven into the poor stammering words of men.

"On earth," said the physician, "I was called a natural philosopher. I always avoided the folly which many of my colleagues indulged in, of esteeming myself bound, as it were, to misuse the observation and investigation of nature for the purpose of finding a sceptical dogmatic system confirmed by it, and bestowing the name of inquiry upon what is nothing

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beauty wonderful. But you thus only pointed out the mystery that met you in this creation of God." So saying he plucked a beautiful red rose, which was blooming in our path, and explained to us the meaning of its form, colour, and fragrance. And we understood it, and rejoiced with happy gladness, for knowledge is happiness. Ah! if you could understand how the colour speaks, gently but so eloquently, how the harmony of the colours in which God has clothed His creation is a full-toned song of praise! The colour is the response of the creature to the greeting of the light sent it by the Creator. For in the light, which unites in itself all colours, He sends to the creature the greeting of love and the breath of life, and the creature breathes back life and love in full-voiced, harmonious accord. Therefore rejoice on earth also, in the splendour of colour exhibited in the creation of your God. For in such rejoicing you are uniting in the silent yet eloquent thanks-giving offered by creation to the Creator.

While we were still talking, a slender roe crossed our path. It stood still, and looked at us with its knowing eyes, without fleeing from us. Many animals, which are found on earth, are not met with in heaven; at all events here, where they manifest in their purity and uninfluenced by aught earthly, the creative thoughts of God, who made them also for the pleasure and service of animated beings, just as He called grasses and flowers into existence, they frequently have other forms and natures.

"See," continued the physician, pointing to the merry and joyful animals, which were hastening

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through the trees in front of us, "is it not like a moving flower, a new and special ornament of the forest? does it not with its compeers and the birds which over above us, give new beauty and life to the glory of creation?" Alas that on earth the creature is still groaning together with mankind, alas that it is still under the curse of sin! He reminded us how on earth the animal world flees with alarm from man, in whom it recognises rather its foe than its lord. How terribly does the beast of prey copy in its cruelty the sin of man, how does the domestic animal, often alienated from its original destination, bear in silent slavery the yoke imposed on it by man, how all, either pursued by their fellows, or by the knife or bullet of man; or under the pressure of unfavourable physical circumstances, end their lives in throes of pain as being associated with the poor earth, which is under the sway of death!

"How is it possible," said my friend, "that men can have come to such a pass as to place their fellows on a level with the brutes, or even to think that they originated from them?"

"Who," replied the physician, "can, even in heaven, explain or understand human sin and folly? But strangest of all is it, that what was known to men since the first time they killed one of the more highly organized animals, should now be called a result of scientific research. I mean the similarity in both external and internal structure between the bodies of man and of the brute,—a similarity which could not but exist, seeing that both are destined to live on one and the same planet, and both, the man

corporeally, and the brute in his whole nature, are bound to the planet by their need of sustenance. But men, who once sought to build a tower that should reach to heaven, and scoffed at God, have now also come to the pass of scoffing in terrible contempt at themselves, and of debasing themselves to the level of brutes. What then if," added he seriously, "that likeness to the brute, which is undoubtedly the property of the soul, which is enslaved by sin and blinded by unbelief should be completed in hell, where all sin is continued and must be continued; although it is perceived to be folly and delusion, if the poor soul its, glance turned downwards to all eternity, should suffer from boundless and unappeased desire, tortured by the sleepless consciousness of its misery?"

"Yes," said I, "it is incomprehensible that occupation with nature, which even on earth and under the veil of perishableness, which it there wears, is still beautiful, and an eloquent witness to the being and character of God, should not lead to God and to the knowledge of Him."

"Did nature," asked the physician, "show you the way to heaven and kindle in you the light of faith, or did you not on the contrary first find God in her, when you contemplated her with a believing heart? Nature is a revelation of God, and a very glorious one, but only to those who know how to read it."

Neither the investigation of nature, nor the mere enthusiasm for her, which only reads in her its own

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thoughts and feelings, or to which she remains altogether a book with seven seals, has ever lead any to God, to Him in whose house we are, and by whose grace we are what we are. It is not distance, nor the gravitation of the earth, but sin that separates man from God. Why should I say this to you who are saved? It was not the sighing of the evening wind in the trees, nor the song of birds, nor the trickling of the mountain stream that saved you, but the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. You know the other and higher revelation which testifies of Him.

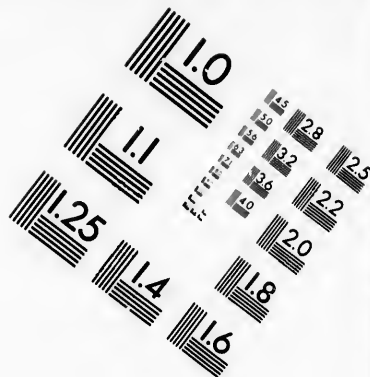
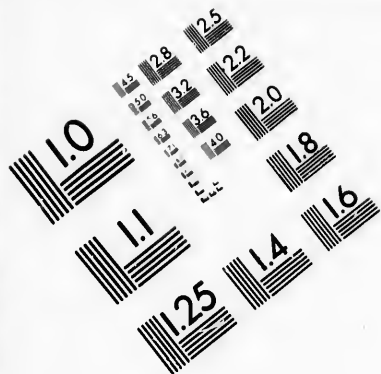
Then my friend said: "Many of your words have fallen heavily upon my heart. I have a brother, who is reckoned among scientific investigators, and his name is famous among the dwellers on earth. He has often said to me, 'Nature is God, and serving God means investigating her.'"

In the weakness of my earthly understanding, widely as I differed from him in opinion, I always regarded such words as a proof of piety, and hoped for him to the end. Oh that one of the angels would go to him and place the book with the cross, and with the story of the Cross between his books, and instruments, that he too might find the living and merciful God!

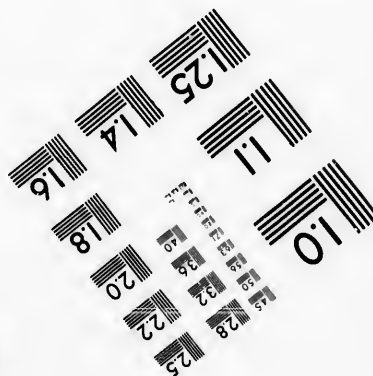
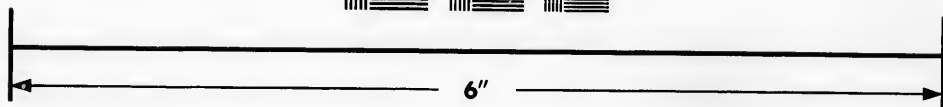
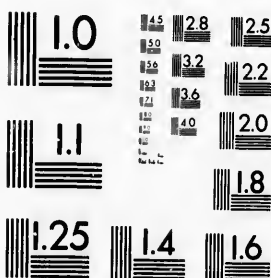
"The angels do this," said the physician, "they take care that the Cross is known to every eye, and that the story of the Cross reaches every ear. And if he will not believe, he would also close his eye and ear to an angel's message."







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#### XIV.

**W**HEN you behold on earth a home, in which the ways and doings of the children are watched over by the faithful guardianship of parental love, where evil is warded off from them, where efforts are made to repair the consequences of their folly, and everything is done that can conduce to their welfare, you have before your eyes a picture of the superintendence of Divine Providence. Though sin rules in the human race, and God to a certain degree permits this, still all your actions and omissions, all your dealings and their results are in His Almighty hand, and His angels are everywhere fulfilling their office, as His messengers, for the good of mankind. And when you encounter the great enigmas of the Divine government of the world, or doubts concerning His omnipotence and the universality of His loving purposes beset you, remember that you are far more insignificant and deficient in understanding, with respect to the Almighty, than your child is compared with yourself. His ways are wonderful, but they are also holy and good. And nothing wears so different an aspect, when looked at from heaven, as human prosperity and adversity. The life of man and the leading of Providence are like an artistic piece of tapestry, whose right side is turned towards heaven. Hence we speak here in such an entirely different manner about what you call misfortune and dark dispensations on earth.

"I have just come," said an angel to us, "from earth. A large railway bridge in America broke down at the moment the train was passing over it. All the passengers were swallowed up in the stream." No cry of horror, no expression of anxiety interrupted the speaker, but we listened willingly for the sake of obtaining fresh insight into the wonderful ways of the Divine wisdom, which wins its greatest triumphs in just those cases where men are most inclined to doubt it. "A great judgment of God," he continued, "has been accomplished—the criminal indifference of those who risked the lives of their fellow-men, although they had long known that the bridge was insecure, is punished—they have brought this judgment upon themselves. The bridge has for a long time been unfit for traffic, but we, God's angels, kept our hands upon it till God's hour had come. And when it came, we were all sent forth to keep back all who were not yet ripe for death; not yet ripe for heaven or hell, from going by that train. The Lord granted a gracious respite to many a one who was walking in the broad road; we had to place some hindrance in his way. Others, for whom God had still some use on earth, we warned in dreams. All who got into that train, which was to carry them to eternity, were numbered. All the tears of the survivors were considered. The field was tilled in which was to be sown that seed of misfortune, from which a harvest of joy was to grow. The Good Shepherd sought once more all the unbelieving souls, the call of God: "Come, for all things are ready,"

went forth once more to their hearts. They received also, on the very night that they left their homes, to hasten to the station through the silent darkness, a last greeting from God: some in the farewell of a pious wife, some from the innocent mouths of children, some from the silent sermon of the heaven-soaring church steeple in the moonlight. The train rushed out in the night and was soon upon the bridge. Then came an awful crash, and the long row of carriages rushed in one mighty curve into the foaming stream. It was but for a brief moment that the moon shone upon the scene of destruction. The tides bury speedily, very soon all was silent, and only the waves were murmuring the death dirge.

Those whose bodies are buried in the stream will not all come here, but there is not one among them whose pilgrimage was not completed. We know every one. But a salutary fear of God will seize men who are living in security and bear many a blessing even to distant circles. A fresh confirmation of the saying, that in the midst of life we are in death, will be beneficial to many a careless soul.

A troop of souls now approached. They belonged to those who had so suddenly and violently departed from the tabernacle of the body. They had already entered Paradise, hence the expression of terror and of the death struggle had already vanished from their features. Angels were accompanying them and showing them the glories of Paradise, and they joined in our praises of the wisdom and mercy of



"Let us travel by night," said the mother, "it will be cooler; and then we shall be settled by Sunday and able to enjoy it."

"Oh how delightful the thought of a quite Sabbath is in the retirement of the country?" replied the father. The mother was still holding in her arms the youngest child, whom she had grasped in the agonies of death. And the little one did not know that it was dead, it laid hold of its sister's hand and said:

"Oh what a beautiful place, let us stay here always Oh I feel so well, and have no pains!"

There is a young man appointed to missionary service, and who was about to start for his station: a mature soul, deeply rooted in the love of Christ. There is work in heaven for such souls, happy work, without weariness or sighs. Many now draw nigh, and there is none whose countenance is not radiant with joy, none whose tears of sorrow are not wiped away. They no longer talk in earthly language of the calamity that has befallen them, but of their happy home-coming; and all horror of those earthly forces of nature, which are so boldly invoked and never entirely under control, is taken from their minds.

The angel now gathered them all around him, and explained the ways of God to them by telling them of those whom they had left behind on earth, and of their fate. They answered with neither grief nor murmurs, they looked up at him with earnest intelligence, and no anxious questioning interrupted the words of the angel. "Yes, many tears will be shed

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for you on earth," he said, "many a sad and sleepless night passed, and many a sigh sent upwards. But are they not salutary? Do your dear ones look upon the saying, 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,' as mere empty words? Men do so struggle against the wholesome bitter medicine, but is it to be therefore withheld? Your seven sons," said he, turning to a railway labourer, who had accompanied the train, "will weep with their mother. They are still sleeping. Listen how one in his half waking slumber is praying for his father. But with the message of sorrow will come to them also a message of blessing. Charitable hands will be widely opened to them. Truly the compassion of men is wont to be aroused by striking cases; it so readily slumbers in presence of every-day misery. Praise the ways of God, who purposes to awaken mercy from its slumbers in your town, where there is so much need and poverty, and so few hands ready to help. It will grow and increase and look upon the distress of others besides yours. But pray for your children that they may not too soon forget you. For prosperity according to human estimation will arise for them from this calamity. And it is not misfortune but prosperity that may easily become a danger to their souls."

"Your intended," said he, turning to a young girl, "will be led to reflect and repent. The shock will become an awakening. But for it he would have been yours only for your earthly life; you know you would not have been really happy with

him. But now the Saviour will find his soul, and in a little while you will have him again. He therefore departed from you for a season that you should receive him for ever."

Thus did the angel address them. At the same time that mourning and lamentation were beginning on earth, songs of praise were resounding in heaven.

But, perhaps, while reading this you are thinking of those who are not called from earth till after much severe suffering. In your office you have indeed occasion enough to hear of such calamity. Even as a clergyman you often stand silent, like Job's friends, in the presence of misery. But you must also have remarked, that it is not those who have suffered the longest and the most severely who complain the most loudly; and that the most patient are alway those, in whose lives a self-incurred reason for their suffering can least be shown. What you on earth can venture to utter only in the rarest cases, because you cannot see into the heart, we in heaven can clearly perceive in many instances, viz. that suffering is a punishment. And conscience tells this too to the sufferers themselves. Certainly we hold fast our Saviour's words which He spoke to His disciples in the presence of the man born blind; but at the same time we do not forget the saying about visiting the sins of the fathers upon the third and fourth generation. And when this takes place in the third, the second and the fourth must fear the power of sin and the righteousness of God. Nay, the complaints of a sufferer powerfully and earnestly preach of both to all whose ears they reach.

XV.

I AM about to bring before your mind one of the loveliest of pictures, by introducing you to the children's Paradise. Our happy children are indeed with us, and we with them ; but they have also their own abodes and pleasure places, where, following their impulse for cheerful companionship, they can meet together.

A dear Christian man who is now in heaven once told on earth a story of a sick child, who was in a ship with her mother. There were numbers of falling stars, and the little girl asked what they were, and where they came from. Then her mother explained them to be lovely flowers blown over from the garden of Paradise, to which she would shortly go.

On the other hand the souls of children who come home are like blossoms of the tree of human nature blown over from the earth to us, not to wither but to go on blooming gaily and gladly. You know the storms by which they are snapped off on earth. You know what insidious devastating sicknesses make them fall in crowds. But, believe me, the storms are not the cause, but the occasion. The juices of the tree are diseased. The curse of sin rests upon it. For human sin and human weakness and disease are in mysterious and dreadful union. You inquire with horror as to the cause of those children's diseases, which appear now here, now there, and greedily

snatch away their victims. Whatever names physicians may give them, and whatever causes they may discover for their origin, they are abscesses on the body of human nature, and witnesses to the corruption of its vital sap; and the tenderest branches of the tree are the first to suffer from them. The causes of children's deaths are not, however, always so obscure, their connection with sin is often as clear as day. Some, impelled by avarice, crowd together in masses in great cities, where they can with difficulty, or not at all, find nourishment for their children, and where there is an absence of all the conditions required for the development of so tender a creature. Others, on whom these are abundantly bestowed, in their ungodly-indolence treat their little ones in the most unnatural and irrational manner. They, who easily and eagerly learn to take care of a young tree, which is one day to yield them profit, never care to learn how that tender plant, a child, is to be treated. Besides, what is often the case as to the fulfilment of a mother's duties on earth? A child is connected with its mother by a thousand invisible ties, even after it is born. How many mothers violently rend asunder these ties and regard the child as a plaything to be seized when the fancy for playing with it takes them? In all other respects the child is indeed well taken care of. Many a mother has been summoned from some scene of pleasure to the death-bed of her child; many a child's soul, whose body has perhaps remained healthy, has been isolated and stunted in the charge of a hireling. Oh unfathomable mercy of

our God, which collects these lost and fallen blossoms! Oh infinite love, which lets none of these little ones perish! Oh sacred fatherly affection, which far surpassing that of earthly fathers cares for the least and most despised!

See this broad pleasant garden of endless extent. See what millions of children are here gathered in the glad enjoyment of their existence, none suffering, none cast contemptuously aside, none peevish, or unsubmitive, but all joyous and happy. Is not the sight of joyous children one immeasurably pleasing even on earth? Does not a thoughtful mind contemplate with purest joy the life and movement of children? This pleasure, but without limitation or alloy, is granted to the blessed also. And those who on earth loved to minister to children, those friends of the Saviour, are permitted to do so in heaven.

You see here representatives of every age. The little ones and those elder children who are already near the circle of the grown up, and whose employments resemble theirs, are gathered here. What a pleasant sight is here offered by the souls of those children, who were no sooner born into earthly life than they were immediately removed from it. Those whose soul-life was still sleeping in the germ are like lovely and delicate flowers. But a light is shining in the calyx of these flowers, the light of Baptism, which gives them rights of citizenship in heaven. Whether all these little and elder ones are, when once they shall have put on the resurrection body, to grow up to the measure of the perfect age

of Christ, I know not. But neither do I desire to know, for each of the children leads after its own fashion a satisfied and happy life, and is lovely and perfect in itself at the stage of development at which God took it to heaven.

What Martin Luther once wrote to his little son of the heavenly garden, is what you here see, only that it is much more beautiful and glorious. See how happily they run about among each other, now hastening to their parents, now joining each other in joyous companies. See how innocently and gently their happy gaiety is carried on without either weakness or unholiness, how all their ways and doings combine, notwithstanding their contrasts and variety, in a beautiful harmony, which becomes a song of praise to the goodness and mercy of God, who has given them existence. On earth the child, who plays, grows up by imitation in the ways and doings, and also in the follies, of his surroundings. In heaven he breathes only a heavenly life. And yet these children have brought with them their ideals so far as their minds had conceived them. They delight in their toys and take pleasure in the things they liked on earth. They are always making themselves new pleasures in the greatest variety, and always affording new joy to the spectators.

Look at this child, it is the child of a poor man. It was very little cared for during the four years it lived on earth. It became acquainted with the hardships of life. The angels have just brought it to heaven. How astonished it looks at all the

beauty around it, and stretches out its little hands to the companions from whom no timidity keeps it back! And that other is the child of a prince. Many persons were engaged in its service and in taking care of it, but its soul never awakened to the joyous unfolding of its nature till it reached heaven, It had as yet had no toys when it came to heaven for the many things with which it was surrounded on earth, and with which they wanted to teach it to occupy itself, were but cold and dead to it. It had much to play with, but was not allowed to play in its own fashion and according to its own inclinations. That child was a poor sick boy, who lived in a cellar in a narrow court. He was always confined to bed. At his best he could only go a few times up and down his little room on crutches. A neighbour's boy one day brought him a wild flower, which he planted in a flower-pot and placed on the window-sill near his bed. It bore flowers every year, it was his flower-garden, his little treasure on earth. It was grown all over with his dreams, he turned towards it in death, when the Lord called him. Here he still has his flower and delights in its heavenly beauty.

And that one is *my* child! My eyes always seek it, and then rest upon it with maternal joy. As on earth his happiness is mine also, for they are not merely ties of blood that bind a mother to her child. He is a copy of my nature, and much more plainly than on earth do I see in him a picture of my own being, and perceive at the same time the impress of his father's and of our parents' qualities. Not mere-

ly was his body born from my body, but his soul-life also is in wonderful and mysterious combination with mine. He is not my creature, but he is a gift bestowed upon me through myself, by means of God's marvellous creative power. And what God has joined together continues joined in heaven also. Was he not therefore taken from me that I, who had indeed on earth renewed my maternal happiness by my delight, as an elderly woman, in my grandchildren, but yet could only taste it again as it were at a distance, might in heaven renew the happiness of my young life?

And even on those who are taken from earth childless, a happiness beams here, which they have hitherto been deprived of. Thousands of baptized children do not find their parents in heaven and would wait for them in vain. What a pleasant sight it is when maiden souls, whether they departed in youthful or mature age, open here in heaven to maternal happiness and join themselves with some solitary child-soul, which most resembles their own nature. Still more pleasant is it when such a soul, already matured in the love of Christ on earth, draws round it whole circles of little children and serves them with ministering love. How beautiful is it when the solitary man, who has as yet been deprived of the fellowship of love and of association with believing friends, and who is just beginning the life of heaven, acquires maturity and strength by love to children, and learns in their service to understand and value the fellowship of love!



