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The Reuniting Pilgrimage

A Prose Poem

Interpreting Human Life as an Initiation

by

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The Reuniting Pilgrimage

CHAPTER I.

PAUL CALLED TO JERUSALEM.



OW it came to pass that after Paul had tarried many days at Rome, and the churches were established and confirmed, that his heart burned within him to visit the confines of the West, that there, too, he might preach the Gospel. Whereas great sadness fell over the hearts of the believers, doubting not but that they should see his face no more. For certain of the members of Cæsar's household had aforetimes dwelt in the Northern Islands, who endeavored to dissuade Paul from his purpose, saying that no man might return thence, unless he had great provisions and instruments of war; for the men, said they, were exceeding fierce, and the lands wild and desolate. But when Herodion, Andronicus and Junia who were his kinsmen, saw that Paul had set his face to depart, they arranged their private affairs that they might go with him; doubting not they should die with him, but Paul comforted them, saying that it had been revealed to him he could not die in any place other than the Great City, after having been a witness unto the Lord in the face of even the uttermost Gentiles.

And it was so that when they departed Aquila and Priscilla and those of the family of Persis and Rufus came to the ship to bid them farewell, and they wept sore, crying aloud. But Paul and his company set sail in a ship bound for the Pillars of Hercules, where they might seek means of crossing the streams of the unknown seas beyond.

Now it came to pass that during the night a great storm arose, so that neither moon nor stars were to be seen, no, not for many days. So it came to pass that both Paul and Junia waxed exceeding sick because of the tossing of the waves. And as Paul lay on his couch praying, misdoubting whether it pleased God he should have undertaken so unfortunate a journey, the Word of the Lord came unto him, saying that he must first go to Jerusalem to learn many things concerning the Kingdom of God, so when the ship put in at Melita for repairs we left it, and embarked in a boat, laden with wool, bound for Tyre. And after many days we arrived there, and having comforted the members of the churches, proceeded to Jerusalem, hastening if perhaps we might arrive in time for the Feast of the Passover. And when we had arrived there, we lodged at the house of Herodion, Paul's kinsman, and repaired to the Temple to undergo the purification according to the Law.

CHAPTER II.

PAUL FINDS THE APOSTLES AND THE BLESSED MARY.



AND as Paul was praying in the Inner Court of the Temple, he besought that the Lord would make plain the purpose of his journey to Jerusalem. And just while he spoke thus, the Lord Jesus stood by him in appearance like to any other man, but that his face shone with a white light, so that Paul being dazzled, covered his eyes and worshiped. And the Lord said, Saul, thou hast done well to follow Me hither. And I will reveal to thy fellow Apostles by thy means many things which shall comfort and stablish your souls. Yet, for the darkness of the times, see that they keep these Mysteries of the Kingdom secret. For the days shall come when the world shall be ready to see the full light; but the Time is not yet. Go up the Street called the Road of Tiles, and knock at a house covered with two heaps of straw, and it shall be opened unto thee. There ask to be admitted to the bedside of the Blessed Mary who bore me, in the house of John, whom thou shalt see. And when they shall have received thee, ask her to tell thee and thy fellow Apostles concerning all that is in thine heart, that thou thyself beest at peace, while preaching to others.

And when Paul looked up he saw none but his fellow-companions, praying devoutly as heretofore. And he rose and trembled violently, and wept, so much so that

Herodion helped him home, Paul being speechless, but for the words, I have seen him, I have seen him, and could not tell who it was that he had seen. Then Herodion understood that he had beheld a vision, and forbore to ask him further questions till what time he should be restored. And after they had reached the house, deep sleep fell upon Paul, and he slumbered sweetly as a child from the sixth even unto the twelfth hour, and when he awoke they set meat before him, and he strengthened his heart.

Now when the stars became bright, Paul set his face to go forth, to do the work of the Lord. Now Junia pressed Herodion to go with him, but Paul said he must go alone. And as it was dark, I, Luke, followed him afar off, doubting whether he would find his way alone, for the many new houses built there of late. And Paul, being rapt in the Spirit, hastened down the Joppa road, and as he turned the corner of the Citadel, three sons of Belial full of wine barred his way, and would have beaten him had I not run up and frightened them by my cries. And when I would have fallen back Paul bade me go with him and guide him to the Road of Tiles. And as we proceeded he told me he was about to ask the Blessed Mary to tell him the Mysteries of the Kingdom, before she should pass away. And when I had entreated, he bade me enter with him, to make record on all she should say, but keeping it secret, lest speaking wisdom among the foolish the Mysteries of the Kingdom take hurt.

And straightway, as he spoke of these things, we saw a house roofed over above the gateway with two bundles of straw, which was the house of John, who had taken the Blessed Mary to live with him, after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. Then Paul knocked at the gate, but the door standing ajar, and none coming to answer, no, not after we had knocked three times, we made bold to enter in and there was nobody in the porter's lodge, there being no light in it. But as

we left it, we heard the sound of weeping; and as we turned towards it, we saw the figure of a man, bent over in the bitterness of anguish. Then Paul went up to him and spoke to him, but he only wept the more, making signs that he should be left alone. But Paul would not leave from him, and inquired whether this was the house of John, where the Blessed Mary lodged. And the man turned upon him fiercely as a dog.

But when Paul had spoken meekly, the man stood still astonished; and we saw that it was Simon Peter, the apostle of the Lord. Then Paul recognizing him stood back, doubting as to how Peter would receive him; for when they last met at Antioch, they had parted in anger, Paul having withstood Peter to the face for dissembling with the Jews. But Peter, crying, "Paul, Paul," fell upon his neck and kissed him, weeping, till the tears came into the eyes of Paul also; and with a husky voice had him sit down, and tell him how it was that he was there. And when Paul had at length told him how the Lord Jesus had called him when he was on board ship, and how he appeared to him in the Temple, Peter rejoiced greatly, and lit a candle, and called a damsel, who chanced to pass by, that she should take word to the other apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, being at that time assembled in the house, watching by the bedside of the Blessed Mary, who was exceeding sick, and who said that she knew that her hour had come.

And it came to pass that as soon as the damsel had told those within that Paul had arrived, that many disciples who were in the house came out in great haste to salute him. And among them I saw Bartholomew who had gone into Armenia, and Andrew from the shores of the Euxine Sea, whither they had gone to preach the word of the Lord. And recognizing them, they showed to me the other apostles, Matthew and Matthias from Ethiopia, and Philip from Hierapolis, and Mark from Alexandria, and Thaddeus

from Edessa and Armenia, who all greeted me lovingly, though the faces of all bore that silent sadness and anxiety which comes from watching by the bedside of the sick.

CHAPTER III.

MARY WARNED OF HER END.



AND when we had inquired after James surnamed Justus, and John his brother, and after Simon Zelotes, and the others of the Lord's company, Matthew told us that they were resting, having watched by the Blessed Mary all day. Then Euphoris the damsel brought lights, and while we sat at meat, Mark, who sat next to me, told me how that all the Apostles had been led up of the Spirit from the distant lands where they were preaching the Lord Jesus, and had met here at the house of John, one after another, to listen to the last words of the Blessed Mary, if perchance she might tell them some of the words of Jesus when he had dwelt with her, before his ministry. For the Blessed Mary had treasured all his words and deeds in her heart, and loved to tell of them to those who had followed him in his later years. And though she was now in her eighty-third year, yet was her eye as bright as when she had been a girl of eighteen years, and spent her days praying in the Temple, before Gabriel the man of God came to her, to tell her what should happen.

