

RACHEL COMFORTED

**Conversations of a Mother in the Dark with
her Child in the Light.**

BY

MRS. FRED MATURIN,

Mother of Earth (Child)

WITH A PREFACE

By W. T. STEAD



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DEDICATION

I DEDICATE this book to my two children, unseen, but often near me, Kay and Gordon (Sunny) Maturin.

Death has not parted us even a little while,
And has not severed the finest strand
In the eternal cable of our love;
The very strain has twined it closer still,
And added strength.

I saw a fisher bold yestreen
At his cottage by the bay,
And I asked how he and his had been
While I was far away,
But when I asked him of the child
With whom I used to play—
The sunniest thing that ever smiled
Upon a summer's day,
Then said that fisher bold to me,
And turned his face away—
"He was not willing to stay with us,
He was not willing to stay."

Then I looked upon his pretty cot
So neat in its array,
And I looked upon his garden plot
With its flowers so trim and gay,
And I said, "He hath no need of me
To help him up the brae;
God worketh in his heart, and He
Will soon let in the day."
So I left him there, and sought yon rock
Where leaps the salt-sea spray.
For ah! how many have lost their loves
That "were not willing to stay with them,
That were not willing to stay."



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THESE remarkable Records, probably quite the most remarkable for sustained individuality and continuity yet received from a Child (aged thirteen) from the Other Side of Life, are to-day all the more remarkable from the fact that they were received by the Mother of this Child nineteen years ago, when the orthodox idea of the After-Life rendered them unique, indeed. They were then felt to be too far in advance of the times to publish.

To-day, through many other independent sources, it would seem that Sunny's "Happy Land" was correctly described after all.

(Conversations of a Mother in the Dark with her Child in the Light.)

"Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

"Thus said the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for . . . they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

"And there is hope . . . saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."—JEREMIAH xxxi. 15-17.



TO READERS, REVIEWERS AND CRITICS OF THIS BOOK

MY READERS AND REVIEWERS,

My chief dread in consenting to the publication of this volume was you.

I can picture all that some of you may be tempted to say of it.

Some of you will have children of your own. I ask you, when reviewing this book, to imagine it is your own child that has died, and to say at least nothing scoffing or disrespectful of my dead child?

However much you may be inclined to cavil or mock, be fair and kind to him.

I have had practically no more part in receiving these messages than you, beyond being the instrument through which they came. I was as astonished, and sometimes at first as incredulous, as you may be. So it is no book written for the purpose of fame or gain that your opinion will be passed upon. It is a Voice from the Beyond — the Voice of a Child striving, in his own imperfect way, to comfort his Mother, and at last succeeding.

Those of you who have studied the great questions opened up by this book will, I know, be gentle of your own wish. To those of you who have not, be gentle for the sake of any child you have loved, or may love, and who some day, like mine,

“ May not be willing to stay with you,
May not be willing to stay.”

RACHEL.



PREFACE

BY

"RACHEL"

OTHER RACHELS STILL UNCOMFORTED

IN presenting to you these conversations with my child I thought I had lost, I make no attempt to explain, or even always understand them myself. There are things in them that have astonished and puzzled me, even as I expect they will you.

But one thing I know and believe. That I have, through them, dwelt and talked with the child who for a year I believed dead. I had at first no hope of finding him again. I had never heard of spiritualism. He was gone. The many things I yearned to tell him, I could not. At last I would write them upon a sheet of paper and lay it beside my bed at night, wondering (since I had read du Maurier's "Peter Ibbetson") whether I, too, might wake to find an invisible little hand had written to me as I slept. But no reply came.

I felt I would die unless God answered my passionate prayers to give me some proof—some tangible proof—of the continued existence—somewhere—of my child. Neither the Bible nor the religious consolations offered me by many friends were able to comfort me. I little dreamt in what way my prayer would eventually be answered.

You will read in these Records how it all "happened."

The same joy is within the reach of many.

The conditions are, a great love both sides, fair health, and a quiet, regular life, if possible, in which this Research

is made the chief object. I do not wonder at the unsatisfactory results that so many enquirers obtain, when I look at their lives of rush, bustle and other interests.

If one is embarking on a far journey of discovery into an almost Unknown Land, one makes that journey, its equipment, and its object, one's very first care? One would not expect an explorer to arrive at anything worth finding if he devoted most of his time and thoughts to something else? I lived in the heart of London during the earlier years when most of these Records were obtained, but I retired from the world, and gave myself, my health, and my life up to it. I know that comparatively very few people can do this, but much can be done by devoting even one hour a day to this quest in the silence of your chamber. Your own hand will do as well as any other medium, provided you can exercise a very great and lengthened patience. After I lost Nellie, experienced as Sunny had become on the planchette, it took him and me three months of my hand moving aimlessly on the paper before any intelligible writing appeared at all.

A great love can and will face all this, as mine did. Some of my most wonderful results arrived through my own hand, after that three months of patience. Those later Records are not given here. I gave it (with my hand) about half an hour a day, but the rest of the day I devoted largely to a kind of silent communion with him which I felt was helping him. With planchette, we gave up often four hours a day and more. For years on end, till Nellie married.

The first conversation here recorded was received early in 1901, both I and the "Nellie" who throughout sat with me (a valued and trusted family maid) hardly able at first to believe our senses. "Nellie," being once a very earnest Salvation Army girl, was at first averse from sitting at the planchette with me, fearing (she said) "it was not right," which is a strange idea many good, pious people may have, though they would often be puzzled to explain why. My grief, however, at her refusal overcame her objections, and

she at last embarked with me upon these journeyings into the Unknown. We ceased at last to wonder! We both grew to *know* that it was my child. The method of communication also plainly revealed itself to us. The third and unseen Intelligence was plainly using the combined force or electricity in us with which to move the senseless piece of wood. The *modus operandi* was as clear as the sending of a telegram. The bit of wood stuck through with a pencil would suddenly become like a living thing, would quiver beneath our fingers like some animal, and as time went on its, at first, feeble scrawling became vigorous, living, most rapid writing. No one who had once followed its movements could have doubted that here was a third Intelligence, and one over which we had no mental control. Often we would be tired, and suggest stopping. But, childlike, he would perhaps be in a happy, excited mood, and would pay no attention, and short of removing our finger-tips, the little board would *not* be stopped (even when we asked, sometimes), and as time advanced it has several times written one or two short words or letters after we had raised our fingers, which we would do as an experiment (half laughing) in the middle of some sentence. The effect was very convincing. It was plain that whenever the electricity or power he borrowed from us was suddenly cut off, he found it very difficult to conclude his sentence without it. The communication would stop as suddenly as if the electric current were cut off in the middle of a telegraphic message. But later, more than once, the sentence would be concluded, painfully and feebly, it is true, as if under great difficulties, but triumphantly concluded all the same.

Another striking instance of the third personality was when the planchette in moments of his excitement continued to write rapidly, long after the pencil had left the paper. We always fastened this with drawing-pins to a smooth white table-cloth laid upon the table. Seeing that the little board had reached the end of the paper, we would call out to the child to stop, and allow us to move the board to the

beginning of a new line. . . . But often in vain. The little board dashed excitedly on, and we often wondered what our laundress thought of our table-cloths covered with ends and bits of sentences in pencil.

I am sorry I have not been able to reproduce his little drawings, which I have since compared with some he did in earth-life. Their peculiarities are faithfully repeated. He could not draw very well, and had a queer way of making a stroke for people's legs with a hook at the end for the foot. When drawing women, their limbs were always visible through their dresses, and no figure had ever more than one eye.

The conversations of the first eighteen months only are here recorded. Those that followed grew still more striking. They continued for years. It will be noticed how, as we proceeded, the invisible child seemed to gather strength and wisdom to express himself, how his character developed slowly, and how his little childish faults caused him grief and a desire to amend. Also, what a childish, and often almost unconscious, revelation is here given as to the real conditions of life on the other side! After the usual orthodox teachings of harps and crowns, seas of glass, and hymns eternal, it will be understood that we were at first very much surprised. But years after these conversations had been recorded, and examined by members of the Society for Psychical Research, learned divines, and many others, I had the pleasure of reading books by Theosophists, Spiritualists, and others, and was naturally overjoyed to find that my dear little son's descriptions coincided often in a convincing manner with the teachings there. There are discrepancies. I have not wondered at that. There must be many planes in the Beyond, and all must be different, according to the degree of development arrived at. But I have been struck to observe that all communications I have read from children have resembled Sunny's in many respects, though I have been told that none are known to exist to equal his for continuity, consistency and individu-

ality. Those I have read never consisted of more than a few rather scrappy sentences more of the nature of Sunny's very earliest conversations, when he was not strong enough or advanced enough to write for more than a few minutes consecutively.

I have, to my surprise, met bereaved mothers who have told me they liked to think of their lost children in the orthodox Heaven, waving palm branches and singing praises eternal. To the orthodox mind there appears to be something irreverent in visions of an after-life where we shall, as I now know, live in houses, use furniture, play games, have pets, and make jokes. I must confess that, at first (imbued as Nellie and I ourselves both were with orthodox teachings) these new ideas came like bolts from the blue. Yet soon how relieved was my wounded mother-heart to learn that my little boy had not, after all, become the far-away unapproachable angel I had in my ignorant anguish bewilderedly pictured him. In time the old ideas melted away, and I thanked God my child led apparently a life so much more understandable. A Heaven approaching that of the Bible I believe exists, and will be attained by all, some day. Sunny speaks of such, and of bright Beings who visit the other spheres where all are preparing for it, even as we are doing here. But who leaves this life so purged of earthly desires and impulses as to be fit for that blessed state? Why should the mere action of divesting itself of its earthly covering alter suddenly, let us say, the soul of a joyous, fun-loving child snatched from his home, his games, his pets, his companions?

When Sunny first speaks of his heavenly teacher "Love," he at first could not say whether it was a man or a woman. I have (*since* hearing this from Sunny) read Swedenborg, and note that he says that a highly perfected spirit ceases to have any sex. "Love" apparently lived many years, perhaps centuries ago, and when, after a while, the child begins speaking of this Guardian Angel as "she," I think

it was permitted she should dwell with him as a woman, because the motherly influence of such would be stronger on a child grieving for his own mother left behind.

Upon the anniversary of Sunny's death, and each succeeding year for two years, there appeared in a country paper under the "In Memoriam" column the following:

"Beloved little Sunny, good, truthful, and kind to every living thing. From his Mother — uncomforted."

That cry of deepest sorrow continued yearly till the day came that I could reply to Sunny's oft-repeated question: "AND ARE YOU GLAD GOD CALLED ME HERE?" Yes!

The day came when I even could say that!

Yet even to-night, twenty years since his death, and with all this comforting spread out before me, the old anguish returns, and the "Yes" is a broken one!

Such is a mother's love! Almost reaching the Divine sometimes. Yet never, never quite.

My Boy — I still often stretch out my arms to you — empty. I still often return to my Garden of Gethsemane and again pray that the Cup may pass from me. For though I have nearly drunk it dry, a few bitter drops remain, and until I clasp your little Form and now your brother's, solid to my heart, as I know I shall, I must have my hours in my Garden of Pain.

Yet I am now "Comforted."

A light is all around me, even in that Garden, and though I cannot see my two vanished children, they are in it holding my hand often.

The title of this volume was suggested by the child.

I offer it to you who are still uncomforted, believing it will heal your pain as it has done mine, and Sunny and I dedicate it in our solemn gratitude to HIM from WHOM we know all healing and comfort must come.

THIS PREFACE

BY
MR. W. T. STEAD

was written to "Rachel Comforted" in June of the year 1909. For various reasons the book was delayed in publication, but a few days before Mr. Stead's momentous voyage on the *Titanic*, he and "Rachel" met, and it was decided to publish it upon his return from America. But God disposed.

I PUBLISH this book chiefly for the comfort of bereaved parents. I think that its perusal will do them good, may dull the aching pain of separation, and in some cases may enable them to find their lost ones even as this mother found her son.

First of all, let me dispose of the question as to whether these conversations are published in good faith. I take upon my shoulders the full and entire responsibility of vouching for the fact that this book is no cunningly-devised fiction, but is exactly what it professes to be, the actual textual record of a mother's communication with her dead child by means of planchette. I have known the mother for nearly nine years. She is a truthful woman, who reported the progress of the conversations to me from time to time at intervals during the whole of that period. I have now had these Records in my possession for five or six years, hoping against hope that some day the mother would realize that it was her duty to sacrifice her desire to regard these conversations as a sacred confidence only to be shared with the most intimate friends, in order that

they might minister to the relief of other Rachels still uncomfortable. At last she has consented, and I gladly stand sponsor for the book, guaranteeing the absolute good faith of all concerned. If I were to play tricks or make believe in a matter so sacred and so full of poignant emotion, I should indeed be a miscreant.

As to that preliminary point, no reader need have the slightest misgiving. I pledge my word as a man of honour that these communications actually were received as described, and that they were faithfully reported. Several reliable people interested in these subjects have seen the communications in process of being written out by the planchette, and all felt at least quite certain that neither of those who had their hand on the little instrument had the least idea of the nature of the answers which it was writing in reply to their questions. At the close of each sitting the mother wrote out her questions, and copied in ink the answers given by the planchette. She then sent them on to me in order that typewritten copies should be made, and from these typewritten copies the present book is set up.

The maid who sat with the mother at the planchette throughout these conversations is a much above suspicion of trickery as the mother (who is, I should mention, a woman of family and social position, wife and daughter of two military officers of rank). "Nellie" was a valued and devoted servant of the mother's, and though she had been in her service some time when these communications began, it must be borne in mind that "Nellie" had never known "Sunny" (*i.e.*, Gordon), who had "died" before she took service in the family. This important fact removes any idea of "Nellie" having spent years sitting with her mistress pushing the planchette (even suppose it possible to imagine that any busy, well-worked servant would take any interest in doing such a thing!). Over and over again the planchette wrote of matters of which "Nellie" had not the slightest knowledge, and which had also completely

passed from the mother's memory, and which often also were unknown to both. Perhaps one of the most striking evidences of the communications having been completely independent of both the mother and "Nellie" is one where the child caused "Nellie" much annoyance, and his mother much surprise, by telling them how "Nellie" had, on her previous "Sunday Out," discussed leaving the mother's service. As will be seen, "Nellie" was intensely put out at her most intimate secrets being thus given away to her mistress, and made objections to continuing sitting at the planchette any longer, because, as she expressed it, "Now Master SUNNY sees and hears all I do and say, and tells you, Ma'am, I shall not be able to call my life my own." It appeared that "Nellie" had discussed leaving her place, but only for a time to nurse a friend.

With difficulty "Nellie" was persuaded by the mother to go on as before, and SUNNY was enjoined not to give "Nellie" away again. After this, SUNNY sometimes asked: "Please blindfold 'Nellie,' Mother," when something very private had to be discussed.

"Nellie" was not strong, and had plenty of work, and has confessed since that often she would have given worlds not to be called off her work, as she often was, to talk to SUNNY. Being a gentle, sweet-tempered woman, deeply in sympathy with her sorrowing mistress's loss, she always came to the daily talks, however, willingly and cheerfully, but to suppose that she helped to lay up all this extra toil for herself by trickery is quite inconceivable.

The second question that arises after the good faith of the mother, the servant, and the editor, is admitted, is one on which it is obviously impossible to speak with the same absolute certainty. That question is whether there is any sufficient evidence to prove that the planchette, which under the hands of the mother and the maid wrote answers to their questions, was really and truly controlled by the disembodied spirit of the boy. The alternative suggestion is that the operators unconsciously pushed the planchette

so as to make it write what was written. I say unconsciously, because I can vouch, as I have already stated, for the absolute good faith of both mother and maid. This distinction is important, because even if it be admitted that two rogues can, by prior agreement, use the planchette to make it write what they please, it is impossible for two honest persons, who have no idea as to what the answers will be, unconsciously to write replies with the planchette to a long series of questions which have never been considered in advance. If any reader doubts this, let him procure a planchette and try the experiment.

Neither mother nor maid knew in the least what the planchette was going to write. It frequently wrote not merely what they did not expect, but what appeared to them to be so improbable that at first they were disposed to reject it as untrue. But the fact remains that day after day for years on end, these two earnest women did obtain from the planchette answers to every conceivable kind of question that could come into a fond mother's heart to ask of her absent, much-loved son. They were neither fools enough nor knavish enough to persist in practicing so silly a fraud upon themselves. Whatever explanation we may decide to adopt, the supposition that the mother or maid wrote the answers to their own questions can hardly be seriously entertained by anyone who takes the pains to read the record of these Conversations.

That some intelligence moved the planchette other than the conscious intelligence of the operators seems to be clear. What that intelligence may have been now demands consideration. If the mother alone had had her hands on the planchette, the movements might have been imputed, however improbable the supposition, to the unconscious action of muscles set in motion by the subconscious mind. But that two subconscious minds could work together to move the hands of two different women to write answers to all manner of questions is an unthinkable proposition. There remains the hypothesis that the planchette was controlled

by some Intelligence other than that of the mother and the maid. What Intelligence was this?

The first and most direct inquiry is, What explanation has the planchette itself to give of the director of its movements? The answer to that is clear. The planchette has never once varied in the course of nearly ten years in asserting that it was moved by the spirit of the dead boy. It may be true or it may be false. It has at least been unwavering in its declarations, and never once, in the whole time, has it ever suggested that it was controlled by any other Intelligence, save on one occasion, when another bereaved mother sat at the table and her little son contended with SUNNY for the control of the planchette for a few minutes.

But may it not have been the work of some personating spirit? Personating spirits undoubtedly exist. They occasionally take a perverse delight in creating confusion. But such entities do not carry on their mischievous tricks year after year, day after day. To what end, for what object, can it be supposed that any spirit—other than the lad his mother loved—would have the patience hour after hour to pour a flood of important and unimportant information into his mother's listening ear? Of course the existence of such a perverse and patient spirit of deceit can be imagined, but the effort makes a greater strain upon the imaginative faculty than the assumption that the planchette wrote truly when it ascribes its answers to the boy.