There is a great stir yonder among the host of children. It is as though a new sun had risen, towards which all were turning. The games cease, the active motion stops. The great Friend of children is visiting His darlings, He knows each and calls each by name, and each one knows Him; those, too, who had not yet uttered His name on earth, but were baptized into it, know Him and rejoice in Him. They hasten to Him, they kiss His hand, the reflection of His love is mirrored on their faces. The eyes of even the very little ones sparkle. When I once took you in my arms on Christmas Eve, when you were a baby, to show you the lighted Christmas-tree, your eyes sparkled and your whole countenance was lighted up. So do the eyes of the little ones shine in heaven in the light of the Saviour's love.

XVI.

**I**T is from the mouth of the apostle, who certainly knew more of the sorrows of life than his fellows, and whose later letters breathe forth the longing, elevated indeed by Christian feeling, yet still plainly preceptible, to depart from this vale of sorrows, that the exhortation comes: "Rejoice in the Lord always!" And in opposition to this stands the saying of one of your greatest poets, a man wonderfully gifted and distinguished by God, one acquainted beyond others with human nature. Happy? Who then is happy? We know who are happy, the blessed are, but certainly even during the earthly pilgrimage true joy is no unattainable possession.

Joy is the key-note to which the soul is tuned. She manifests herself only where she may rejoice, and with us this key-note is continually resounding. As soon as one can feel oneself purely a creature of the gracious God, and those alien and disturbing influences which interfere with this fundamental feeling of the soul are removed, this joy-note sounds out pure and full. If sin had not entered into the world, man would still be dwelling full of peace and joy in the earthly Paradise, and earth would resemble heavem. But sin, with its companions, fear, anxiety, and sorrow, robs the poor inhabitant of earth of his joy and peace, and he has to wait until

a happy death takes him to heaven, to be able to live his proper existence.

If the earth were still under the curse of sin, a curse whose unrevoked influence reached into eternity, I do not know how joy on earth could be even spoken of. There would then be joy in heaven for only the angels, and no child of Adam could hope to share it. As it is, redemption from sin stands side by side with sin. But how the dwellers on earth should be able to rejoice, without having become by faith partakers of that redemption, I do not understand. You will see, that I by no means intend that wretched pursuit of enjoyment, which when it is attained for the most part proves itself to be the opposite, and either produces too speedy satiety or begets fresh thirst. There needs but little experience to recognise the misery and futility of this practice, and to see how these restless strivers after the pleasers of life attain at most in the rush and roar a cloudy and disfigured image of the ideal they pursue. All pure and lasting joy is unattainable by men devoid of faith. A frivolous mind does indeed devote itself to the enjoyment of the cheerful and untroubled present, but even in the fact, that it must force itself not to think of the future, a constraint of which it is always conscious, lies the hindrance to its joy. Such an one is like a homeless wanderer, who at evening gets unperceived into a well-furnished, uninhabited house, and makes himself comfortable in the handsome rooms, but can scarcely forget that he will be turned out next morning.

Unalloyed and genuine joy is only possible when life can be regarded as a whole and as eternal. Limited happiness finds its boundary in the limitation. But ought not you, who are redeemed by Jesus Christ and have a title to, and promise of, eternal life, to be able also to be truly and boundlessly happy?

When I look back on my past life, I cannot but say that I enjoyed much happiness on earth. I experienced no special awakening, at least I am unable to state any period, at which I can trace an actual and general transformation of my inner life. I was indeed regenerated in baptism, and I never forgot, as my pastor so impressed upon me at my confirmation, that I was a baptized Christian. My Christian knowledge came indeed slowly to maturity. It was only quite gradually that I comprehended and laid hold upon Christ as the Redeemer. The spirit was always willing, the flesh always weak. I remember many times of sin, but also many times of repentance. I never ventured to call myself an earnest Christian, I only strove that God might make me such. I enjoyed, however, many hours of inward peace and happiness, though they were but hours, to which were opposed days and weeks during which my heart was devoid of rest and peace. And here, where my whole past life lies like an open book before me, I see that my happiness increased with advancing age. This was the will and work of God. God's days have beautiful sunsets, and joy and happiness

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What I tell you is the substance of a conversation carried on in a large circle of the blessed. Let me give you some other experiences.

"For a long season," said a former master of a high school, "I disdained Christianity and the Gospel. I had artificially compounded a heathen theology which must, I imagined, bring me satisfaction. Let us, I taught, take a cheerful view of life as long as it is granted us. Let us do our duty and put ourselves as little out of the way as possible for suffering, and when we must one day give up our lives, let us do it with the consciousness: 'I have lived, and I have not lived in vain.' Such was my teaching, and I was withal very unhappy and uneasy. I was earnest enough to know that my fulfilment of duty was very defective. I was not so easily capable of not caring for suffering as I required others to be. I sought after the drops of comfort, which were to run down the bucket of misfortune, but did not find them. Nor had I in more mature age a single moment, in which I should have been ready to wind up my life and say, 'I have lived.' And when I ventured to think it, an inward voice said to me, 'You must first really live!' Thus I had a long life full of sorrow, but unprofitable sorrow, behind me, till God once came in mercy and made me to sorrow, nay, added the most severe, but also the most blessed, sorrow, that of repentance, so that my now believing soul could keep the birthday of its happiness."

"To me," said another, who had been on earth master of a National school, "was decreed a hard life,

full of care and trouble. Much was said of me, and of the hard lot imposed upon me. I belonged to that small number of men, who do not complain, and yet are much pitied. I had many grievous obstacles to overcome in my office. I had many children and much trial to go through with them. The arrangements of my sitting room were for years those of a sick room. And yet I was always cheerful and of good courage, and enjoyed life, though in another sense that is spoken of on earth. I was called an optimist; I was almost pitied for my contentment; my happy temperament, and my gift of bearing misfortune with dignity, were extolled. But there is no mock modesty in heaven; it was not my temperament, but my trust in God that supported me. My Bible was my daily companion; it is quite worn out with reading, and many of its pages are stained with tears. But when I closed it I was strengthened for the conflict, and charmed against the arrows of misfortune."

"And yet," said your father in conclusion, "men are not so much in the wrong in what they say of a happy disposition, when once faith is left out of the question. There are men who, by a constitution of mind entirely independent of their will, are so disposed, that even in the darkness of night they will perceive and rejoice in the first faint tokens of the grey dawn; who are capable of overlooking the wants and sorrows of life, and the more gladly turning their eyes towards its bright side. On earth they are called optimists. Others will instinctively turn

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their gaze towards the gravity of life, towards the obstacles opposed to every good work. Even on a bright sunlit evening they will be already expecting the shadows of night, and will early see them spreading. Duties corresponding to their gifts are placed before both, and the constitution of their minds may become a blessing or a ruin to either. Faith, however can overcome the weaknesses of both and assimilate the truth of both. In heaven, moreover, there is no longer either optimism or pessimism. Most, indeed, even among believers, act during their earthly pilgrimage in accordance with this natural constitution of their mind. On earth I was myself called a pessimist. I went through life amidst many sighs; and often, soon after I had found comfort in prayer, a dark picture of life was again before my eyes. I set faint-heartedly about much which others took in hand as though it were, so to speak, play-work; and if I left my hand to itself, it took a gloomy delight in wrapping itself in a mourning garment. Not of such mourning, but of conflict with it, was my happiness born, blessed be He who called it into being."

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themselves dwelling-places which do not fetter them, but which form the social centre of their life. Hence I can equally speak of circles, of which the time they spend together on earth forms the bond of union, as well as of such as are united by similar interests and similar work in the Lord's vineyard. Like maturity of experience, and a like degree of sanctification, also join souls together in intimate and enduring association. The Fathers of the earlier ages occupy, indeed, a different position towards the kingdom of God from the sons of this last century, which often makes its children so rich in this world's goods, while it leaves them so inwardly poor. Even national distinctions make themselves apparent. In the kingdom of God there is indeed neither Greek nor Jew, nor does hatred or opposition separate those who are of the same family. But souls bring with them the ideal world of their earthly life, and the shorter the time they have been in heaven, the more prominent are the differences of the earthly ideas which possess them, and which, though they do not separate, yet distinguish them; while the blessed of former centuries have more and more stripped off the ideal world of earth and replaced it by a heavenly one. Do you ask concerning differences of confessions? You, too, believe in one Holy Catholic Church, and for that very reason keep loyal to the creed of your own Church. In heaven, believers of all Christian confessions are united. Differences have vanished, because with the first breath of the life of heaven that touches the soul, error is known

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as such and laid aside. You see no rosaries in heaven and no one can think of a merit earned by good works when he surveys his own inner life with an unprejudiced eye. Just those who were most zealous about good works perceive most clearly, that is if they have meantime maintained their faith, the worthlessness of their works; they perceive them to have been breathed upon by sin, nay, impregnated therewith, and they unite with us in praise and thanksgiving to the merciful God, who justifies us without the words of the law by faith only. Or, when they see those, whom on earth they invoked as saints, themselves worshipping before the throne of the Lamb; when they see the Virgin Mary joining in devotion at the feet of her Divine Son with the other women who were on earth permitted to be among the personal followers of the Saviour; when lastly, they are certain of, and happy in, the immediate presence of their Lord who is on earth also, always with His people till the end of the world, they think no more of worshipping and adoring the saints.

You will ask whether we meet with heathens also in heaven. We are in heaven, where the Crucified and Risen Jesus reigns. We may, indeed, apply to heaven also His saying, that he has other sheep which are not of this fold, whom He will bring, that there may be one flock, one Shepherd. It may be that besides His Father's house there is an abode where those dwell who would willingly have heard the call, "Come ye to the marriage," if it had gone forth to them. But how should they be in heaven

without faith? Let the Lord call them when and how He will. I once heard on earth the saying, that the virtues of the heathen are splendid vices. It seemed to me a hard saying. But now I see that it has its deep truth, and that he who uttered it had at least searched more deeply in the Word of God, and had more knowledge of human nature, than they who conceive of heathen teachers and founders of religions as on a level with the Saviour in the Christian heaven. What you humanly call great is often very small in the kingdom of heaven.

What else are often these much admired virtues but natural gifts, but prudent and calculating self-assertions, or judicious renunciations of things regarded as either worthless or unattainable? How frequently is this moderation revealed as crafty sagacity, this valour as selfish ambition, this self-sacrifice as vanity, this benevolence as pride! Yes; leave the departed heathen to the Lord, but remember, my son, those still living on earth with holy and earnest intercession.

I made acquaintance on my journey with many whose names I do not tell you, because they have either been never talked of or long ago forgotten on earth. Many of these are spiritually a whole head taller than the rest. I mean, especially, honourable women who on earth went on their way simple and unknown, of whom, to human apprehension, there were no deeds of piety, no special achievements to relate. And yet in heaven we know them all, and they are all adorned with crowns. Many others

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I also saw many faithful witnesses to the Christian faith who had stood alone in a faithless age at about the turn of the last century. I saw also that pious minstrel whose life-task it was to sing of his Saviour's work of redemption. He was walking with two others. One was of much more ancient times,—a man of a religious, but daring mind, an Italian. The other a native of England, whose eyes, which had been blind on earth, were now looking brightly and gladly around him, was walking between the other two. Their harps were silent. They were talking together of the glories of Paradise, once lost and now regained, and of how far the reality excelled those images of it which they had seen in sacred rapture on earth. I was able also to press the hand of that good physician who, like few on earth, equally understood and kept in view the healing of the body and the soul, of that natural philosopher to whom God's earthly creation was a living witness to the excellence of its Author, but at the same time a parable of the eternal world of only partial and conjectural interpretation.

When we went farther we were soon surrounded by forms of a long past age; we saw the godly of the seventeenth century, many crowned like martyrs, and most of them come out of great tribulation, but faithful to the end. What souls these were! what fulness of prayer, what boldness of faith, what meekness of patience distinguished them! I saw there the godly minstrels who would always let the Lord manage, and committed their ways to Him, and who,

after the calamities of war, sang so charmingly of peace. Still farther back, and another group stood before our eyes; in their midst one known to every evangelical Christian, that hero of the faith, with the bold brow, the flashing eye, the humble, pious heart, His faithful friend, now long since released from all the sorrows of life, was standing beside him. He was surrounded by a band of comrades who were on earth united with him in his greatest work. I saw noble and faithful princes in this circle. One of our latest arrivals, who approached this group, told the hero of the celebration on earth of his 400th birthday and of the great affection with which he is still regarded there—an affection no longer accorded to any in the preceding or following century. And he rejoices that the word has remained on earth, as he was sure it would, and is speaking with the blessed of the last great conflict with Satan. Many protagonists, too, of evangelical truth, whose souls ascended to heaven from the flames, and who wore the crown of martyrdom, were near this group. Nay countless godly souls journey to this dwelling that they may see face to face this elect instrument of God, whose word has strengthened and whose example had encouraged them on earth.

I also saw that painter who was so much admired on earth—the painter of the Madonna and of maternal happiness, before whose greatest picture I had so often stood in that pleasant city of my native land. But the representation of the most highly-favoured among women with the most holy child was to me just the basis, as it were, upon which he sought

to glorify that mother love and maternal happiness which is the thing on earth that most resembles Paradise, that is most heavenly.

How shall I go on to describe to you the souls of the middle ages, of the olden time, as you call it on earth? Those who in the body were contemplative, pious monks, who lived near to God in faith and prayer in their solitary cells, or marched as armed knights under the sign of the Cross for the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre, or laboured with religious zeal in the building of those gigantic cathedrals. Here, too, you would see martyrs' crowns. How gloriously they shine upon the heads of the missionaries of Germany; and lo! in their group I saw a dear and well-known face which I knew on earth, a missionary who was killed by the hot sun of India, and who has now sought out in heaven those who bore the burden and heat of the day before him in the same labour of love.

But when I saw the group of primitive Christians who are all of one mind in heaven, also when I saw the holy apostles themselves, who are the dearest and constant companions of the Saviour in heaven also, when I looked on the face of his favourite disciple, I felt just as a younger child-sister might when looking up to a grown-up brother. They live in the same home, they are united by hearty brotherly and sisterly affection, and yet she looks up with a certain amount of reverence to the grown man.

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XVIII.

LIFE in another world is eternal. This thought must be terrible to the dwellers in hell, but to us, the saved, it is delightful; it is necessary to our happiness that it should be boundless, otherwise it would cease to be perfect happiness. That very growth in knowledge, which is only one side of our life of bliss, requires an eternity for its full development. For all that exists and all that happens, so far as it is God's, interests us. Behold creation in its endless forms and shapes, which are by no means exhausted in the earthly creation; behold the boundless order of the heavenly bodies, similar to your earth, yet subjected to entirely different laws and conditions of life, bringing forth and supporting life in a different manner, and one far surpassing the measure of earthly knowledge, what materials do these not offer to the soul thirsting after knowledge! Or survey the history of human development, with its countless proofs of the government of Divine providence, with its mighty conflict between the powers of heaven and hell. What a delight it is to contemplate that vast progress of the kingdom of God upon earth, so often but partially perceptible to the eye of man; how infinitely blessed to recognise how He does all things well, and knows how to carry out all His plans of love and salvation! Nay, a single small portion of this history of human nature,

the course of my own life offers me endless material. One day on earth I took a glance at my father's journal, and found a section in which he had put down his ideas and plans respecting my education. Such a glance, not only at my father's faithful affection, but also at my own life, which was represented to me in this book under an entirely new light, affected me wonderfully. Here in heaven I am reading of ever fresh proofs of the Fatherly love of God, and I also understand my own inner life better and more thoroughly at every fresh observation.

The human mind is intended for knowledge. But it cannot hover in the air. The knowledge of God is the foundation on which it must be built. Therefore did God place Himself before the eyes of our first parents in Paradise. They knew Him, and if their life had remained without sin, their knowledge would have advanced, so to speak, in a straight line. Doubt, that first malady of man's mind, shattered his knowledge; and now man, in his struggles after knowledge, often gets no farther than overcoming this malady, and returning to where he might have stood at the beginning, to certainty of God. The thirst remains in the soul, but it so often drinks of anything else rather than of the water of life. There was a saying which I have often heard used on earth by the opponents of Divine revelation, in which a serious and sincere inquirer declares that he would rather receive from the hand of God the ever active impulse after truth

than truth itself. It is a striking testimony to the thirst after truth which dwells in every soul of man, and at the same time a fearful testimony to that defiance of the creature who would fain be the Creator. As if the whole full truth, the truth which it needs an eternity to grasp, could at all be given; as if inquiry and knowledge did not begin after the right stand-point is given. He who would commence investigations of the starry heavens must have a post of observation. Poor human nature is so often searching after one, whence it may examine heaven and eternity, and will not see that which has been raised by God Himself. You ought to be looking up from the hills of the Holy Land, and you are wandering in the wildernesses of the heathen, and raising up hills for yourselves from the sand of the desert.

Hence it happens that on earth inquiry and knowledge are not so closely combined as it seems. You think, perhaps, that it is given to only a small portion of mankind, perhaps to those whom you call the aristocracy of intellect, to advance in the knowledge of truth. You so readily conceive of heaven as peopled entirely with the so-called cultured. But the millions upon millions who living from hand to mouth, are far removed from your culture, and your inquires, are also children of God, and destined for heaven. Nor is there any such mighty difference between them and you. The simple countryman, who may perhaps now and then take away with him from the sermon the comprehension of some text of

Scripture, or who has really felt the guilt of his sins when confessing them, has got farther than the scholar who with his numberless foreign languages is able to say nothing, and with his extensive learning to undertake nothing.

What you call knowledge and learning is unknown to the greater part of mankind. The rustic and the labourer have scarcely ever a conviction or an independent opinion in secular matters. None rises above the other. The general view of things is also the view of the individual. But they have, or must I say they had, their Christianity, and thereby they stand at the gate of knowledge. It may be that they advance but few steps through the gate, but on the other hand, they are not walking in the paths of error. No vapour everclouds their souls when the ray of God's seeking grace penetrates to them. Is it not criminal to deprive them of their Christianity, and to give them nothing—absolutely nothing, in exchange? It is the fearful guilt of your century to take away their faith from the masses, and to stupefy them by artfully doing violence to their convictions. A God-fearing, rural, and artisan population was the fountain of your national strength, the basis of a healthy culture, the stay of your social life. You are now beginning to repent of what you have sown. You have in senseless haste heaped up in your country masses of stones, part of which are unprepared and unhewn, and with these you would have the people build for themselves the edifice of science and knowledge, as though the possession of stones would make them capable of building. For a

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long time they beheld them with indifference and felt no interest in them. At last they have noticed them, but they do not build with them, they hurl them against you and your erections.

It is folly to think that mankind must in the first place obtain by strenuous efforts its faith in God, the foundation of all knowledge. It has efforts enough to make. Leave their faith, or at least their Christianity, to the masses, for your earth will have perished long before your so-called knowledge has become the common property of the masses. The Church of those who know is the heavenly Church, which will one day dwell on the new earth.

Opposite our parsonage—as you will remember—lay Sandhof, a small peasant property. Even if we had not lived in such active intercourse with its inhabitants, we should yet have known their history; we looked at their windows from our sitting room. Old Sand was of a firm, almost a defiant character. He was a strict churchman. Every Sunday he was in his place at church, he maintained good discipline in his family. The day began and ended with family prayer. But there was an absence of all works of Christian benevolence, nay, of every proof of neighbourly love. Your father often lamented his backwardness in giving, for he contributed to no collections, and was the only countryman who passed the alms bag without giving anything. When your father once put it to his conscience, he appealed to the text, that the right hand must not know what the left hand doeth, and broke off the conversation. We did

not know that he had made several extensive loans to poor members of the congregation without interest, and with the express condition of the strictest silence; that he had made great sacrifices to save a young man, his godson, who had been led into evil ways in town by bad companions, and was in the greatest poverty. He was a man well versed in the Scriptures, but decidedly unfavourable to all that is on earth called the progress of the age. He held scientific farming in contempt, and the new system of teaching at the village school was an offence to him. Your father, as school inspector, had many contests with him about it. He never read a newspaper, and no one told him plainly and simply what had happened, but only what the townspeople thought of it, and that was to him a matter of indifference. Towards his son, who after completing his time of service returned from a garrison town to the paternal property, and wanted to introduce many modern improvements, he was even rough and harsh.