For it had come to pass that since the Feast of the Dedication the Blessed Mary had grown feeble in body; and she longed to depart, praying instantly day and night that her hour might come. But as the days lengthened, she grew stronger in body; yet her heart

within her waxed wearier of life. And she prayed, saying,

Lord, who knowest the sorrows
Of all Thy servants; Who heardest
The prayers of our forefathers,
And answerest them who are sad;
Delay not the coming of mine hour;
For the times are late, yet sorrow rules.
Have I not served thee fully in my day?
And all my brethren are beyond,
And I alone am left to mourn
My own wild grief, and Israel's grief.

And as she was praying, the man Gabriel stood by her, holding a milk-white Lily in his hand. And he said,

Hail, Mary, Blessed of God;
Thy prayer is heard,
And the days of thy pilgrimage shall cease.
Only exhort the Brethren,
That their hearts fail them not:
For the sacred bulwarks be cast down
And Israel be trodden under foot of the Gentiles.

And it was so that Mary spent her days in prayer and fasting, till one might see the sun through her hands. And she would not be entreated, no, not so much as to lay down in the night-season. Then her strength forsook her, and she lay down upon a bed. But not for all the entreaties of Mary of Magdala and the other Mary would she so much as taste food, since, said she,

My time is drawing nigh.

And it was so that as she prayed at the rising of the sun the same day that Paul saw the vision in the Temple, that she fell back on the ground, and her spirit left her in a trance; and in vision saw the sixth

heaven, nearest to the Throne of God. And it came to pass that when her eyes were opened that she caused Mary the mother of James and Joses to call the Apostles to her. For she said,

My time has drawn full nigh.

And it was so that during the day, as she lay on her bed, strengthening the hearts of the Apostles and of the Faithful Women, that a light shone from her face, so much so that none durst look at her, or speak to her, but waited till she should speak to them. For there was no need that any should tell her what was in his heart, for she answered the thoughts of each before he could tell them to her. And it came to pass that at sunset, after they had prayed together, and the men had sung a psalm, that she dismissed them, that they might take meat. But she was lifted by Mary of Magdala, and Mary the wife of Cleophas from the upper chamber to the roof of the lodge, that she might say farewell to the sun for the last time.

CHAPTER IV.

MARY PLANTS A LILY.



OW the evening air was heavy with the fragrance of the lilies that grew on the house-top. For when Gabriel the man of God had first come to Mary of Nazareth to tell her that the Holy Spirit should overshadow her, and that she should bring forth the child called Jesus, that as she wondered in her heart at all these things, the man Gabriel gave her in her hand a lily wonderful to behold, milk white, with golden tendrils sweet as honey, whose buds were ever trembling because overweighted with their own fragrance that rose up in visible clouds like the incense of Arabia. And when Mary had planted it within the court of the house of her mother Anna, it grew straight and tall, blooming only once every month, on the night of the Feast of the New Moon. And it always came to pass that the buds opened at the first breezes of the dusk of the night of the Feast, and withered away before the breezes of the dawn. And each year, at the time the man Gabriel had come to her, the lily died, a new one springing up in its place.

But after Mary had come to dwell with John the son of Thunder at Jerusalem, she went to Nazareth to close the eyes of her mother Anna, and brought back with her the lily, where it throve so well that it did not die each year any more, but only sent forth a new shoot, so that there were now five and thirty lilies

growing on the house-top near the door of the chamber where she slept, which was an upper one, in order that she might see the sky by day and night. And as the Blessed Mary and the other two Maries were praying, the sun was setting amidst a glory of scarlet and purple clouds over the golden waves of the Great Sea in the far distant west.

And it came to pass that the scent of the lilies waxed so sweet that Mary of Magdala turned herself towards them, and saw that the heaving buds were breaking open one after another. And when she saw this she raised her eyes to see whether the moon were not full, and behold, she saw it rising over the golden roofs of the Temple from which ascended the smoke of the evening sacrifice in straight columns towards the stars for there was no wind stirring. And when she had told the other Maries, and they had turned to behold the rising moon with the faint stars of God shining all around it, that it happened that the trumpets of the Temple rang over the Holy City, and the fantastic mist of fragrance of the lilies was mingled to the rising and falling waves of the sound of the singing of the priests as they began to sing the great Shiggaion of David that is sung at sunset, and ends only with the rising of the sun again.

And as the Blessed Mary was bathed in the waves of sound, and fragrance, and light, she fell on her face towards the Holy of Holies lost in silent adoration, drinking in the ineffable beauty of God. And as she remembered that she should soon depart, tears filled her eyes, and she sobbed aloud, so much so that the other Maries wept with her. And behold, as the voice of their weeping rose upwards there came over them a cloud of glory, and a great peace came into their hearts. But they all continued instant in prayer until long after the purple night had risen upwards unto the hearts of heaven, lighting the stars so that they shone gold, and green, and scarlet, and blue, and the

roofs of the Temple grew pale, and the singing of the Shiggaion grew faint, and the lights of the Holy City went out one by one, except the glow in the Court of the Temple, and they began to hear the booming of the waves of the Great Sea far distant, being brought to the garden of lilies by the changeful breezes of the night.

CHAPTER V.

PAUL PRESENTS HIS DIFFICULTIES.



OW when the Apostles had taken away the desire of eating they fell to talking about many of the words which the Blessed Mary had uttered, so much so that Peter and Paul slipped away unnoticed from the table, I following them. And Peter led us to the house-top, and took us to where the Blessed Mary was sitting amidst her lilies. And when Paul had told the Blessed Mary of his vision, it came to pass that she blessed God, who had led to her all the Saints, that she might say farewell to them before her hour should come. And, rejoicing in the spread of the Gospel, she sang the song of the venerable Simeon, saying,

Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant
Depart in peace,
According to thy Word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation
Which Thou hast prepared
Before the face of all people.
To be a Light to lighten the Gentiles,
And to be the Glory
Of thy people Israel.

Now it came to pass that while she uttered these words the Apostles, one after another, came up, until all those who had sat at meat, and many of the saints who dwelt at Jerusalem, sat down on the house-top

around the garden of lilies in which were the women, the Blessed Mary reclining among them on a carved chair. And it was so that a great splendor shone from the face and body of the Blessed Mary, so much so that a man might see the faces of the men sitting in a circle around her, and tell their faces. And among them I saw many of the saints whom I had known aforetime, and of many of whom I had till then only heard, John, Mark and Barnabas pointing out many with whom afterwards conversing I gleaned many of the facts of the life of the Lord Jesus, which I have written down in my Gospel. And I saw there with my own eyes James, surnamed Justus, and James and John Boanerges, and Thaddeus and Thomas, and Simon Zelotes, and Matthew and Bartholomew and Zaccheus, most of them being now well hoary with age. Then Paul, looking steadfastly at the Blessed Mary, and taking courage from her loving glance, said,

Behold, Blessed Mary, the Lord Jesus appeared to me in the Temple this very day, bidding me come to thee, to ask of thee many things that have long troubled my heart. And the Blessed Mary, smiling so that the light in her face grew brighter, said, Go on. And Paul lifted up his parable and said, Men and brethren who have companied with the Lord Jesus himself, and since have preached the Gospel, I think to myself that I have not been the least faithful among you to teach how that Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, taught the words of the Heavenly Father, and did marvellous deeds. And that the Jews crucified him, but he was not holden to Death, ascending to the Father. And though this knowledge be sufficient to lead men to the Light, yet are there many words I would speak of which I nothing know, the Spirit saying nought about them. Although I believe that God is just. And John the son of Thunder said, Yea verily, here is the patience of the Saints. And Paul proceeded, Lo, John has well-spoken; but if the ways of God be

equal, then are they so in heaven, not on earth. For here the tears of the afflicted rise by day and night, crying out that God's ways are not equal with them, and I have no words to answer, but words of faith, which seem belied by facts. Tell us, Blessed Mary, how can we reconcile the facts and the faith, the tears and the hope? Hast thou no word of comfort for my soul? Oh, how can God be just, while well-nigh universal charges of injustice rise from Earth? O brethren in the Lord, have I not spoken well?