Let us suppose that such a method of communication is possible, how would we test the identity of any person on the other side who wrote us messages, by what standard should we try the authenticity of the messages themselves? To answer that question let us suppose that the child is not on the other side of the grave, but in a hospital, and that his mother can only communicate with him by telephone through his nurse. The boy, we take it, is in bed, and unable to use the telephone himself. Otherwise his mother would, of course, recognize his voice. But, by the conditions, she can neither see nor hear him. She can only

receive messages from him. How would she judge the authenticity of these messages? How could she be sure—quite sure—that the messages actually were dictated to the nurse by her own beloved boy? If the reader will but study out that problem, he will soon see that he must rely upon the tests which, although not absolutely productive of mathematical certainty, nevertheless do result in a conviction correct enough for all practical purposes, that the boy is really at the other end of the line, sending messages through the nurse.

What are these tests? There is first the test of character. (1) Are the messages true to the known character of the child? (2) Does the nurse use his familiar expressions and forms of speech? (3) Does the invisible boy in the hospital remember the same things which his mother knew were present to his memory? And (4) Does he know the things, the places, and the people which the boy used to know before he went into the hospital? Clearly there is not a loving parent who could fail to discern in a few messages whether they came from her own child or from another—that is, of course, if the boy, as in the case of Rachel's son, was old enough to have acquired habits of speech, modes of action of his own, and had a fairly wide acquaintance with friends of the family. If, after all these tests had been applied, and all of them had been complied with, what would be thought of a parent who refused to believe that her child was communicating with her over the telephone, because forsooth she could neither hear his voice nor see his face?

The same would apply to a mother receiving letters from a child, say, at the Antipodes. Let us suppose that, for some reason, the letters are typewritten, so that the test of recognizing his handwriting cannot be applied. Upon what would she depend, for the sure and certain knowledge that it was her child with whom she was in correspondence? Naturally, upon his recollections of the past, his allusions to a hundred and one matters proving his identity, his

tricks of expression and endearment, etc., etc. Could she have any doubt? *Would* she have any doubt? Of course not!

Apply this same common-sense, practical method to the case under consideration. Rachel receives a message purporting to come from her lost son. It is in writing, and therefore the sound of his voice affords no guidance as to his identity. She cannot see him. But she can ascertain whether the sender of the message is the same boy as her lost darling by applying the fourfold test: (1) Character; (2) Habits of speech and modes of expression; (3) Memory; and (4) Knowledge. Rachel applied all these tests, and found none of them to fail her. She felt that in very truth this is her son who has come again from the land Beyond.

Let me take them in order. First, as to character. Is it conceivable to any mother that she could talk for years on end, day after day, to her twelve-year-old son and fail to recognize him as her own? In the present case the character of the lad was strongly marked. He was of a merry, loving, mischievous, jealous disposition. All these characteristics appear continuously in the Conversations. Over and over again the mother exclaims: "He is just the same as he ever was, my own darling!" If the love of a mother's heart is no touchstone, where can it be found?

(2) The evidence from habits of thought and modes of expression and tricks of writing is very strong. In the very first message written by the planchette he hall-marked it, so to speak, by using the phrase "me happy"—a kind of baby-talk he used to persist in, after he became quite a big boy. But the still more remarkable proof of his identity was supplied by his delight in scribbling doggerel verses and making quaint little drawings, both rhymes and drawings after death bearing a strong resemblance to those written while still in the body.

(3) The memory of the Intelligence that moved the planchette appears to be almost identical with the memory of the deceased. It was tested a hundred times, and always

responded triumphantly. The names and addresses of old friends, the habits of his brothers, the memories associated with different places, were all familiar to him. Few boys still in mortal life would stand more successfully a cross-examination as to the episodes of their childhood.

(4) The most surprising evidence, however, is that which is afforded of his knowledge of the affairs of the family and of friends, knowledge of which the mother and the maid were often totally ignorant. This boy is not only identical in character with the deceased; he not merely expresses himself in the same way, with the same tricks and mannerisms; he not only remembers all the incidents of his past life, but he shows a keen, continuing interest in the welfare of his father and mother, his brothers, and his cousins. Whatever may be the case with others, this disembodied spirit kept himself in close and constant touch with the doings and sayings of those whom he left behind.

Of this, the reader will find many instances in the Conversations of the first year, which alone are recorded in this book. Among those I would direct special attention to the story of the pawning of the pencil-case, and the case in which he mentioned the name—a peculiar name of three words—and the death-day of a friend on the other side, whose existence the mother and the maid knew nothing about.

An instance which I shall quote here is one of the most curious on record. It is quite recent, as it happened within the last two or three years. In the year 1901 the boy wrote with the planchette, expressing his great satisfaction that his young cousin, Raoul Boustead, was coming over to the other side before long. This prophecy was not fulfilled for several years. The mother, then in Africa, received a letter one day from England, telling her that her nephew Raoul was down with rheumatic fever. Asking her son next time she talked with him, as to how his cousin was, she was startled by being told that "Raoul has been here several times recently. But he is so different from the others who

come; he has always gone back. Soon I hope he'll come for good."

These visits of young Raoul to SUNNY's Happy Land were, it would appear, made during the long periods of unconsciousness from which he suffered during his terrible illness. It would seem that during sleep, unconsciousness in illness, and also under anæsthetics, the spirit, partially freed from its earthly tenement, finds itself in the same sphere to which it will go after death.

After this, the boy used nonchalantly to remark that "Raoul had been there, but he is gone back again." At last he wrote in high glee that he thought Raoul had come, and this time he really believed that he was "going to stay." "But," he added cautiously, "we here know he has gone back so often he may go back again." Next day he announced:

"It's all right, Raoul has not gone back. He is here for good."

That same day the mother in Africa received a telegram from England, from her sister, announcing Raoul's death, but this is not the important part of this case.

A day or two later, SUNNY wrote saying that poor Raoul was very, very sad.

"You think," he wrote, "that we are all happy on this side. If you could see Raoul now you would not think so. He is crying as if his heart would break."

"Why?" asked the mother.

"Because," replied the son, "he sees how miserable his poor mother is. He remembers that it was partly his own disobedience that brought this illness upon him. Aunt Lelia wanted him to wear warm flannels, but he would not, and he got a cold which brought on the fever. And he is so sad because he cannot make his mother hear how sorry he is. If he could only tell her, he would feel better."

SUNNY's mother replied: "Tell Raoul that I will give his message to his mother, but he must tell me something

that I can write and tell her, which will convince her that I have really received the message from him, and that I have not made it up out of my own head."

"I'll ask him," wrote SUNNY, and departed.

Next day he wrote: "I have seen Raoul, and he is so grateful. He says that you must tell his mother to go to his room, where she has locked away all his papers and things in a trunk. It will pain her very much, he knows, and he is very sorry, but she must do what he says. Let her take all his things out of the trunk, when she will find a pocket-book. Open that pocket-book, and inside she will find a little poem which Raoul cut out of a newspaper just before he passed over. *It describes the grief of a son who has lost his mother.*"

The mother of SUNNY did as she was instructed. She sent the message to her sister in England, and waited many weeks to hear the result. She knew nothing whatever about this poem and had been in Africa some years. She was delighted to learn that her sister had done as she had been directed, had emptied the trunk, had found the pocket-book, and had unearthed therefrom the identical newspaper cutting. Two lines from that little poem were afterwards chiselled upon the tombstone of Raoul Boustead.

There are many such instances. But let these suffice.

Is it to be wondered at, that this Rachel has been comforted indeed, feeling that she has found the son that was lost, and that he has indeed come again from the land of the enemy, Death?

I may add that the boy has been seen by clairvoyants, that he has written messages by my automatic hand, that he is in constant communication with his mother, from whom the bitterness of death has passed away. The consolation which this Rachel has received, other Rachels still un comforted may also receive, for it is only the bodies of their loved ones which are dead, the children themselves are still alive.

II.—LIFE IN HAPPYLAND

The statements made by the boy to his mother as to the life which he is leading on the other side of the grave will be somewhat startling to those whose ideas of life after death are of the conventional vagueness. They are precise enough, they are consistent, and Julia* insists that they ought to be published.

Without attempting to give a *précis* of his communications, there are certain statements which he makes to which it is well to call special attention. The first relates to the communication which he asserts takes place between the sleeping and the dead. In sleep the boy declared he had frequently visited the Other Side in his childhood, and hence he found himself quite at home when he died. Further, he always asserts that ever since he died his mother has constantly come to him on the Other Side. Every night he meets her and talks with her, but her subconscious mind carries over no memory of the meeting to the physical consciousness when it awakes.

On this subject I questioned "Mr. Myers" through the automatic hand of Miss Harper. He replied:

"It is perfectly true that in sleep there is full and absolute communion between the living and the so-called dead, in cases where there is an intense bond of affection and the tie has never been broken. The soul of the sleeper leaves the body and converses freely with those whom it has loved and lost, rising to their plane—the spiritual senses, keen and clear, being then divested of the physical encumbrances through which it is so difficult to pierce."

Another most remarkable statement made by the boy is that he is permitted to remain no older than he was at death, in order that the mother may have her boy as she knew him when she lost him. On this subject I asked Julia if this were possible.

* Mr. W. T. Stead's friend "Julia," whose communications, "Letters from Julia," are well known.

She replied:

"The son was a boy of twelve, and he passed over into this world as a boy, and as a boy he remained after the change called death. When he came here he found the world just as he describes it, and he will not grow out of it while his mother constantly cherishes him as it were in her bosom. It is not for me to judge. It is a common thing for the children who are born into this world to be kept in a state of arrested development by the love of their parents. No. It is not cruel. It is a natural process. The child remains a child till his mother ceases to wish him to be a child, then he grows, and the arrest had not stunted him, only he grows later, like spring-sown wheat and winter wheat." F.W.H.

When the boy died, he tells his mother he experienced a delightful change. His happiness was only marred by his mother's sorrow. He was immediately conscious of his surroundings in his former earth life, that he followed his body to the grave, and cared for nothing except to comfort his mother. It was one year before he succeeded in establishing communication on the physical plane. From the first he conversed with her when her body slept.

His account of his life on the other side recalls reminiscences of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' beautiful "Gates Ajar." That was a romance, and caused a great sensation many years ago. Deacon Quirk hoeing potatoes in Heaven and children learning the piano, etc., were new ideas then. In this book, the description of life on the other side is written by one who lives there, who tells his mother day by day how he spends his time, what lessons he is learning, what games he is playing, who are his friends and companions, and so forth. He is never wearied of telling us that "There is Here," and that everything we have here they have there.

It is a remarkable story, presented by the boy to his mother as a simple matter-of-fact statement of the life he is actually leading. If he had been at Rugby or at Win-

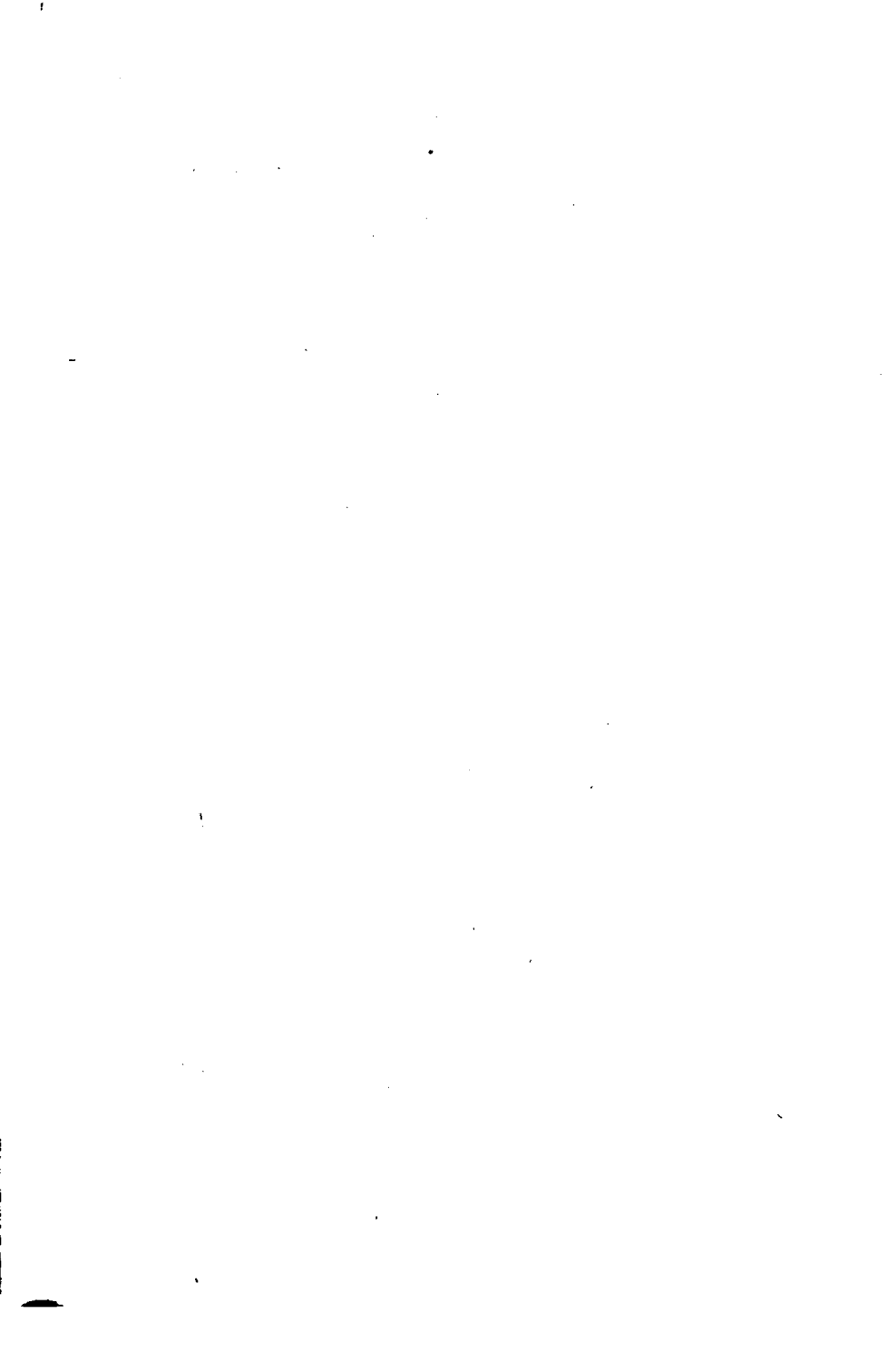
chester he could not be more matter-of-fact, in the details which he gives about his life in Happyland.

In conclusion, "There is Here." The dead are not dead. It is possible for those who love to bridge the grave.

That is the message of "Rachel Comforted." It is a good message and true.

W. T. STEAD.

June, 1909.



A NOTE BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

I HAVE been asked to write some words as a prelude to this beautiful book, but after reading the touching words of the mother and the weighty argument by the late Mr. W. T. Stead, I feel that any formal introduction by me would be a purposeless intrusion. I do not think that anyone who has a soul can read the mother's words without emotion, nor can a sane, balanced brain consider the arguments of Mr. Stead and fail to see that they are convincing. I know that Rachel, in gaining her own comfort, has also passed it on to many other sorrowing hearts, and brought conviction and consolation to many of the bereaved. Sceptics and unbelievers have admitted the deep effect produced upon them by the narrative. There are some who cry out at such a heaven as being too material. They must remember that in heaven also there is evolution, and that Sunny's "happy land" is but one resting-place on the upward journey. We grow towards complete spirituality, but we have all eternity ahead of us, and the process is a gradual one. Most of us will rejoice that we have our rest-cure in such an earth-like heaven, or heavenly earth, as Sunny describes, before we face conditions which would seem higher perhaps, but more difficult and unfamiliar. I would add as a word of caution that no Spiritualist believes in the literal verbal inspiration of every word in a message from the other side, for he is aware, if he knows his subject, that there are temporary causes which may make for inaccuracy or misunderstanding. Here, as always, the spirit is greater than the letter, but the letter also in the main will be found to bear every sign of consistency and truth.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

December 26, 1919.



RACHEL COMFORTED

CHAPTER I

My third child "Sunny," whose Communications from the Other Side are here given, was born during a period of great sorrow to me. I was still very young, though he is my third and last child.

My father, an Army Officer of the Old School, held an official appointment in India during most of my childhood. And so our childhood was spent far away from our parents, a sad thing for children, and although I married an Army Officer, too, I never would part from my children nor leave them to others.

The love between us was therefore uninterrupted and great, and this Book is to show you that Death itself was not able to cause any severance. Indeed, I can say:

Death has not parted us even a little while,
Nor severed the finest strand
In the eternal cable of our love;
The very strain has twined it closer still,
And added strength.

Sorrow and disillusionment tintured my early years of motherhood. The home where two of my children were born that I have now "lost," holds sad memories. I had to throw many cherished ideals overboard, and being young and undisciplined, I took it all much as a child would do, and cried, month in, month out, with the consequence that my third child Sunny was born very delicate.

But also, as a consequence, the young Soul was, from the beginning, full of a great Love and Understanding, as if it had already shared and known part of my pain. This impression I have had with all my children, and very especially with him.

A few words about Sunny on this Side of Life will prove useful in showing how the same traits are present in the conversations and experiences here recorded, as he had in Earth life.

He nearly died during his babyhood, but later grew stronger, and at the age of three, and onwards, was a beautiful little creature full of roughish fun and mischief, and was smiled at and admired, even in the streets, with that look of tender delight that men and women, especially the older ones, give to the pretty young things just beginning Life.

Sunny had, till later on, when he insisted on having his curls shortened, truly wonderful long golden ringlets half way to his waist. And they curled right up to his head. His eyes were large, soft, dark, antelope-looking eyes. His skin was fair, and he had dark delicately pencilled brows, with temples pale, broad, pure-looking, and intellectual. His face was oval. Of course as Boyhood approached, the Baby-beauty lessened, till in his last long illness at the age of twelve, when a new beauty, sad and wan, came and stayed. He was full of roguish fun, and as he grew older, so witty, that no one could help laughing at some of his remarks. You will find this trait very marked in his communications from the other side. Also the poetry, the riddles, the stories, and above all, the deep capacity for love and sympathy.