You know that he died suddenly. He met with an accident at hay-carrying. Your father found some difficulty in preaching his funeral sermon; he even mentioned the roughness and harshness of character which distinguished him notwithstanding his faithfulness to his creed. And what a pure and noble soul he is! It is touching and striking to see how the simple character of this man has developed in Paradise, how perceptibly his soul grows and thrives. He has so little to leave off. Not that he was free from sin. Like any other soul he has been cleansed from

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the great guilt of sin by the blood of the Lamb. But the little knowledge he had was of a kind that can be built upon in heaven he had, and wished to have no other. It is not his first task, as it is that of most who could boast of earthly wisdom, to disentangle truth from errors, follies, prejudices and speculations. And what a refined moral tact he had acquired even on earth. Not that tact which is the result of a certain social polish, and which a cold and unloving heart acquires with the greatest ease, but that Christian firmness of action which is neither made sickly by doubt nor disturbed by the influence of others. Even his stout adherence to the customs of his fathers was an expression of the faithfulness of his nature, and what is required of stewards is that a man be found faithful.

**W**HEN I led you to the Paradise of children, I omitted to remind you of thousands upon thousands of souls, who though on earth they no longer inhabited a child's body, have in heaven the same claim to care, guidance, and help as children. They were in the same condition on earth, only there they were without that perception of the poverty and littleness of their inner life, which they first acquired in the light of heaven. Many a one thought himself on earth not only very independent, but also very advanced, who has now in heaven to begin at the first rudiments. Oh how little I know, above all how little I am, is the complaint of many ! Do not think that there is in heaven any ostentation of wisdom, or even any spiritual pride which leads us to look down upon and judge others. Only we cannot ignore facts.

The greater number of these indigent ones—do not be astonished at hearing it—come from the ranks of the so-called cultured, average people educated according to pattern, whose characters have had no kind of development, and whose knowledge is an entirely external acquisition and quite unconnected with their inner life. A kind of knowledge of no importance or use in heaven. It is not all such indeed by many that come to us, but those who are saved by the loving mercy of the Saviour, and do

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come are so often at the very first beginnings of the spiritual life. Character? do you ask. Are there not also bad and spoilt characters? Yes, truly, character may almost lead to hell. Character is a tree growing in the soil of a sound, free heart, which spreads out great branches if its growth is not disturbed, and which is indeed as likely to be a poison-tree as a fruit-tree. But when this tree is made good by the Spirit of God, it is a plant in which the heavenly gardener can take delight. With your average education you trim the trees of human nature according to your pattern, to make them look as much alike as possible, and apparently at least of the same height. The best branches are often broken off that the uniformity may not be destroyed. Actual trees may occasionally flourish under such a process, but human souls, each of which has, by the will of God, a different nature—its peculiar nature—and is also subjected to a different law of growth, cannot bear it. It stunts their heart-roots, and thus human souls get perplexed about themselves, and do not want to be characters. Instead of eradicating the shoots of sin in the conflict for holiness they prune away their own branches after the pattern of others. Fashion takes the place of morality, fashion not only in dress but in the training of the inner life. It is the fashion to go or not to go to church, the fashion to take part or not to take part in works of charity, to do this, to leave that undone. How paltry!

Listen to the confession of one who has now come to maturity in the atmosphere of heaven, who clear-

Ip perceives in what respects his age sinned against him. and consequently he against himself.

"My mother," he says, "died early. I never knew my father. My mother was an earnest believer. She brought me up religiously, but the seeds she planted lay undeveloped in me until by the grace of God they began to grow on my death-bed. As I was tolerably well off, everything was done to impart to me a good education. I came to the capital to be a pupil in a public school. The religious instruction made no impression upon me. I appropriated at most such information as was necessary to understand, as our director said, the problems and aims of the age. My heart had no interest in these things. It was only the instruction for confirmation of an aged clergyman that really touched my heart. I certainly felt love for the aged pastor, though not as yet love for God. While yet a youth I was the ruin of a young girl with whom I formed an acquaintance on a holiday tour. I had read in a book of travels of the savage maidens of the South Sea Islands who offer themselves to strangers for a trifling gratuity. And I did not see why I should not be gratified when it would cost me only a few lies and promises, which I was not in earnest about. By chance I afterwards learnt that this girl died in great misery. Then my conscience was shocked. I remembered the old pastor, and wished to confide in him. My guardian learnt that I was about to visit him. He warned me that the man was known as righteous overmuch (he was,

in fact, working zealously for a mission). Religious fanaticism, he said, was infectious, and I obeyed. Nevertheless I cannot say that I fell any farther into a life of special sin. On the contrary, I was much concerned as to what people might say of me, and learnt to care for my honour. I even imagined that I had gradually become a highly respectable man. I gave myself up without reserve to the pleasures of the capital, but I ran into no excess, and always observed a certain amount of moderation. Let there be no follies to repent of next morning, was perhaps my motto. I was an average man, both in good and in evil. I felt no holy indignation at sin, I felt no enthusiasm for goodness. Having now become a man I regarded in a coolly critical manner a revival of vital Christianity in our town, though I was by no means at heart so hostile to its manifestations as the favour I showed to progress, so-called, might give me the appearance of being. The greater number of my relations and acquaintances were on the same side, and I had neither the moral courage, nor especially the necessary acquaintance with the matter to oppose them. My views on the questions of the day, and above all on prominent Church movements, were formed at the beer table. I had no objection to occasionally changing my opinion, especially when an objective estimation of things seemed to require it. But I had also my faith, which I let no one deprive me of. I believed in humanity as I called it. Humanity was my gospel. I do not know what I really thought of it,

I only know that it often cost me trouble to maintain my faith in the continuous moral progress of the human race by its own resources, that I had to close my eyes designedly to facts. But it was just because my opinions were so very obscure that they could not be overcome. Of one thing alone I was certain, that I hated and persecuted every earnest and zealous reaction against the evil that was in the world. At the same time I liked to be benevolent, and promoted humane undertakings. Diligent collecting for humane purposes, especially when the only sacrifice it cost me was the cheap one of my time, or when I could thereby impede Christian benevolence, was my delight. When in some merry meeting we had broken the necks of a whole battery of champagne bottles, I would carefully pick up the corks to sell them for the poor. I was never married. I had been told much of the exaggerated requirements of the fair sex, and of the bad habits in which they were brought up; I saw so many examples of unhappy marriages, and I myself required so much from a wife, that I feared I should not find one who would satisfy me. Thus I passed my long life. You, dear brethren and sisters, know my death, and how the Saviour yet found me; but you know also how unspeakably poor I was when I came among you, and how in your faithful love you had to rear and teach the hoary headed child."

Thus far his narrative. But when I look back at what I have said, I feel that I must remind you, my

dear son, that in those circles also, which call themselves believing on earth, there exists much unhealthy conformity to one pattern, much unauthorized tyranny of fashion. I know parsonages on earth, and I mention these that we may first strike upon our own breasts,—I know parsonages which were places of worldly pomp and splendour—and such worldly pomp may be displayed even by statuettes of Christ, and Gothic embroidery, as to offer no place where one of the common people would venture to sit down and open his heart freely. I know clergymen's wives who seem to have forgotten the words of St. Peter about the plaiting of the hair and wearing jewels of gold, and who want to be not women but only ladies. I know clergymen who pay more respect to the aristocracy of birth than to that of intellect, and with whom a gentleman and a godly man seem identical. I know clergymen's children who show plainly enough that they are brought up for money getting and pleasure, but not for quiet godly ways.

And what of Christian characters? Even in heaven I cannot search into the heart of any man who is still alive, and see how it is with the life of faith, while of those who are in heaven I know that they desire to grow and will grow, even if they attained to faith only in their last hour. I do not know how many of those who are now alive on earth are living merely according to traditional phrases, practising their accustomed employments, which may bring them earthly honour, and are by no means always undertaken for the Lord's sake, and walking in the beaten track of an average externally Christian life. But I do know that I have not met with many whom I certainly thought to find here; famous preachers, much talked of Christian workers, souls whose lips overflowed with unction!

DO you still remember the little verandah on the garden side of your father's house where we used to sit on mornings and evenings in summer? How pleasant those mornings were if every one was well and no special trouble oppressed us! There we made our plans for the day. The delightful fragrance which came from the garden of itself attracted us thither, where ripening berries greeted us, and where exuberant weeds had also their lesson for us. The birds assisted at our morning devotions, the villagers going forth with their tools to field-work greeted us silently and respectfully, and the morning bell mingled its tones in our prayer.

The evenings were almost pleasanter. When the shadows fell, you children tired with play used to nestle up to us. The night scented rockets had opened, and the stocks gave forth their perfume. Distant singing was heard from the village, it was the young girls singing perhaps some hymns they had learnt at school. Then all was silent. There fell upon us somewhat of the peace of God, nay a foretaste of the peace of eternity. Then we would pray:

"Abide with us, fast falls the eventide;  
The shadows deepen; Lord, with us abide!"

or sing Paul Gerhardt's charming evening hymn, "Now rest the woods again," a hymn in which I

delight even now, when my heart is "from sinful works set free, nor pines in weary sorrow more," and when Christ has "given to me that spotless robe that ever shines."

Add together the morning freshness and the evening tranquillity, that vivid morning feeling which flows through our whole being, and the peaceful evening feeling inspired by the hope of slumber, and then you will have some notion how we feel in a land where no sun rises or sets, where no mid-day heat exhausts and unnerves, and where the rapturous joy of existence is always equal.

We are sitting on a flowery hill, and thinking of our joint earthly pilgrimage. Here, too, the flowers are fragrant, and many a one passing by gives us a friendly greeting. Distant singing is heard, a band of virgin souls hovers past, clothed in white and decked with flowers. I recognise the hymn they are singing, it is just like the one you know, and like, "Let us go our Lord to meet."

It is composed by the same much loved author, but the heavenly hymn bears the same relation of the earthly as fruition does to hope; he has now entered the heavenly Jerusalem, he knows the city with the golden streets. But we are thinking of the time when we also sang, "How will it be." It is pleasant, even in heaven, nay, far pleasanter than it can be on earth, to give oneself up to remembrance. There we have carefully to separate happy memories from sad ones, and often violently to turn our busy fancy from the path she had chosen. Here the sting is extracted

from all sad remembrances, they fit pleasantly into the whole picture of life, nay, from its necessary shadows. The eye even dwells with preference upon many a dark spot, and passes over with indifference many days once thought happy, but which now appear empty and trivial.

Your father had taken his harp. Oh that you could hear the heavenly harping! They are not the broken off, quickly expiring tones of the earthly harp that we hear, tones which are only effective through the rapid succession of chords. Each sound is like that of those soul-breathing stringed instruments which, resting on the breast of man, reveal the depths of the human heart. Every string of the heavenly harp sounds full of soul, not veiled and foreboding, but merely suggestive and advancing from enigma to enigma, like all earthly music. In heaven, on the contrary, her tongue is loosened and she speaks plainly. When on my death-day you sit down to the harmonium and play the choral, "Jesus my refuge," you too speak to your wife and children in sounds. But it is only lisping, like a child who is learning to talk. The heavenly music is a medium of thought, and gives striking expression to a world of common ideas, and that the more perfectly, the closer the mutual communion of the performer and the listener. It is speech transfigured.

The harp now sounded a bridal hymn; he who on earth spoke so little of love, and next to nothing of earthly love, who, even when he wooed me, chose me because we were of one mind as to our journey to

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eternity, he plays to me in heaven, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, a song about married happiness! Now he is leading me to your cradle, you smile for the first time, an angel is hovering over your bed. Now a glance into the church and at the pastor's seat beside the altar, it is the moment before the reception of the sacrament, the absolution is pronounced, the peace of God has entered my heart, a sacred happy moment—now he depicts to me an anxious time, that of the war. A strange sight for heaven, men equipped for battle, uniforms and weapons! But yet it was a time of grace and blessing, a season of teaching and ripening for the inner man. Thus do the years pass before my eyes with their hours of joy and days of mourning, all free gifts of God, all stages to happiness. And now you, my son, leave home, your father makes your youth and your youthful happiness pass by in a gentle echo. Age with its stealthy tread approaches. Then the harp sounds more muffled and softly; it is as though a cloud, but a cloud of golden tissue, lay upon the harp-strings, earthly tones are heard—Jesus my refuge—he is playing his death song. Then again his playing bursts into rushing chords, victory, rejoicing, adoration resound—and he lays the harp aside. Meantime a dear faithful soul had approached us, an old friend of our family, who being herself unmarried, was in close intimacy with us, and one to whom your children are much indebted. She had understood your father's playing, for the interests of our family was hers. In her younger days she was

excitable and visionary, full of enthusiasm, or supposed enthusiasm, especially for art and poetry. She composed a good deal of poetry herself, and not without skill. But her lays stayed modestly on their stem like violets, and gave forth their fragrance only for herself and for us, no one thought of collecting them in a bouquet and letting them exhale their odour for others. She found in poetry the very heart of life and its star. It was not, however, till her riper years that she was brought, partly by the influence of your father, to the right understanding, and consequently to the true appreciation of poetry. Her inner life became more chastened but deeper. She learned to love instead of to dote upon poetry.

She now spoke, saying to your father: "Do you not think that poetry is to earth what this music is to heaven?"

"Yes," said he. "To make poetry means to recall. The poet say to another what the latter already knows, what he has felt and experienced; and the better he is able to say just that only, and at the right time, the better is he understood, and the more thankfully is his gift accepted. He creates nothing, he only gives to what has been experienced, it's a typical purity, by divesting it of all that is mean and accidental. He thus removes the picture which he paints from the limitations of the temporal, and gives it eternity for a back-ground. It is not indeed to all that the poet has something to say. He cannot recall where there is no common experience. But even the common-place can make an impression when it touches kindred minds.

You have already perceived on earth that the object of life is not identical with remembrance.

Not graceful thought and sweet remembrance of it, but work and remembrance constitute the deep reality of life. And in saying this it is self-evident that I am chiefly thinking of that sacred, serious work to which we only, as it were, lend our hands, while another architect stands behind us. And the more those who will have nothing to do with work turn only and always to remembrance, the more is their inner life stunted, and the more are they constrained to puff out artificially its slight substance, and to deceive themselves in respect of its paltriness. It is so easy for youth, whose emotional life is so closely connected with its bodily development, to revel in emotion. But there are also elderly persons, whose eyes look backwarks and backwards only, and who no longer know of any going forwards. And it is just in old age that one learns to forget the dark spots of his past life, or even with criminal levity to smooth down or hush up the faults of past days. But a time is coming when this will be no longer possible, and there is a place where, though remembrance is torture, the face must be turned backwards upon the past life, because there is no longer any forwards.

THE soul has its sicknesses as well as the body. Though in heaven these are got over and deprived of their pernicious influence, yet traces of them still remain in the soul, and furnish conclusions concerning its past life. How frequent is regret for a life of failure and emptiness, the traces of which reach into eternity, and such regret is most frequent just among those whose life a higher education might apparently have rendered a full one, or whom it might have placed in the right path!

This happens because the earthly life is regarded by so many as no part of the eternal life, and thus becomes an amputated limb which must perish. The same folly, which speaks of a self-originated world, talks also of an object which earthly life is to have in itself; and this supposed object not being even comprehended, not to say attained, by most, complaints of a wasted life abound. Demands on earthly happiness are screwed up to the highest pitch, vain and disproportionate claims are cherished, and life, instead of being vigorously and contentedly made the most of, is dreamed away in the contemplation of its possibilities. Thus desire for faithful work is paralyzed, and the flowers, which bloom even on earth for the earnest pilgrim to eternal life, are trodden under foot.

I know a faithful soul which on earth belonged to a miner. He spoke of his life as follows: "I passed my whole life in the hard labour of my calling. I spent a great part of it in the bowels of the earth, and yet I always felt myself happy in my occupation, and did my hard work without complaint. I had many a domestic cross to bear, and my wife shared many a heavy trial with me. But we knew Him upon whom we could cast our cares. Humbly as I acknowledge my past life to have been an underserving and a sinful one, I can yet say also that, from my youth upwards, I kept to the grace of God in Christ. I knew that I was a pilgrim upon earth, but one who was to profit by the time of his pilgrimage. Besides, our dangerous avocation warned us plainly enough to set our house in order and to be mindful of eternity. We knew why, before beginning our day's work, we commended our souls to the mercy of God. I have lived through times when the voices of those who talked of the amelioration of the condition of labourers, and an equal partition of property, reached us. And I should have had nothing to say against being offered lighter work for better wages, but the circumstance that the edifice of our prosperity was to be built upon the soil of unbelief, preserved me from danger. We were to give up heaven and get earth in exchange. I would in no case have given up heaven, even if I had seen that this exchange would really have been effected. And so I escaped unharmed those temptations to which thousands of my comrades succumbed,

and were deprived of both their earthly and heavenly happiness. My life, notwithstanding the few advantages it offered, never seemed barren. My death—I was killed by the falling in of a shaft—came upon me, not indeed desired, for I wanted to see my children grow up; but I was able in the moment of death to commit myself to the mercy of God, which ruled all things for me and mine. My body lies buried by a fallen rock in the depths of the earth. A comrade clung to it in the agonies of death. Where may his soul be? How will it be on the resurrection day when he loosens his arm from mine, when we look each other in the face again—and perhaps go different ways! I myself am infinitely happy at being in heaven, and yet I like to remember my earthly life and its work.”

Let me bring before you a scene which I lately witnessed. I introduce you to a circle of advanced souls, one of whom is especially pre-eminent, and attracts, as it were, the regards of the rest. It is the soul of an aged man. Listen to what he tells of his life.

“My soul,” he says, “no longer wears the exact image of the body it dwelt in on earth. I was there quite deformed and a cripple. My parents had left me a cottage at the extreme end of a small town. I there lay upon my bed, quite drawn together by rheumatic gout, and visited by frequent days of severe pain. I cannot remember the time when I could walk, I was only able to get about by

crawling, that is when the state of my body allowed me to get about at all. I did not, however, live on alone, but was able, on the contrary, to earn enough to supply my few bodily wants. My hands and arms were sound, though weak. So I knitted when I could, and also repaired small articles of furniture, for I had some little skill. My small earnings were not only sufficient for myself; I had also the happiness of being able to do good to others."

"Yes, God requite you for it," interrupted another; "good in every way, temporal and spiritual."

"I had read a good deal," he continued, "was intimately acquainted with the Bible, and had learnt much from the clergyman of the place, who used to visit me, for I was not able to go to a place of worship. I had also read upon my solitary couch a good number of secular works, and thus taken a survey of much secular knowledge. I had many visitors, not only such as required my small services, but also such as a certain curiosity, or a pleasure in my mother-wit, brought around me. I was fond of youth. The young people of the place would often sit in my house on Sunday afternoons. It was especially interesting to me to follow the progress of culture of those, who had perhaps gone to a distance to higher educational institutions and who visited me in the holidays. They often brought back with them a new kind of learning, which little accorded with my simple belief in Scripture, and against which I had some difficulty in making a stand. For they

knew how to state simple, naked unbelief, in learned language, and with the help of many foreign words. I begged of them to give up foreign words, for the truth could, I supposed, be as well said in German. And lo, when the matter was expressed in German, the new learning came out of its cocoon as a very old one. It always consisted in a denying or ignoring of eternity. 'Make the best of this life, for there is no life to come, no resurrection.' This was how one of them preached to me one day. I asked how, with my contracted and miserable existence, I was to manage that, and how it happened that being just what I was, I should never have had a notion of having missed the object of my life. Then he talked about enviable moderation and a limited horizon. But it also happened, that one who had with a compassionate smile conceded, that there was some good in Christian faith for people in my condition, afterwards humbly confessed that it was at least as good for people in his condition. And I have more than once succeeded in convincing would-be wise young people, that their sceptical views pre-suppose an implicit faith, and are built upon at least a thousand incredibilities and miracles, while my belief in Scripture and miracles is based upon one single unproved assumption, belief in the living God. Yes, as was once said it takes a great deal of superstition to deny miracles.