And it was about the second watch of the night, the Constellation of the Bucket and Scales just rising over the Temple-roof and during the first great *Selah*-pause of the Shiggaion we all bowed down to worship silently.

CHAPTER VI.

WHY GOD SEEMS UNJUST.



AND it came to pass that when Paul had done speaking that Matthias answered and said, Paul has well spoken, O Blessed Mary; God's ways are not equal:—I speak but as a man. For if this life be an opportunity of sanctification, it should be equal to all. But some are strong and healthy, large and heavy, others are weak and small."

Then Thomas Didymos spoke suddenly and said, "Yea, and that is not all. Some are poor, laboring and toiling by day and night, so they have no time for devotion; and when the body is under-fed, the soul's judgment is not to be trusted; and soiled garments entail degradation of heart. Bitter and servile is the lot of the poor, depending for their very existence on the whims of charity of the rich, instead of on social justice. And the wealthy are fat and well-liking, and have time to worship, and read God's word, and have unshaken trust in the goodness of the Lord. And they can afford to give alms, and to keep the Temple of the Spirit swept and garnished. And they, in the natural confidence born of accustomed ease can easily, no wonder! speak of the tender love of God for his children. How can he who is faint with the weariness of labor go and listen to the Gospel, taking it to heart and practising it?"

James, the son of Alpheus, sat next to Thomas

Didymos, who said to him, "Have I not spoken truth, O James?" And James said, "Matthias and Thomas have well spoken, O Blessed Mary; God's ways are not equal in this life—I speak but as a man. For if this life be an opportunity of sanctification, it should be equal to all. Behold, the slave is tool of his master, who at his pleasure forces him to lie and steal, and the slave lies and steals freely, saying this, I am not responsible, I am only a slave. How can such a man grow morally self-poised, when at every moment he must amuse the whim, and cower before the anger of an irresponsible tyrant! Even personal service is degrading; an immortal soul for whom Christ died spending its life as the tool of another, sinful mind? And the master grows reckless, cruel, impatient, proud. Surely the ways of God are not equal with the servant and the master; surely there is injustice here!"

And Levi the Publican said, "Long have I desired to understand that of which Paul has spoken, O Blessed Mary. Consider the lot of those born blind and maimed, or who through sudden misfortune are condemned to lie on their backs for the rest of their life. Consider those who are born with a disease which drags them into the grave while young;—have all these an opportunity for moral growth equal to those who are born healthy, and remain strong all their lives?"

And Simon Zelotes answered and said, "Paul has spoken well, O Blessed Mary, God's ways are not equal in this life—I speak but as a man. For if this life be an opportunity of sanctification, it should be equal to all. But some learn knowledge easily, while others cannot away with it. Some children seem to be born with as much knowledge as many seem able to acquire: and knowledge yields wisdom."

And Philip the Apostle of the Lord answered and said, "Paul has spoken well, O Blessed Mary. God's ways are not equal in this life—I speak but as a man. For if this life be an opportunity of sanctification, it

should be equal to all. Consider the soul of the child whose body dies before it be two years old. Can it grow and develop like the soul of the man who lives threescore years?" And when Philip had spoken all were silent, for they knew that Philip's wife Nikeris had died in giving birth to a son, who only survived her a few days.

Then the Blessed Mary said, "Yea, why speak ye thus, to make me weep, and for to break my heart? Nevertheless have ye well spoken, for these are not fancied griefs. Hard is the lot of those of whom ye have spoken, bitter indeed are their griefs. Have ye more to say."

And Bartholomew lifted up his voice and wept; and said, "Would God indeed that this were all; but further and deeper is the injustice of this life. Nay, is it worth while to be righteous? If God reward righteousness and punish iniquity, how is it that some are criminals by birth, and some are born saints? Yea, do not many deal only after the manner of their fathers? Does it not seem untrue that it is possible to grow holier? How few actually change themselves, and leave their former sins behind!"

And the sadness of the plea of Bartholomew pierced the heart of all, so much so that we were all troubled in spirit, nodding one to the other.

Then Andrew spoke out above the rest, and said, "Alas, that what Bartholomew said is true; would God we might call it a lie! Where is the Justice of Providence? I speak but as a man, heavy at heart, grieving for my fellows. Why happeneth misfortune after misfortune to the righteous, and why are the wicked secure from all disgrace? Why must the righteous suffer, the evil rejoice?"

And as Andrew spake thus, the heart of one of the Maries, she of Magdala, out of whom had gone seven devils, burned within her, and her eyes flashed, and she said, "Yea, Blessed Mary, I too will speak, I too

will question with thee concerning the ways of the Lord. Behold, men make their sport of women, casting them out to dishonor and starvation, forcing them, if they would not die, to sell themselves to them. Men sin against women; and the men remain well-spoken of in the synagogues, while the women who have only been weak in that they believed the promises of men, are cast out unto shame and hunger, and are considered less than a horse or a dog. Where is the Justice of God? I speak but as a woman." And it came to pass that when Mary of Magdala had spoken that all remained silent for a time, while the gradual psalms of the Mischal floated over the sleeping city up to the stars in the sky.

Then Lebbaeus Thaddeus said, "O Blessed Mary, suffer me also to speak! If God be just—I speak but as a man—how could he choose unto himself one nation above all, giving salvation to it alone, while the great Gentile world lived and died in ignorance and darkness? Is God not the Father of all races? Is one child of his dearer to him than another? We Jews may be grateful, we are the peculiar people of God; but is this just to the numberless Gentiles who have lived as best they could?"

And Nathanael of Cana said, "Nay, but dear Thaddeus has not said all. If we who knew the Lord Jesus, and have tasted his salvation, have had a great privilege above the Jews who lived before his day, is it just to them that we who sit here, his apostles and disciples, should be saved, while they who are as well-meaning and as earnest as we, should be lost because of wholly innocent ignorance?"

Then said the Apostle James, the son of Thunder, "Nay, but not even beloved Nathanael has said all. Is it just that two souls that have ever once loved each other should be parted for ever? When a mother in divine love has spent her life in tending her child, is it just she should be taken away before her child can

repay her love by taking care of her in her old age? Tell us, O Blessed Mary, how it be possible that the ways of God be equal, when most that we see of life reveals injustice? Yet we would believe that He who rideth above the Cherubim is just; but must our experience and reason ever contradict our faith in Him? Would God that we might see His hand in the land of the living! So would our sorrows not deaden our souls, and our tears not blind our vision!"

CHAPTER VII.

APPARENT INJUSTICE EXPLAINED.