I remember how a governess of the childrens, who was leaving us to go to Paris, promised Sunny to send them "a box of sweets from Paris that will melt in your mouth, Sunny." She departed, and Sunny and his brothers watched every post in vain for those sweets, till one day Sunny remarked, sadly and a little dryly, being then seven years old, "Ah, me! those sweets must have melted *before* they got to my mouf."

He always lisped some of his words.

On our way out to India on one of the old Indian Troop-ships, he used to watch his father, Colonel Maturin, and

other officers playing whist on deck. He was then hardly five years old. I see him now, the pretty little figure, picturesquely dressed, with the falling curls, of that unburnt ripe-corn-like English fairness so characteristic of English children, standing gravely watching the game being played, day after day, when we got into calmer waters.

After about a week of watching it, he announced to his governess, "I want to play whist."

"But, Sunny, it's a very difficult game for such a little boy as you."

"I can play it," he said, "come and see."

The two sat down, Miss Lewis much amused. To her surprise she found that the child understood the game almost perfectly, and could play as well as many an adult, improving rapidly day by day as the voyage progressed. Sunny became whist-possessed. The officers and their wives would stand round watching the pair, Sunny, solemn and absorbed and oblivious to all onlookers, the long sunburnt ringlets half hiding his serious little face, while he examined his hand, selected his card, and astonished everyone with his grasp of the game. Before we reached Bombay he twice beat Miss Lewis at it. This seems to me a rather wonderful thing for a little child of five?

In between these phases, he was the perfect child, loved romping, and especially adored being tickled! He was devoted to fairy-stories, hide-and-seek, and particularly delighted in riddles. He was fond of telling long stories himself, invented as he went along: composed poetry by the yard; drew childish pictures wonderfully like those he drew us on the planchette later, and had nothing precocious about him, except flashes now and then, as in the case of the whist, when he amazed everyone. But the ordinary Sunny was, as he often describes himself in his planchette writings, "Your little romping Boy."

He and his brother Kay, who has now joined him, were a pair of the most loving little brothers I have ever seen.

A perfect understanding seemed to exist between them. Indeed all three brothers loved each other dearly. I see my three children now in memory, the darling little trio, hand in hand, standing often later on outside our Himalayan Bungalow, admiring in a solemn kind of silence, the wonderful view from it, just as three grown-up people might have done. I see especially the two who have now passed on, so often together, and indeed almost inseparable. I see them here; I see them there, I see them in many a picture. And often I see them through my tears; and now I can smile through the tears.

I often see them, too, coming together to meet me across the flower-sprinkled meadows of Sunny's "Happy Land," when I arrive there and ask, "Where are my children?"

CHAPTER II

SUNNY! Everlasting child!

How true your loving saying, when often you climbed on to my knee and laid your curly head upon my shoulder, replying (to my motherly plaint that "my three children are growing fast, and soon I'll have no Baby left"), "I promise you I'll never grow up! I'll always be your Baby! I'll always talk Baby-talk, like this—'Me hungry—me happy—me sleepy.'" That "me!" How much it was to mean to me later on! And—you never "grew up."

Sunny, everlasting child of mine. I think your wise spirit always knew! . . .

So many darlings like you seem sent to earth expressly only for a brief spell! Some small lesson still needs learning! Or else somebody needed you so badly that God heard and sent into that home a being that always seemed (human as you were) very akin, at moments, to the child-angels! My three children have been the blessings of my life.

Everlasting child of mine, your prophetic soul spoke true, and on this night, years ago now, your mother lay unconscious, stricken almost unto Death, because that afternoon your loved eyes had closed and had opened no more.

"I love mother. I love everybody. Have I said enough?"

Such were my Sunny's last words as he "died;" and

they are typical of his whole short life of twelve complete years amongst us.

I see, now again through my tears (fresh as at that awful moment, when the earth appeared to reel beneath my feet), his large, soft, dark eyes full of love and suffering fixed upon my face—the first face to meet his baby gaze as he entered earth-life—and the last as he left it. What mother (from whom God has demanded this all supreme sacrifice of the beloved and cherished fruit of her own body, and sharer, I am certain, of her own soul) but will feel for me, and recall her own mortal anguish at watching, with dilated gaze of horror and despair, the life slowly fade out of her own child's eyes?

He died—or so I then believed.

I called him. I cast myself upon his beloved little form and held it fast to me and refused to let anyone approach us. And I called him to reply to me. And no reply came.

And then the darkness settled upon my soul. For I believed him *dead*.

Thanks to the empty creeds and teachings of a so-called "enlightened age," I believed him dead!

A bitter scorn and distrust of those empty teachings (those cold stones instead of bread, offered to suffering Humanity) overwhelmed my heart and life as the months passed.

I stood day after day, beside his little grave, and remained "uncomforted."

"The voice of Rachel mourning for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are NOT."

That voice, when the whole churchyard was quiet, was perhaps sometimes heard by unseen ears.

I hired a workman's cottage almost touching the churchyard, that I might live close to that little grave. By day I sat beside it; in a little low chair that had been his. It is a lovely spot where that "Garden" is: my Garden of

Pain, as it was in those days. A large softly rustling tree overshadowed the little patch of cruel earth that covered, as I thought, my youngest Darling. I still had two others then. Oh, bereaved mothers, stretch your kind arms out to me, as I do to you, and tell me that you know and understand. . . .

For I have now "lost," as we call it, another child, as dear, and good, and sweet, as sweet Sunny. He has "died" in the war, for the sins and ambitions of an ambitious nation, who flung joyous brave youth into the furnace, and saw the World become one great Tragedy of Pain.

He, my second, is often in communion with me. He and Sunny live together now. Have gone "to prepare a home" for me, and for the last dear child left me this side. This book, however, deals with Sunny alone, and the records here given, came to me when Kay, my second, and Eric, my eldest, often stood by, and asked their little brother questions of his life and doings "There."

Kay, I know, was always quite certain that it was indeed his brother Gordon (Sunny), he seemed indeed not even surprised—as I at first was. He took it all so quietly, and seemed to think it all just as natural and satisfactory as if Sunny had gone to Australia and was writing us letters from there. This calm, steadfast attitude of Kay's was a great help and comfort to me in the early days of these records, when it all seemed to me, and to Nellie, too good almost to be true. Not so to Kay at all. I was struck with the same simple belief in it all (as being quite a natural thing) as shown by a little niece of mine, my sister's daughter Lorna Boustead, aged just a little older than Sunny. These young things of a later generation to mine, seemed to have arrived on earth a good deal wiser over Life's Truths, and with clearer insight into such matters as these, than their elders, especially some of their male elders in the pulpits.

It has been so noticeable in the war. The young men so often went joyously to the Front telling their weeping, despairing parents: "Don't cry! and if anything happens to me, remember I shan't be dead any more than you are!"

My Kay wrote before going to fight, "Do you know that picture called 'Re-Union'? Well, at the most, that's all that can happen." The letter reached me after his death.

I was reading "We are Seven" lately. Oh, that dear puzzled old Poet, meeting the wise little cottage-girl, and asking her:

"Brothers and Sisters, little maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And, wondering, looked at me.
"And where are they, I pray you tell?"
She answered, "Seven are we.
Two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to Sea,
Two of us in the churchyard lie,
My sister and my brother,
And in the Churchyard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother."
"You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs they are alive.
If two are in the Churchyard laid,
Then ye are only five?"
"How many are ye, then," said I,
"If they two are in Heaven?"
Quick was the little maid's reply,
"Oh, Master, we are Seven."
"But they are dead! These two are dead!
Their Spirits are in Heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away; for still,
The little maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are Seven."

This same immortal and beautiful poem begins, asking how "a simple child, that lightly draws its breath, and feels its life in every limb, what can it know of Death?"

More, far more, these clear-sighted young things know of Death than we can do, with vision distorted by nonsense written; and preached, and eyes blinded with tears and sin and ignorance. Yes, Cottage-child, your seven are all complete. What can you know of "Death"? Why know.

* * * * *

Upon some nights, so awful was the anguish over the vanishing of Sunny, that I would get up and dress, and steal out of my cottage, and, the churchyard gates being shut, I climbed a part of the wall that was very low, and lay me down upon that spot of earth, and again called him, and called him, to return to me.

My love for my other two children became one long agony, for fear I might have them snatched from me, too; for I dreaded God and His apparent cruelty.

As time passed on, I said this to God, if a God anywhere there was.

"Unless, God, you are no God at all, send me back my child, if only for five minutes. Give me proof my child lives, if he does live. But I must have proof. Nothing else will do."

And then I waited — for God's reply.

I never dreamt how it would come. I thought either I would die myself, and so find the Child again, or that he would suddenly appear to me—if he was not dead—and if a God there really was. Thanks to orthodox teachings I doubted there could be any God.

And so it became to me, not only my child's existence I asked for proof of, but the existence of the God-head Himself.

Night after night I sat up in the dark and peered into the blackness, for the sight of my child's beloved little face. Night after night I stretched out my arms to the emptiness.

But neither beloved face nor dear voice of the lost child came to comfort me.

Did almost a dread, and almost a sad, awful, shrinking hatred of God grow blackly in my heart?

Yes, in the earliest days of my woe and despair.

But, all the time, I dimly knew that my hatred was only for the false conception of God. The knowledge sank into me that there was some ghastly mistake somewhere.

I frankly hated the false God I had been taught to believe in. The cruel, unnatural God, called by the beautiful name, "Our Father," who yet, we have been taught, does things to us that no human father would do, unless heartless and revengeful. Who gives us children, and others, to love with every fibre of our being, and then callously snatches them from us, leaving us no trace of them save a patch of mouldering earth. Who, we are asked to believe, does this thing, and others as terrible, to punish us for the faults which He Himself created us with. We are to find comfort in the thought that in some depressing, impossible Heaven, years ahead, we may, if we "Kiss the rod" meekly enough now, meet the loved Darling again, clad in white robes, playing a harp, or singing the eternal praises of a strange Being that has tortured his mother and others, and is torturing all humanity in the same way, year in, year out.

This "Father," we are further told, will (if in our love and agony we attempt to get into touch with the vanished darlings) send demons to impersonate them, and to trick and deceive our great love.

In these foolish, ignorant lies, I ceased to believe. I had to destroy that false god in my heart before the knowledge of the true One dawned upon me. I had to hate that Myth, and be honest in my hatred of it; and for a long time after all belief in it was dead, I had no belief in anything.

That did not matter, I now see. Better believe in nothing than in a delusion and an untruth.

I often thought, "I am an atheist now," but I grew to know that that is no real term of calumny. I met atheists, and found them honester, better men, sometimes, than many who have not the courage to use their own intelligence or to proclaim their honest doubts.

Until the dust-heap is cleared away, nothing fair and good can grow on that spot.

My own anguish was preparing the soil in my heart for the truer conception of God, the Sower.

Many there are who dare think for themselves and who resemble the sobbing child whose parent has been depicted to it as cruel and relentless. She stands outside the door in dread, waiting for it to open. But what is happening? The longer the Silence lasts, the quieter the child grows. She leans up against the cruel closed Door with a wonderful patience. And she waits. Her hatred and fear die down. Something tells her that there is Love, and only Love, the other side. Love, and a great wide understanding of her tears and troubles. Her sobs grow less. Now she stands and listens. The Door opens, and Love holds out its Everlasting Arms; and into them she is folded. All is understood. It was only a Myth—the stern Father! This broad, warm shoulder, deep and strong, pillows her head. She hears the great Heart beating under her ear.

"Oh Father! and I hated you! I am so sorry. And now, I love you so!"

* * * * *

I found my Child again. You will see how.

In his own joyous, artless way, he taught me (all unknowingly himself) of a common-sense religion, and a grand common-sense God that helps, instead of hindering, you to live. That teaches you how, Life being eternal, it is well worth the living, even when sorrows crowd fast on you. All that will pass away when Wisdom teaches us how to live, and how no one can die. And how some day, no one *will* die, even in the way we appear to die now. That is all part of the "mistake." We have not learnt how

to make these bodies immortal, as one day they will become. We shall weave into them the thing that cannot die, when our spirit knows how to do it, imperceptibly and gradually. "Death" now is only caused, as I believe, through Ignorance all round.

I doubt if Sunny knows, to this day, how he taught me all this? Do you, Sunny?

You will find that his own idea of the Divinity is often dim, and exactly what a child's would be until he himself had evolved.

From the hour that I realized this ghastly mistake of Death being in any way an "orderly" thing, my real education began. I realized that God had nothing to say to it at all, being Himself a force, a Life-Force, of everything that is orderly, perfect, wise, kind, and deathless.

Wisdom is never cruel. Wisdom is never disorderly. Wisdom makes no errors, teaches no errors, knows no errors, believes no errors.

From the hour that I knew that my child lived, I saw Wisdom, Reason, Sense and Love, replacing the dark horrors of previous beliefs.

A conception of a true Godhead flowed slowly into my understanding, the old lumber being cleared away.

Very far are most of us, I am sure, from any full or perfect conception of what the Father-Mother Godhead really is. When we arrive at that, the "Dew-drop may slip into the Shining Sea" and become part of it.

CHAPTER III

I RECEIVED Sunny's conversation through a planchette, and they began quite "by accident" (as such happenings are called).

A year had passed since his "death." I had given, as a game, a planchette to my two other boys, but had no idea it was anything but a toy, for I knew nothing of Spirit Communication. I sat one winter's night by the fire, thinking with the usual agony of bereavement of my vanished child, when I became aware that my two other sons, aged fourteen and sixteen, were conversing in excited whispers over the planchette they had been playing with. Until then it had been to them merely a rather mysterious game, that told you your profession, future, etc., and was not taken seriously. I heard Eric say to Kay, "You must have pushed it." Kay replied indignantly, "I tell you I didn't. It's you who pushed." Then one of them whispered, "Don't let mother see. It will upset her."

This roused me. I got up and went to the table, and found my children gazing awe-struck at six words scrawled across a very large sheet of paper pinned to the table, thus: "Tell mother don't worry. Me happy." I stood and looked at it too, breathlessly, tensely, asking, "Who wrote this, children?"

As I have related, my Sunny had been wont to say, "Me happy, me hungry, me sleepy," and so on, just to please me when I sometimes remarktd, "Oh, children, you are growing big. Soon I'll have no baby left." Sunny, ever tender-hearted and understanding (as indeed

all my three boys are), would climb on to my lap to embrace me and say, "No fear! *I'll* always be your baby and talk baby talk, cos me loves oo," etc.

And so, upon this winter's night, when winter was also in my heart, I gazed through my tears at this message upon the paper, "Tell mother don't worry. *Me happy.*"

Eric and Kay, practical, and at the age when the school-boy carefully suppresses any exhibition of sentiment lest he should be accused by his fellows and others of being "like a girl" (awful stigma!), were as moved and full of wonder as myself.

My children are essentially truthful. Fearful of breaking down, they both tried to divert my thoughts, but when I insisted on questioning them closely, each boy earnestly denied having done more than lightly rest his finger-tips upon the little wooden board, which, after a time, appeared to become imbued with a life and movement of its own, while all they had to do was to let it write, their hands barely touching it. This was, later, my own experience.

Deeply thoughtful, deeply moved, greatly wondering, I took charge of the message and the planchette, and locked them away. A few days later my boys returned to their public school, and about a fortnight passed, during which time I longed to try the little instrument again, but having told a relative (a Roman Catholic priest, Father Maturin, the famous preacher) about it, I was much upset at his assurance that—yes—it was certainly a *spirit* had moved the little instrument (for he himself, he said, had tested these phenomena, and knew them to be genuine spirit communications); but it was certainly not my child, but an "evil spirit" trying to deceive me.

I pondered, and finally decided that great joy would be mine if I could even get into touch with an "evil spirit," for as my longing was, primarily, to satisfy myself that spirits of any sort at all existed, an evil spirit, be it a veritable demon, would be better than nothing, and would at least furnish evidence of life beyond death. In fact, so great

was now my anxiety to begin, that I was prepared even to try and soften the malevolent entity which my priestly relative assured me was simply bent upon my destruction. The good man was horrified when I replied I'd "cheerfully risk it, or anything else, to find my child again." In vain he pleaded! I replied, "It's no use. I've got to find my Sunny. And find him I will, if he is anywhere."

I did not know then, that there are no more "evil" spirits (poor dears) on the other side, than we meet every day here, when we jostle the poor drunkard on the pavement, or chat with the gentleman who has ruined hundreds of homes by dishonest speculations beneficial to himself; and so on. I also did not know, then, that if your investigations be prompted solely, as in my case, by a great, deep love, that is the greatest safeguard of all against interference from others. But anyhow, why must those on the Other Side who are in trouble, be hounded out with all this fear and abuse?

During the years that now followed of uninterrupted talks with my child, I took care (and would advise all to do the same who wish perfect conditions with only one person over There) never to ask for communications from any but the one person—my boy. To this, I believe, was due the extraordinary success I had—to this and our love for each other. He often conveyed to me messages from other relatives who had passed on, but it was my Sunny, and he alone, who *wrote*, except once, when I was rather taken aback by a little boy in the next plane (whose mother had been having tea with me) apparently seizing the planchette and refusing to let Sunny have his usual evening talk. It was quite strange; the kind of tussle the two children had over it for a few minutes. Sunny would apparently get hold of it now and then, and write rapidly, "Mother, mother, tell him to go away. He won't go." Then Cyril would write, in quite a different script from Sunny's, "I shan't go; I want to talk to *my* mother. I want to send her a message." As Cyril's mother was

getting constant talks herself with her child through a planchette, and had then just left to go back to her home, I begged, and finally persuaded, Cyril to retire, and leave the field to Sunny, who, ever after that, seemed constantly apprehensive of Cyril's reappearance, and more than a little jealous of him. Sunny wrote us sometimes reams of delightfully inconsequent poetry (composed rapidly as he went along), and also drew us child-like pictures, and was very pleased and excited about them. After Cyril's visit he would sometimes suddenly write, in the very middle of a poem, "Am I as clever as Cyril? He can't write poetry, can he?" And upon my assurance, "Oh, no, I don't think so," the little wooden board would fairly dance with joy and he would write, "Oh, I'm glad! I was so afraid you'd get to love him better than me."