Thus I lived on happy and contented, although the Lord was pleased to lead me through many painful nights; and though I was devoid of all those things



that are generally reckoned among the comforts of life, pain and privation were salutary for me; I felt this even on earth. The very fact that I could be something to others and could influence them in my small way gave significance to my life. I was indeed willing to go when my God came to release me; but the old pastor was right when, as I have since learned, he insisted in my funeral sermon that thankfulness, and that not only for deliverance from the chains of the body, should outweigh every other feeling at my grave. Now also it outweighs all else when I look back at my past life. Many of those who were then near me are now united with me. Of many I know neither the course nor the end of their life. I frequently think of an elderly single lady who often visited me in the later years of my life. She was well read, and had had a liberal education, but was inwardly very poor. She had read a good many novels; she called hers a problematic nature. She may have met with the expression, which I did not understand on earth, and here have no need to understand, in books. She talked much of having missed the object of life, and of misunderstood talents. She had never, she thought, been in circumstances in which she could develop her special nature. She was weary of her earthly life, but hoped for no other. She was of too noble a disposition to make pleasure the object of her life, and too proud to have it pointed out to her by God. A gloomy resignation was her religion. I have often put before her the cross of Christ and tried to teach her, that unless we estimate

the worth of our earthly life with reference to eternity we shall undervalue it. But all was in vain. I do not know whether she is still alive."

"Yes, she is, she is," broke in a voice, "but not on earth; she is alive in heaven." A woman with the traces of age, who had just departed, approached him, she was still bearing in her hand the crucifix, which she had clasped in death; she greeted him as a child does a father. "She is alive," she cried, "through thee, thou faithful loving-soul, through thee she learned to serve, to love, to believe, and she has found the object of her life."

But he stretched out his hand and said: "Not through me, but through Him who seeks and finds that which was lost, to Him be the glory!"

XXII.

THE view which we take in heaven of our earthly lot, and of the dispensations of Providence, resembles that taken by the grown man of the events of his youth, of his education, of the chastisements inflicted on him by his parents. He recognises a salutary discipline in much that his parents did, which once seemed to him harsh and incomprehensible, and it is not till he has learned to bless their chastening hand that he fully estimates their parental love. Being able in like manner, and also from a higher stand-point, to survey our earthly life, that which was once incomprehensible is clear to us also, all its enigmas are solved, and a light is cast on all that was obscure. Therefore reverence the ways of God even when you do not understand them. A case is before my eyes in which a mother was taken away from a troop of children not yet brought up, and indeed on the very day that she had given birth to the youngest. On earth only the fearful sport of chance, or the inscrutable dispensation of God could be spoken of. Not so in heaven. The woman had long had dim presentiments that she should not survive the approaching event. These were the finger-posts of God directing her to eternity and eternal salvation. And she understood them. She had set her house in order, and was ready to depart in peace and joy when her hour came, which otherwise would

not have been the case. She died in full consciousness, and was able in dying to commend herself and her family to the mercy of God ; and her prayer had a deep reaching and indelible effect. Her death was a salutary shock to her husband. I mean not merely such as death exercises upon every one who has to witness it—for death is the aptest and most impressive preacher in the world—but another also. He became conscious of his paternal duties. He had hitherto concerned himself very little about his children, except by playing with them in his leisure hours. He had left the care of them to the mother, and lived only for his business, as he called the incessant pursuit of gain. He has learned that he cannot discharge all his duties by money, and that there are also duties whose fulfilment brings no palpable gain. And as to the children, they were tenderly loved by this affectionate but weak mother, but had also been petted and spoilt. As a hen shelters her chickens under her wings, so did she shield her growing children from all contact with other people, from every rough blast of life. In spite of this seclusion, serious faults had developed themselves in the children, but these their mother did not see. In one a defiant and tyrannical disposition, which would scarcely submit to the mother, and not at all to any one else ; in another an effeminate sentimental character which recoiled from all earnest and energetic action. These faults came into notice immediately after the death of the mother. The seriousness of life was a wholesome discipline to the children. They now remember their mother with

more affection than they had shown her on earth; the dead mother is more to them than the living one was. She herself sees all this and thanks the Lord for His dispensation. At the beginning of her heavenly life this was indeed difficult to her. The pain of separation was still upon her countenance. When she came here she wished to see her children just once more, to take leave of them. She longed to hover round their beds in the night season, to let her eye rest upon the sleepers, to listen to their breath. She now thinks and wishes better.

I remember a family still living on earth, and whom you also know, who were always looked upon as specially tried. Even human malice and delight in the misfortunes of others could not say why it should be visited. The husband and wife are anything but unbelieving; thoroughly pious and respectable people. But they never have a happy day. The illnesses of the family never cease, the husband is unsuccessful in business. Where others succeed with ease he fails, people say he has no luck. They are both generally pitied, and the patience and perseverance of the man, by which he is kept from despair, are admired. This is also your judgment, and you, too, are astonished at such an incomprehensible lot. But you do not see that many a youthful sin on his part is now thus fearfully avenging itself, and that many consequences of wanton folly, which, according to God's righteous government of the world, must ensue, even when the folly is repented and deplored, are now ensuing. Nor do you see into his heart,

You do not know that his ways and doings are not according to the will of God, that God would lead him into other paths than those in which he is now walking, and has brought this home to him times without number. Where he seeks earthly prosperity he ought not to seek it. But the pride and obstinacy of his heart rebel. He will go his own way, and he struggles with terrible exasperation to attain his ends in spite of all previous ill-success. Not that he has renounced God, or desires to have nothing to do with Him; he even prays, but God is to be the minister of his self-will; he ignores the third petition in the Lord's prayer. His is a noble but an inflexible spirit, and it needs heavy pressure to bend it; but it will be bent. And then his wife, who depends with idolatrous veneration upon her husband, and whose love confirms him in his obduracy, will be saved with him—is then the lot of these two so incomprehensible?

Or are you thinking of that consumptive friend of yours, the young man with the hectic colour, who died in the bloom of life, and whose gifted mind excited in his friends innumerable hopes, none of which were to be fulfilled? Certainly you would not wish to make God responsible if the poison of disease, which after all is the product of sin and crime, after passing over generations, collects in an individual and destroys his life. Is then death in itself altogether a misfortune, especially when the soul has for years had notice to quit its earthly dwelling and is thus daily reminded of its being un-

clothed and clothed upon? Believe me, that many a one, who has known himself from his youth to be destined to an early death, is the better for this than one who goes his way in health and strength. And does not the merciful God offer His hand to each individual soul? does He not promise life, full, abundant life, to those also for whom earthly life does not quite fully develop its supposed abundance?

I would not indeed conceal that the ways of God must often be obscure to you and to your judgment. You are walking in the land of faith and not of sight. It is enough if faith is only certain that one day nothing shall continue to be obscure, and that all secrets shall be revealed. Yet such knowledge as you might derive from Holy Scripture would clear up much to even an earthly understanding. For instance, the question why the ungodly have often such prosperity on earth will then have no meaning for you. Only those who are children in knowledge look with envy upon a life of so-called prosperity—a life passed in the full enjoyment of earthly possessions and constant cheerfulness, and ending perhaps in a gentle falling asleep. Such a life does not exist. This much coveted earthly prosperity, this very abundance of external means, soon becomes customary, and is not felt as prosperity. It only glitters in the splendour of the unaccustomed, to the envious eyes of observers, while to the possessor it appears in the grey garment of everyday life. The fear of death casts its shadow through every life. At most it is less frequently





XXIII.

THE great gulf which separates heaven and hell is impassable. It was not always so. For once when the Saviour had preached to the spirits in prison, He brought a great company of departed souls with him to heaven. Heaven was indeed empty till then, at least empty of the souls of the dead. Only angels occupied it. Heaven and earth were then in more active and closer connection than they now are, because God's counsels for the redemption of the human race were being fulfilled on earth. I shall let one of the saints of the Old Testament tell you about that first peopling of heaven. His narrative is an excellent discourse on the mercy of God.

“All we who adhered to the hope of our nation for a redeemer and a redemption, had united ourselves in a little band in the realm of the dead. No one indeed is, before the judgment day, in a state of consummated condemnation. As yet the abyss of hell is empty. Life in the realm of the dead is indeed gloomy and barren, but for us who held fast to our hope it was at all events endurable. Very much depends upon what one brings to the realm of the dead. For the earthly life is continued there. Whatever a man hoped, desired, and loved on earth, he hopes, desires, and loves there. Only there is this great difference, that the empty, the vain, the sinful is perceived to be so without its being possible

to the soul to cease from it. What a man has become on earth he continues to be where there is no possibility of reform. Satan has as yet no power over souls. Those however who will one day be in his power feel it already. We on the contrary firmly hoped and believed that a time of release and deliverance would come for us. It was a time of waiting, but our waiting was that of the bride who is expecting the bridegroom and waiting for the day of marriage; while many were like condemned criminals, in hourly expectation of the announcement and execution of their sentence.

Thus we saw millions who were in hell with us, contriving, though only after a shadowy fashion, the empty and miserable life they had led on earth, and tormented by the full consciousness of its misery. We saw the voluptuous ever pursuing fresh phantoms of pleasure, never finding enjoyment, yet never able to cease from this dismal pursuit. We saw the avaricious accumulate supposed treasures, of the worthlessness of which they were nevertheless conscious. We saw gamblers aimlessly exciting themselves to no purpose, winning and losing, only to leave off with the feeling of loss, and then to begin afresh. We saw all the slaves of sin and passion indulging in their lusts, drinking out of empty goblets, and yet always drinking again because of the consuming thirst that tortured them. They knew and took part in all the amusements of earth, combined themselves in clubs and societies as in the world. Hell witnessed a caricature of life on earth,

only there was no smiles and no rest. For hell knows no Sabbath. Dread of the Day of Judgment would suffice to destroy peace, if it existed. It is true that all have by no means an absolute certainty of a judgment to come, for doubt reigns in hell. There they doubt everything, even the fact of their being in hell. Only one thing is certain, the present unspeakable misery. That is denied by no one. With some indeed the deceptive hope prevails that it will not last for ever, nay, that it will not last much longer. There is wisdom and scholarship in hell as well as on earth. And these seek to prove in ever new forms and with ever new arguments, that the present shadowy life is only the dying echo of the earthly life, the final vibrations of the bell, which must at last be silent. This wisdom indeed finds few adherents, the echo lasts too long, and the vibrations do not decrease in strength. Suicide would be preached, if it were possible.

Such was the society in which we lived. Many indeed who were not of our race, but who had departed from earth with hopes of a better world, with a consciousness of the corruption of human nature, and just a dreamy presentient expectation of its redemption, joined themselves to us and shared in our hope. Many noble heathens who either had already deeper and purer views of life, or at least knew their own life in its transientness and poverty, heard from us of those great deeds of God upon the earth, which tended to the redemption of the human race, and waited with us. Thus we formed a company of

pious souls much derided and thoroughly hated by the multitude of the ungodly, but not persecuted. Our hope grew with each earthly century, just as each earthly century enlarged our company. More and more souls joined us, and strengthened our hope by what they could tell us of its ever increasing confirmation as it approached its fulfilment. Thus the great day of deliverance drew on. We heard of the Saviour's birth, one of the shepherds who had heard the song of the angels came to us and announced this message: 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people.' Simeon departed in peace, his eyes had seen the Saviour, and we grew certain that our eyes too should see Him. And now the time must be near, the time of waiting must be coming to an end. We stood like our fathers, when they came up out of Egypt, ready for our journey, ready to enter the land of rest for which our souls were longing. We heard with reverent adoration of our Lord's life on earth. His mighty power extended even to the region of the dead. For Jairus's daughter, who had been only a short time with us, and had told us of the great prophet in Israel, was called back to earth to put on her body again. The young man of Nain, and Lazarus, the friend of the Lord, departed from us. The blessed hope of a resurrection dawned upon us—and now came the time that He set His face to go to Jerusalem—the time of His suffering. We felt that the kingdom of Satan took a special part in the events taking place on earth, though its agency was, as far as we were con-

cerned, hidden under a veil. We knew however thus much, that Christ went to Jerusalem and was betrayed. Then a dreadful form entered the region of the dead, a rope round his throat, and with an expression of despair terrible to even the inhabitants of hell, who are so well acquainted with despair. It was Judas Iscariot. Not that we learned anything from him. He spoke to no one, but wandered about hastily and restlessly, till he found one who was enduring like misery. And now the day of freedom and redemption appeared. Ye dwellers in heaven, what a day it was! He came to us, but not yet in the body of His glory, in which we now know Him. He desired only to be seen and known by those who had an eye for Him. He came with pierced hands and feet as the man of sorrows. The substance of His preaching was: "It is finished." We, however, knew Him. It was just so that the prophets had depicted Him. There was not one in our company who did not recognise and join Him. And His word reached to the millions by whom hell is peopled. There was not one who did not hear it, and he had many sheep who were His, though we knew nothing of them, and who heard His voice. Many others heard it not. He was derided and rejected as upon earth. We, however, and His own followed Him. Paths were opened where hitherto there had been none. Our way lay over bottomless depths. A light appeared such as our eyes had not yet seen. It grew brighter and brighter—and now we too experienced what you did on your dying days, when the gates of

Paradise were opened to you. The angels of God now received us into the abodes of the blessed, the thief from the cross approached us, Moses and Elias greeted us, and soon we—as His first heavenly Church—received the risen and ascended Saviour now wearing the body of His glory.”

Such was the narrative of the saint of Israel concerning that great time. But tell me, does not Scripture tell you the same? Will you not say, even in the weakness of your earthly intellect, “Yes, it must have been so.” There was no human soul who lived on earth before the birth of the Lord, to whom the knowledge of Him, and with this knowledge the great decision concerning Him, was not brought near. And do you ask: “What of the millions and millions who have lived on earth since His ascension without hearing of Him?” Lay aside your anxiety concerning them. He will cast none into hell who would willingly have trusted in Him, if the opportunity had been offered them.

The number of men who have lived, or are still living on earth, is indeed a small one. He knows of all, and is acquainted with them all. You speak of large numbers and of great masses who meantime seem even terrible to you because you can take no survey of the whole, and do not know the individuals. To one who like God knows and loves each separate soul, there may indeed be a multitude, but no masses.

XXIV.

“DO you know me again?” lately asked me an angel who had hovered down with gentle motion towards me. “Do you know me again? it was I who bore you to heaven.”

I knew him again and rejoiced to see him. “Ah, what a happy, holy office is committed to you. If men could but see how you surround and watch over them.”

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed,” answered he. “We are not indeed near to souls only at their departure. Are we not at all times ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation? We are the messengers of God, and are continually descending to earth and ascending from it by His orders, as the patriarch Jacob once saw in a dream.”

“Then is it you alone,” I asked, “who carry on the communication between heaven and earth?”

“We alone; none travel earthwards from the realm of the departed without the express will of God. The evil spirits, the angels of Satan, are indeed active upon earth, and oppose us as far as they can.”

“Were they not once your brethren and created for good?”

“Until they fell and severed themselves from us. That was a mighty event, and entailed disastrous

consequences. At a time prior to the earthly creation we were all united before the throne of God. Do you ask of the origin of evil, and how it entered the harmony of the heavenly life? Enough that it did this and with it separation and hell. And then came the creation of the visible world as men call it. At the word of God the earthly world was called into existence. It was marvellous to behold how at His word, 'Let there be light,' the dark masses were enlightened, the stars kindled, and light, dispensing life and blessing, penetrated to immeasurable distances. The earthly world was fashioned to a lovely copy of the heavenly, and man, the crown of creation, made in our, nay, in God's image. We admired with reverent adoration this work of God, a living soul in a body formed of earth! How beautiful was the young earth! how beautiful in his purity the newly-created man! But sin came, and with it came the curse upon the defiled earth and the gates of the earthly Paradise were closed."

"And did your service for the rescue of fallen mankind now begin?" asked I.

"A long work," he replied; "it is harder to restore than to destroy. You know from Holy Scripture how frequently we interposed in the course of human development, from the time when He no longer held intercourse with man till we comforted at the tomb of the risen Saviour the mourning disciples, whom we subsequently assisted in their difficult work."

"Has not your ministry to mankind been latterly



a different one? In former times you were often visible to men; did that no longer occur afterwards?"

"Does not mankind advance," answered he, "from century to century? They are always talking of progress. Does not a mother guide her growing up child in quite another manner from that in which she rules the little one? The more men were themselves in a condition to know the will of God and the object of its ways—and they had the complete Divine revelation—the less were we permitted to interpose with warning and direction. But now to-day, as formerly, we still meet, when God's will appoints it, the poor in spirit and those whom the living waters of God's revelation of mercy have not yet reached."

"Then it is your happy office to promote good and prevent evil?"

"Say rather to turn evil into good. We know only of sin, not of ill. If God were to prevent evil, human history would have come to an end. We deliver from undeserved suffering; we strengthen the souls of those who suffer for the trial and confirmation of their faith; we turn aside the darts of the wicked from those whom, according to our Father's will, they are not to wound."

"And do you not especially minister to children?"

"Yes; they are the Saviour's darlings. We delight in children. They still bear about them something of the form of man as God designed him. At the sight of them we are reminded of the first

human pair, when they walked upon earth as yet without sin. We indeed see also the unhappy germs of sin already shooting forth from the hearts of children; there are even children in whom the ill weeds of sin already bear buds and blossoms, weeds whose seeds were transmitted from the hearts of their parents, and which have been cherished and reared."

"Yes, and yet it seems as if men discerned in children the nearness of the angels; I know of cases in which the voice of God has spoken through them to their elders."

"It is so indeed. We have already brought many a good word to grown men by the mouth of a child. They are often so much farther from us, they are themselves so wise!"

"Ah, how can man, who is a child of the dust and of time, be proud? And yet I know of many who have forfeited their eternal salvation through pride alone."

"Men are a strange race. How often do we watch them! How they fall into error and folly, reprove to-day as falsehood what they yesterday acknowledged as truth, and are again and again trying to reach the goal by hitherto untrodden paths, while refusing only the path where the hand-post stands and the guides are ready. Man is to investigate and to acquire knowledge, it is one of his chief earthly tasks; but his knowledge is a creeping plant and needs a support. Therefore God, from the beginning, revealed Himself, and planted the trunk to which it

may cling. That trunk afterwards became the Cross. But human knowledge so often crawls on the ground like a creeper that has lost its way, it attains indeed to luxuriance of shoots but never to fruit, and the farther it creeps the more stunted it becomes. Is it not—to speak in the language of earth, for in heaven the word does not exist—ridiculous to see a man sitting at his desk surrounded by a chaos of books seeking to fathom the origin of the world and to account for its existence, that world of which only a small fraction is reflected in his brain. We angels feel infinite compassion at seeing a system created in which what does not suit its composer is omitted, and what he has no experience of denied, and which unbelieving thousands slothfully applaud, and indeed the more loudly the more indulgent it is to the flesh. The good name of 'Science' has already often been made a laughing-stock, and the dwellers on earth need to be on their guard against everyone who inscribes it on his standard."

"But," replied I, "is not the impulse after knowledge innate in man? And is it to be exclusively religious knowledge?"

"You are still speaking in the language of earth," said the angel with gentle reproof. "What is there in the created world which does not remind us of God? Look at the least of the works of His hands on earth, everywhere you meet with a genesis; and the cause of all genesis is mysterious to man and supermundane. Care has been taken that man

should have matter for investigation for millenniums, as yet he scarcely knows the little planet which is his dwelling-place, as yet he has no understanding, perhaps hardly a perception, of a thousand things which take place at his feet."

"I was on earth," said I, "a woman who understood but little of the progress and results of science."