NOW when the Apostles had done speaking, the Blessed Mary smiled so that her face began to resemble that of the Lord Jesus as it was at such times when He had performed some miracle of healing. And the light that shone from her eyes grew brighter than that of the full Moon, which by this time had risen high. Yet none of the Apostles or Disciples were weary with sleep, so eagerly watched they for what the Blessed Mary should say. And she turned her face toward the Temple, and being intent in prayer, raised her hands aloft. And it was so that when she had finished her prayer that she said, "The Spirit of God which led you all up out of the far countries where a few months ago ye were preaching the Gospel, fills my heart with joy, and loosens my tongue that I may comfort your griefs, and stablish you in firm confidence of the Father in heaven, that none of you should fall away, but bring many of the knowledge of Truth. And blessed be the Father of all who has given it to me, his handmaiden, to speak to you all the words of this life!"

Now as she spake, behold, I became aware that we were no longer alone in the night. For first, I thought the dawn was breaking; but as I looked intently into the darkness around us, I beheld that on the roofs of all the houses around us, as far as eye could reach, sat and stood hosts of the blessed Cherubims, with bodies

of living fire, veiled in shining garments, wonderful to behold, in such great numbers that no man might number them. And near-by I saw the Four Archangels of God, Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, standing near the Blessed Virgin, listening intently; for they had all come to hear the words the Blessed Virgin was about to utter.

And the Blessed Mary said, "Paul, and those of you who have spoken, have spoken right words. If this one single life be all the opportunity for development which a soul may have, then indeed are the ways of God not equal. For Justice demands that every soul have equal opportunities to bring forth an equal degree of sanctification. Hear, O Israel! The Lord thy God is a just God, Who is no respecter of persons, with Whom there is no variableness, or, shadow of turning! Now, if this be true, two results must follow. Firstly, there must be lives before and after this one we know of, in which the inequalities here apparent shall all be compensated. Secondly, these other lives must have occurred in this same world, in order that the debts which one soul contracts to another may be repaid; which can only occur when the circumstances of repayment are exactly the same as those of the occurrence. Now both of these conditions would be fulfilled in a reincarnation on this earth, in which providential arrangement each soul would by God be furnished with the necessary circumstances, in wise succession, so as to give each soul a wise and rounded experience; through which she may attain to perfect Godlikeness, and behold the beatific vision, until she came into the unity of faith, and experience of the divine sonship of God, unto perfect man, unto the measures of the fulness of the stature of Christ; as it is written, "Upon this Generation shall come all the righteous Blood shed from Abel to Zacharias, because the souls of all those who committed those crimes are all incarnate to-day, awaiting the Judgment, now nigh at hand."

Now it came to pass that when the Blessed Mary had uttered these marvellous words, that the Apostles were astonished with a great astonishment, and were struck dumb, beholding the infinite wisdom of this revelation; and the hosts of the Angels began to praise God, singing and rejoicing, saying.

Glory to the Father of Souls,
Who grants to each the opportunity
Of growing like to Him, divine!

Then the Blessed Mary smiled, and the halo of radiance around her pulsated with glory, while the women near drew back in awe. And she said, "Wonderful indeed are the Mysteries of God. And that ye may undersatnd more fully how this can be, I will tell you all of what happened once.

"It was in the days when God had but lately created the human race. And the anger of God desired to behold the new creatures. And at a certain time this Uzziel, one of the Angels of the Throne, came to the boundaries of this Earth, and considered man from the rising to the setting of the sun. Now when Uzziel returned to the Courts of Heaven he told his brother-angel that there was not one race of man, but many races; for, said he, 'I saw some men not taller than three cubits, and some four, and some taller; yea up to fourteen cubits high.' And his brother-angel smiled, doubting. So Uzziel returned to the Earth, and staid there during the whole life-time of Enoch. And behold, he then knew that what had appeared to him at first so many races, were only different stages in the development of one race; that there was not one race of children, one of youths, and one of men; but that one and the same soul in the natural course of its development passed through all those stages successively. And though no difference of growth could be detected during the space of any one day, and though each day was separated from the other by a death-like state of

sleep, yet the swift rolling years showed to him who watched continually the unity that underlay the diversity. Likewise," said the Blessed Mary, "is it with the lives of men. One life of man is one day of God; the death of man is but the night of God; and God alone sees the human soul traveling from one house of flesh to another, through the nights of physical death, until the year of God, the whole life of the soul, be accomplished, and she stand before God—her lusts, desires, passions and debts left behind, all pure and strong."

And it came to pass that when the Blessed Mary had done speaking, that the Host of Angels grew bright as the sun with hymns of delight, so much so that covered our eyes, lest we be blinded. But when their hymns had died away, and all was still but the sacred Shiggaion resounding through the night I thought of a still stream in which the glowing stars and the moon are reflected.

CHAPTER VIII.

DIFFICULTIES ARE RESOLVED.



AND it came to pass that the Blessed Mary smiled tenderly when she saw the sacred awe that held all the Apostles and the Women as with a hand of iron, so that we could neither move nor speak, nor reveal to her the questions we would ask only by the glance of our eyes. And the Blessed Mary said,

Fear not, ye sons and daughters of men,
Verily, kings and prophets
In vain desired to hear and see
Those things which now ye hear and see,
Nor saw, nor heard them ever.
Fear not, for your Father is tenderer in love
To you, than the mothers who bare you,
And all this angelic glory is not so much
The pomp and pride of the Court of Heaven
As the natural splendor of your own souls
Albeit while yet imprisoned in the flesh
They count themselves unworthy
Of so much spiritual beauty.
Fear not, dear souls:
To those who love him and serve him
The Father hath destined joys and glories
That eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard
Nor heart of man conceived.

And as the Blessed Mary said these words, behold, the springs of the deeps were opened, and tears of joy

and gladness blinded us. And a great peace fell upon us all, and the Four Archangels raised their hands over us in silent benediction.

And it came to pass that the Blessed Mary, bathing her hands in the lightening perfume of the lilies, lifted up her voice and said,

Sweet human Souls, who here to-night,
With me watch out the last of nights
Of this my earthly pilgrimage,
O listen while I answer all your questioning
That henceforth Peace may fill your hearts
Concerning the deep Sorrow of the World.

Dear Matthias, thou seek'st the reason of
The difference of bodily conditions of men.
Yea, if this life be all,
Then is Providence unjust.
But behold, each Soul in different lives
Possesses bodies strong and weak,
So that each Soul may learn
The varying experience of each.

And so, impatient Thomas dear,
It is with rich and poor, the laborer and idler,
The synagogue's devoted worshiper,
And laborer who has no time to pray:
Each soul has each experience in its turn,
If not in this, then in some other life;
But not by chance—
'Tis as each man somewhere, somehow,
Deserved it, that results appear to-day.

And as she spoke, the Archangel Uriel cried aloud
for joy,

Blessed be the Lord and Father of us all,
Who hath heard the prayer of the poor.
And the other Archangel answering cried,
Glory for ever and ever, Amen.

And the Blessed Mary said,
I need not answer thee at length,
O blessed James;
The Slave of this life
Is the Master of the next.

Dear Levi, listen; souls that here
Are born all sick, and maimed and blind,
Beyond are healthy, whole and clear of sight.
For lo, of every soul the end
Is just according to their works.

So, dear headlong Simon,
Is it with the wise and the fool,
The learned and the unlearned.
As each uses the knowledge he has,
So will he be given more,
For the Father is just and faithful,
Who will let none wander in darkness, that
Deserves to have the Truth, and keeps it,
And makes himself incapable of misusing it.