Perhaps, to strangers, the child-like pride, imperfections, candour, and simplicity of these communications were more convincing than anything else. As Mr. W. T. Stead explains in his preface to this book, the whole thing was as natural, artless and convincing as if a little schoolboy on this side had gone to some land of which his mother knew nothing, and wrote her boyish letters about his life, his companions, his pets, his home, his garden and his education.

But to return to the early days of these records.

The demon theory having failed to terrorize me (indeed, it interested me greatly, much to the amazement of Father Maturin), I asked my valued servant, "Nellie," if she would sit at the planchette with me, my boys having returned to school. Dear Nellie, my faithful maid, had been a Salvation Army lass, and had devoted years of her life to working for the East-end poor upon a tiny pittance, till her health broke down, and she entered my service of rather more ease. I knew I could trust her. She had a true and beautiful nature. And so I invited her to be my companion upon this my journey into a then, to me, Great Unknown. She hesitated at first. Was it right? Were we "allowed" to talk to those who had passed on? I

replied, "Oh, Nellie, Seek and ye shall find." To seek I was determined. Not all the angels of Heaven, nor all the demons of Hell, nor all the puzzling horror of well-meaning people, could have now deterred me. I knew it *could* not be wrong to wish to find my darling child and prove to myself that no one dies. What nonsense! Dear Father Maturin found me deaf, and knows better now, I expect. And so Nellie sat down with me, and we entered together upon the most blessed and wondrous experience of our lives. The Garden of Gethsemane in which I, a humble mortal, had prayed that "this cup should pass from me," changed gradually, day by day, week by week, month by month, from a Garden of Pain to a Garden of Joy. My crown of once sharpest thorns became a wreath of flowers. My tears often fell, even in conversations years afterwards, for a great mother-love like this, must always be nearly as much pain as joy. Even when, in the physical flesh, your darling is clasped in your arms, your mothers (and wives and others, too)—well, you understand! A great Love holds so much pain. How much more, when the beloved one is out of sight? But as time passed, my tears became more of joy than pain—I had found my boy again.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER our talks had gone on for nearly a year, Sunny began to ask me at the end of every day's talk, "Mother, are you glad now that God called me here?" Well, I could not truthfully reply, "Yes," and so I would answer, "Some day, darling, some day I will be." He continued to ask the question persistently and regularly, and I had no other reply to give for many a long day.

But as it was borne slowly upon me how happy and natural was the life my child lived, how he longed to hear me say that I would not have him back, and how, far from being really parted from him, I felt that we were united for evermore, then I grew slowly to know that it was indeed "well with the child."

I had during the first few months hours of bewilderment. I had so much to unlearn. I had the usual absurd ideas that my little son had become as a very Solomon in wisdom, that he must know everything—including everything that was going on all over the world—and be able correctly to foretell the future; that he should consequently be expected to remember the smallest and most trivial incidents of his life on this side and never make a mistake or contradict himself; that he must have, or should have, become perfect in character; that it was not to be supposed that he would care any more for the things and people he loved here, except in a *very* superior way; that he ought never to joke about anything at all, because (being engaged in singing hymns and other pious pursuits) it would be so irreverent; and so on. For, like most of us, I had arrived vaguely at these conclusions by the road of orthodox religious teachings, lamentable in the crooked and strange ideas they foster.

And what did I find instead? What revelation of truth (for so I regard it) burst little by little upon me, not by a sedulous process of education, carefully administered, as it would have been by an adult spirit who realized my ignorance and difficulties; but through a happy, joyous, and yet sometimes grieved and wounded child, who was so excited to tell me all kinds of things interesting to himself, and who, for a long time, realized *so* little that he was re-educating his mother, that some days confusion became worse confounded, and the sitting would end with my little boy and me both apparently in tears, Sunny writing in obvious agitation, "Mother, you are doubting me, and that big black wall has come between us. Oh, Mother, *don't* you believe I'm your own Sunny?"—or words to that effect, and I sobbing to think I had wounded my child. Great harm and sorrow was caused for quite a long time by the counsels of my priestly relative Father Maturin, who had prepared the way (in all kindness of course) to complicate matters terribly at first. Sunny found this out, and if I said, "Sunny, here is Father Maturin come to ask you questions" (Father Maturin was very interested), Sunny would hastily write, "Oh, brother! He worries me! And he makes you unhappy, mother. But tell him to go on. What does he want to know?"

I will describe more fully all these and other sittings later, but I have never forgotten dear Father Maturin's face when he solemnly said to the invisible Sunny, "Is Christ the Son of God?" and waited, I suppose, for some horrid atheistic reply, or perhaps through a loud devilish "Ha! Ha!" might resound through the room. Instead of that, there was a kind of rather shocked pause, and then was written, "Oh, Mother, doesn't Father Maturin *believe* He is the Son of God?"

And innocent Sunny would, I could see, have tried, with more opportunity, to convert to better conceptions this very strange priest who apparently was doubting Christ's Divinity and had come to Sunny for light! Had my child

appeared there and then in the flesh before him. Father Maturin could not have looked more deeply struck and touched.

I never asked him, but both Nellie and I believed that he received a sudden illumination then, which went far to convince him that it was indeed the child writing.

Father Maturin was drowned on the torpedoed *Lusitania*, to my sorrow. But he is wiser now, I am sure.

I found as the months went on, that Sunny knew very little more about the riddles of life and death, and things generally, than when he was on this side. The mistakes, and muddles, and doubtings, caused by this alone may be imagined. Pitifully he would write, "But I'm *only* thirteen! I'm not a philosopher (*sic*)! Shall I ask my teacher?" etc. I found he knew but little of the future. And yet sometimes he seemed to have a flash of wonderful prophetic vision, and was nearly always right. He was as liable to make mistakes and contradict himself, or change his mind, as we all are. He had not changed suddenly in nature or character, nor become perfect. He always had a lovely nature in most ways, but I found his little faults and failings still there, contrary to my anticipations. And—I was glad. He could not tell me anything about anyone, near or far, *as a rule*, unless he had known them, or they were much associated with me or his brothers or anyone he had loved. For weeks he could not see Nellie sitting with me. He said she looked like a "black lump." A member of the Psychical Research Society read the records later (Mr. Piddington), and told me he was much struck at Sunny asking one day (when I said we must stop now, as Nellie had to get the tea), "Who is Nellie?" This was some time after we had begun. (He had never known her.) As time passed, he would remark that he could "see her clearer." He often explained that we had a thick or a thin mist round us, presumably the physical body. If he loved the person, the mist was thinner. Those whom he had loved on this side I found he

loved even more than before. He was deeply interested in all family news, and was very fond of writing people letters with the planchette, and if I suggested, to save time, that I should address the envelope, he was determined to do it himself. If, as we sat, there was a postman's knock at the door, Nellie or I must go and see "if there's a letter for me" from So-and-so, and every day it would be, "Has So-and-so answered my letter?"

I found he had not lost his sense of humour, which was great (we are of Irish descent), and that, with all his piety and his reverence for the names of God and Christ (always written slowly when otherwise he raced over the paper), he did not spend all his time in religious exercises. He said once: "Murray" (a schoolfellow who had passed over) "and I are lively boys, and I know Jesus wouldn't want us to sing hymns all day." Another time he said: "I don't want to be an angel," and seemed to think that if I wished it I might bring it about, and he was quite happy as he was. I found that though he remembered things better and better as he went on, at first he seemed confused, and would write in an agony of apprehension: "Oh, don't doubt or stop talking because I can't remember that. Wait a tick, Mother, it's coming back." And after a pause he'd say: "I *do* remember"— something often which I did not even know, and Nellie had never heard of, but which, after inquiries of other people, would prove to be true, and always, always he asked: "Are you glad God called me here?"

The day at last came when I could reply (even then with a deep stab, whether of pain or joy I could not define) "Yes, my blessed child for your sake I am glad."

There was a long pause on one of these occasions, for he so often asked me this question, as if he longed to hear it often.

"True?" he wrote.

"Yes," I breathed, and meant it, yet hoped that the tear upon my cheek would not fall.

"Oh, Mother," he wrote, "my heart is full, *nigh to bursting*. You have put the crown to-day upon my happiness."

The "*nigh to bursting*" is so like him. He often used it after this. When he was on this side of Life, his grandmother offered her eleven grandchildren a prize for the best story. Sunny got it. I always remember how his story began: "It was a god-like spring day."

I called him my "Pearl" once, while using planchette. He was delighted. "Oh, what a nice name. Then *you* are Mother-of-Pearl!"

* * * * *

In my next chapter I will tell of extraordinary proofs received of the genuineness of the communications as coming from the Other Side, and as being from him. We had hundreds of such, entirely convincing to me (and I am very hard to convince), but I will relate some of more value to strangers.

I am thinking to-day how happy Sunny must be to see these dear records given to the world at last.

"Oh, dear me," he often wrote, "when will my book be printed?" We had long arguments over the title. If he didn't like what we suggested, he would have none of it.

"Pearl and Mother-of-Pearl," was tabooed because it sounded "too like a girl." "The Happy Land" he rather wanted, but he finally said, he had found a title, and it was "Rachel Comforted."

CHAPTER V

I FEEL that faith in these communications which I have described in my previous chapters largely depends upon faith in the reliability of myself, and Nellie, who sat with me. For myself, as my whole object was to obtain proof of my child's continued existence, with no idea, till years after, of sharing my experiences with the public (and I do so now chiefly from a sense of duty), no one can suppose that I, the busy mother of children, and mistress of a household, would spend four hours a day for several years, pushing a planchette and inventing fables. It would be a laborious and unprofitable way of writing fiction, to start with, and a foolish one. I need hardly, therefore, continue that argument. Regarding Nellie, her single-hearted devotion to the family, and desire to know the truth, alone enabled her every day so cheerfully to leave her work (ample in itself) to sit with me for three hours (the fourth hour was spent by me copying what we had received) to get these records from my child. She was my only servant at the time. She often gave up an outing to sit with me. I look back and fear that in my intense wish to get into touch with my Sunny, I forgot what a strain on Nellie these daily sittings (far too frequent really for us all three) must have been. But she never complained. We sat usually afternoons. No matter what she was doing, she was ready to drop it. I often experience sorrow (now that I am, I hope, less selfish and more considerate of others), at recollections of the half-stifed sigh that my dear Nellie would try to hide from me, when, with plenty of work still to be done, she would wash her hands, put on a clean apron, and come to our daily sitting.

I made life as easy for her in return as I could, and luckily have never been an exacting mistress. We both lived largely upon uncooked food of the very simplest description. But with all that, housewives, at least, will not need to be assured that it was not to the benefit or interest of dear Nellie to encourage these communications, except from the same point of view as my own, a keen desire to investigate this truly wonderful subject, and to learn the truth, and only the truth. So, will my readers please dismiss all thought of Nellie or me sitting for years pushing a planchette for fun or profit; and I would advise those who still doubt, to try the amusement themselves, and see how long they care to keep it up—as an amusement, speculation, or fraud.

* * * * *

Here are verbatim parts of conversations concerning a Mr. Frost on Sunny's side, whose existence, and "death," and other matters were later verified through the Registrar.

I am now copying from the original records of "Rachel Comforted."

July 26th, 1902.—Mother: "Sunny, I am better, but still in pain."

Sunny: "Oh, Mother, that horrible screwmatics!" (Sunny's name for rheumatism.)

Mother: "You told me, darling, to remind you to tell me of someone in your Land I had never heard of before."

Sunny: "There is someone here who knows Uncle Charlie. His name is Mr. Frost, but Uncle Charlie calls him Willie. That is his name. He died (no Mother, scratch that out, I don't like to say 'died'), I mean he passed over the same year as the Duke of Clarence."

Mother: "And his age, profession and place of passing over?"

Sunny: "Wait a minute." (A pause.) "He says he was twenty-seven, and he was living at Southsea. He

knows the house and street (Victoria Road) but not the number, but it was close to the sea. He is very sad when I ask him. You see, Mother, he told Uncle Charlie that he was just going to be married when he passed over, and he is always speaking of her." (*Name mentioned. Christian name only.*) "He says it was through taking cold he passed over here. He came over very quick."

Mother: "What was the illness?"

Sunny: "Influenza."

Mother: "What was his profession?"

Sunny: "He was Clerk of the Dockyard."

Now I had passed quickly through Portsmouth several times when proceeding from or to troopships for and from India, but of a Mr. Frost, or of the names of streets in Southsea, or any of these things, I knew nothing. Nellie had never been there. Many years before (in 1884) I was once at Southsea, but too delicate to go about at all, met no one at all, and knew not one street from another and was only there about two weeks. I therefore wrote to some friends who had gone only a few days previously to live in Southsea and asked a daughter of the family if she would examine the Register for me and let me know the result. I did not tell her my reason. Had I done so the whole family would have decided that I had gone out of my mind through the loss of my child. (The usual deduction when any bereaved person suddenly discovers proofs of a future life: "Poor thing; the grief has gone to her head.")

A few days passed and my friends wrote to this effect: "Are you sure Mr. Frost is dead? I was just going to the Registrar for you when a man friend called, and I asked him if he had known Mr. Frost. He says a Mr. Frost is in Southsea now, and is Clerk of the Dockyard. Shall I still go to the Registrar?"

This was striking enough, but puzzling. I was beginning to understand things enough to know that, on the Other Side, it is often difficult for them to know whether a person seen there is out of the body temporarily (as in

sleep, unconsciousness, or even in a state of deep thought), or whether out of the body altogether, as at "death." So I called Nellie hastily to the planchette, and informed Sunny of the contents of Susie's letter, adding: "You are thinking your Mr. Frost is dead, but he is not. He can only be on your side now and then."

But Sunny emphatically insisted that "*my* Mr. Frost," as he called him, "*is* what you call *dead*, Mother. He is here for good. Oh do, do, ask Susie to go to the Registrar, and you will see that I am right."

I now wrote to Susie and said that I thought that the Mr. Frost I referred to must be dead, and the one she had been told of would probably be a relation, so would she please go and see the Registrar. She did so, and sent me the official copy. I had Susie's unopened letter by me and then, *without reading it, or the copy from the Register*, Nellie and I sat down to planchette. (This part of the conversation is duly recorded, and it must be noted that neither Nellie nor I had yet read Susie's letter, nor the entry in the Register.)

Mother: "Sunny, darling, what are Mr. Frost's other names?"

Sunny: "Uncle Charlie calls him Willie, but he says his Sunday name is William."

Mother: "Yes, but his others?"

Sunny: "Wait a tick." (A pause.) "Oh, he said it is something about 'Shooting Apples.' He is just off for a ride with Uncle Charlie and Miss Mitchell. One of his names is Sydney."

(We heard much of this Miss Clarissa Mitchell from Sunny later. Apparently she and Uncle Charlie felt tenderly towards each other.)

Mother: "Did he laugh?"

Sunny: "Oh, yes! he said as I caught hold of his stirrup: 'Hullo, Sunny! got another feather in your cap?' You see, Mother, I am always asking them all such a lot of questions. They tell me each one is another feather in

my cap. Uncle Charlie says 'bonnet.' Bonnet indeed! as if I were a girl."

Mother: "Perhaps he means a bee in your bonnet? Is it possible that people are as incredulous with you, as with us, over all this?"

Sunny: "Some of them are. But, you see, they don't know."

The conversation stopped, and I now opened the letter again, and read out to Nellie the copy of the entry in the Register. It was of the death, in 1892, at the age of twenty-seven, of William Sydney Oakshott Frost; and everything Sunny had told me was verified—town, date, street, age, names, illness, and profession (a curious one). I was sorry he had not been able to tell all Mr. Frost's three names. "*Something about shooting apples,*" of course, alluded to Oakshott. But it was all wonderful enough to overjoy me and Nellie, who had never known or heard of this personality before. Mr. Frost, after that, became to us a very real person, and is one of Sunny's greatest adult friends there. He is often alluded to in the conversations. He told Sunny (when I offered to find the lady "Blanche" to whom he had been engaged to be married) to please ask me not to do so, because "she had forgotten him." I therefore took no steps to acquaint Mr. Frost's family of these incidents. The chances were that they would, not knowing me, put it down to fraud, and I did not care to risk it. I hope my doing so now will not vex them. Mr. Frost's private family affairs (on this side) are not again alluded to by himself or Sunny, but his part in the life "There" is often introduced. I wonder will his relatives recognize all this? I got it in 1902, now eighteen years ago.

CHAPTER VI

SUNNY's brothers were at their public school and I had not seen my boys for several weeks. Sunny passed over at Tombridge, where the school is, and his "garden," as he will now have his grave called, is there, is one of the most beautiful churchyards of England.

One morning, here in London, Sunny wrote that his brother Eric, had, *that morning*, during an interval in the studies, gone up to the churchyard, and had cried most bitterly beside the little brother's grave, and had written Sunny a short letter in pencil on a bit of paper, and had "pushed it down into the earth of the grave with a piece of stick." I remember that Sunny told us this in great distress, and begged me to go and see his brothers and to assure Eric that Sunny was *not* lying in that grave at all.

So next day I went by train to Tombridge, saw my two boys, and told Eric what Sunny had written us. He looked dumbfounded, could hardly believe it at first, but admitted yes, it was all true. One may realize how a sensitive boy, seeking (as we all do) to hide the grief consuming the heart, was startled beyond words to know that it had all been seen and recorded to me and Nellie in London, *at the very hour it occurred, by the little "dead" brother himself*. Eric would never have told me this thing, for fear of "upsetting" me. I remember he gazed at me awestruck, and said: "Well, I never! I was in the churchyard alone."