"You are none the worse off in heaven for that," answered he. "Science has effected much good, but much which is infinitely foolish has also been asserted in her name. There are indeed those who teach others that the world was self-originated, according to laws existing as they say it. Do you not feel the prodigious irony involved in these words?"

"It is the language of unbelief, which will have no Creator, because it will have no master. But can there be any who continue faithful to their unbelief to the end, even in the presence of death?"

"This only happens when a gloomy despair and an animosity, which men do not indeed always recognise, take possession of the heart. On the other hand, I have often been sent to the death-beds of men who during their life had adhered with apparently sincere conviction to the dogmas of unbelief, but who in their last illness rejected them, as the mariner casts out the ballast from the sinking vessel, and departed in a happy and child like faith."

"Do you not then also see much that is good and beautiful on earth?"

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"Do you think that the kingdom of God will fall to ruins? and is it not a delight to see it increase? We see much that is good and beautiful, and much too that human eyes do not see. And we have seen it at all times, for there are no dark ages on earth, they all have their bright side also. Yes, we have also seen much that rejoiced us in heathenism, and which will one day be brought to light, for the heathen also are God's children. Nay, at the time when they in their blindness and folly made the gods to be men, they were nearer to the kingdom of God than they who have made men to be gods."

"Do the inhabitants of earth do this?" asked I.

"Can it be that you know nothing of it? Man must have something that he holds sacred to which he may look up. He becomes as the brutes when he gives up the upward look. He who has lost his God must put something else in His place. Every mortal will have something he holds sacred. And if he does not worship men, he puts a community in the place of God. There are many men to whom nothing but their earthly native land is still sacred."

"I too loved my native land with my whole heart, and I love it still," said I.

"But even in your native land you knew that you belonged to the strangers and pilgrims. You knew of a better country, and perhaps it was just on that account that you loved your native land the more heartily. But stay—an old man, to whose service I am called, is just about to die. See, he lifts up his hands to bless his family. The doctor stands silently

at a distance. He now requests to hear the hymn : 'Jerusalem on high, my song and city is.' His children comply with his request with trembling voices and weeping eyes. 'When shall I be, my God, with Thee, and see Thy face?' is gently uttered by his quivering lips. 'A moment and it will come to pass, we are coming. But as for you, farewell, you know him and will soon see him!'

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XXV.

**M**Y letters do not take you to the presence, and so to speak to the vision, of the Thrice Holy. It is true that I myself am drawing ever nearer to Him, and that He is bestowing upon me from day to day, in ever richer abundance, that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. The knowledge of this does not penetrate to earth, but blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And do not ask how His omnipresence, of which you on earth are also certain, is to be reconciled with the fact that we behold Him. I too am always certain, even without beholding Him, of His sacred immediate nearness; I hear His voice in a heart no longer seduced by the flesh, I inquire concerning His will, and nothing hinders me from acting in conformity therewith; He is all in all.

And He in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and who yet walked on earth in human form, whose holy image Scripture at every page places before your eyes, He truly is in our midst. It is not a comfort only to the dwellers on earth, but to the blessed also, to know the Lord as their Brother, and to abide under the shadow of His Almighty and merciful hand. He is present for each who dwells in the great house of the Father;

He takes care of each soul, as the gardener does of his trees, and He works and acts in heaven as the Evangelists describe Him to have worked and acted on earth. He works miracles here also; nay, the miracles He wrought on earth were but patterns of His heavenly agency, rays of light which fell upon our earthly darkness, and were designed to excite a longing for the kingdom of light. He still opens eyes and ears, He heals all diseases, He feeds us, as He did His contemporaries, with His word, and will one day feed us again bodily, when we shall drink with Him of the fruit of the vine. Only He has no longer enemies in heaven, and the time when He will raise the dead is not yet come.

See, He is passing by. All souls turn towards Him. Without words, His look speaks. Streams of blessing flow from his upraised hands. John is with Him, the first who quite understood Him when he wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He wears the form of an old man, in which he took leave on earth of his little children; but old men on earth do not look thus, for the youthful appearance that men are wont to depict him with also suits him. It is strange, but a certain timidity hinders me from approaching him and the disciples—a timidity which I do not feel in the presence of the Saviour. He is so far above me, he saw farther into the mystery of the Divine nature, almost two earthly millenniums ago, than I do now. And yet there is no reason for this timidity; we are all brethren in our Father's house.



It is a work of love which the Saviour is come to perform. His ways, and those on which He sends His messengers, are simply ways of love. They have brought up from earth the soul of a youth, an idiot from his birth. The angels do not depart from him, they stand round him, and their eyes seek the Saviour. The youth looks like one dreaming, a smile, such as he never had on earth, passes over his poor imbecile face. And have the angels brought him to heaven, him who did not believe? Yes, him whom Jesus loved, nay, whom He specially loved, and was expecting. They bring him to the Lord, as on earth men brought the deaf mute to Him. He lays His hands upon his head. Then the slumbering soul awakes; streams of life thrill through his body, his eyes see clearly. It is like a new creation; thus may it have been when the first man became a living soul. The Saviour delivers him again to the angels, who go with him. The man who has been healed as yet says nothing, he only listens, but he takes in all he is told.

Then an aged man presses through the hosts of the blessed, and hastens to the restored one. He presses him to his heart, he caresses him: "My son, my son," he cries in supplicating tone. But the healed man looks at him cheerfully, but like a stranger. He knows him no more than all else that he meets with. Then a mark of inexpressible pain, such as one is not accustomed to behold in heaven, passes over the countenance of the aged man. He rushes to the

Lord's feet. "My Saviour," he cries, "alas that unhappy hour of guilt—the poor child!" He said nothing more, but the Saviour lifted him up and said: "I atoned for heavier guilt on the cross, go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee." We were silently remembering the words about the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children.

The tongue of the restored was soon loosened. It was wonderful to see how quickly he learned. "I am," he said, "like one who is conscious that some great happiness is bestowed upon him." And the angels said, "Saved." "I am saved," repeated he "and for ever" added they. "But where was I?" continued he, "and why am I come here only now? or have I not existed at all?" Then the angels taught him as one teaches a child. They explained to him the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and he took in their words as a thirsty man does a draught of fresh water. He rejoiced when they told him of the everlasting mercy of God and of the value of a human soul. Only to a soul that breathes the atmosphere of heaven is such an access of joy as he then experienced possible.

I thought on this occasion of the indifference with which men received the preaching of everlasting mercy, because they have so often listened to it, and because they have grown accustomed to the promise of salvation.

Meantime the heavenly choirs had gathered around us and were singing of the mercy of God and of the Saviour. The bells of our cathedral fell in harmon-

iously, the sounds of the organ reached us from its lofty aisles, and all we who had been witnesses of this occurrence crowded into the church to worship. We only worshipped and sang praises, no one preached to-day—we had seen a sign.

Then I said to your father, who had joined me at the door: "Alas! how many like him are over there, where the heavenly light does not shine. Many whose eyes have been holden that they could not see His glory, who have been plunged into the misery of unbelief by the fault of others, maniacs who awake to consciousness in the land of terror. Would that everlasting mercy would pierce beyond the great gulf, and a great flock surround the Shepherd!"

Thus I spoke, but he answered with solemnity: "Till the last judgment, hell is a place of waiting. Eternal love turns away from none who do not turn away from it. But lay aside these thoughts. Would you wish to have a mercy without justice, nay, is there any mercy without it? Have you not already read on earth that an eternal, though to you perhaps an incomprehensible, enactment of God says: "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned."

An angel, who overheard our conversation, said significantly to me: "God still governs the world, and His is the kingdom for ever. Lay aside what is still of earth where men so desire to fathom that which is, and is to remain, secret, till that day shall reveal it, where they would fain make the final decision dependent upon their own standard, or even on their own feelings."

Thus did he instruct me, and my soul was silenced and calm.

**I** OFTEN see you still, as you sit tired in your easy chair on a Sunday evening. You used to look back at the work of the past day, and that not without pleasure. You often used to say that at least a little was attained by your labours, even though much of the seed sown should have fallen by the way-side. And that what was attained was of eternal value. It is the happy advantage of your calling, to be allowed to do work for Heaven. What so many can only do outside the work of their calling you can do in it. And yet there is no calling on earth which might not be fulfilled according to the mind of Christ: none in which the Christian heart of him who fills it might not assert itself. And even if this were not the case, mankind would still have to be thankful for work, because it is a bulwark against so much evil. It is a poor life which is passed without a vocation and without work, and it is a beneficent arrangement of Divine Providence that but very few are at any time in a position to be able to dream away their life. Even by such, much is done which they indeed call work, but which is in reality only amusement. In heaven we look forward to eternity, and no one speaks of amusement. On earth you have such a short succession of years before you, and yet you are seeking for means to while away this brief space of time, and make it

appear shorter: Time passes without assistance. On earth people read to pass time, how often without learning or acquiring anything, nay, even without recreation. They read to forget themselves, and the duties they will not acknowledge to be such; or to kill *ennui*, that phantom by which empty hearts are haunted. Or they enjoy their wealth, in other words they spend their life in reckoning up their possessions, in seeking to increase them and in resisting such efforts as might prevent their quiet possession of them. They look upon the protection of capital as the problem of the moral system of the world, and everything else as secondary. Thus the heart becomes a desert, it grows hard and insusceptible, and the life is empty and barren. Then they resort to drinking to transport themselves artificially into an illusory prosperity. The spirit of wine or beer is to give substance to life, and to conceal its poverty. Then the empty chatter which this spirit begets with its phrases and cant, which have no points of contact with either a Christian or a rational life, takes the place of true wisdom.

• My own sex is still worse off when it is self-condemned to an unemployed life. There are girls whose minds, taken captive by reading, are strangers to actual life. Their life is chiefly one of emotion, their understanding and will are torpid. With some an extensive correspondence takes the name of work; plentiful effusions of feeling are indulged in, and the paltry contents of their inner life, which cannot but be weak, because deprived of its proper nourishment,

are squeezed to the last drop. I have often seen the want of a calling lead to an actual worship of parents and family. You know how happy and affectionate was our family life, and how hearty was our mutual love. But life and filial piety were not for you, and ought not to have been, identical terms. Nor does heaven exist for the sole purpose of reuniting parents and children.

I knew on earth a clergyman's daughter, an only child, who lived alone with her father and an old servant, for her mother died early. Her father was the sole object of her affection; she was by no means handsome, and no suitor had knocked at the parsonage door. Nor did she want one, for had she not her excellent father? But he died, and she was obliged to leave the house. She then hired a small room in the village, with a view of the church and churchyard. She did not want to see the parsonage house again, for the new clergyman had made many alterations, he had even made another room the study. Indeed she did not want to know anything of him who was trying to replace her father, whose loss was indeed irreparable. She had no need to work for her living, so she rummaged day after day among her father's papers, put them in order again and again, and contemplated with sorrow the memorials of past days. When the bells rang for the second time on Sundays she used to open the old closet in the corner of the room. There hung her father's gown and cap. It had been her office, even as a child, to take her father's official dress to him, and she would not leave

off now, that he could no longer put it on. So now also she every Sunday spread out the gown upon the easy chair, and laid the cap with the bands beside it upon the chair. Then she would stand and contemplate all these things, and the image of her father, as he used to look on Sunday, when he always appeared to her a special object of veneration, would rise vividly before her mind. And when the bells left off she would take one of her father's manuscript sermons and read it devoutly through, for her own edification. I wonder whether she is still alive.

On earth I often found even the religious sentiment made an object of trifling and dreaming. There is a longing for heaven in which true faith has but very little share. It is on the contrary, nothing more than the delusive other side of giving up hope of earthly prosperity. But heaven is not, apart from other considerations, an asylum for those who have suffered shipwreck on earth, and it is a sad abuse of the Saviour's words, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," to suppose that nothing is needed but the experience of earthly sorrow, actual or imagined, incurred through our own fault or inflicted by others, to entitle us to rejoice in heavenly comfort. "Do you not understand," says, if I am not mistaken, a German author, "that it is easier to feel enthusiastically than to act rightly." To which I add that it is easier to act rightly, than truly to believe and to prove your faith by love. For there are so-called right acts which are of very doubtful value. And yet it is better to

act than to talk of acting. I know ladies who talk much of, and show an interest in, all works designed for the benefit of suffering humanity, who in committees will condescend to the depths of poverty, and will yet coldly draw back their hand when a child of the people would offer its cordial greeting. I have known the welfare of the serving class zealously cared for by some who treated their own domestics with that cutting and cool severity, which is regarded as specially adapted to the poor.

It is, I hope, impossible for you to misunderstand me. You know best that I am very far from thinking that men should forget heaven in their care for earth. I know also of a true and genuine longing for heaven, and rejoice that it is satisfied in the land of eternal rest. I know how the work of life-wearies, and how in the burden and heat of the day the wish will arise in the heart: Would that I were at home! "Blessed are they that feel home-sickness, for they shall go home," was written in my album by a dear old man now among the blessed. I too knew this home-sickness, and felt happy when a glimpse of the battlements of the city of God, shining at a distance, was vouchsafed to me. For they do shine even as far as earth to the eye of faith. It is folly to say that on earth one knows nothing of heaven. You know enough of it to rejoice by anticipation. When you are about to change your place of abode on earth, and are purposing to dwell in some town, in which indeed you have never been,



but concerning whose situation and circumstances you have obtained trustworthy information, from which too a messenger has come to you and has imparted to you all that you need to know, to live happily in it, do you really know nothing of the town? Those who really know nothing of heaven are such as invent, as it were, a heaven of their own, and conceive of the abode of the blessed so as to suit their own inclinations and weaknesses.

It is our supreme happiness that we have each his calling. We know for what we are here, and why we are just what we are. And our work is never in vain. Every seed that we sow germinates and springs up. Every remembrance of our past life, every look around us, every glance at the future is placed at the service of our holy work, which is no one-sided one, but pre-supposes a full development of our nature on all sides. We do not dream, but clearly and with waking senses grasp the full reality, which is far better than the happiest dream of our earthly life was able to picture it.

A GIRL who has just passed through the gate of Paradise enchains my attention. Her clothing is in disorder and much torn, her hair is hanging unbound and tangled, her countenance bears the traces of a hard death-struggle. She notices my interest in her and asks me: "Am I really in heaven?" But before I can reply, she continues, with joyous excitement. "But why do I ask? yes, I am in heaven, blessed be God."

No one approached to welcome her. As she was still young, perhaps all her relations were still alive. I took her hand and made her tell me her history. She had been drowned at sea, the ship in which she was travelling had been wrecked in its passage from England to Germany. But you shall hear what she said.

"I was brought up in wealth and luxury, my father was a merchant and made a great deal of money. Every wish was granted to me and my sisters, neither my father nor my mother could refuse us anything. Such was the manner in which the years of my childhood were passed. Shortly before my confirmation day a report reached our house, that my father had committed suicide to avoid encountering the outbreak of a large bankruptcy. We children were able to bear this with composure, our father had troubled himself but little about us and had,

as he said, lived only for his business. Our sorrow began when we understood that we were condemned to grinding poverty. There was scarcely enough left for my mother to maintain herself and her three children in the humblest manner, besides which she fell ill in consequence of the shock and of anxieties to which she was unaccustomed. The necessity for me to earn my own living now became apparent. Long consultations were held as to the manner. My guardian made various proposals, but my mother insisted that I must be provided with something suitable to my position; she would willingly suffer any privation to make this feasible. In this view the vocation of a teacher seemed the most expedient and a period of hard work began. I undertook it willingly, for I was wise enough to see that work was to be my lot for the future. I therefore went on learning and learning day and night. An elderly lady gave me advice and told me what matters I had to master in order to pass the examination; I received instruction in the most important branches in the preparatory institution. But my heart had no share in what I learnt, I even went through the course of religious instruction without feeling any interest in it; it was just so much material for the examination, and I took it in often with tears, self-denial, and self-torture."

"Poor girl!" interrupted I, "work without love is slavery."

"Ah, that comes first," said she with a sigh, and then continued: "I got through the examination; it

was said that I had but little gift for teaching, but that my thorough knowledge would compensate for this deficiency. I had myself never put what gift I might have to the test, but when I now entered upon the office of teacher I perceived that I had no pleasure in teaching. My work after the examination was just as disagreeable to me as before it. A strict director supervised my proceedings, I had to work almost incessantly, and I never took delight in it. I agreed with my mother that I should give up my appointment and go to England. A so-called thorough knowledge of the English language was to be the magic wand with which I was to earn money, or at least procure a more endurable lot, than in Germany. What I underwent in England I will not tell you, it is too sad. If I were on earth I would tell it as a warning to others."

"I see how wounded your heart is," said I; "but be at peace, the Lord will heal it."

"After a year I resolved to return to Germany. I was standing solitary and poor on the port. I had gone through temptations and trials which are perilous and dreadful for a young girl, I had endured many humiliations, I had earned nothing, but I knew English! The ship started. I lay down in the evening with the joyful hope that I should to-morrow morning breathe my native air. I was aroused from sleep by an awful crash and roar, by cries and lamentations. I know not how I got on deck, I only know that the raging storm was howling round me, that the waves were breaking over the sinking ship, and that

I was clinging convulsively to a piece of the broken mast. What happened to others, and how they fared, I know not, for I lost consciousness. When I recovered, the mast, to which I was clinging, was floating on the water. I did not cry for help, no one would have heard me, I did not look around for deliverance in the stormy night, I could see nothing. I knew that I must die. Die and appear before God! It was awful. I knew all that Christianity teaches of God, of heaven, of salvation—and yet I knew nothing. I had so often taught it, and had yet never thought of my soul. I could not even pray, often as I had in my official position said prayers with the children. A terrible struggle took place in my soul, like that of a body buried alive and striving to force its way towards light and air. Then the little evening prayer of my childhood, which my nurse taught me to say when she put me to bed. 'O God, make me a good child, and take me to heaven when I die,' struck me, and I prayed it again and again—I could do nothing else. But the prayer expanded, the sins of my youth came before my mind, and that as sins, and Christ on the cross, of whom I had talked so much, but whom I did not yet know, became real to my heart. I saw His arms stretched out towards me, His never failing eye looked at me—me the poor lost one, a feeling went through my heart like the freshness of spring, like recovery from illness, and the stream of prayer flowed forth with ever increasing freedom, angels descended, I felt it, to be near my departing soul. My arms grew more and more rigid, my body

colder, and colder the night ever darker and the storm more violent. But a lovely bright light dawned upon my inner sight, I soon felt myself sinking back, deeper and deeper, but I still remained within sight of the light which was shining upon my soul. So might a child fall asleep in its mother's arms in sight of the Christmas-tree. If I were still alive on earth, I should talk of the horrors and terror of that night—and yet it was a happy, delightful night.”

The young girl was not quite so alone in heaven as I had thought. For at the very beginning of her story a woman of mature age had approached, and kept her eye upon the girl, to whom she listened with much interest, and who now recognised and greeted her with a cry of joy. It was the nurse of her childhood.

She stroked her cheeks and said: “Poor child! how often have I thought of you and your sisters, how much you have suffered; only twenty, and such marks of sorrow on your face! But no, fortunate child, how happily you have come home. What infinite mercy the Lord has shown you!”

“You taught me to pray,” said the other, “you faithful soul.”

“I often think of it,” said the aged woman, who still in heaven found pleasure in relating, not what she had done, but what had happened to those whom she loved. “Your mother did not hinder me; she would often come of an evening into the bed-room when you were in bed. I think I see her now in her handsome silk dresses and her diamond ornaments,

ready to go to a party or ball; she was but little at home. She would mostly fold her hands while you were saying your prayers, and once, when you asked me whether father and mother would go to heaven too, I saw tears in her eyes. Your father was harder. Once when he was present, and I was calling you to prayer, he interrupted me, and said sharply, that he did not approve it, such things turned children's heads. You, however, did not understand him, but folded your hands and said your prayer. Then he turned to the window and gently drummed on the panes, and went away without saying another word. Ah, how glad I am to have you again."

"Then teach me again, dear nurse; you have more than I."