Loving Philip, be not anxious
For thy son who passed away a babe.
He will return to thee,
When the time has come, in another life.
Nay, rejoice that he was spared
The suffering and anguish of this our life
For that one time at least.
Nay, he shall return to earth once more,
When greater opportunities are ready;
Till when he sleeps in peace
Upon the breast of his Guardian Angel.

And the Archangel sang aloud for joy:

True and righteous are Thy dealings,
Glory to thee, O Father, for ever, Amen.

And the Blessed Mary said,
I will now answer thoughtful Bartholomew.
Some souls were born criminal, some holy—
This is the very best proof
That before our souls entered these bodies,
They have lived on earth before.
Nor righteousness, nor sin, is born of Chance:
For righteousness is born of righteousness,
And sin is born of sin.
According to their former lives,
Are they now born moral or immoral;
As they live now, will they be born beyond.
But for this, Bartholomew were right—
Vain were the struggle to grow holier.
But the good deed sown to-day
As habit to-morrow is reaped.
Despair not, but rejoice, Bartholomew!
The search for holiness is not in vain!

Thy question, Blessed Andrew, was
Concerning the misfortunes of the good,
And the good fortune of the bad.
But knewest thou the Lord in spirit, ah!
So little, but in flesh alone so much,
Thou seemest never to have understood
'Tis only those He loves He chasteneth?
Oh, if this life were all, oh! then indeed,
The righteous should here rewarded be:
But there are other, surer, fairer fields
Where blossom holier rewards.
'Tis only they who out of tribulation came,
Whose raiment shines snow-white!

O Mary dear, of Magdala, take heart:
The Father avengeth wronged women!
Passed through the crucible of love,
Beyond, their hearts of gold shine clear.
Had he but known!

The mocker, mocked himself.

God is not mocked: who sows, shall reap:

Here is the patience of the saints.

And the four archangels raised their trumpets and
blew four blasts that reached to the host of stars on
high; and the Cherubim sang,

Praise to God the Avenger and Comforter,

The Loving Father and Terrible Enemy,

Glory for ever and ever, Amen!

CHAPTER IX.

MARY PROMISES HER EXPERIENCES.



AND it came to pass, that as soon as the Angels had done singing, that we heard all the trumpets of the Temple blowing; for at Midnight of the Feast of the Full Moon, the first part of the Shiggaion ends with the Great Hallelujah, in the which every Jew, wherever he chances to be, joins. And when the Blessed Mary heard the sound thereof, she rose to her feet, turned herself to the Temple, lifted up her hands, and took up the Sacred Chant. Now her voice was clear with the clearness of love and sincerity; like unto that of a young girl; so much so that it cut us so much to the heart that while we too rose to take up the Hallelujah Chant the voice of many was husky, and their eyes shone in the light of the moon, and many turned towards the Great Sea, and were still. But Mary, hearing a sob, cried out,

Grieve not, dear Children, grieve not;
But rather with me rejoice
That I so soon shall stand within sight
Of the Great King in his Beauty.

But we grieved all the more; and there was silence for a time.

Then the Blessed Mary said,
The Time is short:
Have ye aught more to ask?

Then Lebbaeus, Thaddeus, and Nathanael, and James spoke, reminding her that she had not yet answered their difficulties. And she would have spoken, but that she suddenly smiled, answering,

Brethren, have patience;
Another shall answer ye.
But since I have told you of further existences
As a theory only, let me relate
All that I can remember well
Of whom and of where I have been;
How I wrought good and ill in other lives,
Being thereby purified by wisdom's hand.

And all of us were sore amazed thereat; and Thomas Didymos answered hastily,

O Mother dear, art making sport of us?
Thy own past lives?
Why then remember we not ours also?

And the Blessed Mary smiled so that it seemed the laugh of a babe, so merry was it, in spite of her age. And she said,

Impatient yet, yet unbelieving,
Thomas dear?

And she laughed softly and sweetly, and the star that hung over the forehead of each archangel twinkled with merriment, so that Thomas was abashed.

And hardly had the merriment ceased, and just as the Blessed Mary was about to speak again, when the laughter welled up once more, mingled with pity; for we heard the cries of an obstinate child, and the chiding voice of a nurse. But the Blessed Mary's face grew sad with pity, and she besought Mary the mother of Joses to fetch the child.

And it was so that when Mary the mother of Joses, had brought up the child, she was found to be Euboule, the three-year old grand-daughter of Joanna the wife

of Chuza, who used to minister to the Lord of her substance. Then the Blessed Mary stretched her arms, and took the struggling Euboule to her breast, gently endeavoring to comfort the little soul, but she would not be comforted.

Until Raphael the archangel, whose duty in Heaven it is to care for all the little children, bent down, gave Euboule one of the fragrant lilies to smell, and kissed her on the forehead. And straightway a smile that resembled the smile of Raphael the archangel, spread over the countenance of little Euboule, who then kissed the Blessed Mary, laying her curly head upon the Blessed Mary's breast and straightway fell fast asleep into peaceful slumbers, so that she moved not, no, not even while Mary the mother of Joses took her away. And it is said that all her life long, on that one night each year, Raphael, the man of God, brought her a lily to smell.

CHAPTER X.

MARY'S FIRST EXPERIENCE.



AND it came to pass that when Mary, the mother of James and Joses, had returned, and had sat down with the Maries among the fragrant lilies, that for a short space of time all were silent; and so deep was the stillness that we could hear the harmony of the stars, and the lilt of the moon which her Angel sings when she has grown full.

And the Blessed Mary said, "Dear Brethren, to comfort and stablish your hearts I now will tell you what I remember of my past lives on this beautiful Earth. The earliest thing that I recall is that my brother Abel and I, who was called Adah, twin-born from the venerable Mother Eve, ever tended the sheep and goats of our Father Adam together. And there were no other men on the face of the earth in those days; so much so that we were nearer and dearer unto each other than men and women are in these latter days. And Abel and I loved each other beyond the manner of brother and sister, so that in the first bloom of womanhood my father Adam gave me unto my brother Abel to wife. And before all of us who were alive in those days he lifted up his hands to bless us both, and Eve fell upon my neck and kissed me. And behold, the first day after this great joy it came to pass that Cain waxed envious of Abel, for that we loved each other so devotedly; and having made a pretext, he

slew him in the field, and fled from before the face of Father Adam. The great grief of Abel's death bore me to the ground, and when my spirit returned, I was dumb, and could speak no word for the space of ten journeys of the sun, until what time as I passed away.

"For, when I was Adah, my soul was still unformed; it was passionate, and hateful and envious, gluttonous and proud, stupid and lazy; but I loved Abel tenderly, and in that I loved him, I was saved. For when the hour to die came, this dear Gabriel who is now standing by me here came to me, and told me not to fear the darkness which was sinking in over me, warning me that Death was only the soul's passing away out of the House of Flesh, and that she should, in God's own good time, travel as a pilgrim to another House of Fesh; and that I should not be separated from Abel forever, in that I loved him still. And I was weeping, thinking that I had wasted my life, in that I had lost my Abel so early; but dear Gabriel told me that instead of having an existence wasted, it had been a successful life inasmuch as the sorrow at the death of my virgin twin brother and bridegroom had chastened my heart and had washed out from it the ugly foulness of passion with which I had come out of the womb of Eve, so that instead of seven deadly sins that had been mine at birth, I now had only six left.