Another time, Eric, the young pickle, during the holidays, had been away from me at the seaside for some weeks, when Sunny wrote, very mournfully, that he had "something sad to tell me about Eric." Alarmed, I asked what

it was. I thought some harm had come to my precious boy. Oh, no, he was quite safe, wrote Sunny, but had been "very naughty." Wondering what was coming, I asked for details, reflecting, I remember, that if Eric knew how closely he was apparently watched, he might not be too well pleased! Few of us would quite like the feeling, especially in careless, thoughtless youth! Sunny seemed to be more anxious over the doings of impetuous Eric, than of his other brother, Kay, whose staid, quieter disposition was not so likely to lead him into mischief. So Sunny informed us that Eric, having run through his pocket-money, had gone, a day or two previously, to a pawnshop (Sunny was much shocked) and had pawned his gold pencil-case for three shillings and sixpence, or some such sum, and his silver match-box for some equally trifling amount. Sunny "had tried to stop him," and to remind him "how upset mother would be," but he "would not listen." I was not very upset. I was too anxious to know if it were true. I wrote off to my boy and asked him, and I remember the tenor of his reply, making Nellie and me laugh: "Really, this is a bit thick! He seems to know all I do, and tells you. It's very wonderful, of course, Mother, and I understand all it means to you. You see, he's not dead at all. Now you ought to be quite happy. But I shall have to mind my P's and Q's. It's a bit awkward for a fellow ——" or words to this effect. However, solace followed in the shape of more pocket-money, so Sunny's artless revelations held their consolations, even for the young culprit!

Another evening he wrote that his other brother Kay (the darling boy I have now lost in the war), was "playing ball with (I think the name was Montague) in his dormitory," which also proved to be true at that very hour.

He told us the winner of the Derby, weeks before the race. I did not want this information for money-making purposes. Nor, when he told me, did I use it to that end. He has since told me three winners of famous races before-

hand. On this occasion a friend, in the usual fashion, declared he "would believe if the Derby winner were given." To convince this sceptic, I asked Sunny if he could tell us the Derby winner that year? At first he asked how could he tell us such things? He was "only a little boy and never went to races." (Apparently a kind of astral counterpart of the Derby would take place, or else some of them could see it clearly beforehand, and be there later themselves.) Finally, he said he would ask a once famous racing personage of rank, upon his side, of whom he sometimes wrote, and whom I had known. This person, told him to tell me the winner of the Derby would be "Volodyovski." I passed on the information, but Nellie and I decided it was too great a jumble of consonants to mean a real name. Later, we saw it, to our delight, quoted in papers as a favourite, and that year. Volodyovski won the Derby, weeks after Sunny had told us.

Readers may again like to know more of Sunny's chief characteristics on this side, that they may, as the articles continue, judge for themselves whether the communications be true to the child from whom they purport to come.

He was intensely loving and tender of heart; he adored his parents and brothers; he loved and pitied all animals; he was very truthful, and had a high sense of honour in all things; his mind and heart were innately pure and refined; and with all his merry, joyous, mischievous sense of fun and humour, his piety was deep. I had been out one evening, and on my return, found one of my servants crying in the kitchen. She told me: "It's Master Sunny; he will never live to grow up; he's too good." And then she related how she was seeing "the young gentlemen" to bed, and the two older ones were having a bolster fight with her, when Sunny, kneeling by his little bed in his long white nightgown ("looking a little Samuel," added Alice), looked up and implored in a hushed voice: "Oh, Alice, keep quiet! *I want to be holy.*" The game stopped, and Alice had been crying since. How my

heart-strings tightened! Mothers will realize. He was so generous in sharing what he had with others, that on the day of his funeral many poor children insisted on following the coffin, crying, and explained that on Monday mornings, when he got his sixpence a week pocket-money, he would change it into halfpence, and as he ran to school would give it *all* away to the little ones, who got to know that if they were on the road they would get their half-penny. I had never known this, till then. It was the same with all he possessed. He was often quaint and old-fashioned in his speech—in fits and starts—and this is a marked characteristic of the communications, as are all his other traits. In India, when only five years old, he would climb on my knee and say: "When are we going home again? *I want to end my days in England.*"

Once when on Jubilee Day his father sent him a shilling, he replied: "Dear Father, thank you for the kind feeling which prompted your offering of a bob." Another time he wrote to Queen Victoria: "Dear Queen Pretty."

He was a creature of sunshine, joy and laughter—as a rule—and this characteristic, mixed with his serious piety and tenderness, are mirrored clearly throughout the records, and would go far to convince all who knew him.

One day, being in one of his tender moods, he would, on the planchette, give us, as poetry, hymns, and sacred songs, composed as he went along. (He had always been fond of writing poetry.) Here is one; but we gathered that this one was not his own composition, but often sung by himself and other children over there:

Mother, don't you hear the angels?
They are singing round my head,
They have borne me to the mansions
From my little earthly bed.

In contrast to this, on one October 25th I find him in a joyous mood of impromptu verse (I am now, as throughout, talking of his after-death writings):

Oh, dear! oh, dear! I wish you were here!
To join in all our fun,
With Murray, and me, and Towzer dear,
From morn till setting sun.
Aunt Etty often says to me,
"Oh Sunny, when she comes,
Your mother, darling, whom we love——"

Here came an agonied pause, no rhyme to "*comes*" being apparently to hand. Planchette half-raised in air, as if pondering. Then down it came with a bang, and he finished rapidly:

"Will she eat all the plums?"

Some days there would be long arguments over rhymes to suit his fancy. I do not believe anyone could have stood behind us and doubted that a third personality, *and that of a child*, was controlling the instrument. Occasionally while the little board raced along, Nellie and I would indulge in brief conversations of our own. Nellie might say for instance: "I hope my kettle isn't boiling over, or my soup burning," or some such mundane remark, and I would reply, and perhaps ask what sort of soup we were to have for supper that night, etc., when suddenly, *most* indignantly, the planchette would break off in some poetry or description, to write: "*Please* Mother (or Nellie) don't interrupt me," or else, slowly and mournfully: "Don't you *like* my poetry? shall I stop?" or half playfully: "Oh, bother the soup!" Profuse apologies from mother and Nellie, however, soon cleared the air, and fearing he had pained me, he would write: "I want to kiss you. Put down your face." And the little board would raise itself on one end and tenderly (so like his sweet, repentant ways!) stroke over my cheek, over and over again. I have a portrait of Sunny (at the age of seven) playing on a flute. It is on the Frontispiece of this book.

Long golden ringlets fall round his fair, earnest, oval face. The large, dark eyes are bent upon the flute. His brow is broad, intellectual and pure-looking. It was one of his truly "holy" moments! The expression is almost rapt! He might well have been taking part in some, to us unseen, angelic choir.

CHAPTER VII

I CONSIDER that the planchette is in most cases the best "writing medium" we yet know of for communications from the other side. If the hand be used, some people feel uncertain for some time whether it be oneself or the spirit. It is often both, mixed. But that is very unsatisfactory, though, after a while, oneself disappears, and was only being used to help the Ego the other side. When the planchette is really being controlled (as described in my previous articles under this heading) by a discarnate person, the two people (two people are best) who sit at it can have not the smallest doubt that a third and unseen personality is present, and is moving it. You yourselves have nothing whatever to do with it, beyond letting your finger-tips lightly touch the board. After we had sat patiently some time, the writing became more and more legible, more and more easy and very rapid. A few minutes (at first, perhaps, even half an hour) after sitting down, we would notice a strange trembling, stirring movement in the little board. It was, in fact, as if the inanimate wood were becoming a living thing! I often whispered to Nellie: "It is as if a small living animal is struggling under our fingers to move!" Having gathered up enough strength (drawn, as I believe, from the electricity in us), it would start off, and so rapidly did it write, that Sunny, through it, could fill an enormous sheet of white paper about twenty-six inches by twenty-one (pinned to a white tablecloth firmly spread over the table, the tablecloth pinned together under the table to prevent it moving) in a far shorter space of time than we could have done ourselves. He became so joyous and

eager as we went on, and so pleased at his own cleverness, that the little board would dash along, oblivious of any remarks we made. Seeing that he was getting to the edge of the sheet, we would call out: "Stop! stop!" (so that we might move the planchette back to a fresh line); but often he would *not* stop, but raced along, the last few words being written on the highly-starched white tablecloth, and I often wondered what our laundry thought of a long line of such words as: "And then, darling Mother," "Towzer began to," "Hullo!" and sometimes only the fag-end of words. He was so eager, that if we sought to stop him when he was intent on finishing his sentence, we found sometimes that on trying to move the planchette back, *it was held down with such force* that Nellie and I both had to *pull* it to lift it at all.

I always believe, had we been able to continue these delightful experiences another year or two, that we should have had the joy of seeing the little board move entirely of itself, under perfectly normal conditions; for, after one year, Sunny, one day, when very strong and joyous, moved it feebly entirely by himself, *neither Nellie nor I touching it at all*. But the effort exhausted him so much that I did not often ask for it again.

In earth-life, as I have told you, Sunny loved inventing and asking riddles. One day we sat down to planchette, and while resting our fingers on it and waiting for Sunny to begin, we discussed a ten-shilling piece I had dropped that morning in a shop. I was worried over it, and Nellie was trying to cheer me up, when all of a sudden Sunny (tired evidently of this very dry conversation!) wrote rapidly without the smallest preamble: "Why do policemen wear big boots?"

It was the first time since his transition that he had ever asked a riddle, and I was so taken aback I did not know whether to laugh or cry; but of the two emotions the joy was greater, for it was these things (coming so unex-

pectedly) which were to me so convincing. Nellie looked frightened, and whispered: "Is it Master Sunny?" I fancy she thought a stalwart policeman from the other side might be paying us a visit. I replied: "Oh, it's he. He loved riddles." In earth-life Sunny would have days and days of riddle-composing, and would land one on you, shouting: "Guess again!" every time you guessed wrong. He wrote now that we were to "guess the answer," and when I said: "Oh, Sunny! How like you this is!" he wrote: "*That* isn't the answer, is it? Oh, Mother, *do* guess!" (He soon learnt to underline words.) After many guesses and "Oh, Nellie, you duffer!" etc., he wrote solemnly: "Because they've got big feet," and asked: "Am I clever?" And when we praised him, the little board would fairly dance with joy, lift itself and stroke my face, and sometimes Nellie's, too, and then he would write rapidly: "Oh, I do love praise!"

After that we had riddles, and *only* riddles, for days and days on end, as you will see later on.

Then he would have a poetic fit, and would compose yards of childish poetry, sometimes serious, sometimes amusing. Then he had a spell of drawing—another favourite amusement of his on this side. It was quite marvellous the way he used that rather clumsy little board to draw in turn angels, omnibuses, bicycles, houses, ships, people, etc. He could never draw very well, and had always envied the great talent in drawing and painting possessed by his brother who had now joined him over There. But he was always passionately fond of drawing pictures, and I had put away in a trunk, with his dear little clothes, every single drawing he had ever done me. His drawings with the planchette went on day by day—of course, under great difficulties at first, for he found it hard to lift it up to fresh lines, etc. But finally he was able to give us charmingly childish pictures, generally full of fun, and on comparing these with his past ones, *every characteristic was there*. He drew an omnibus

one day (they were horse omnibuses then) with people inside, and an old lady climbing up the steps, being assisted by the conductor. He labelled this: "A 'bus; mother inside with a feather round her hat." (We looked, and recognized it.) "And grannie climbing to the top swearing at the conductor" (a bit of boyish mischief, and just the way he used to tease my mother, who is much too dignified to do any of these things).

I remember laughing at the two very decrepit-looking horses he had drawn, and I said in fun: "The poor horses look very hungry, Sunny!" He was quite hurt. "Had he done them badly? Didn't I like the pictures?" etc. All this is *so* like him. He would have sensitive moods, and think you were laughing at him. But, as a rule, good temper, joyous love of life, jokes and "larks," quick repartee, a great sense of humour, and a most affectionate nature, characterized him, on both sides of Life.

Here is, verbatim, one (short) conversation, dated *December 1st, Sunday morning*. (On Sundays we only talked a short time.)

Mother: "Sunny, darling!"

Sunny: "Oh, yes, Mother, darling. Do you like my story?"

Mother: "Oh, I do, indeed!"

Sunny: "Well, will you just tell Miss Nellie to keep her thoughts to herself?"

Mother: "But she is delighted with your story."

Sunny: "Oh, yes, I know; but she said: 'I believe it's his own experiences.' Now, Nellie, just you don't believe anything at all about it. Please wait till the last chapter."

Mother: "All right. We like it so much."

Sunny: "Oh, I am so glad you like it! Ten minutes up yet, eh?"

Mother: "Not yet, darling. What are you going to do all to-day, Sunny?"

Sunny: "Going to church. Have my dinner. Read and enjoy myself. And what are *you* going to do, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

Mother: "Well, first I'm going to Earl's Court to take the train to Westfield."

Sunny: "Oh, dear! *Take* the train! Oh, it will be heavy for you to take!"

The "story" he alludes to I give part of, later. He was several weeks writing it, doing a small bit every day, then stopping, and asking: "Now can we have a nice chat? I'm tired of the story." It was obviously his own experiences from the hour he found himself on the other side. But he would not tell us the identity of the "little boy" whose experiences he described, and, child-like, was most anxious to keep up the mystery, often stopping suddenly, when racing along, to write (with an anxiety impossible to describe, yet vividly recognizable by us): "You don't know *who* the little boy is, do you?" And, of course, to please him we would say: "Oh, no!" And so he would continue in most joyous mood, though as time went on it became a rather open secret.

Here is another little conversation, verbatim, as we got it in the year 1901:

Mother: "Who teaches you, Sunny?"

Sunny: "My teacher, Mother."

Mother: "Who is your teacher, darling?"

Sunny: "She is Love."

Mother: "Do you call her Love?"

Sunny: "Her name is Love, but I call her lots of other names."

Mother: "Will you grow to love her more than me?"

Sunny: "Mother, my own little Mother! You know I could never, *never* love anybody so much as I do you, little pet!"

Mother: "Well, tell me some of the names you call your teacher. I won't be jealous."

Sunny: "Sometimes I tell her she is an angel, and sometimes I tell her she is a beauty."

Mother: "Is she an angel?"

Sunny: "Oh, no!"

Mother: "How old is she?"

Sunny (slowly and very mournfully): "You *are* a little bit jealous, I think."

Mother: "No, no, my funny pet, I won't be jealous!" (Of course I was, and he saw it.)

Sunny: "I think my teacher is twenty-four, but I have not asked her. Shall I?"

Mother: "Would she be vexed? Ladies here don't like their ages asked."

Sunny: "No, Mother, she is never vexed."

Mother: "Does she live in the same house with you, darling?"

Sunny: "Are you sure you are *not* a little bit jealous?"

He then told us she had on "a white dress this morning, but she has a blue one on now."

There are people who have a most remarkable attitude towards life on the other side as regards the objects in it. I have met people (and there *are* thousands, we know), who, if Sunny said his teacher wore a dress of gossamer, would say: "That is as it should be." But if he told us it was alpaca, they would have a fit. If he spoke of someone playing music with a trumpet of pure gold, they would believe it. But if it was a tin trumpet, they would decide that Sunny was an evil spirit and not Sunny at all. Meals of grapes and "luscious fruits" would be admitted, but not of peas and potatoes. Even a chair might be allowed, providing it was strictly picturesque; a couch, but *not* a bed; and so on. A lady told me that her father lived "under a canopy" on the other side, and that houses denoted a lower plane. In Central Africa we all, our

servants included, lived under canopies—i. e., tents—some very ragged ones! I do not believe my Sunny is on a very low plane. He was more fitted to a fairly high plane than many adults would be likely to attain at once. And why the most advanced of souls should not be as advanced and holy in a house as under a canopy puzzles me, I must confess it. There are more saints living and doing good probably in the East End of London slums than in the West End. I quite believe that, as we shall advance, we shall arrive at more that is beautiful and less that is ugly. A house may be a thing of great beauty and art (the concrete thought of a nature beautiful and artistic), or it may be the early Victorian horror of the early Victorian mind, with a dark basement and the hideous bow-windows and hard, cold front of the typical London Square. Each dwelling is but someone's ideas and thoughts embodied. The houses and furniture of certain periods are standing examples of narrow outlook, bigoted ideas, and rather ugly, crooked, or foolish or cramped minds. Of course, want of space was, and is, a great excuse. But take the artistically evolved architect of to-day, and he will, with only the same space, design you an abode which satisfies your soul to some degree, instead of setting your teeth on edge. So also it must be over "There."

Another lady recently told me that a friend of hers, passed on, could not possibly be in any plane "so low," that to help or advise, cheer, or comfort, the friend struggling (amid many sorrows) on this side, would be possible to the advanced one, or agreeable! She was "much too high up!" If being "high up" means enjoying yourself so much amid heavenly glories that those who so badly need you on earth are forgotten and ignored, then may no one whom I love or respect go as "high up" as that.

I expect that lady's friend is longing to help her if given the chance!

CHAPTER VIII

I THINK the realness of Sunny's communications lies chiefly in the absence of all high-flown talk, which is a feature of adult communications. These are often beautiful and helpful, but one must confess they are sometimes rather boring when the entity is a very ordinary soul, "not good enough for Heaven, not bad enough for Hell"—which, as a military man newly arrived on the other side observed, seems to be the normal condition of most people who pass over. And is not that quite natural? Why should Mr. or Mrs Smith, of Bloomsbury or Park Lane be any more in the position to preach to us on higher subjects from that side than they were on this one, until they have outgrown all that made them very ordinary people here? Their remarks are comforting, so far as they go, in that they prove to sorrowing relatives that they are not dead at all. But they go such a little way! We on this side hunger, surely, for some common-sense description of the new surroundings, locality, climate, occupation, etc., in which we may picture our vanished darlings day by day, doing this or that, meeting So-and-So, under such-and-such conditions, dwelling in a home that we would simply love to hear described, and amid all the little details which go to make up home-life, no matter on what plane it is being led! A "plane" (as I understand it from Sunny) is *not* locality at all, *but a state of thought*. I cannot for a moment believe that any advancement, education, or helpfulness *could* be arrived at, if all the good and advanced souls were isolated from the less good and advanced. Walk into a lecture-hall full of people on this side, or into an hotel, restaurant, church, a train, or amongst the throngs of a Hyde Park Sunday, and are we not amongst souls of

every plane and thought, from goodness and mediocrity, to badness? Do we not know that we must often brush shoulders with God's own saints living in wretched slums, helping humanity, and perfectly happy in doing so, yet mentally dwelling on a plane far above other souls? Must it not be much the same "There"? What a strange plan, to carry off all the good and helpful ones to live in selfish glory with each other, and herd the rest of us somewhere else to make the best of things!