"Ah," she said, "what a poor, poor life you have behind you! I heard your history—I also look at your soul and see how poor it is. I was a poor servant and reached old age by many a painful step. But I have never been as poor as you. I loved you children, to whose service I was called, I prayed not merely *with* but *for* you. How should I without this love, perseverance, and patience have had strength for many a hardship! And what were the children which God committed to you, not for bodily, but for intellectual and moral training?"

"Yes, reproach me," said the other; "you are right. I never loved a child; they were just stock in trade, nothing more. Ah, teach me, give me of your wealth, that I may grow and increase. Let me always be with you, till my mother—perhaps—comes."





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## XXVIII,

A SOUL is making its entry into heaven amid the hymns of the angels. Therefore it is the soul of a sinner who has repented. We are indeed all sinners, but this mark of honor applies especially to those who were on earth designated lost and sinners. It is a man still young, he died praying. It was a long record of guilt, which Christ blotted out before his departure. Few of the blessed know him, but an inward voice—and in heaven inward voices are intimations from God—says to me—Help him ! I turn towards him and greet him with a welcome of peace.

“Are you too,” said he, “one of the pious women who are so good to me ? I have not yet seen your face.”

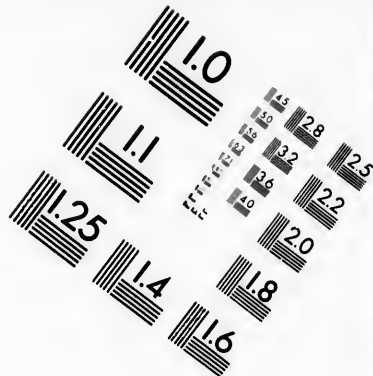
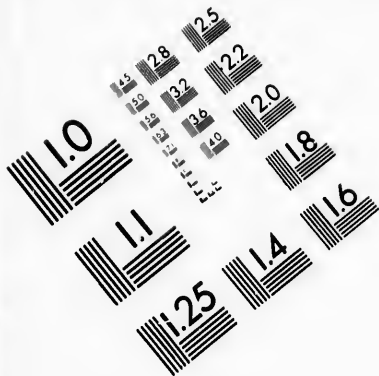
“I am one of the blessed, saved like yourself.”

“Am I then dead ? Yes, indeed, this is not earth, I have never before seen such light. Am I then—even I—to be saved ?”

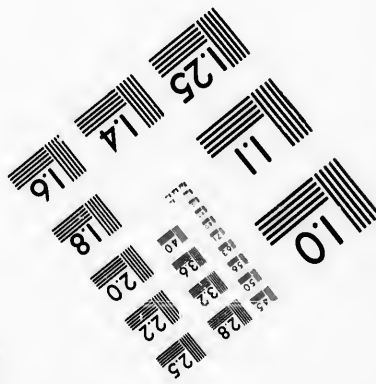
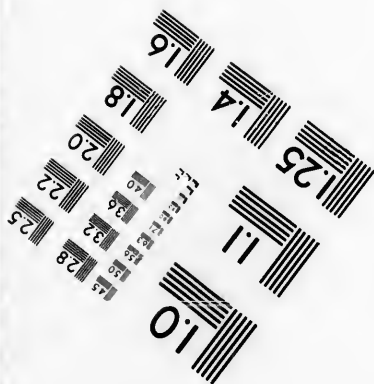
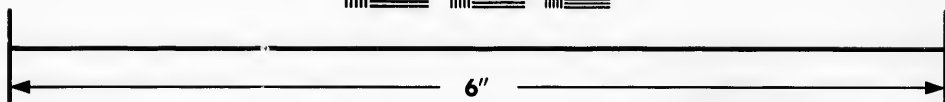
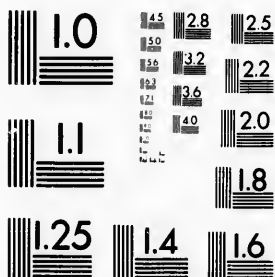
“You are so already, or you would not be here. But tell me, where did you die, and how ?”

“In the hospital. Pious women in black garments took care of me there. I do not know how they could do it. One of them often prayed with me, she was praying but just now ; it was so comforting to pray with her, I learnt from her to do the same. But tell me, you who are one of the blessed, is there





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such love in heaven also as I experienced there? and why did such an one as I experience such love as no one else knows on earth?"

"Do you ask it? Do you not know the Saviour?"

"Yes, I know Him. He has saved me, but I have known Him only a short time."

"Did you know nothing of Him before? You were surely baptized?"

"I did not think that He cared about me."

"I will take you to Him, but first let me hear who you are?"

"The history of my life will be soon told. I was a workman in a factory. I did the same monotonous work all my life. I do not like to think of my childhood. My parents both worked in factories. They were out all day, and I was left to myself. Even on Sundays they were seldom at home. They lived on good terms and took their pleasures together. But their pleasures and amusements were very many. I and my little sister used to be huddled, either sleepy or asleep, into the corner of the public-house where my parents sought their diversion, often till far into the night. No one cared about me, but I was used to this. When it was not possible for them to take us with them we were sent to an old woman, a neighbour, where we waited, and slept in our clothes till our parents came to fetch us away towards morning. I became a workman myself and married early. I and my wife entered on the same course of life as I had seen my parents do. We earned a good deal. We had more than we required for the necessaries.

of life. Then my wife's health failed, and we quickly fell into poverty. We knew of no comfort and found no pity."

"Had you no faith?"

"I never knew what faith was. I knew about God and Christ, nay, I had from my school-time onward a certain respect for the person of the Saviour, but did not know how He was to help me."

"But was there no church where you lived?"

"Yes, certainly, but only for great folks. I never entered it. I should have felt ashamed before my comrades. We had different teachers from those who preach in church. They came to us. They spoke of our poverty and promised us redress; was it strange that we believed them? We saw besides that many of the prosperous, who were blessed with earthly goods, did not concern themselves with church. Our master himself never went to church; we knew, though he did not think we knew, how he scoffed at faith and the church, and yet he was a prosperous man! Nevertheless I should have liked to go at least once to the Lord's Supper, but I had a horror of confession. I did not know what I ought to confess, I had no conviction of sin, I only knew of misery. My wife died, and after I had buried her, I turned my back upon my native town. I could no longer endure the vacancy and monotony of my existence. I went to the capital, where I hoped to find something to divert my thoughts. The sale of our last possessions, there was little more than the bed on which my wife died, brought me some money. I squandered it in

the capital. I then began to be in want and tried to get work, but could find none. My clothing became slovenly, I wandered about day and night, and spent in brandy the few pence which, by extreme caution, I managed to beg out of sight of the police. Then I became ill. A fearful pain in the side tortured me. I was one Sunday morning roaming aimlessly about, when some one put a card into my hand to admit me to a breakfast and devotional meeting in a neighbouring house. I went for the sake of the breakfast, and found hundreds there who probably come for the same reason. After the breakfast, a clergyman got up and spoke of the Good Samaritan, of the love and mercy of God and of Christian charity. I had heard of such things in my youth, but had forgotten them, together with the tales then also told me. He spoke also of the misery of sin and of repentance, and much that he said was without doubt right. But were there such things as love and mercy? A few days ago I had read in the newspapers that these repasts, the bodily as well as the spiritual, were nothing else than the enticements of those who wanted to gain partisans. They should not catch me! And yet—they had said nothing of this,—they had let me go without hindrance. A great struggle was kindled in my soul, and my whole frame was shaken by fever. The bells were ringing out of doors; I felt impelled to enter the church. For the first time since my confirmation did I again tread the sacred floor of a church. What I heard was so beautiful, but again the thought struck me: Preachers must speak thus, they are paid

for it. And the question, Is there love? is there mercy? became more and more urgent. I was not able to think much more, for my sickness advanced with giant strides. I sat down shivering on a bench in front of the church when the service was over, fell asleep, and awoke in a hospital. I was there under the care of those dear women in black garments of whom I told you. I did not ask them what induced them to minister to me. It could be nothing but love. And now my inner life awoke. They did not speak to me of repentance, but I spoke of it to myself and longed for pardon. They were happy days that I passed, notwithstanding the pain I had to suffer. Soon all was well, and my soul rested in the peace of God. When I prayed it often seemed to me as if the Saviour drew nearer and nearer—and once—the nurse was then praying with me—He bent down to my bed and said: 'Come!' Then I went.

While we were together praising God for His mercy, he continued: "Oh, why is the knowledge of the loving mercy of God so rare upon earth? Why have just the poor so little opportunity of knowing the Divine mercy in its copy in human mercy? Millions of my poor brothers and sisters would find safety and peace. For be assured they do not believe that there is such a thing as love on earth."

I replied, "The work of God is not hidden under a bushel on earth. You might have heard of it. It was your own fault that you did not choose to see and hear. And men have no means of forcing others to see and hear."



"Do not speak of me," he answered, "my guilt is clear before my mind, and I must despair unless Christ had borne it. I had my Bible from my school-days onwards. It was my own fault that I disregarded it. Many a time has God called me, but I have not harkened. My pursuit of the intoxications the pleasure was my own fault. Do not think of my brothers and sisters."

"They will certainly be in the same position as yourself," answered I.

But your father, who had witnessed our conversation, interposed and said to me: "It is just because he has humbly confessed his own guilt, that he is right in insisting on the guilt of others. If he had spoken thus, while still walking in the flesh, without being himself a penitent sinner, he would have spoken unjustly. In heaven he may well speak thus. It is indeed the curse of earth that guilt begets guilt. And the world has many sins of omission upon its conscience with regard to his equals. The poor man, however full of envy and hatred, readily takes the rich and those of higher position as his examples. It is thus that thousands of sins have penetrated from the upper to the lower strata of the people. It was through such examples that they became discontented, pleasure seeking, and ungodly. We are right when we tell him that he might have kept to God's word and the church, but should we have kept to them ourselves, unless we had been led to them and the bread of life had been brought to us? He found no love on earth. And

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do the rays of loving mercy really penetrate into every recess of misery, into every stratum of human beings, aliens indeed from God, but in the depths of their hearts still thirsting for mercy? And then how many are those who despise the multitudes and give expression to their contempt even with words full of wisdom, as opposed to those who pity them! The fields are already white for harvest, and the labourers so few."

Then we all lifted up our hands in prayer and drew near to the Lord, and said: "Lord, send forth labourers into Thy harvest."

**A**LTHOUGH souls in heaven live in undisturbed and continual happiness, hours of special joy are nevertheless sometimes granted them. I was witness of one such, which your father was allowed to experience, and desire to make you also acquainted with it. It is already long ago since he once preached on the happiness of salvation through Jesus Christ. The text had given him occasion to compare the heavenly and the earthly worlds. He spoke of care in the earthly, and peace in the heavenly world. It often happened in summer that he had hearers from town, people who had perhaps made a party to visit the neighbouring forest, and who, perhaps from curiosity, or for the sake of a certain amount of Sunday keeping, would visit our village church. They would often stay through only a part of the sermon, and we seldom caught sight of them, because the entrance could not be seen from the pulpit and the clergyman's seat.

Some days after this sermon your father received an anonymous letter from the town—you may still find it among his papers—in which his sermon was shaply criticized, though certainly in very courteous terms. The writer was by no means a scoffer, he expressed himself somewhat as follows :

He had last Sunday heard with deep indignation

a teacher of the people venture to exhort to contempt and depreciation of the world we live in. It was folly, to represent the happiness of enjoying life as imaginary, and to rob people of the present for the sake of a future which was unknown, and which was no immediate object of concern. It was not only effeminate weakness, but folly. "You do not know life," he wrote; "you do not know what it means to draw a deep breath and act in the full feeling of your own strength, nor what it means to rejoice in the works of your own hand. You embitter this joy to men when you make all that is good and right and excellent depend upon the influence of grace. You misconceive the importance and value of earthly happiness, when you require that the man of sound health should renounce what perhaps the sick man must. You darken life; till eternity dawns, all is to remain in the twilight of expectation and hope, never are the bright rays of gladness to shine; nay, the highest earthly delight, that of happy absorption in deep and beautiful thought, is also taken from us, if only the poor in spirit are to be blessed. It was a comfort to him," he added, "that no one would believe everything the preacher said but that he wrote because he had taken away with him the impression that the preacher had spoken from full conviction."

Your father received the letter with a cheerful smile, which might have astonished many. They indeed who knew that he found his whole happi-

ness in faithful, unremitting labour, and could yet at times be so cheerful and happy, could understand it. "It is well," he said, "for us preachers to be told sometimes from the other side, what our sermons are thought of." We afterwards thought no more of this letter.

A short time ago we were walking, after service, with many friends who had been listening to your father's preaching, when an old man approached him, unknown by face to either of us. In heaven, however, we feel so near to each other, even if we have never met, that he joined us and told your father that he was the sender of that letter. He is now indeed another man, and would be incapable of writing such a letter. But your father's time of joy began when he spoke as follows: "I was a merchant, and was then already in good circumstances. We had made a large party to visit the forest, and when there we agreed to breakfast in your village. In the hotel there was no one but a maidservant, and this showed us that we should have to await the return of the master and mistress from church before our wants could be attended to. Hence we resolved, in order to pass the time, to go to church ourselves. It was during the season before Whitsuntide. Your text was: 'In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' I called, and knew myself to be a man of the world, and everything I then heard from you was entirely opposed to my views. Your sermon nevertheless made a deep impression upon me. As a man acquaint-

ed with human nature, you would perhaps have noticed that the very reason for which I wrote to you was to resist this impression. But from that time I was never again able to free myself from thoughts of eternity; my principles and views wavered. I turned to the Bible. You know how difficult it is to an unaccustomed hand to deal with the Bible. I turned over the pages, I found the text on which you had preached, but did not understand it, and what else I met with did not seem to suit my circumstances. But the impulse to think farther on these questions continued urgent. I was, however, also unwilling to throw up *my* gospel without further consideration; it might, I thought, be well defended and rationally expounded. I had myself obtained it—why should I deny it—from a much read and famous novel, the name of which I have forgotten. For novels and periodicals constituted the diet on which I and such as I satisfied our appetite. We even at times thought we could study history by means of novels. I resolved to visit the author of this novel in the hope of receiving instruction from him. I was courteously received; perhaps he expected that I had called on him to flatter him, or to turn my experience to literary account, hence he had put on his intellectual Sunday finery. He heard me explain the object of my visit with the greatest astonishment. "He did not," he said, "in the first place share all the views which he had put in the mouth of his heroes; besides, religion was a private affair, and he desired to deprive no one of his faith." I

replied that I had really no faith, but that it was difficult to me any longer to assent, without further explanation to his philosophy, of which I had hitherto been a disciple, and that I wished for the removal of a series of doubts which occurred to me. He replied that this was rather a clergyman's business than his, and the more so that my very doubts betrayed a decidedly religious bias. He was, he said, an author, but, he added, with a shrug of his shoulders, a man of business also. Novels were wares which must be adapted to the taste of the reading public. Besides, he was employed upon another book, in which he should represent the Christian theory of life with the same objectivity. It was thus that he dismissed me.

From foolish fear I did not go to a clergyman, though the advice to do so was given from an impartial quarter. But I went more frequently to church. The clergyman of the place I lived in was always accustomed at the end of his sermon to recommend a chapter of the Bible, which had reference to his sermon, for private reading. This was very useful to me. In this manner I became acquainted with the Scriptures. As I drank, my thirst increased, and I was thus gradually initiated into Christian views. But I also attained to faith. My Christianity grew slowly and almost imperceptibly, but constantly; it was only after years had passed that I had become another man, but I found support and comfort from my faith in the many heavy afflictions which my God laid upon me. Now would have been

the right time to come to you and thank you, but you had meantime gone home in peace.

"Here too," said your father, "it is a happiness to know you; but tell me more about your life."

"Not without difficulty did I manage to make my household a Christian household. It was especially difficult to introduce the custom of asking a blessing at meals, and my wife was astonished when I assigned a place of honour in our sitting-room to the Bible. It is so hard to a man to lay aside a certain amount of fear, which prevents his letting his Christianity see daylight."

"In which," added your father, "a certain amount of justifiable modesty, at laying bare the roots of one's life, comes into play. I have never liked people whose faith was always on their lips. They provoke unbelievers to search out their faults, a search never without results."

"For my part," continued the other, "I had rather accuse myself of too great fear of man. I have often omitted a confession at the right time, and been silent when I ought to have borne testimony. But my wife too, soon found the Lord, and we brought up our children in Christian seriousness. We did not show them the lawful pleasures of the world through iron gratings, a procedure which generally excites a thirst after them. We introduced them to them ourselves, but we guided them and held them by the hand, and taught them to estimate them aright. They are now—I had only daughters—happily married. But I never forget your sermon on



eternity. A young man whom I knew to be clever and well-principled, but with whose attitude towards Christianity I had not been able to make myself acquainted, proposed for my eldest daughter. I took him on the day of his proposal into my room alone with me, saying that I had an important question to put to him. He expected an enquiry concerning his pecuniary circumstances. I however asked him, "What do you think of eternity?" He stared at me and stammered out, "I have—always—been conservative." I answered that I did not want to know that, and repeated my question, "What do you think of eternity?" He did not indeed give me a quite satisfactory answer, but the question itself became of importance to his life and to his marriage. He would, I think, be now able to give an excellent answer to it.

When he ceased, your father said to me with evident delight, how I am to-day thinking of the words, "He that goeth on his way weeping and beareth precious seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." Truly this is not the first sheaf my God has allowed me to bring with joy.

ALL earthly happiness, if one can speak of such, comes from its contrast to experience. Sunshine delights us after rain, joy shines upon the dark background of sorrow. Habitual prosperity is no longer felt to be such, nay, it may be regarded with disgust through the consciousness that it is incapable of enhancement. Heavenly happiness needs none of these contrasts; it affords from itself the highest satisfaction, and is ever capable of increase, but never in need of it. And if we wish to find enjoyment in contrast, the remembrance of our past life offers opportunity and matter enough; we compare our present with our former life.

The greatest difference between the two is indeed that there is no longer either death or decay. We no longer see death making ever fresh gaps in the ranks of our friends, and those nearest to us, and thus beckoning to ourselves also with his hour glass. We no longer observe with anxiety and carefulness our death-devoted bodies, examining how far their capacity of enduring the toils and hardships of life may have increased, or calculating, it may be, the period during which we may reckon on their services. We no longer mourn over a wealth of blossoms destroyed during a night of frost, we are no longer dismayed at threatening

clouds which conceal in their depths dark menaces as well as kindly promise. We no longer tremble by night at the stealthy lurking of crime, nor fear lest the prosperity of the individual should be endangered by the increasing corruption of the masses.

And then there is no more sin. I will show you the results of this in only one aspect. Compare the social life and intercourse of the blessed with the conditions of earthly life. It is such a happiness to meet with truth everywhere. No one conceals from me anything that is in his heart, and that could be of interest to me; no one bends before me who does not desire to show me respect; no friendly exterior conceals an angry mind and a repugnant heart; no excuses seek to throw artificially a better light upon what has been done. What a pure atmosphere we breathe in heaven, how utterly free it is from the miasmas of falsehood which poison the intercourse of the dwellers on earth! What a happy thing, what a cause for gratitude, to find every one free from falsehood, and especially oneself, without as on earth detecting oneself at every step in some fresh and perhaps not even intentional untruth.

And then remember, that we live in continual peace with each other, not the peace produced by the exhaustion of the combatants or their mutual fear, but in true, and complete heart peace. In the earthly life how men rub against each other with their different natures and different interests, how

afraid they are of each other, how anxiously do they keep on guard against wounding each other! How quickly does worldly wisdom change the open nature of the youth into the cautious reserve, and alas! often that distant coldness of the mature man which is opposed to his own will, and to the will of God. How much this worldly wisdom is esteemed on earth! It is true that the Lord has recommended to us the wisdom of the serpent in combination with the harmlessness of the dove. But the former is prized and sought after where not a trace of this combination can be discerned. He who is wise is good. How many who have never earnestly opposed evil, never energetically taken in hand anything good, enjoy the world's approbation, simply because they have been able by constant tacking and continual change of sail to steer their vessels, and perhaps those of others, round rocks; while you, dear and blessed friend, with your straightforward honesty, with your restless energy and your self-denying love had to bear, so many reproaches and apparently effected so little on earth. But the time when such wisdom prevails is past. Here heavenly wisdom reigns, there are no more serpents, nor that wisdom of the serpent so indispensable for poor earthly life.