"And this dear Gabriel then told me that if I only would be faithful, I should soon be cleansed from all of them, as Providence would so arrange my destiny that I might leave them all behind; and that only then, when I should be free from all of them, I might hope to be reunited for ever to my dear Abel. And then my soul threw its arms around Gabriel's neck, and he bore me away into the Haven of Rest, where I fell asleep for a time."

And behold, as soon as the Blessed Mary had done speaking, the whole host of Cherubims rose flying into the air like to a great army innumerable of birds, out

of sheer delight, darkening the light of the moon as they flew hither and thither, singing and praising God, and saying,

“Blessed be the Father of Heaven who sends
Childish souls into the school of life,
That they may cast behind them
The clinging lusts of the flesh,
That their eyes may grow pure enough
To see while yet in the land of the quick
The ineffable beauty of God, face to face!”

CHAPTER XI.

MARY'S FURTHER EXPERIENCES.



AND it came to pass that as soon as the Angels had ceased their songs of delight, that they returned to their former places on the house-tops around us, and the deep stillness of the night sank down upon us once more, save the fitful droning of the Levites in the Temple, singing the Twenty-four-letter Psalm that hath no ending. Then the Blessed Mary smiled gently, saying, "In a few words will I end my story.

"After a rest of nine hundred and seventy years, I was re-born in the land of Shinar, and was known by the name of Yonah. But the men of that land were wicked, niether feared they God, nor regarded they man, except the man Noah, who went about doing good, and preaching repentance and coming judgment; and I found favor in his eyes, and became his wife, and bore him three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And when the wickedness of the times was full, God sent a flood on all the earth, and every living creature was drowned, except we who abode in the ark. And after the flood I grew compassionate in pity of the death of so many living creatures, whereas before I had been full of hatred of all who would not yield to me. So it was that in this existence I left behind me hatred, having now only envy, gluttony, pride, ignorance, and laziness to work out. Now I loved Noah tenderly, patient and kind man that he was, and when this dear

Gabriel took me away from him, he promised me I should meet Noah once more beyond.

"Now after a peaceful slumber of fifty years my restless soul sought out a little female body in the land of Mizraim, by the banks of the great Yeor. And while with my parents I tilled the soil, I waxed passing envious of the rich. Then the king of Mizraim made war upon the king of No, and of the captives my father bought as a slave a youth named Khufu, who served in the fields; but when he dared to kiss my feet, with a whip I struck him over the face, and had him chained, so that he dared not look at me. But in my sixteenth year it came to pass that the river rose not, so that our harvest failed, and we and all we had were sold to pay the king's taxes, and we saw no more each other's faces from that day. And my spirit was broken within me, and I ceased to envy the rich, and became very humble in heart. Now it chanced that Khufu was found to be the son of the king of No, who again made war on the king of Mizraim, and prevailed against him and all the princes of the land. And when he died Khufu reigned in his stead. And as Khufu the Pharoah took dinner one day in the house of one of his mighty men of valor, whose slave I was, serving as one of the maids at the table, he recognized me, and bought me straightway, and made me his queen, and I served him as wife and sister all his days both lovingly and truly. And Khufu built a great pyramid of stone in the land of the Naphtuhim to teach men righteousness, and the worship of the God of Heaven. And when his days were fulfilled, and he fell on sleep, I, Asenath his queen, tended him, and closed his eyes. Then Gabriel soon came for me also, promising I should meet him once more beyond, having for ever left behind envy. Now this existence had had many sorrows, and I was very weary, and remained in the Haven of Rest beyond a long while, yea, seven hundred and four years.

“And it came to pass that Gabriel came to me to wake me from my slumber, announcing that if I desired to rid myself of gluttony a favorable opportunity was open to me in the land of the Emim and the Zamzummims. And I followed his advice, and I took the body of a babe named Margoah. And it was so that the Emims and the Zamzummims feasted on flesh and wine every day. And one day when I was about twelve years old I ate so much that my heart within me grew bitter whensoever I ate; so much so that I lost flesh till I could tell all my bones, but still could not eat. And there lived a physician of great renown in Shalim, on the river Jordan. And my mother took me to him there, but I ever grew worse. And the king of the city was Melchizedek, a priest of the most high God, a teacher of righteousness; and whomsoever he anointed and prayed over grew well. But not even that saved me, so that I lingered for ten years after, treasuring in my heart his godlike face, albeit he never thought of me a second time. And I was vexed at first, but after became patient, praying this dear Gabriel, when at last he came to deliver me from my life-long lying in bed, that I might meet Melchizedek the friend of Abraham beyond; for, said I, though he forget me, yet love I him.

And this dear Gabriel, with tears in his eyes, said that I might. And having lived a good life, I was immediately re-born in the land of the Hivites, in the household of Abraham. But that existence I wasted, when I might in that one time have come to a full knowledge of the true God, and have unburdened my soul of all its remaining sins. But I grew rebellious, and from bad to worse until in mercy Providence gave me an opportunity to close my career there, permitting me to fall into the brook Jabbok, and be drowned. Weary of myself, I lay asleep for one thousand two hundred and ninety years.

“And I chose a female body that was named Pars-handathah, in the land of Ur of the Chaldees, in a rich household, where I ate of the fat of the land. And then Zarashustra the captain of the host of the king of Asshur swept our land with fire and sword. And he caused collars of iron to be smithied around our necks, and had us chained together, and for the rest of our days we ground corn for the household of the king of Asshur. By day and night in a damp cellar, none of us being taken out except to die, and be thrown to the dogs. And I heard that Zarashustra went into the wilderness and became a priest, and taught wisdom and righteousness, till he died crowned with a halo of light. Therefore I longed to see him again, having had all my pride burned out of my heart; so that when this dear Gabriel came to fetch me, and delivered me out of the damp prison, he smiled seeing that I now had only two mortal sins left—ignorance and laziness, promising me that I should be dear to Zarashustra beyond.

“Thus having lived a successful life, I rested but two years, and was re-born immediately in a body named Yasodhara, the daughter of the rich king of Kali. Here my soul lost all its ignorance, and I learned all truth. Then being found the most beautiful of all the maidens of the land of Kali, I was bethrothed to Gautama Siddhartha, the heir of Suddhodama, king of the Shakyas, and bore to him a son whom I called Rahula. But Gautama grew sad for the sorrows of this suffering world, and renounced all that he had, and forsook me in the middle of the night as I slept, and he became the Buddha, preaching the Path of enlightenment, so that many were turned to holiness. And though he came to see me once more in later years, yet I remained alone, meditating earnestly on all knowledge, till I too became enlightened, knowing all truth. Now when my hour came. Gabriel took me once more into his arms and said, ‘Well done, beautiful soul; thou

hast left behind thy ignorance, and hast but one more sin to work out; then shalt thou be forever be united unto thy beloved Siddhartha.'

"Now after thirteen years I entered a body called Eunike, of a family of honest weavers in Athens. But when my parents fell on sleep, and I was married to the gaoler of the city prison, I preserved my virginity. Now I labored faithfully, looking neither to the right nor to the left, serving my lord lovingly; and I reaped the reward of labor, for I waxed skillful and wise beyond my years. Now Sokrates the virtuous philosopher had no regard for any woman; but I looked longingly into his face. Then when he was wrongfully accused of corrupting the youth of the city, he was put in the care of my husband Xenon, who would have let him go, but he would not, while I desired that even if I might not look into his face I might close his eyes after he had drunk the hemlock. And he died wisely and nobly, and I closed his eyes and shed tears over his body. But soon this dear Gabriel, who followed and inspired me in all the career of my soul, came to release me for the last time, promising that I should be united to Sokrates when the times should be.