I have noticed always, and so will you, that in Sunny's artless confidences, no especial desire to *teach* anything is manifest, though he, of course, unconsciously does so. It has been deemed in high quarters that this feature alone points to the genuineness and value of the communications as coming from a child. It does not usually appeal to children to preach or teach. Yet one knows, that because of its very innocence of all such desire, and because of the clearness of the mirror of its young mind, it often happens truly that "a little child shall lead them" more surely sometimes than the finest sermon ever preached by the most learned divine.

During the years when I was getting these communications, there came occasionally to my house, at their own wish, to be present at the sittings, learned divines of various faiths, scientists, students, and people of all sorts, who all seemed impressed by the conviction that here at least was no fraud, no effort, no high-flown sermonizing, but just the simple outpourings of a single-hearted child, intent chiefly on one thing—to describe to his mother (and thereby comfort her) what that world is like wherein he now dwells and awaits her. It is very strange to me (and I think a great pity) that we do not get more of this common-sense kind of talk from spirit-friends. When your relatives have gone to the Antipodes, is not your one longing to hear what it is *like* out there, especially when you know you will soon follow? It is no doubt comforting to be told at séances that you will soon "get over the obstacles

in your path," and that someone who is now "nasty" to you is to become "nice." It is also, of course, delightful to be told that you are recognized by all spirit-friends as being far too noble for this sinful earth.

"This is *too* wonderful!" a lady exclaimed at a séance I was once at, where we all sat for an hour listening to praises of herself, more befitting an archangel than a plain Mrs. Jones, "though I say it, I have simply been described to the life."

"Yes," said the Control once more. "You are *far* too good to live."

And I'm afraid (so bored were we all) that we all silently wished she was. Myself, I was quite convinced that the waggish little Control in question was having the time of her life, "pulling the lady's leg," so to speak. But really no one ever seems to realize that much of the nonsense we get in the séance-room is due to the spirit of fun, and the practical jokers who exist over there, naturally, the same as here. Often probably children. And what splendid chances of it they get, too! No one can "go" for them with a big stick, or a broom, or a bucket of cold water. Some, I am sure, are schoolboys. And if they are convulsed with laughter, as I'm sure they often must be, no one can see their merriment, or put up a stern eyeglass and freeze them solid, or cut them dead next time they meet; so they have great fun.

How many sad yet hopeful souls go eagerly to the séance-room and get little else than this sort of thing? Or else long sermons about nothing in particular. But picture such a letter from a loved son in Timbuctoo! Not a word about the kind of house he lives in, the sort of people round him, his occupations, the scenery, or the climate! Only an exhortation, often very unlike him! Why are we to be given such cold stones instead of bread from "There"? And what, I wonder, is the meaning of it? One explanation, I think, is that, finding themselves in surroundings quite familiar, because those sur-

roundings belong to our true home (visited always in sleep), our friends, accustomed also to seeing us there, have no idea often that our return to the body has blotted out our memory of this experience, and that, therefore, we are, *for the moment*, ignorant of what we really know quite well. That there can be nothing new at "death" is shown by the fact that many spirits have not known that they were "dead" for years. If, in sleep, we live "There" (as I am sure we do), there can be very little to show us that we have "died," which simply means that we do not return to the body again mornings. *Many years before I ever read a word upon this subject by occultists and others, Sunny explained all this to me;* but I only got it by dint of much questioning and pressing, for at first he could not even realize, I think, *what* it was I was trying to "get at," and, in fact, I do not think he knew himself, till he had been told by his teacher, "Love," and others. It all got cleared up to me very gradually, and then at last I understood. It was such a joy to me to see it confirmed in books many years later, for when I was getting all this (eighteen years ago), such communications were very rare and created a sensation.

Here is a "story" that Sunny wrote for us in bits, day by day, often with long conversations and questionings in between. We soon realized that it was the story of himself on passing over, and of his earliest impressions over there. He took the greatest delight in writing this story, and the planchette would race along in his excitement, and when he could see my tears dropping on the paper, as they sometimes did, the little board would be lifted to stroke my face and comfort me, and when at other times I laughed, and Nellie laughed, the little board would execute a little jig of joy. And now let me give Sunny's story, or some of it, exactly as he wrote it with the planchette. It went on for years:

"Not many years ago, in a place not far out of London, God sent a little tiny baby to comfort a dear, kind lady,

who was at that time very, very sad. This little baby grew up into a romping boy, and was always doing a lot of naughty things; but through it all his mother always loved him. But at that time she did not realize that God had only lent her this little babe, and by and by He was going to fetch it back to Him. Several years passed by." (Planchette paused, scratched out "passed by" and turned it to "rolled on.") "Several years *rolled on*, and this romping little boy turned into a public schoolboy, aged twelve. And then one day God said to him: 'Are you ready now to come with Me to a beautiful place I have got ready for you?' This little boy said: 'Oh, yes! But must I leave my mother, whom I love, oh, so much? and my darling brothers? I am afraid I shall not be happy to leave them behind.' Then this kind and gentle God, who loves all little children (and big ones, too), sent a kind lady to tell and explain to him God's way of drawing all His children back to Him, and she said: 'Do you know, little boy, that it is part of God's plan to bring you to our happy Land, so that you may be the means of teaching and guiding your own father and mother and brothers to find the way as well?' Then this little boy said: 'Oh, yes, let me come! do let me come! But won't my mother miss me and be sad?' And she explained it was for her good. Then this little boy looked up into her face and said: 'Thank you very much, but I *cannot* leave my darling mother all alone to be so sad. Will you please take another little boy whose mother will not miss him so much?' But this lady said: 'No, no, my little boy, God wants *you*. He has work for you to do, and no one else can do it.'"

Sunny's story, which I will continue in a later chapter, was mixed up with many interruptions such as one would get with a child. If I cried, he would not continue, but be intent upon cheering me in his own sweet way. Sometimes he would say: "*Not* my story to-day. Let's have a nice chat." Therefore, even in the part that I

give you here of this little narrative took weeks to get. But may the joy, mixed with many a tear, that it brought me, find a place to-day in the hearts of other Rachels, some of whom, perhaps, have believed their darlings were really lost to them!

Bothers, poor mourning mothers, for you, as well as for me, was my little son returned to me. I hear your voices everywhere to-day, "refusing to be comforted." But pause now in your tears. There is light fast coming everywhere. You may not entirely cease to weep. This Rachel sometimes weeps, but only because her children are out of sight. Not because she any longer believes them "lost" to her. That cruel delusion has vanished for ever.

CHAPTER IX

BEFORE I continue with Sunny's own "story," I will turn over the MS. pages of "Rachel Comforted" haphazard, condensing a little of the information he daily gave us. How very surprised were Nellie and I, reared in the usual vague and foolish teachings concerning what we term "the *other* life," to find that apparently it is no "other" life at all, but that we are in it all the time, in more or less degree. Slowly it dawned upon us that every single thing around us, including humanity, has an imperishable counterpart which forms what *we* call "the spiritual world" (so named, just as if it were a separate and distinct world from this one, instead of being, as I now understand it, *the inner facsimile of all we behold*). I must ask my readers to accept the fact that I am not trying to teach or dogmatize, but am simply giving them the impressions—indeed, convictions—that have very slowly grown into my own consciousness. They are the growth of nineteen years of communion, more or less interrupted, with my child Sunny. At first we had two and a half years of long daily conversations lasting a large part of each day. Every word of these, including my questions, was copied down most accurately, even to the notes of exclamation or interrogation. Then for another few years (life having become strenuous and interrupted in a far country—Africa) we got less. And during the succeeding years, though the communion has never ceased, it has been much interrupted. Therefore the main and important records date back to years ago. But the strange thing is, that every year since the daily voluminous conversations,

I have understood better and better the things he told us, and which, at the time, often bewildered us. I believe when the daily records ceased more or less (not through any less desire on his part or mine, but because my dear faithful Nellie married, and had to leave me), that I continued then to learn from him in my sleep, and that I do so from both my children, now "There," to this day. I awake with some new knowledge, some sudden clear understanding of something I could not understand yesterday, which I think can mean nothing less than this.

I offer, however, Sunny's delightfully childish, inconsequent and irresponsible outpourings, and my own more serious and thinking conclusions (drawn from them) to my readers for exactly what they are worth. Sunny must be as liable to errors as myself. The world is as yet only upon the very fringe of this wonderful science, the evidence and explanation of "Life Continued." The Churches have taught us practically nothing of it. They have, indeed, tried to close fast the door, and have succeeded only too well. Ignorant laws, made by ignorant and materialistic legislators, have further laid a heavy, stupid hand upon research into this thing, which matters more than all other researches put together. And the public has permitted all this—indeed, has not greatly cared. The clarion trumpet of war has at last awakened many. What is this unnatural horror of "death," that has snatched from us at every hour some beloved form that we adore? Have we adored that form only, or an imperishable inner form as well, which *nothing* can touch or injure? That is the crucial question. Many of us learnt the answer long ago. Sunny's conversations are quite unconsciously in the nature of *teachings*! Will you all gather what you can, or will, from them, as I do? To my mind, they teach one big thing. To use his own frequent words: "Oh, you funny Mother, *when* will you properly understand all about our Happy Land?" (I am copying exactly from a conversation on December 3rd, 1903.) "Don't you see, Mother, *our* land is *your* land?"

But you have not had these dark curtains taken from your eyes, so you can't see as we see."

One may, indeed, learn much from the joyous prattlings of a child, as we all know, once we realize how much of innocent wisdom may sometimes be revealed in them. Just as that, and no more, do I offer you these, to me, wonderful yet childish records.

He was always, on this side, very fond of writing letters to relatives and friends. And the same desire characterizes these records. "Please, Mother, may I write a letter to So-and-So?" he would ask (with planchette), and would insist on "a new sheet of paper, please," and would insist also on our laying the planchette even upon the envelope, so that he himself should address it. Here is a letter, just as he wrote it, which I posted to a girl-cousin he was very fond of, my sister's daughter, Lorna, then a child of about fourteen, now grown up and married, and a Spiritualist, as most of us now are in the family.

"The Happy Land, Palestine, April 4th.

"DEAR OLD TOM-BOY,—It's a long time since I wrote to you. But it has not been my fault. . . . How are you getting on at the High School, which I used to call the Low School? No doubt you thought, when you heard that I had passed over, that I had got out of all my school lessons? but you were never more mistaken in your life. I only had one day off, and then I had to buck up. But you see I had had a long holiday before I came. Will you please write me a letter and send it by post? If you are hard-up, you need not put a stamp on it, because I know my mother won't mind paying for it. How is little Lively? Do tell me when you write."

Here he suddenly tapped the paper (an agreed signal to show he wished the planchette moved on to another sheet of paper so as not to spoil his letter), and said he was "too tired to go on," and could he finish next day,

which he did, calling his cousin Yummy-Yum, "Good-bye, Yummy-Yum."

Now, there were three things in this letter *of which we knew nothing*. The allusion to "The High School, which I used to call the Low School," "little Lively" (we had no idea to whom he referred), and the "Yummy-Yum" nickname.

I sent the letter to my niece, Lorna, a girl about two years older than Sunny, and I remember her reply of wonder and joy, finishing with, "It has made me feel, Auntie, that life is a different thing, for it is all *true* about 'High School and Low School,' and 'Lively' is Atheling (her brother, now also passed over in the war, a most noble boy), and Sunny often called me 'Yummy-Yum.'"

Sunny had stopped with his cousin once when I was abroad, and these sayings had been invented there. Nor had I seen the two children much together after, nor heard of these jokes.

His cousin wrote back to him, and, as was our custom, I read the letter out loud to him, while we sat with our fingers on the planchette, in case he had anything to say. When I came to the sentence, "Little Lively is quite well. He has had holiday most of this term," he wrote rapidly, "Lucky beggar!" just as one would interpolate a remark in the middle of listening to a letter, and so on, with little boyish exclamations, right through the letter.

Another day he described climbing a beautiful mountain with the Mr. Frost he so often mentions, whom I had never heard of before, and whose life, death, profession, age, and passing over, I had verified through the Registrar, as described.

"It took us an hour and a half to climb to the top, and the view was lovely! Towzer" (his pony) "looked about this size O at the bottom. From the top we could see the houses and the gardens, and the woods below, and the beautiful, beautiful blue sky above. It looked all like one beautiful forest. The houses looked about the size

of mousetraps. But the trees are much bigger. We named the mountain after you, Mother, Mount Edith."

He then broke into rhyme, a long poem, which began:

When standing on top of the mountain,
And thinking of God's love for me,
I thought, then, of you, darling Mother,
And knew, oh! how pleased you would be.

CHAPTER X

I FINISH my last chapter but one in the middle of Sunny's own story, written with planchette, which obviously related to himself and his passing over, and his early experiences in "The Happy Land," as he calls the condition he now dwells in.

It will be remembered that we had arrived at that part of his story where Sunny looks up at the "kind lady" (who is asking him if he can bear to leave his mother and brothers), and says, "If it will make mother very sad, will they please take another little boy, whose mother will not miss him so much?" But the reply is, "No, no, my little boy, God wants *you*. He has a work for you to do, and no one else can do it."

Story continued by Sunny: "So then this little boy said: 'If I come to your Happy Land, can I see my darling mother sometimes?' Then the lady smiled and said, 'Why, Sun . . .'"

Here the planchette stopped short, as if in dismay, for up till that instant Sunny had refused to tell us who his "little boy" was, and if we asked questions, would write, "Oh, *do* be quiet, Mother and Nellie! You must not guess." Therefore, when he found he had let his name out, he wrote rapidly, "Oh, dear, I've done it now! Never mind, you'll like it just the same, Mother. I've let the cat out of the bag."

Story continued (after some talk): "The lady smiled, and said, 'Why, Sunny, you are not *going away* anywhere! You are only going to have your eyes opened to the beauty of this, our Happy Land.'"

A pause, and then Sunny wrote: "Now the secret's out, Mother, I can tell you it is all true — every word."

I replied, "Oh, Sunny, is it really? And who is the lady?" "It's Auntie Etty," wrote Sunny (my sister, who passed over many years before Sunny died). "And when," I inquired, "did she say all this to you?" "Oh, a long while before I came here, Mother."

Before I go on with Sunny's story, let me say that in another part of his writings he told us that he had always known he would pass over, as he expressed it in his own quaint way, "in the days of my youth." He told us that my sister Etty, his auntie (a beautiful girl), constantly came to him at night from the Other Side, and told him he was coming over, but he could not bear to tell me. This, be it understood, he wrote us with the planchette *after* he had passed over. I am myself inclined to think that he did know *in his sleep* that he was to pass over early, and must have carried some dim subconsciousness of it into his waking hours, as I am sure we all do about many things, almost without ourselves being fully aware of it. Yet the memory will tincture our lives and actions, as it must have done his, for he often said strange things. Once in India, when aged five, he climbed into my lap, laid his curly, golden head upon my shoulder, shut his eyes with a sigh, and remarked, "When are we going home again? *I should like to end my days in England.*"

Story continued: "Then this little boy, who was now nearly thirteen years old, said: 'Yes, please, I will come. I want to come, and then I will wait God's time to bring my darling mother to me.' But, then, God sent another kind friend to me, who said, 'Sunny, before you come here, God has yet another trial for you to go through. Can you bear it, for His sake?' And then I thought that perhaps it was something more that would make my darling mother sad, and so I said, 'I can, and will bear anything, if it does not make *her* sad, as she has had a very sad life, and I cannot bear that through me she should suffer any more pain.'" (A pause.)

"I think, Mother, I had better stop now. Do you like my story?" to which I replied, "It is beautiful." "And, Mother, it's all true! Every word! No fiction about it! You see, Mother, it makes me a little bit sad to think of those times. But the best and happiest things are coming in the next chapter. And won't it be lovely? And you don't mind my speaking about those times, do you? It does not make you sad? You don't think me unkind to rake up the past?" which expression was *so* like him, that through my tears I began to laugh. He then wrote, "Thirteen thousand and fivehundred kisses for my darling mother, seventy-five for Eric, seventy-five for Kay, two for Nellie."

I exclaimed, "Only *two* for dear, kind Nellie, Sunny, darling?" (It must be remembered that Sunny never knew Nellie.) There was a little pause, then he wrote, "Oh, but she is going to ride Towzer when she comes here, and that will be a good reward, won't it, Nellie, dear?" (We got a great deal about Towzer in the communications. He often described going for rides on him, "and my canary sits on my shoulder or my head, and sings.")

Story continued next day: "So this dear, kind Angel said, 'Sunny, don't you know that everybody has a certain amount of affliction to bear? and if your darling mother has a lot on this side, she will not have it to bear after she has passed over.' Then Sunny said, 'Why does God allow so much pain and misery in this world? My mother does not hurt anyone. Why has she got to bear so much pain?' Then the Angel said, 'Sunny, God has His own way of leading His children to Him, and if they did not have to go through pain and sorrow, they would not think of Him and all His love for them.' Then Sunny said, 'I will! I will bear anything. But as much as you can, please, please, spare my darling mother.'"

"Shall we stop now, Mother?"

To which I replied, "If *you* wish, my darling." And Sunny then wrote: 'And before we stop to-night, will you please tell me, Mother, if you think I was very selfish to want to come here, when I knew all the time it would nearly break your heart?'

He seemed so unhappy about it, raising the planchette to stroke my face, that I find (recorded in the communications) how I told him he was to sit on my knee (even though I could not see him), and now *I* had a little "story" to tell *him*, as follows. I am quite certain he was on my lap while I told it. Nellie sat opposite me. The room was half dark. I see it all again.

In Scotland, Sunny, my darling child, there was a shepherd, taking his flock of sheep and lambs to the fold at night. The way was long and rough, and they were all tired and glad to be going home. They now came to a deep, rough stream. The sheep were frightened, and would not enter the water to cross. So the shepherd gathered up the young lambs in his arms, and carried them across the stream himself, and landed them safely on the other side. The mothers remained on the bank for some time in great distress, but the shepherd had known what he was doing, for now the mothers braved the torrents, forgetting all their fear. They swam the water they had so dreaded, and in that way the shepherd got his whole flock across to the fold."