We do not, however, live in peace with our surroundings only, we live at peace with God also, because we are incapable of doing anything contrary to His will. The voice of our heart is the voice of God. The voice of earthly hearts is so often different

from the voice of God. On earth it may indeed excite admiration when a man is able to carry out energetically and consistently the will of his own heart, and perhaps to make it a law to others also, whether it is in accordance with the Divine will or not; in heaven such heroism is of no importance. Far more is accorded to the ardent struggles of noble and earnest souls, who desire to do the will of God, and yet in a thousand cases do not know what the will of God is. For though the word of God speaks plainly and distinctly, the ear of sinful man no longer hears clearly. It has been acknowledged with the deepest sorrow by many earnest men, and even by such as were not Christians, that sin casts a veil of error about the head of even those who have successfully contended against it. Man errs not only as long as he strives—he errs indeed also, and more readily, when he does not strive—but he errs even when he thinks he is obeying. And how, when your conscience bids you go two ways, that to the right hand as well as that to the left, when an ancient, everlasting Divine ordinance is in opposition to an earthly power, to which also you owe obedience? Your father once read to us on earth the Greek tragedy, *Antigone*. He thought that the longing after Paradise, the abode of peace, the place where contradictions of life are solved, was nowhere more clearly and touchingly expressed. The maiden has buried her slain brother, because a Divine law requires that a sister should love and honour a brother, but by so doing she has transgressed the command of the king, who has the power to for-

bid the last honours to those who have fallen in battle against the city. Hence she has to die, because she has done what is right, and she departs with bitter complaints against a world in which right—is wrong. Thus does this tragedy give expression to the great discord which pervades the world, which makes guilt virtue, and virtue guilt, and which can only be resolved for individuals and in individual cases by departure from this world, by death.

But if you are perhaps thinking that in such cases it is by no means questionable what the will of God is; remember, that the will of God requires also obedience to human laws, and that cases often occur, in which to your weak sight the finger of God seems to point to both the right hand and the left. What path are you to follow in the education of a refractory and stubborn son? Is severity or kindness suitable? Where is the boundary between obstinacy and faithfulness, between concession and a cowardly compromise? My son, it is just the curse of sin that you stand in presence of such enigmas and suffer from such contradictions. But as the grace of God can turn every curse into a blessing, such experiences should prove to you the emptiness of life and awaken desires after the peace of eternity. Are then they who perish by a tragic fate merely punished, or are they not at the same time released and taken out of the battle?

I often see a pious man who was a prince upon earth, and who is now one of the lowliest among the inhabitants of heaven. He was on earth deprived

of his throne, though conscious of no fault which should have been punished by such a lot. On earth he stood up for his rights, though unsuccessfully. He often tells me with a smile how many reckoned his adherence to his right a crime, who would have been the first to flatter him if his efforts had resulted in the recovery of his throne. He now knows the will of God, and looks with a single eye to another throne, which is exalted above earthly thrones, and before which it is his happiness to stand in adoration.

I know, too, a woman who was a nun upon earth. She belonged to an order which was employed in the instruction of young females. She entered the cloister very early, and was very happy in her position and duties. She embraced Christian doctrine in its Roman Catholic form, and did not know what it was to doubt. By means, however, of the relations which were entered into between her cloister and the secular authorities, and through the various studies to which she devoted herself in the faithful fulfilment of her calling, she became acquainted with evangelical truth. Henceforth she became the subject of great struggles. She had vowed fidelity to her church, and she cherished great affection for her superiors, who had shown her much kindness. Hence a secession was as little possible as open opposition. But still less could she close her heart against the power of the gospel. On earth she never again attained to inward peace. Now that she has learned the one truth, she perceives these two things: that the struggles of the last years of her earthly life had a most salutary influence upon her inner life, and that the peace of eternity is indeed a precious possession.

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XXXI.

**T**HERE is no hero-worship in heaven. Christ our Lord has the sole claim to adoring reverence. And great as may be the difference between individual souls, this is no ground of external privilege. One is our Master, and we are all brethren. Do we then disparage genius? Certainly not; for genius is not something obtained by labour, something acquired, but a gift of God, and the dwellers in heaven, as well as those on earth, rejoice in the gifts of God. But it furnishes no claim for reward in heaven, where the question is not what was the amount of gifts with which a man laboured, but what was the faithfulness with which he traded with them. The man of genius develops on earth human capacities, which are latent in other men also, but which unfavourable circumstances—you know already what I mean by circumstances—have not suffered to develop. Men, as God thought them, are greater and fuller than they are in reality. Some blades of grass work themselves out and develop between the cracks of the pavement; but how many germs are slumbering under it which would gladly shoot forth if they could! Here in heaven every talent of the human mind can be developed by every one, and each, in fact, develops those talents with which he can serve others. For no one has gifts for himself only, in the kingdom of God.



Hence in heaven we do not speak of great men as on earth. The Saviour never spoke of them on earth. He was only astonished at and admired the bold faith of individuals.

In heaven everyone is an artist. For like the earthly artist we all strive to ponder the works of God and to comprehend them in their purity. See what pains the sculptor on earth takes to understand and imitate the form of God's masterpiece, the human body. We speak of perfect creations, while nevertheless we mean only the most perfect possible imitations of the Divine work. The genius of the artist consists entirely in his not mistaking the accidental phenomenon for perfection, but in grasping the thoughts of God in their original purity. On earth, however, stubborn matter has to be subdued and the hand practised; in heaven, where no dead mass has to be overcome, and where the conception, once grasped, can be projected from the mind and enter into appearance without mallet or brush, artistic creation is much easier, and the more so, that the works of God are always before our eyes and reflected in our souls in their pure form.

Delight in art is here natural to us all, while on earth it is the privilege of only certain select individuals. I have often heard you deplore the want of taste and feeling for art in the lower classes, who often find their special pleasure in what is ugly and bad. Still delight in the beautiful is not wholly absent even among them. The peasant woman, who takes care of her flowers and stands contemplating

and admiring her favorites, finds pleasure in the beauty of God's works. But earthly art is in only the rarest cases generally comprehensible. For it not only pre-supposes experience and knowledge (think for instance of historical painting) which the majority are without, but it is often obliged, when the stubbornness of matter hinders it from saying what it would, to have recourse to symbolism and to speak, as it were, a secret language, which only the initiated comprehend. Besides, just examine whether, when you see the ugly preferred and valued instead of the beautiful, sin is not the source of the error. Only think how sometimes a supposed work of art betrays the obvious purpose of the artist to excite sense; and then look not only at the lascivious representation which the poor man hangs up in his room, but also at many poems and pictures esteemed as perfect works of art. Certainly nature is the subject of artistic representation; but it makes all the difference, whether it is so presented as to delight the mind or to inflame the blood.

There are in heaven many who still carry on their accustomed occupation with art; only no one does so professionally and exclusively. The heavenly life is too many-sided and sets too many tasks and duties, for this one occupation to be able to fill up a life and give it satisfaction. And as all employment of gifts in our own interest is excluded, the motive which urged them to production on earth is lacking to many.

There are in heaven many poets whose delight it

is to sing and say, *i.e.* to bring before the mind, what they have experienced. The alliance, which poetry and music have but externally concluded on earth, is here a much more inward one. Music says and poetry sings, and both are in truth the same—emanations of the one light which on earth appears in separate rays.

In close alliance with them are also painters, who bring before the mind the earthly life in its various forms and circumstances. We often use their services for the purpose of producing in our minds a more perfect remembrance of vanished times. You will perhaps ask, whether there is dramatic art also in heaven. I am not thinking of those so-called artists who beguile with buffoonery the time of men who find it hang heavy on their hands, or even exhibit merely physical feats. But there is no matter in heaven for even the really artistic drama. The tragic and the comic both belong to earth, for they are both connected with the sin and infirmity of the dwellers on earth. Tragedy laments, comedy laughs at sin—we have overcome it. We no longer need to weep, for we have departed from the vale of tears; nor to laugh, for we live in constant rejoicing of spirit.

A short time since a painter, a friend of mine, took me to his house, which he has decorated with the works of his hand. In the middle hangs a large and beautiful picture representing the Saviour as He appears in heaven. He is stretching out His hands to bless, as He is accustomed to do.

Opposite to this is one of the Saviour, as he lived on earth in the circle of His disciples; and the great superiority of this picture to those painted on earth is, that it contains genuine portraits of the apostles, for he knew them all. Only Judas Iscariot is represented according to description. It was the first time I had seen pictures in heaven. I regarded with admiration the beauty of the colours, and the relief with which the picture stood out from the light, bright background. The old Byzantine painters must have had some presentiment of this beauty, when they painted their figures of saints on golden backgrounds.

Many of his pictures were, however devoted to remembrances of his past earthly life. "That is my wife," said he, showing me a picture of a woman. "She is still alive, but I hope she will soon join us, and I have prepared a special surprise for her." So saying, he pointed to a whole row of pictures of children. "Those are our children," said he; "I have represented each of the three several times at different ages of their lives. Parental affection and a practised eye saw so acutely on earth, that I was able to retain and re-produce the features of my children in the various ages of life. Let me show you one more attempt," he said, lifting up a curtain which hung over one picture. "In heaven, too, we try to ponder on the thoughts of God, and to grasp in anticipation a beauty which is not as yet before our eyes. That is my wife in the resurrection body."

When I had enjoyed the picture, I said to him :  
"Do you have much intercourse here with former  
fellow-artists?"

"Yes," answered he; "but more with such as  
were not my contemporaries on earth. My voca-  
tion on earth was not that of an artist. I was of  
mean origin. Though artistic talent had shown  
itself in me, there was no one who could pay for my  
education. I was therefore obliged to learn a trade,  
and was only able to practise art in my leisure time,  
and often by the sacrifice of my night's rest. Hence  
the technical instruction which I procured for my-  
self was scarcely sufficient. I had at least always  
the consciousness that the productions of my hand  
fell far short of the ideals of my mind. Bitterly as  
I lamented on earth the fact that I could not be-  
come an artist by profession, I now in heaven thank-  
fully recognise God's gracious leading therein. For  
a second-rate artist is indeed only a handicraftsman,  
who works to order and for pay, as I too did. But  
a first-rate one, who is upheld by the favour of the  
public, and flattered by the great, occupies a posi-  
tion full of danger to his inner life. Earthly in-  
cense acts as a narcotic. It is much less dangerous  
to the soldier who is continually risking his life, and  
to the statesman who knows men and the value  
of their approbation, than to the artist who lives  
in retirement, and whose eye for earthly and  
heavenly realities is obscured by its clouds. I  
know among the blessed many who were on earth  
famous artists, but who have laid aside their art in

heaven, because they find better and more important things to do here. For men will pardon a man much if they can only admire him as an artist, but the Saviour seeks not artists but human souls for His kingdom."

At these words I thought how often the most unimportant trifles in the lives of great men, or men esteemed great, are investigated with conscientious reverence, and what trouble is taken to bring such utterly insignificant particulars to the knowledge of the multitude, who actually are even unacquainted with the real or supposed greatness of the object of veneration, while the veil of oblivion is drawn over really important matters; and I smiled at the folly of men who are so ready to venerate anything rather than that which is truly worthy of veneration.

XXXII.

I ONCE met your father in conversation with an elderly man, whose features were not entirely unknown to me. I approached the two and found that he knew me, although I could not myself remember either the time when, or the place where I had met him during my earthly life. He was a general at his death, and had been but a short time in heaven.

He came to the assistance of my memory and said : "When I was a young officer I was once quartered in your native town. The inhabitants gave an entertainment in honour of their guests, at which you and your family were also present. There was dancing, but during the dance you disappeared and went into the garden."

I remembered. "I was not opposed to this amusement, which was also permitted me by my parents, but it did not afford me full satisfaction. Much as I liked dancing, I nowhere felt more solitary than in the ball room. Something was wanting. My young friends, who were casting stealthy glances at the dancers, and regarding each other with jealousy and envy on account of supposed preferences, were but little accessible. I separated myself from them to enjoy the air alone in the garden. It was a lovely summer evening. My heart was full. I felt stirred by opposite emotions. I was filled with love of life,

and with youthful gaiety, and affected by a longing after something better, some dim expectation of a happier state. In such a frame of mind I was walking alone, and the young officer who followed me——”

“Was myself,” replied he, “I went after you. It was not the mere desire for fresh air that induced me also to leave the room. The provincial tone of the society did not please me. I had been accustomed in the capital to seek for recreation with the fair sex in a freer manner, than etiquette permitted during a ball of this kind. I met you and jested at your walking about alone in a reverie and gazing at the moon, but we soon fell into deeper and more serious conversation. You spoke of your dissatisfaction, and thus gave rise to it.”

“You immediately began to instruct me, what you said was strangely new to me, you must certainly think differently now.”

“Just repeat it,” exclaimed he.

“You said that the world in general being imperfect, there was no reason why we should lay claim to perfection; that we ought not to be always looking at what might be, but should gladly and joyfully surrender ourselves to what is. You affirmed that the world was always pleasant enough and that so long as enjoyment beckoned us, and we had the power of enjoying, we should take what is given us. That flowers were everywhere blooming around us, and we had only to open our eyes to see them. ‘I know,’ you said, ‘that by-and-by I shall think otherwise;



youth passes away, and in old age we think differently from what we did in youth. But the greatest pleasure of my age will consist in thinking of how I enjoyed my youth. It is not indeed spent without certain errors and follies, but these are the necessary shadows cast by the light. Nay, it is just the follies of youth that will afterwards shed a cheerful light, and afford old age matter for pleasant memories.' And when I made some objection, I know not what, you continued with more animation, 'Anything but that everlasting talk about the sin and corruption of the world, I hate nothing so much as this obsolete rubbish of fanatical parsons. We can't all hang our heads as they do, and we want not merely to look at the flowers which bloom in our path, but also to pluck them.'

"Frothy fermenting must," said your father, "which became good wine?" He did not, however, speak cheerfully, but with a serious questioning look at the other.

"So would the world say," replied he, "and so perhaps said I too." The must ferments and froths, this is just how it becomes good wine, and fermentation is a condition of its clearing. But does it ever go through a period when it is ill-flavoured and sour? does it not continue to be at every stage a good gift of God, through striving for perfection? Youth, too, has to go through a process of fermentation, and it is but a poor and enervated kind which would seek to be wine before the time. Youth must entertain its ideals, and it may in restless efferves-

cence bring about the clearing of mature life. But is it necessary to the process that it should wallow in filth and enter, so to speak, into an acid fermentation? These are not preliminary stages, but obstacles to clearing, and after years will suffer more or less loss, but never derive advantage from such stages of transition.—I have at no time perhaps had more sins to repent of than at that when I declaimed against discoursing on sin, nay, I can right well remember that I talked myself into a certain amount of zeal, for the purpose of silencing the admonitions of conscience. I used to denounce, of course not then only, the clergy in general, of whom I knew only one, the kind and good pastor of my native village, who had never been able in any way to make too near an approach to me. But as you know, the thief rails at the judge. And the hope that I might find subsequently pleasure in looking back at the time of my youth has never been fulfilled, either on earth or even in heaven. Many serious consequences of my youthful arrogance have prevented it even above.

I replied: "I contradicted you but little, although what you said was so utterly opposed to all that I had hitherto heard. Still less did I without farther consideration agree with you. But your doctrine produced a certain uneasiness. Why should I at eighteen years of age, be cut off from so many of the enjoyments of life? Where were the flowers which I might have plucked? and why had they been hitherto concealed from me? A young girl is the docile pupil of a man. As long as he does not make

himself despicable, she takes in his teaching with more avidity than she lets it be supposed, and it is far easier to mislead her than, thank God, it seems to be. A girl's silent attention often means a loud "yes."

"I know it," said he, "from other cases."

"But the angels of God," added your father, "hover round their charges, and call to them: 'Flee, flee!'"

"But now," said I, turning to the old man, "we meet again in heaven."

"Yes, through God's mercy. I found my God before my first campaign. In the circle of my comrades we often talked of the prospects which the war would bring us, and also of the dangers which it entailed. We avoided speaking of death, but we thought of it all the more vividly. I knew the saying: 'It is sweet and honourable to die for one's country.' I fully acknowledged its truth. But it was far less terrible to me to encounter death, than another life after death. I knew the saying of the poet: 'To sleep, perhaps to dream,' and it deeply moved me, I could not get rid of this 'perhaps.' What would it avail me to gain earthly laurels, to have my name handed down with honour to posterity, if I myself should dream instead of sleep, and dream mayhap a bad, an endless dream!"

"Before the commencement of my first battle I prayed for the first time since my childhood, and did not again omit doing so. I was seriously wounded and taken to the hospital. It was doubtful whether

I should live. How glad I was then to be able to confess and to speak of my sins, and how thankful to the clergyman who brought to me the comforting assurance of pardon !”

“The profession to which you belonged,” said your father, “is so especially calculated to warn men that they have on earth no abiding city.”

“Is not the same warning to be heard in every condition of life? As the countryman can get accustomed in his quiet village to see the rows of graves get longer and longer in the churchyard, so does the soldier get accustomed to look death in the face and to have the dead before his eyes. They who do not choose to see, see nothing even on the battle-field. The blessing of my calling is that it educates men to discipline and obedience. It is well said, that soldiers are needed in every country against a sudden outbreak of war. They are much more needed in peace, as an antidote against the insubordination and impatience of control of the age. We learned to know the seriousness of life by strictest subjection to the wills of others; we developed our powers most perfectly without feeling obedience a burden; we felt our souls most at liberty when we were obedient; we learned to despise the phrases and the empty talk of those, who would not contribute a stone to the edifice of national prosperity until they were themselves its architects. We were the educators of mankind, and we had to draw the reins the tighter, in proportion as such education was elsewhere neglected.”

"How you any children? asked I.

"Only sons, they are all serving their country."

"And for the sake of gain?" inquired your father.

"My family is a wealthy one. They serve from love of their sovereign and fatherland."

"See," replied your father, "how well it is to embrace a calling on earth without regard to gain and profit. What an excellent preparation for the heavenly calling, in which the highest happiness is found in service."

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### XXXIII.

IT has been said by one who lays just claim to the name of a great man, that life did not seem to him worth the trouble of living without the hope of another life. He was active beyond others, and brought the greatest benefits to your native land by his devoted labour. This expression is one so natural for a man, and yet it originates in a disposition shared by few. The higher point of view has been lost by so many, who have accustomed themselves to a lazy acquiescence worthy of a beggar who feels he is in his right condition. When I was still at school, under the instruction of a kind and conscientious teacher, I felt so happy in the fulfilment of my small duties, and thought so little of the fact that the instruction and practice of school were not their own object, that it was only with reluctance that I turned my thoughts to the time when my school life would be over. I found the object of my life fulfilled in being a school girl. But in this I was a child. The dwellers in heaven also rejoice when you, who dwell below, feel happy in the school of life, willingly perform your limited duties, keep your little festivals in your respective circles, and find your world in the school-room of earth; but life has to succeed to school time, and childish things have to be put away.

Noble minded men of all ages have shared the feel-

ing of him of whom I spoke; they were like the sons of a sovereign, who, even in the banishment and without hope of returning to the king's palace, have felt royal blood stirring in their veins. The very heathen perceived the germ power of the soul for another life, though they did not see the sun which was to develop this germ. But long before men undertook to investigate eternity with the microscope, and spirit with the probe, this hope was disputed. Millenniums ago a plebeian mock humility already talked of the final dissolution of man into atoms and of eternity, just as a rustic might talk of the symphony of a great master. Is not that separation into two companies, which is to take place at that day, being prepared for in the human race according to the position taken up by its members towards eternity?

Man is made for life, and that need not be declared from heaven. He who created masses out of atoms, destined to a constant circulation, raised man above this circulation by bestowing on him the breath of life. His soul has no share in the play of atoms, or else how would this be so clearly reflected in the soul, if the soul itself participated in the motion?