"Saidst thou not so, Archangel dear?" And it came to pass that Gabriel the Strong Man of God bent down and kissed the Blessed Mary on her forehead, and turned, saying, I will finish the story of her soul's career. When I took her soul out the body of Eunike, I said to her, "Dear Soul, now shall thou rest for a long time before thy final existence on earth, when thou shalt meet Sokrates again. Divinely hast thou purified thyself from all thy sins—lust, hatred, envy, gluttony, pride, ignorance, and laziness. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. And I sung her to sleep as any mother rocks her baby; and slept sweetly for three hundred and ninety-six years in the Haven of Rest, where she had tarried so often before." now the Blessed Mary blushed like a young girl, and the host of Cherubims raised a shout and sang,

Star of the Ocean of Love,
Hail Mary, Blessed in Heaven and Earth,
For Thou hast found favor with God.

And the wings of the Cherubims raised a wind that beat down the lilies to the ground, for the Cherubims filled all the sky above us, so that we saw neither the moon nor its light, and would have been wholly in the dark, but for the divine light that shone from the Blessed Mary, and from the Four Archangels, and from the faintly shining incense of fragrance of the lilies.

CHAPTER XII.

THOMAS ASKS A QUESTION.



AND it came to pass that when the great song of the Angels had ceased, that Thomas Didymos said, "Hail, Blessed Mary, favored of God. To thy words we listen as humbly as to the words of God Himself. Yet, O Blessed Mary, why hast thou not told us these blessed words of comfort before, that the justice of God might be known to all, supplying to each an all-powerful motive to good, and a terror from evil?"

And the venerable Blessed Mary said,

Dear Thomas, wise thy heart.
Now the Spirit saith expressly
That all these things I have revealed to you
Are mysteries of the Kingdom
To be treasured, not published abroad.
For first, although your earnest hearts
When thinking of the sorrows of the world
By these deep mysteries be comforted,
Yet might the careless suffer much thereby
For they would say,
To-day, oh let us eat, drink.
To-morrow will we fast, and will repent!
As if the loss of this day's opportunities
Were not so many less beyond!
The people die, not that they do not know
But that they do not live up to their light,
For even devils are but angels who forgot

To live up to the light they had.
Oh use this existence's opportunities;
For certain are we only of this present one,
While fate's decrees may much delay
Men's memories, and hopes, and theories.
So doing duty now, the future will
Attend unto itself, as it doth lie
Upon the knees of God, who only hath
All wisdom, love, and power.
So, brethren, treasure in your hearts
These words of comfort for the world,
Exhorting everywhere that all repent.
Now in the days of this their mortal life;
And to believe, in spite of all injustices,
That God is just and faithful, and will not
Permit ye to be tempted more than right,
With every danger making ways to escape
For those who have the wisdom, strength
Them to discern, and to embrace.
He chastens most those whom He loves,
That He may gather them unto Himself,
That in His arms, they may forevermore
Have peace and rest, and happiness divine.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARY HEARS THE CALL.



AND hardly had Mary uttered these words, that the whole sky became brighter than the sun, and a masterful peal of thunder shook Jerusalem to its foundations. Then a terrific gale came from the west, driving before it inky clouds, whose bosom was rent continually by arrows of lightning and rumblings of thunder. The hurricane almost threw us over into the court, so that in order not to be hurt, we were compelled to lie down flat on the house-top, while the wimples of the women were carried away and the men's cloaks were lifted from their shoulders, throwing them back over us, so that many struggled for light and air. Now the storm brake off every one of the lilies, tearing them apart, and a tongue of fire descended from heaven, and ran in a circle around the Blessed Mary, so that henceforth none durst approach Her. But she alone stood upright, with her arms stretched towards the sky, her eyes set, and her hair streaming, shining like the sun in the midst of the darkness, the Four Archangels standing around, veiling their faces with their wings.

And after a while it came to pass that the Blessed Mary turned her eyes towards us, and she cried out,

Haste, haste, the Hour has come!

Follow me, beloved Apostles!

And she turned round, and fled down the stairs into the court with the lightness of a doe in spite of her years, the fire dancing round her as she proceeded, Gabriel and Michael preceding her, and Raphael and Uriel following her.

And, being hurried, many of the Apostles stumbled in the going down of the stairs, because of the darkness. And it chanced that as I was furthest of all from the stairs when the hurricane had arisen, I was the last to leave the house-top. And it was so that I stumbled over what had been the bed of lilies but half an hour ago, and fell down, and struck my head against the post of the chair the Blessed Mary had sat on. And as I tried to raise myself, my hands grasped one of the lilies still half attached to its root, and in rising to my feet, I pulled it with my hand. Then I bethought me of keeping it as a memorial of the Blessed Mary, and placed the bud in my pouch under my tunic, and have kept it since, even unto the present day.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARY IS TRANSFIGURED.



OW the Blessed Mary went to the Mount of Olives, the women following her as best they could, Simon Zelotes and Philip assisting Mary the mother of James and Joses. The clouds lowered, and the road upwards led into the mist in which we would have lost sight of the Blessed Mary, but for the fire that ever danced around her in a circle, and for Raphael and Uriel that followed her. At first many of us lost the road, and stumbled over stones and roots in the wet cloud, but after awhile the air cleared, and behold, far above in the sky the stars were shining, and the full moon was sunk towards the west. And behold, beneath us were the clouds, stretched out like an infinite ocean riven by lightnings, and belching thunder, while above us reigned eternal stillness. And the Cherubims who had listened to the words of the Blessed Mary all night were here already before us, innumerable hosts of them being camped on the clouds as far as eye could reach. And as we emerged from the clouds some of the Cherubims beckoned to us sweetly, as if they had been waiting for us.

Now it came to pass that the Blessed Mary led us to the very summit, near Bethany, from where the Lord Jesus had himself ascended into heaven forty days after his resurrection. And when the Blessed Mary has reached the open ground, she turned towards

the east, shading her eyes, plainly awaiting something. And behold, even as we were looking, the dawn began to break. But suddenly above the clouds rose a great and a shining light. And looking intently we began to discern hosts innumerable of angels, a Splendor leading them. Now their bodies were of fire, for they were Seraphims. When they had come near, the Splendor beckoned to them that they should not advance further, but himself moved forwards and turning to us all, who fell on our faces trembling, lifted up his hands, and blessed us, and bade us arise. And when the Blessed Mary would have worshiped, he raised her up, and took her in his arms and rested her head upon his breast. And it came to pass that in that he touched the Blessed Mary, that she was transfigured, and her white hair waxed once again dark brown, and her wrinkles disappeared into a fair smooth skin, and her face became creamy white as the face of a blooming maiden, and the knots of her fingers passed away into the frail and slender fingers of a girl, and her garments clung to her and became new again, and she grew to be once more the slight figure she had been when the Archangel Gabriel first announced to her that the Holy Spirit should overshadow her, and that she should bring forth a son called Jesus. And as the Blessed Mary rested in the arms of the Splendor, she looked up into his face with a smile like to that of the archangel Gabriel. And behold the Seraphims gathered into a circle around them and us, and they sang hymns which it is not lawful to utter, sounding like the rushing of a mighty wind through a forest when the trees are bare. And they sang praises to the Father who had loved man so much. And when the Blessed Mary had gazed her fill at the Splendor, she turned toward us, and smiled sweetly, so that our eyes were dazzled. And she said,

Dear souls that have watched with me
During this the last night of my

Stay on earth,
God will repay you your labor of love.
And were it not that I am so near
To the Heavenly Father,
I would grieve to be separated from you,
O beautiful souls with whom
I have lived and loved,
Lo, these many years,
But He, the hand of the Father, will
Protect you from all evil, and
Bring you all safe home at the last.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY.