* * * * *

After talks like this, his love for me, and his longing to comfort and cheer me, were a great consolation and joy to me. The little planchette would almost fly to press itself against my heart, to kiss and touch my face, and many a tear has it also wiped away, or tried to. Then, suddenly, perhaps, an organ-grinder would start to play some jaunty tune in the street below, and the dear little board would jig about to the tune, "to cheer mother up," finishing with more kisses, and, "Oh, I do love you with all my big, romping heart!"

CHAPTER XI

To Nellie, and me, and others, I must again, and yet again, repeat that the astounding part of my Sunny's communications was, at first, the *sort* of life he pictured. At the outset, we were prepared only for harps, crowns and seas of glass, golden streets and gates of pearl, all, I am now convinced, merely poetical and symbolical word-painting.

Do some of you Rachels desire to hear that your children dwell amidst such surroundings? I fear, then, you will find nothing of the kind in the artless and joyous descriptions of my little son, aged twelve, with which I now deal.

I have often smiled at the recent outcry in some quarters at descriptions very like my boy's, on the Other Side. I can picture the gasps and outpourings of wrath could certain persons read my Sunny's complete conversations! I am enabled to tell you that nineteen years ago (beginning in 1901—during the Boer War, in short) my boy was daily filling pages with descriptions of a life *exceedingly* like this one, through apparently *much* happier and better in many ways. I am so glad to see (years later now) that the same kind of descriptions of the life "There" are coming through in most reliable directions, though I believe people are nervous of relating *all* that they get? May this book give them courage! The Truth is all that matters.

A favourite expression of Sunny's, in his communications, was "Mother, *how* shall I explain? I've not gone away into the sky or anywhere. *There* is *Here*, Mother. It's all the same."

This, in reply to my ever-recurring inquiry, "Do you have so-and-so there?"

Mr. W. T. Stead intended publishing "Rachel Comforted." "If the boy had been at Winchester or Rugby," wrote my dear friend towards the close of his preface to this book, "he could not be more matter-of-fact in the details which he gives about his life in the Happy Land." That was one of Sunny's names for his side of life, and an appropriate one. Happiness seems its chief feature—tempered.

I am so convinced that it is all as Sunny described, that I feel at moments appalled at the terrible bigotry and ignorance with which we have been instructed concerning this dear, happy, natural life that is being led by those we love. Yet ancient beliefs die hard. And you often cannot convince Mr., Mrs. and Miss John Bull that, should they quit their physical bodies to-morrow, they would be *very* uncomfortable and unhappy if they had to sing hymns all day and all night for ever and ever. At present, soft beds, hot baths, and four-course dinners seem necessary to them; and one must realize that the body only demands the things which the Ego—the Spirit—craves. Can you picture comfortable, busy old Mr. John Bull, killed in a train accident on his way to the City, suddenly finding himself with a palm-branch in his hand, loafing round a throne, and content to do nothing else for ever and ever?

Oh, "for mercy's sake," as Sunny would say, in his quaint way, let us use a little common-sense over this great vital subject. I take it that, as it is quite evident, from many communications, that many people who have passed over do not even know they are "dead," there can be very little change indeed, otherwise how could they fail to know? Indeed, I often ask myself, may I not have died yesterday, and yet know nothing of it? What, after all, thanks to centuries of hard-and-fast ignorance and complacency, do we know yet of the other side of the change called Death? I consider we need to be ready to throw aside almost perhaps every idea we

once had, of the "life beyond the grave" (as we rather ambiguously call it), and be prepared to find that it is still, thank God, a life of activities resembling those of our daily existence here, minus much of its pain and sorrow.

Sunny speaks of pet animals, gardens, flower-beds, lawns, houses and furniture; of beds in which you sleep and wake, and from which you rise; of having a cold bath, and using a sponge, especially when you have been gardening, and "got the mud all over your hands." He described going to school, doing sums, reading books published "There" as "Here," riding bicycles, and being given a present of a "gem of a bike—free-wheel, mind!" He talks of Christmas parties, of theatricals in which he took part, *Cindrella* being the play, and of his being cast for the Prince, because of his long golden curls. "And I think it was very selfish of me, Mother, but the ugly sisters were so ugly I didn't want to dance with them. Miss Hall was dressed up to be one of the ugly sisters, and had made herself a nice fright."

He tells of a donkey-ride at the seaside. He speaks of electric light, "but far more beautiful than yours;" and of how everything we have "Here" is but a poor imitation of the discoveries and inventions "There," the ideas for such, evidently being communicated to us in our nightly death, *i. e.*, sleep; of motor-cars, in which glorious rides are enjoyed; hills and valleys; rivers and lakes; lessons and play; friendships and misunderstandings; joy, and some sorrow; remorse and regrets; strivings and ambitions; horses, ponies, dogs, birds (but not in cages); professions, churches, theatres, trains, cricket, football, hockey and golf. He is amazed at our amazement, and frequently asks what sort of life I think he would be living if my early ideals had been correct? It would be a very dull one, that is certain! "God wouldn't want me to sing hymns all day." Yet the child also describes "once seeing an angel." And another time he speaks of having seen Christ, and asks me

whether I remember "a picture of Christ standing knocking at a door?" "Well, that's like Him, Mother. Nothing on His head. Only a light all round it."

The angel he suddenly saw while digging his little garden. A beautiful form, with wings like silver gossamer coming from out its shoulders. No, they don't often (he tells me) see angels, but, if one has been very good indeed, an angelic visitor may apparently suddenly gladden one's eyes "There," even when one has been getting oneself "black" from the mud of one's garden, where "Mother" (spelled in mustard and cress) shows where the thoughts of the little gardener sometimes go.

CHAPTER XII

THERE are many mothers, during these heart-breaking times, who, like myself, lost one child, perhaps years ago, and now, since the war, have lost another, or even two or three more. These will, I believe, share with me a bewildered sense of surprise, and added sorrow, because they find themselves mourning the child recently removed more than they now mourn the other darling who passed on earlier. They may ask themselves, as I have done since my second boy's "death," why nearly all the grief and tears now are for the child newly gone, while one's heart was long since more or less comforted about the other child? And perhaps, as with me, this thought will intensify the whole anguish, for fear that the first child who passed on may imagine, "Oh! mother doesn't love me now as much as she once did. Her tears are now all for my brother." This kind of case has been very common since the war.

With a woman's intuition that many are thus grieving, I would tell them *why* they now mourn so bitterly the recent loss, while the earlier pain is eased.

My Sunny's conversations, together with the nightly education which I am aware I am receiving somewhere (though I can bring hardly any recollection of it through) have told me the answer to what appears puzzling in this matter. One knows that one's love and devotion to the earlier vanished darling have not abated one jot with the lapse of years! One longs just as passionately for a sight of the loved face and the sound of the dear voice as when the pain was one day old. So what does it mean? the comparative calm of that once tempestuous sorrow as against the new agony of the more recent one?

This is what it means, and only this. *One has simply become aware that that first vanished child is not dead at all.* And over the later, newer loss, that knowledge is at present choked out by blinding anguish, and therefore *cannot* at once penetrate one's physical consciousness, nor will do so while we mourn the loss of the physical body so dear to us, which is, of course, the only thing we really have to mourn. The boy himself is as much alive as he ever was, and all that has happened in the case of his brother, mother, sister or father is that we have learnt to *know* that this is so.

You may ask, poor bereaved ones, "Then why does not that same knowledge comfort me afresh now?"

Well, it does, little as you may be aware of it. Your physical self is grieving for that other physical form. Your spirit is not mourning his spirit, though you may think it is. We are all spirits in the one and same world, so what is there to mourn? We have never been parted for a moment, could we but realize it. All that has been parted, is the material part of us—and of them.

But while the loss is new, while agonizing reflections concerning the dear garment we loved and knew (mistaking it in the blind past for the wearer), overwhelm our outlook, we naturally can see and realize little else. The great truth is hidden in our own tears and in our own darkness. That garment is

But a simple sea-shell one—
Out of which the pearl, is gone.

I take it that when the day comes, as it does come, sooner or later, when we can bear to think, and even speak, of "him" or "her," it is simply because you have really learnt to know, beyond all manner of doubt, that he, or she, *never died at all.*

This must be the case! The love has never altered. I "lost" my Sunny twenty years ago (in 1900). If I could love him more to-day than I did then, I do. I know that if someone told me, "If you will walk across the world

bare-foot, encountering every pain, privation, danger, and hardship known to humanity, you shall at the other end find your child Sunny," I would do it to-day as eagerly and assiduously as I would have done it then—fearing nothing, minding nothing, in my great love and longing to clasp him once more in these arms. I have gone hungry for him all these nineteen years. Yet when his brother, my darling Kay, lost his life in this war, the agony was chiefly for him, not for Sunny—and why?

Simply because I have learnt to realize that the one child is not dead at all, while the physical loss of the second boy has temporarily overpowered me, in spite (I am almost ashamed to say it) of all the blessed comforting given me by my lost, and found-again, Sunny.

Slowly, but surely, the same knowledge is reaching my wounded spirit again—about the second boy.

So do not grieve over this thing, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and wives. It does not mean that the other love is any less. It means only that you have grown wise over him, and are still in deep waters about your second loss. Soon you will know that he, too, is more alive than ever he was here. You may have no manifestation of it. All the same, the knowledge will grow, and grow, and grow. You will unconsciously be learning it in your sleep (when you visit the unseen world, just the same as you will do at "death," and there find those you love so dearly and so faithfully). You will probably remember nothing of it on awaking. Never mind! The memory and knowledge lie there, deep down in the chambers of your true self, your soul. And thus comfort comes at last.

Often has Sunny written (since his "death," be it understood) in his joyous way, racing across the paper (too excited even to attend if I called out "Stop! stop! What's that last word?" or some question of the sort), "Surely, Mother, you haven't forgotten *last night* already?" Then I would ask, "What? Do tell me, darling, what you mean?"

And he would write, "Why! you were so happy! You did my curls, brushed them, and twisted them round your finger. Then you went with me in the garden, and we went to see Towzer in his stable. You *can't* have forgotten, Mother?"

Oh, but I had, entirely!

Once I asked him, "When I am with you at night, do I remember about your death? Do I cry?"

"Oh, no, of course not," he wrote. "*Why* should you cry when I'm there alive all the time?"

Why, indeed? And this ignorant sorrow, over a great "mistake" will in time disappear from the earth.

Sunny hated to see me wear black. Once he suddenly drew a grave, with a big wreath on it, and wrote at the top, "Funeral of Mr. Black." Rather startled, and wondering did I know some Mr. Black who had just passed over, and Sunny was trying to break the news to me, I asked:

"Oh, Sunny, who has died? Mr. Black?"

He replied: "I hope he's dying. Do bury him." And when he had enjoyed our puzzled faces for a minute, he wrote: "I hate old dingy Mr. Black. I want to see you in colours, Mother. The black makes a thick fog round you and I can't get so near you. Do leave it off, Mother, darling, to please me."

Still I wore mourning. To replace it all was so expensive. He then began, at the end of nearly each day's conversation, to write, without warning, "Good-bye, Mr. Black!"—until I ceased to wear it. On the day I put on a colour, at last, he started his conversation with (the planchette dancing joyfully):

"Good-bye, Mr. Black, you've quite got the sack.

* * * * *

One of his many quaint and amusing planchette drawings was dedicated to Father Maturin, who at that time was

living in London (I think it was at St. Mary's Presbytery) with Cardinal Vaughan and other priests. I often went to see them, and I told Sunny one day, at our planchette talk, how they all had meals at one long table, and, child-like, he wrote, "What did they have to eat?"

I replied: "Oh, you see, they are priests, and have to deny themselves, so they have very plain food."

This resulted, of course, in Sunny asking for a clean piece of the very enormous sheets of paper he used for planchette, and he drew them all, sitting at a long table, and eating a stew, out of which poured the steam from every plate. The priests all looked *very* thin. One figure was labelled "Father Maturin." Another "Kardnel Vorn" And out of Father Maturin's mouth (inside a kind of huge balloon — Sunny's usual plan) was written (all this wonderfully done with the planchette, at which, by that time, he had become most adept) these words: "Well! whatever else Sarah has forgot to put in the stew, she has not forgot the WATER!"

"Sarah," a rather trowsled-looking little Abigail, stood waiting at table, her cap awry, and inside the balloon from *her* mouth the retort: "Well, if this is all the thanks I get, I resigns my place."

I showed this drawing to Father Maturin. It was, of course, crude and childish to a degree, but one could not help laughing. It was also exactly the kind of drawing that Sunny had been so fond of doing on this side of Life, on all occasions.

I stood watching Father Maturin's face as he gazed at this innocent production, supposed, by his Church, to be the work of an evil spirit. He said: "Dear me . . . ahem! . . ." but after a few minutes I saw a distinct twinkle in his eyes as he glanced whimsically up at me, and then back at the drawing.

I felt certain that he was daring just then to think for himself, for a brief moment, which his Church forbids its followers to do (unhappily), so that the ignorance of by-

gone ages has still to be blindly accepted, or else—ex-communication. (No wonder we don't advance!)

I think he must have been reflecting (for a more sensible man really never lived) that if all this childish, harmless fun and nonsense, mixed, as it so often was, with the virtues of a great love, ready to sacrifice anything to itself; sympathy, understanding, help; encouragement on Life's rugged road, regrets for faults past and present, and a desire to amend; and the deep, unmistakable piety, reverence, and unselfish sweetness so often shown, too—if all this (coming every day so spontaneously and quite unconscious of its own charm and loveliness) was really the work of an "Evil Spirit," giving up its life, year in, year out, to the destruction of my soul (and Nellie's) in this *very* futile and curious fashion, that Satan ought not to send out his emissaries until they knew their job a bit better.

Dear old Father Maturin found silence golden over that picture, and stifling all comment, though not a smile, (instantly repressed), he retired to St. Mary's Presbytery to ponder over it all in his "brain-box," as Sunny would call it.

He had many more amusing and touching surprises in the times that ensued. Sunny became more and more amusing, as he became able to express himself through that clumsy little planchette, until it became wonderful what he could make it do, and express by its very gestures. We never knew, when he began a drawing, what the subject of it was to be, and we would sit puzzled and excited, often making comments and guesses, such as: "Oh, *that's* a horse!" when Sunny would rapidly *lift* the planchette off the picture, on to a huge "Remarks Sheet" we kept at one side for this purpose, and violently scribble on it: "No, it's a donkey!" or else "Oh, don't guess, Mother! You're spoiling it!" etc.

He once drew his father, Colonel Maturin (then abroad), in uniform, and asked: "Ought he to have a row of little

buttons all down the front of his jacket?" And then took the planchette back and put them all in, and a cane in his hand, and out of his mouth: "Now, my men, follow me, and don't be afraid of being killed, for it doesn't hurt a bit!"

I feel sure that my Sunny, Father Maturin, and Cardinal Vaughan have all made each other's acquaintance by now; and if, as I believe, our old errors of thought gradually disappear during our Evolution, over There, as Here, we will picture them having many a good laugh over the days when Sunny was one side of the veil, and they on this side, deeply suspicious of him.

That Sunny keeps them all "alive" over "There" with his fun, I have had many proofs.

Older men always especially adored the child, finding him quite irresistible. Dear Mr. W. T. Stead once kissed his photo (given you in the Frontispiece of this book), and told me he "just longed to meet him."

CHAPTER XIII

I WAS much interested to read in *Light* a charming article: "The Here and the Hereafter," which is a complete confirmation of the most marked feature of my Sunny's communications to me (per planchette)—*i. e.*, how much their life "There" resembles ours "Here."

Let me repeat what I have related before in these columns—how Sunny so often wrote, in reply to some puzzled question of mine, or Nellie's ("Do you have so-and-so there?" etc.): "Oh, you funny little Mother, how often must I tell you that *There* is *Here*?"

These two words he would write slowly, in larger letters than the rest, a thing he often did when emphasizing something.

At the time we received these conversations, now nearly twenty years ago, nearly everyone seemed startled or shocked at the descriptions so innocently and naturally given by Sunny (*who was apparently quite unaware of their unusualness*), of solid homes with furniture, gardens with mould, lawns that required mowing, flowers that became thirsty, children who went to school daily, ponies, bicycles, motor-cars, books and publishers, electric light, roads, hills and dales, rivers and woods, lovers and courtships, and, in fact, most things the same as here. Only better—happier.

It is a great satisfaction to me in these days, years later, to see that, slowly but surely, the idea is gaining ground of the truth of these descriptions. Please God the day is not far off when the ridiculous after-life of harps, crowns,

hymns and palm branches, and nothing to do but sing and wave them about for endless æons, apparently without any object, will have faded away into well-deserved oblivion. Fancy a dear Tommy at the Front, finding himself with a wreath on his head and a branch in his hand! However, I must not be hard on those who still cling to these fables! Although, even as a child, I was not one to accept blindly anything, and would ask the most troublesome questions, I still grew up miserably believing (more or less) in these delusions, and no words can describe my amazement when Sunny gradually dispelled them, one by one. Following upon amazement, came a great relief and joy. Thank God my child had not flown far away into some impossible, unapproachable Heaven; thank God he had no wings, instead of his dear little feet, and did not float about, but walked, and jumped and ran; thank God he still had his little faults; thank God he wore no uncomfortable long white robes, which he would have loathed "here," but had much the same clothes as before (though I confess I would not have minded a dress for boys a little prettier than is the fashion here); thank God he had not forgotten me, or any of us, in impossible, awful golden splendours, but had fretted for me "till you found out you could talk to me, Mother;" and though tears gathered in my eyes at the knowledge that there is some grief there, as here, yet, oh, yet (mothers, you can most of you understand), I liked to feel that he was still as human as myself, and that no gulf separated us (such as I had imagined, thanks to orthodox teachings), and nothing had happened, save that he was living within our own world, "here," not "there," and that the two lives were so alike that they, in the inner life, often could not be sure whether those around them were there for always, or only for brief visits, in sleep, unconsciousness, or even in what we call a "brown study." The expression "absence of mind" is more truly correct than most of us have realized. The mind-body is the lasting one.