How I delight in thinking of the time when you will see, will live, together with us. You will drink in life in full deep draughts. You will feel with rapture that you have a present not limited by the past or the future, that you exist without tracing a breath of corruption. You will with delight be certain of the ever clear and full con-

sciousness of your whole ego, and will no longer as on earth rejoice or be alarmed at a single ray of it, and still less see at certain times some dismal depth of your own self lit up as by lightning. You will be steeped in the full enjoyment of an ever-equal harmony of life, conscious indeed of deficiency and imperfection, but seeing at the same time happy and unobstructed growth.

If the inhabitants of earth could take a view of this fulness of the heavenly life they would believe—no, they would see, and that they are not to do. The purpose for which the ideal of life is held up, nay lived, before them, is that they may measure by it the partialness and poverty of their own life, and attain to the hope of a better and fuller one. You know how on earth we used, when winter approached, to take shoots from the favourite plants of our garden, to take care of them indoors through the winter, and in spring to plant them again in the garden. They grew indeed but scantily, and brought forth only single flowers. But these single flowers also were beautiful. We talked of our winter garden, and the care and contemplation of our plants were a great pleasure to us during the long, dark winter. But we never forgot that the plants would not burst into full flower till summer and in the garden. How many changed their appearance in the room, what long lean stalks they shot up, how yellow were their leaves, many were quite caricatures of plants. Do you know what humour is on earth? It is the gift—springing indeed only



in the soil of a Christian view of the world—of perceiving the world to be such a winter garden, and of measuring the mean forms of the plants by their true ideal forms, without however losing delight in the single blossoms which God allows to grow even in the winter garden. Nay, this humour itself, smiling among tears, is a fragrant flower which blooms for the inhabitants of earth. It has no place in heaven—the tears are wiped away.

Well for him who perceives with deep yearning the poverty and partialness of human life, but at the same time does not kill the germs which, shooting forth in the atmosphere of heaven, are to impart its full and vigorous form to the tree of human existence. Sorrow and suffering bring a man more quickly and surely to this perception, but a single eye suffices.

Let me unroll before you certain single pictures of human life. I will for once leave aside the difference between believers and unbelievers. I will place myself on the stand-point of purely human notions, will allow for the circumstances and observe the limits beyond which the individual man could not advance, and will show you how poor and partial many a man's life is through his own fault, nay, how self-crippled it is.

This self-impoverty and self-crippling seem to me least prominently met with in childhood. A merry, healthy child develops its life on all sides, and puts forth plentiful buds which might become

flowers, if a foolish education did not perchance cut off vigorous sprouts for the purpose of cultivating weaker ones. In the lower classes, too, life mostly develops itself more fully and freely than in the upper, who know more of life than the lower, but confine it within so much narrower boundaries. A girl of the working classes has occasion to develop many talents and powers; she lives in unrestrained and many-sided intercourse with her fellow creatures, and has, moreover, a vocation. Look, on the other hand, at many of the daughters of the upper classes. Look at the long school hours, the often toilsome and seldom honest cultivation of particular gifts existing really to only a very slight extent, and which after all amounts only to aimless trifling. Look at the constant care for personal adornment which willingly submits to a servile dependence on the prescriptions of fashion, and often contemptuously refuses all regard for the beautiful and becoming. See how frequently whole weeks are looked upon as merely a season of preparation for some pleasure, which at last brings nothing but disappointment, nay, how very soon the necessity of recreation is spoken of—recreation from pleasure. How paltry! See how life itself offers less and less, how demands on the future fall lower year by year, very often until marriage only begins the second period of a one-sided self-impooverished life. Then look at the young men. At the time when their hearts should beat fully and warmly for all that is great and noble, and they should experience in the consciousness of their

rising powers a foretaste of the happiness of Paradise, they are already anxiously calculating on the bread-winning of their after days, and sacrificing their ideals for quick and certain profits ; or they are cherishing in a one-sided manner an artificial feeling of honour which is constantly spying about for any who might be inclined to wound it, and knows well how to combine an exaggerated assertion of its own dignity with the most childish actions ; or they affect dandyism and conceal the shallowness of their minds under easily acquired aristocratic manners. How paltry ! Look at the woman who checks by force the impulse to activity innate in every human being, lets herself be waited on as much as possible, and is in continual ill-humour with the imperfect services of her subordinates, because with all her exhortations to diligence she always sets them a pattern of idleness, who in unconscious self-derision finds her pleasure in severely censuring in social circles the weakness of her sex. How paltry ! Look at the man who after the day's work can apply his leisure time to nothing but the pursuit of some hobby, which bears in every one's eyes the mark of partialness, who can only use his hand, that symbol of man's supremacy, in guiding the pen, who knows nothing of the beauty and wealth of nature beyond the distant glimpse afforded by his oft-trodden walk, who in the evening must try to forget instead of to comprehend his life. How paltry ! I will not speak of the old man often occupied only in the care of his health and the preservation of his spark of life, and

meanwhile forfeiting even those joys which flourish for old age. You will have perceived that men on earth are not like trees, reaching a full and goodly growth in a favourable soil.

Do you think I am painting dark pictures? Perhaps it is natural to me in the light of heaven to lay too much stress on the darkness of earth. But I am not thinking of human nature collectively, I myself did not live so poor a life on earth, and I do not think I should have done so even without faith, many thousands do not. But just see, whether eternal life is not most denied in precisely those circles in which earthly life is most crippled and partial.

**I**N everlasting light and life one remembers with a strange feeling the time when day and night, walking and sleeping, alternated with each other. It is difficult to transpose oneself to that feeling of a need of sleep with which man, partly a natural, partly a spiritual being, willingly sinks into the arms of his mother nature, there to receive fresh power. How full earthly night is of mysterious beauty and mysterious terror! It is just in the night that another world, with its everlasting stars, rises on man, that the faintly and uncertainly lighted earth appears so truly a land of shadows, and aspirations are stirred in the soul towards the abodes of unchanging light. I remember many a beautiful night on earth. Last New Year's night is still before my mind. We were standing together at the open window, the church with its tall tapering spire lay before us bathed in moonlight, the bells were resounding far and wide, and in their pauses we could hear the bells of the neighbouring villages, their sounds now strengthened, now scattered by the wind. Those distant bells seemed to me like the greetings of eternity, and my soul longed to enter into its rest. I thought of many a past New Year's night, of many another night of my life, of many tears, sighs, prayers, which only night had seen, of many graves which were yet closed to me, of my own grave. It was a happy, a

blessed hour; but I also know of dark, sad nights, not devoted to peaceful contemplation of the past, but reluctantly sacrificed to present grief. How long such nights of sorrow are! how fearful is the question: "Watchman, what of the night?"

Your father was lying on his death-bed. There were alternations of dozing and of seasons of consciousness, during which in the delirium of pain he now impatiently asked for something impossible, now desired with a moan to change his position, now in a stupor picked tufts from the coverlet. I sat there, while he seemed just slumbering, staring at the glimmering night-light or at the stertorously breathing man on the sick bed, and listening to the equal ticking of the death-watch, all around me was lonely and death-like, the house silent as the grave—I remember many a sleepless night in the time of my widowhood, when I, unduly exaggerating little cares as is the wont of the aged, was occupied with your lot and that of your children—and above all, my last night on earth, my breathing was so laboured I could not lie, and scarcely sit, cold perspiration was on my brow. It was so quiet around, I could hear through the slight partition the regular breathing of the sleepers near me; the silence was only sometimes interrupted by the gentle cry of some dreaming child. I think of how I got up, impelled more by the pangs of death than by the dawning day, and dressed myself—to die. My Lord and God, I thank Thee that Thou didst release me and bring me to the light; farewell earthly night, with thy stars and moonlight.

I am in the light, my eye needs no night and no darkness wherein to rest, it is accustomed to light. Only in hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth is there darkness, a lasting lonely night of sorrow!

And yet earth, and all that is of earth, needs night, because all life germinates in its maternal bosom. Life also germinates in nights of suffering; and just look at nature, which though it does not sleep, yet obtains and brings forth life in the night, that it may be developed in the light. The spirit of God once brooded over the lightless creation to deposit and fertilize germs. And still the mysterious and hidden darkness is the place where life germinates. Even for the heavenly life, which is open to its very depths to the light, this ordinance of God has still its significance. For we, too, until the day of Resurrection, are looking with hope to the night, in which a germ is to be developed; for our body is slumbering in the darkness of the grave, a corn of wheat which is to come forth gloriously in the light of the Resurrection morning.

Night envelopes all human genesis and growth. Thought springs up from the night of unconsciousness, as lightning shoots forth from the dark cloud. From the night of childhood, in which the baptismal gift slumbers, faith grows up into the daylight of consciousness; we do not cherish the precious plan till it has penetrated to the light, God cherishes it in the germ. Look at all that is good, or great, or beautiful, it stands complete before you when its

birthday has dawned ; but you did not see it originate and grow.

But all this needs time, good fruit develops slowly. Would it not be folly in the agriculturist, after he has deposited seed in the earth, to want to see whether it has sprouted, or to dig up the grain to observe it, or to tear open the young shooting stalk to look after the ears. Learn then to have patience also in the spiritual life till the seed of God grows, and do not take rapidly growing weeds for God's plants. But above all do not lift up the veil of night with which God covers His work, lest by your impatience and temerity you destroy the germs. Even the ripening ears, which show themselves with glad promise to the eye, live by the roots, which cannot be uncovered without injuring the life of the ears.

A friend was telling me in heaven of the well-meaning injudiciousness of an instructor, to whose special care she had during her youth been committed. He was one of those who, with all their earnestness and personal piety, have little confidence in the agency of the Holy Spirit, and who do not understand that wonderful conversation of the Saviour with Nicodemus, which significantly took place by night. They want to find out whence the wind cometh and whither it goeth, nay, they would like to direct its course according to their will. He was incessantly letting down his plummet into the inner life of the growing girl. He required that she should be constantly testing her own spiritual state, and



also that she should communicate the result to himself. He was continually digging the soil of her inner life, and so injuring the young and often weak stalks. He inflicted on her soul many a wound from which flowed the corrupt matter of hypocrisy; she accustomed herself gradually to a self-contemplating vanity and a pharisaic contempt for others. It was but very slowly that she recovered from these wounds, and humbly let fresh seed be sown by the Lord.

You know, my son, that I never tried to excuse or conceal the hatred found on earth towards Christ and believers, nor could I possibly do so for truth's sake in the light of heaven. If they have hated Him, they will hate His people also. But there is a grain of truth in the opposition of the enemies when they see how the sacred ordinances of God, which equally pervade the kingdoms of nature and grace, are broken through by daring hands, guided for the most part by pride and vanity, unless the ultimate causes of such proceedings reach down into a still darker, a weird province of the soul's life.

Therefore let that which God has sown grow tranquilly, Appeal again and again in virtue of God's commission, appeal in earnest and affectionate words, comfort the desponding, alarm the secure, but do not seek to do the work of the Holy Spirit yourself. Leave that in tranquillity which should be in tranquillity, and learn to be tranquil yourself. To be tranquil, means to let God's Spirit work in secret, to wait till God's harvest time is come. So many of

your brother pastors, so many others, who desire to be earnest Christians, do not in the over much business of their lives attain to tranquillity. That must indeed be a copious spring whose well needs no other supplies, but only gives forth continually. Look at the pastors of old times, how they used to sit over the Scriptures and the teaching of the Fathers, who were always to be found at home, and who in retirement and tranquillity lived before their flocks lives earnest yet cheerful, and resting on God. Look at modern pastors, often estranged from their homes and congregations, ready to minister to all except those over whom God has made them shepherds, exhausting themselves with overmuch business, and so frequently only laying the foundations, so seldom building the edifice.

The happiness of being able at the same time to take in and give out, to learn and to minister, is reserved for heaven, as your life needs the night's sleep after the day's work, as that alone is a healthy life in which the two regularly alternate, so too do the plants of your spiritual life need, after the heat of the day, their night hours of hidden germination and growth, of recollection and absorption, for which neither longer pauses from work for the purpose of amusement, nor periods of merely bodily recreation can compensate.

**T**HOUGH I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal." We do now talk together with the tongues of angels; but the best that we talk of is begotten of love to God. "God is love." This is a mystery to the earthly spirit, although it can already bless the earthly heart. In heaven, however, the dawn of knowledge has risen upon me. And with the knowledge of love the power to love increases, for to love is to be like God. For the soul made in God's image is destined to love and thirst after love; its nature is perfect when it loves. How is it possible that a soul should choose to stand alone, and to be without love? Sin is already separation from God, temporary, perhaps not even desired; but how can a soul desire to be separated for ever, from the first cause of its being, to go where there are indeed many, but where no communion exists? Solve these questions, which already occupied angels before the creation, and you will have reached the goal of all knowledge. And yet there are undoubtedly human beings, who choose to be without love.

"Let us love one another"; it is a saying of great significance for heaven as well as earth. What, indeed, does the language of earth mean by

love? How does love become hatred in the world of sin, so that men think they love just when they bitterly hate? A mother blinded by vanity spoils her child, flatters its faults, cherishes all the germs of evil and speaks of love! Or one man helps another to sin, that he may be helped in his turn, shuts his eyes when he should have opened them, is silent when he should have spoken, and talks of love. Or the white of truth and the black of lying are mingled into a disagreeable grey, all sacred enthusiasm for justice, all serious horror at injustice is avoided, yet love is spoken of. True love is strong and holy, it is the test of all love that it rejoices in the truth. And the God who has been manifested to you in the New Testament as the God of love, is also the jealous God spoken of in the Old Testament. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." Yes, the God of love hates and punishes evil. That is the thought which terrifies the weaklings who make love mean what they wish, but are not able to twist and turn words about God's wrath: fleeing before this thought they make a morality for themselves by removing the normal standard from the object to be measured. I remember a bold saying of your father, who, while yet on earth, declared: "If I did not recognise in the Scriptures and in conscience the voice of God telling me, and having a right to tell me, what to do and what to leave undone, I should be inclined to be an immoral man, I should then at least deceive no one."

And this Holy God loves nevertheless all those who are made in His image, though they have renounced His love; He requires nothing further from them, than that they should return to the union which they have themselves given up. And like Him we too learn to love all who bear a human countenance, and rejoice in heaven over every reflection, however faint, of this universal all-embracing love of God, which is found on earth. Where men begin to set aside self for the sake of others, where sacrifices are made, and good is done for its own sake, we gladly see an image of the love of God.

Love must, however, be learned, it does not spring up of itself. Nor can man begin with the love of God, he must learn to exercise love to the visible and the individual before his love can rise to the invisible and universal, it is not self-created, self-originated. No one can go the contrary road. How can he love God who does not love his brother? how can he love mankind who hates his neighbour? Love begins with child love. They are the ties of nature which bind parents to their children, but a holy, a Divine love is to grow out of natural love. And they who have once grasped each other in love do not let go again in time or eternity. I once read on earth a saying to the effect, that the love of kindred has now no longer any significance in heaven. As though any one could put asunder what God has joined together, as though a natural tie were not one made by God. Had he who wrote it no love for his

parents on earth, or had he experienced none from them? Did he come perchance from unbelief to faith, in opposition to them? Well for him if he then learned to love Him whose love exceeds that of children and parents, whose love also fully compensates for the want of it; well for him if God lifted him safely over the first missing round of the ladder—but there is no occasion for us on that account to break out that first round. As life goes on, the love of God increases by means of love to our neighbour. Here, too, natural instinct lends us its assistance. Compassion is a Divine help in learning to love. But too many make the mistake of taking compassion for love, when it is only love's finger post. The scribe's question: "Who is my neighbour?" is that of human nature. Selfishness will always be asking it, but compassion alone will never answer it. Next comes the assistance of conjugal love. What an excellent school of love is marriage. Thousands of marriages are concluded amidst much talk of love, without a spark of the genuine article. That was called love which was only instinct, and the very elements of love are often first studied in married life. Well for those who begin by loving and make further progress afterwards. How could I, in writing this, fail to think of your father and of our marriage, and to praise the mercy of God which made it so easy to me to learn love by experiencing so much of it.

There is even a love of Christ which is yet no perfect love, but may become a stage to it. He is

the fairest among the children of men, and a human heart may therefore love Him, the pure, the gentle Son of man, the meek Sufferer, without quite understanding and quite embracing Him. This love also is genuine as far as it goes, but it must lead beyond itself. To it too. The word for it is: Onwards!

Yes, onwards to the perfect love of God, to love towards all whom He loves. Even towards those whom we know not. Love desires and learns to know; as love increases so does knowledge, until at the time of perfection love and knowledge will happily embrace all who dwell under the sceptre of Christ, upon the new earth.

And the lost also?

On earth I was much occupied with the question, "Whether there would not at last come a time when the fires of hell would have burnt out, and the souls of the lost, purged and purified by suffering, be brought to the one great flock of the one Shepherd." Your father told me that this hope was shared by many earnest persons, and that it had at least nothing in common with the weakly expectation of those who conceive of heaven as the place where all who have lived on earth will continue their lives in peace and unmolested by any troubles. But even on earth the objection struck me: "Would God, like a weak father, have only threatened eternal condemnation, and could His Son, who manifested to us the love of God, and frequently spoke of the outer darkness and the everlasting fire, have been mistaken?"

At the beginning of my heavenly life this question, "And the lost also?" was still of consequence to me. Now it is so no longer. I do not know the lost. I do not feel compassion for them, I cannot love them.

"That day shall declare it. God is love."

But think of earth and of those who live on earth with you, who are lost, but who not merely may, but ought to be saved. What happiness to be allowed to lead a soul towards the seeking love of God! If my letters contribute to disclose further to you the love of God, nay, if they should be the means of leading any lost and wandering soul besides to the Saviour, whose glory I have tried to show in the light indeed of heaven, but in the dark speech of earth, a great thing would indeed be done, and I, one of the blessed, be more blessed.

Eternal unfathomable ocean of love receive me, that I may be submerged in thy waves. Not to be lost therein as the drop in the sea—that would be only an instant of supreme happiness, and I am called to everlasting happiness. No, I would renew my youth, would be renovated in Thy waves, that so my very nature may become love, and that released from the last particle of earthly life, delivered from even the memory of earthly guilt, I may at last enter upon the Resurrection Life.



XXXVI.

**Y**OU are ill, seriously ill. An angel told me so. I heard it with fervent thanksgiving to God that I was no longer on earth to receive such a message. In heaven it sounds so differently.

I said to your father, naming your name: "Our son is ill." "This sickness is not unto death," said he. "But come, I will take you to the Book of Life. The names of all men were written there. Those of the baptized shone brightly. All the days of their lives were entered, with the value they have for eternity. Many names also were blotted out. But the names of all still living on earth were yet left. There I saw also the course of your life, and your departure. I do not know whether I should, in the language of earth, call the time allotted to you long or short. To me it seems short. But all the greater and more glorious are the entries concerning your life. Prayers heard beyond asking or thought—bright sunshine and the peace of God at eventide—Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

Since I have looked into the Book of Life the impulse to communicate with you has ceased. A little while and you will come yourself. You will then see, and we shall talk together!

Only once more will my motherly affection yearn towards you. I shall once long, not to write, but to come down to you—when your hour is come. Oh

that angels may then prepare to accompany your soul ! I should then say to them, " Let me go down, that I may be near him in his dread hour, as he was with me when I laid my head to rest. I will wipe the death-sweat from his brow, I will smooth his pillow for sleep. The most faithful wife, the most affectionate children, could not smooth it like a mother's hand. The welcome of my love greeted him in the morning of life ; let it accompany him in its evening."

But the angel will forbid it, and say : " Stay, our hands are tenderer, and our arms softer than yours. You could only smooth his pillow, we can bear him upwards."

" Will they speak thus ? " Watch and pray !

And I too watch and pray. But I will wait for you at that hour at the gate of Paradise, hand in hand with your dear loving father. His eye sparkles, he has words of affection ready for you. You are coming ! Not to the left, but to us, in the name of Jesus—I stretch out my arms—blessed be God !

Till then, under the protection of the All-merciful—farewell And when the time comes, in the Saviour's name,—farewell !