AND the Blessed Mary still leaning on the Splendor turned her glance full upon us all. A smile spread over her countenance, transfiguring it so we would not have recognized her, as happens with us common humans at the rare times when we foresee a new friendship. Then she said,

Dear Brethren, before I be removed
For ever from among you,
If ye have aught to ask concerning
The mysteries of the Kingdom,
Speak forth freely, that your hearts
May be stablished within you,
And that ye may preach the truth
In the light of knowledge.

Then James Boanerges answered and said, Blessed Lady Mary, take no offence that I ask for the third time, shall not the souls that have once loved each other meet again in the dim beyond? Behold, I would fain believe it; but lo, when thou didst tell us of thy former lives, although the angel promised thee each time that thou shouldst meet beyond him whom thy soul had cherished, lo, thou didst love each time a different man, first Abel, then Noah, then Khufu, then Melchizdek; and later Zarashustra, and Gautama and Sokrates; and behold, even in this thy last existence

didst thou meet none of these. Sweet Lady Mary, Blessed of God, heart of the circling fire of heaven, make this plain, and comfort our hearts! And it came to pass that after he had spoken these words that James bowed himself down to the ground.

Then spoke the Splendor,

O slow of heart to believe all that
The Blessed Mary has spoken,
O James, my James!
Hearken, O Apostles, to the Way of God!
Open your ears, that ye may understand!
Before Abraham was, I am.
I am the Pilgrim of the Ages, the Soul of Man!
I am not a stranger to her
Upon the face of the earth;
For of old I too
Had lived and loved,
Suffered and rejoiced,
Beneath these beautiful skies.
Hearken!

It was me she loved, when I was called Abel;
It was me she loved, when men called My journey-
ing soul by the name of Noah;
Stronger than death was Mary's love, for
It was me she loved when I was known as Khufu,
the Pyramid-Pharoah of Mizraim;
Behold, I am Melchizdek, the King of Righteous-
ness, to whom Abraham brought gifts, and was
glad to see my day;
Behold, I am Zarashustra, and
Gautama Siddhartha the Buddha am I!
And I Sokrates the peaceful Athenian!
Yea, from righteousness to righteousness,
From birth to birth,
From death to death,
Over land and over sea,
Has the light of my love for Mary

And Mary's love for me,
Drawn our journeying souls together,
Not once nor twice, but ever, forevermore.
For when in the revolution of times
Preaching the gospel of truth
Not only to the few and vain Jews,
But also in times of old foreknown,
From the foundation of the world till now
To the people that sat in darkness,
In the land of Ur, and in Naharaim, and in Mizraim,
and in Canaan, and in Asshur, and in the land
of the river Ganges, and in the city of
Athens.

My soul and that of the Blessed Mary
Have long left behind the fires of passion,
So that this last time we could not
Meet as husband and wife.
Then none was found pure enough
To bring me into the world
But she, the spotless soul
Of Mary, of Adah, of Yonah, of Asenath, of Mar-
goah, of Parshandathah, of Yasodhara, and of
Eunike.

And the Spirit of the Highest
Overshadowed her,
That even though only as mother and son
Yet should we not be sundered
For this the last time upon earth.
And she brought me forth
That I might end my age long labors
And save the world from its sins.
As Abel, first, I taught peace and labor.
When Noah, I warned man of the coming Wrath
of God;
And as Khufu, sanctifying the exercise of power to
the enlightenment of the poor.
As Melchizedek, I brought healing to the sick, and
righteousness to them who were afar off.

As Zarashustra, I taught to the soul of men that
God is a consuming fire in his spiritual nature.
As Gautama Siddhartha, teaching the eight-fold
path of righteousness,
Which I as Sokrates deduced from the traveling soul
of the youth of Athens.
But at the last my very life I gave
That he who obey my words
Should find the narrow way
That leads to eternal life.
And behold, Mary is mine, now as then.
With me she sorrowed and rejoiced,
Loved and lived.
By my side her soul has left her sins behind
In other climes, and in other ages,
Till by my side in this last life
She has shown in her life
The truth which I preached, until,
Behold, not even death shall cleave asunder
Our souls no more twain, but one.
With me shall she leave this earth,
Whose lessons both of us have learnt for evermore.
With me shall she rise to the sun, there
To behold the faces of Glories and Angels
Beyond the glories and angels of earth.
There with me to grow as we grew here,
Till in the revolution of God's own times
Both of us inseparable for evermore,
Shall sit us down together,
At the right hand of the Father,
No more two souls, but one soul,
Perfect at last, and blest forevermore.
Face to face, heart to heart, knowledge
To knowledge with the fire of life
Whose glory is eternity,
Whose destiny is itself.
Hail, souls of men,
We salute you, Mary and I.

Hail, we shall wait for you beyond,
Ye whose destiny it also is
To know yourselves
And to become of God.
Hail, gods in the flesh, destined divinities,
Destined Masters of Angles, Rulers of Spirits!
The joy of us shall not be full until
Ye shall be one with us beyond.
Hasten the course of the age,
Hasten the time appointed,
Live the regenerate life,
Teach the inexorable truth.
Spread the unspeakable love.
Bring home with you to the face of
Our Father, brothers and sisters many,
Even as we brought here you
To show you that ye are our own,
Before the unfailing witness of the eternal hosts of
the Cherubim and Seraphim, before the face of
the Four Archangels, the Blessed Gabriel, the
Blessed Michael, the Blessed Raphael, the
Blessed Uriel, the North, the South, the East,
and the West of Heaven!

And it came to pass that when the Splendor had uttered these words, that the Cherubims and Seraphims and the Four Blessed Archangels, worshiped, and raised a great hymn, such as no man ever heard, nor ever will hear, a harmony unspeakable, an ocean of glory.

And the Blessed Gabriel sang,
None but the pure shall hear.

And the host of innumerable Angels sang,
Glory to God, for ever and ever, Amen!

And the Blessed Michael sang,
None but the true shall taste.

And the host of innumerable Angels sang,
Glory to God, for ever and ever, Amen!

And the Blessed Raphael sang,
None but the strong shall see.

And the host of innumerable Angels sang,
Glory to God, for ever and ever, Amen!

And the Blessed Uriel sang,
None but the kind shall know.

And the host of innumerable Angels sang,
Glory to God, for ever and ever, Amen!

Then the Four Blessed Archangels and all of the
Cherubims and Seraphims together sang,

Glory to Him who is perfectly holy,
Father and lover and guardian of souls!

And it came to pass that when the angels had done singing, that a great peace fell upon us all, who lay prone on the ground, so still that we heard the beating of our hearts. But when we looked up, behold, we were all alone, and we looked into each other's faces, the hot tears blinding us, but there was none to comfort us. Then we called aloud on the Splendors, and we wept for home-sickness after them, and for the sorrows we should know before the day we should all meet again in heaven.

But none answered us.

So we turned homewards, heavy at heart, losing each other in the mist of the clouds that still hung over Jerusalem, so much so that it grew dark about that time.