In spite of all his fun (and he was, and is still, full of it when we sit at the planchette), he showed, after his passing over, as in earth-life, a deep, child-like piety. Never do I remember his writing the name of God, or Jesus, with the planchette, except slowly and reverently, even if an instant before he was racing along the paper far quicker than we could have moved the little board ourselves. "My Jesus," is a favourite expression of his. He described seeing Christ once, much with the same joy as "Raymond" expresses, but in different surroundings, "my Jesus," having visited the school-room, where a very difficult task "was making my brain-box ache."

"Suddenly I looked up, and oh, Mother! my Jesus was there beside me, and I talked to Him about you. I asked Him, was it wicked to talk to you? He looked down at me and asked, 'How can it be wicked to love your mother and wish to talk to her, my child?'"

The following very different conversation I copy from the records verbatim:

"Sunny, tell us, darling, about the party you said you went to."

"Oh, but I've been to such a lot of parties since I've been here; but I'll tell you about the first party I went to here. Well, I was sitting in my study, doing, oh! such a hard sum, and I had just said to myself, 'I will get it right, somehow,' when my teacher came in and said 'Bravo, Sunny! I was waiting to hear you say that. Now, how would you like to go to a real grown-up party?' Oh, dear me, Mother, you should have seen me! I simply yelled! So she said, 'Oh, yes, young gentleman, but finish your lessons first.' Oh, dear me! It was hard. But I finished them, and then went up to dress. That was when I had a new—you know, eh? Guess!"

"Was it a new suit, Sunny?"—"Yes, but what kind, Mother? Guess!" excitedly.—"Well, let's see. A white satin tunic to your knees and a gold belt?"—"Oh, no."—"A pale blue and silver one?"—"No!"—"Pale green

silk?"—"Oh, no! One more guess, Mother, and then give it up." "Well, a dear little tunic of pure cloth of silver?"—"Oh, you vain little Mother! No, it was—blue serge."—"Oh, Sunny, what a come-down!"—"Oh, but it was a beauty. And a new white silk tie, new slippers, and then I was finished."—"I wish I could have seen you, darling."—"Yes, I looked a toff."—"Were the trousers long, Sunny?" I rather sadly inquired, with, I must confess, some sense of disappointment over the very ordinary attire apparently worn in Sunny's "Happy Land," as he called it. I hoped, I remember, to hear the trousers were at least short. Sunny and I had had many a little tussle on the vital subject, short or long trousers, when he was in earth-life. He had long since told me, with planchette, that he had consented over There to let his curls grow long (another crucial subject) "for mother's sake." So now, I thought, we shall hear, I hope, of short trousers also, "for mother's sake."

But no such thing at all; and we couldn't help laughing at the excited and indignant way the little board wrote: "Why, Mother, I'm turned fourteen, of *course* they're long!"—"Well, darling, we had got to your new tie and slippers."—"And please, Mother, don't forget the blue serge suit!"—"Well, Sunny, how did you go to the party?"—"Why, we had an omnibus, because there were six of us going. When we got to the party, oh, my! you should have seen the supper-table, Mother! My eyes were nearly as large as tea-cups. We had dancing and games till twelve o'clock, and then supper. Fruit, sweets, puddings and ices. You should have seen me. I did have a tuck-in. After supper, more games, and then Mr. Wiseman ——"—"Stop, stop, Sunny, please *who* is Mr. Wiseman?"—"Oh, don't interrupt, Mother, that's my name for grandpapa, I call him the Wise Man of our times. He said: 'Well, sir, for a first grown-up party I think you have had enough. So poor little Phil Garlic——'"—"Stop, Sunny! Who on earth is Phil Garlic?"—"That's me, of

course; Murray calls me that."—"But why?"—"Oh, I don't know a bit, Mother; I have never asked him. He calls me all kinds of names. Phil Garic had to trot round and say good-night. Finis. The end."

Such is Sunny's account of a "party" on the "Other Side."

* * * * *

My impression, after being in touch for many years with my spirit child, is that it will become more and more an accepted fact that life on the Other Side, for the average person, and for a longer or shorter period, *closely* resembles this one, and that *that* is the simple explanation of much that now puzzles investigators, such as spirits appearing in the same clothes they wore on this side, for instance. They are, I believe, the same clothes in very truth, only they are the inner form of the earth-garments, in the same way as the spiritual body is the inner form of the physical body. Should this be the case(and after all, it is of no importance what we wish to be true, only what is true, matters), every material object that we behold in this physical world would possess an, to us, invisible counterpart, amidst which live and move, not only part of ourselves (a small part only of ourselves, I believe, functioning in the body), but also those who have passed on, and who, it has often been discovered, have consequently no idea at first that any change has taken place. I am inclined also to suggest that some polite and kind-hearted communicating and rather nervous, prim spirits, recollecting the *strange* beliefs held by their relatives concerning the after-life conditions, *hesitate sometimes to shock them, and fear to be taken themselves for frivolous or evil spirits, if they give a truthful picture of their surroundings?* A child would obviously not be greatly troubled by such imaginings. Indeed, it sometimes looked as if my Sunny had

quite forgotten the queer teachings of the Churches, he would seem to be so very amused, when we (in the early days of our ignorance) would inquire, what about wings and harps; and streets paved with gold; and millions of people standing wasting their lives singing the praises of a God depicted sometimes as vain and pagan as any "Heathen" could desire? What it all meant, Sunny seemed sometimes unable to understand, and would write: "But that's not like our life here at all."

CHAPTER XIV

THE HERE AND THE HEREAFTER

BY "GERSON"

(By kind permission of *Light*)

SITTING down to write a brief notice of a little book, I found that it had started me on a train of ideas which had long been forming in my mind, and which now insisted on endeavouring, in however confused and piecemeal a fashion, to shape themselves in words. If their expression brings about my ears a hornets' nest of indignant protest, it may, on the other hand, waken in some breasts a responsive chord. The book in question is entitled "The City of Christ: A Conversation and a Vision," by Paul Tyner (Elliot Stock, rs. net), and the text illustrated by Mr. Tyner's vision, is that, in all manifestations of life, work is at once a means and an end. "Knowledge is tested, verified, actualized, only in its application in expression, *in action*. At the same time, this *doing*, brings new and larger knowing." The sublimest ideals and conceptions die, if denied expression. "Love is the law, the law demonstrated in conscious loving, in consciously loving *work*." After enunciating this lesson, the teacher in the story transports his disciple to a marvellous city—so vast in extent, that it is as if all the great world-capitals were brought together, and then spread out, so that their structures and streets covered as much ground as possible, instead of as little. A commanding height in the heart of the city is crowned by a magnificent, many-pillared temple of white marble.

before which is a great circular open space. Into this space, as the visitors arrive, are pouring from all sides, thousands of people, men and women. They move in orderly procession under leaders—captains of tens, captains of hundreds, captains of thousands—yet everywhere is a sense of freedom and individuality. Each unit in the vast army is willingly identifying itself with the whole. Division after division takes up its position on the circular terrace, and then the disciple becomes aware of one radiant presence which dominates the whole scene. On a stone seat in front of the temple, and facing the concourse, sits the city's King and Ruler. He is no other than Christ, the Divine Man. It is a special occasion of some importance. He is listening with interest, as one individual after another stands forth from the crowd and announces some new achievement in industry. Authors, artists, poets and musicians, recount their latest triumphs; scientists and chemists the progress of their discoveries; agriculturists tell of new varieties of fruits, vegetables and grain, and of better methods of tillage; nor are artisans and handicraftsmen without their spokesmen. No pursuit useful to mankind is thought too humble and insignificant to win the Master's word of recognition and encouragement. He is the head of a perfect human society, in which each works for the love of his work and the joy of service. Though enthroned King, Jesus is, as of old, a carpenter, the chief of a guild of carpenters, delighting in designing and carrying out more and more beautiful examples of their craft.

Such is Mr. Tyner's vision, and the reader, whatever he may think of some of his beliefs (I do not personally share in his reincarnation ideals), will agree that it is a very grand and inspiring one. But here comes the point to which I want to call attention. The scene is *not* laid in some ethereal realm: the actors, including the central figure in the drama, are clothed in physical bodies. It is a vision of Heaven ("the highest of many Heavens," the

teacher explains to his disciple), but it is conceived of as *existing here on this earth.*

"A Heaven on earth!" I can imagine some note of astonishment and demur in the exclamation. Well, why not? What is the matter with this beautiful world? "Oh," it may be objected, "this life is a life of limitations." True, and so must any life be, that is short of the Infinite; but the limitations against which we really chafe, are they not far less those which Nature had imposed on us than those which we have imposed on ourselves by defying her laws? Are we to suppose that there are no laws in the hereafter, and no penalties attached to their infringement? However, let us turn from the Heaven of Mr. Tyner's dream to that pictured for us by the composers of some of our best-known hymns. We at once note that in place of the infinite variety to which we are accustomed here, its distinguishing feature is a deadly monotony. Readers of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's "Gates Ajar," will remember the description of an intensely warm day in church, when the temperature standing at seventy-five degrees in the porch, and every window being shut, the minister, with strange inappropriateness, gives out Doddridge's "Lord of the Sabbath," in which occur the lines:

"No midnight shade, no clouded sun,
But sacred, high, eternal noon!"

The choir goes over and over the words. A hot sun-beam is striking full on the head of the girl who narrates the incident, and she gasps for air.

The lines quoted occur as part of their saintly author's idea of the "nobler rest above." We will supplement them with two of Cowper's:

"There everlasting spring abides
And never-fading flowers."

No night—no stars? No clouds? No feathery cirrus flecking the sky? No grand cumulus fringed with dazzling

silver? Only and always one great heaven of blue? Eternal noon? No rose and crimson glory of sunrise or sunset? No rain, and *yet* never withering flowers? Flowers that never make way for fruit? No changing seasons, no glow of summer, no wealth of autumn, no orchards, no fields of waving grain, no winter sleep of Nature under her white coverlet? No snow: I mentally hear again the cry of delight of a little girl, running in front of me, on her way to school after the first snowfall, last winter, "Oh, lovely, lovely!" And who, with any eye for beauty of line, has not admired the bare limbs of a stately tree stretched against a background of evening sky? But the poet who apostrophized a naked tree as "thou piece of perfect symmetry," and saw in it a "carven thought of God," must be content to forgo that spectacle in the scenery of the Hereafter. There, no self-respecting tree will think of disrobing itself in public, or even of ever exchanging its dress of delicate green for one equally beautiful of many tinted hues of yellow and brown and bright red.

And, as with Nature, so with man. The alternations of sleeping and waking will accompany the other alternations, of day and night, and changing seasons into banishment. Good Bishop Ken, in his Evening Hymn, after praying that "sweet sleep" might close his eyelids, turns on his erstwhile welcome friend in this ungrateful fashion:

"Oh, when shall I in endless day
For ever chase dark sleep away?"

Her gentle ministry being no longer needed, she is curtly dismissed. In that greatly improved order of things, in which seasons never change and flowers never wither, there will be no waste and therefore no need of renewal. These belong to the limitations of earth, and will be done away with. We shall no longer be aware of effort in anything we do. There will be no bending sinews to any task, no joy of overcoming, none of the pleasant languor that follows a day's toil, which has just wearied our bodily

powers without exhausting them; no stretching of tired limbs on the welcome couch, no sweet oblivion of sleep, no glad greeting of the returning light, with the consciousness of newly-gained vigour to discharge the duties that await us in the new day. As if the very zest of life did not depend upon contrast and variety! Life would be emptied of all outward delight, because emptied of all novelty.

With the need for sleep, will go also the need for food. Let us see what this involves. Spiritualists, at least, have agreed that life proceeds in connected stages, that the spirit on leaving physical conditions experiences no violent, bewildering change; that not only does the scenery of the after-world largely resemble that of earth, but that the so-called spiritual body bears a recognizable likeness to the physical body, through which the person manifested before his transition. The human form in its perfection has ever been regarded as the crowning work of the Creator. Artists have never tired of studying it. But that form is not a mere piece of sculpture or modelling; it is the protective covering and investiture of certain organs, and the delicate curves which the sculptor and figure painter love to portray do but follow the lines of these organs. They, in their turn, exist to discharge certain functions, nearly all of which are associated with the processes of waste and repair. But as those processes will no longer have any place in the scheme of things, such organs will cease to be needed. What sort of an unnatural monstrosity results? Look at it! Features that resemble those of the friend we have loved and lost awhile, but rigid eyelids that never close, nostrils that never breathe, teeth that never masticate, tongue and palate that never taste, and for the rest an empty shell, a hollow mockery of the warm sentient being of flesh and blood we knew—a sham body walking about in an impossible world.

"Walking about," did I say? I was forgetting that if feet and hands are retained, it will be merely as links with the long past, for where the old time laws no longer hold, and we can by mere volition be in a moment in actual bodily presence in some distant place, there will be no need for feet. We shall be saved the time and exertion—and miss the exhilaration—of a mountain climb, by the simple process of wishing ourselves at the top. We shall no longer delight in the exercise of handicraft of manual skill and dexterity. The very expressions will become meaningless, for the occupations in which hands were employed in providing food and clothing and shelter, or in translating the conceptions of artist, sculptor and architect into visible and tangible form, will have ceased to exist. "Creative thought" will create houses and garments out of nothing but itself, and without any intermediate processes. "Love lightens labour." Love will be spared that privilege: there will be little labour for her to lighten. Indeed, nearly, if not all, the manifold little methods in which love can now express herself will be denied her. Not even the warm handclasp will be left. One reciprocal act remains in which the hand has no part. Perhaps blest spirits do not indulge in anything so earthy, yet, if altogether forbidden, some of us would miss it—not, of course, as much as the newcomers in "Raymond" missed their accustomed whiskey-and-sodas, but with some natural regret. Alas, how dear soever the lips by which it is given, the kiss (if still permitted) will be cold, quite cold!

No, the "spiritooal Heaven" of Deacon Quirk, and the old hymn-writers, is as unattractive as it is impossible, and our later improvements on it seem to be little better. Do we really want a Heaven so very different from earth?—from earth as God has made it, not as blundering man has marred it? There are hardly any experiences in life, save those due to human faults and shortcomings, which, whether pleasant or not at the time, do not afford

pleasure in the retrospect. We would not have been without them. Basking in to-day's sunshine, we laugh merrily at the recollection of the drenching downpour which soaked us to the skin yesterday. Can we conceive of a time when sun and shower will no longer be alike needful to our lives? We liken God to the sun, but His message to parched souls, to the dew and the refreshing rain, for no one outward symbol can convey the many-sided perfection of Deity: it needs many symbols, even symbols apparently at variance with one another. For God is in the darkness as well as in the light, in the cloud that hides the sun as well as in the sun itself. The darkness is but the shadow of His protecting wing, and the clouds we dread may, as Cowper saw, be "big with mercies." Those old writers forgot, too, that our finite perception cannot at once take in the far-distant and the near, that that same light of day which reveals to us tree and leaf and flower is an impenetrable veil to hide the stars. "The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." So, even from the point of view of symbolism, there is no reason for the unnatural picture of a Heaven of eternal noon or everlasting spring.

And just as little reason is there to suppose that the substitution of one kind of body for another must necessarily mark a step in spiritual progress. To take one idea regarding the "spiritual" body. A body composed of ether, which has *not* whirled itself into the knots which we call matter, is not necessarily, by virtue of that fact, of a nobler type than one composed of ether which *has*. We do not conceive of fairies, if such creatures exist, as beings of a more refined and spiritual order than ourselves. The possession of a body of any kind, gifted with senses to place it in touch with its corresponding surroundings, must involve some kind of bodily enjoyments, and corresponding opportunity for their denial where their gratification clashes with the laws of health, or with the good and happiness of our fellows. If any appetite

becomes diseased, the fault lies with human ignorance and perversity. Remove all ground of temptation, and you remove all ground of progress, for virtue consists, not in the absence of appetite, but in its subjection. Mr. Tyner's beautiful vision is meaningless if it does not imply that nobility of character has nothing to do with independence of material conditions. The earth life of Jesus was plain proof to the contrary. Though all temptations, as indeed all life's experience, must come through the avenues of the senses, some of the very worst evils, and those which cause the widest misery—cruelty, lust of power, mental and spiritual pride, overweening ambition—do not spring from any physical appetites. They may dwell in a Palace of Art—a very heaven of purely aesthetic delights—in a hermit's cell, or on the pillar of Simon Stylites.

Take away, then, selfishness and ignorance and their offspring in disease and deformity (and wherever the former can go we can never quite hope to escape the latter), and we want no more beautiful heaven than this world can afford. Inconceivable glories hereafter! Every one of Nature's marvels, from the eye of a fly seen under a microscope to the afterglow on Alpine heights, is "inconceivable" to those who have never seen it! The chief joy hereafter will not be in any glittering transformation scene, but in reunion with those we loved here (God is with us here as there), and perhaps in wider opportunities of service, though we are very, very far from having exhausted those now within our reach. Meanwhile, he who has Heaven within him can always see Heaven without, because he sees some aspect of the divine beauty in rain and sunshine, cloud and blue sky, in the alternation of the seasons, in all the ever-changing panorama of Nature, in the animal creation, and in his fellow human beings made in God's likeness when He pronounced them good, and in whom that likeness is seldom, if ever, utterly lost.

CHAPTER XV

SUNNY's story, all about his own experiences, was continued day by day, just when he felt inclined. I see how, on February 3rd, 1902, we sat down to planchette, and I asked:

"Have you ridden Towzer" (his pony) "to-day, Sunny?"

Sunny: No, Mother, not to-day. School this morning. Home to dinner. Back to school. And this evening just been larking about, doing nothing particular, but thinking, "When will my mother say, 'Now, Sunny, would you like to go on with your story?'"

He often gave us little hints like this, and, of course, I apologized for the long gap, and on February 4th, 1902, I got out his "story" on big sheets of paper all by itself, spread it on the table, and we sat down to planchette.

Mother: Sunny, here's your story!

Sunny: Oh, I'm glad! Are you happy, Mother?

Mother: Yes, darling. Shall we begin?

Sunny: Yes, please. But, first ask *me* if *I* am happy.

Mother: Are you happy, Sunny?

Sunny: Oh, yes! Oh, so happy!

Mother: Why so especially to-day?

Sunny: Because I love everybody and everybody loves me. Now, can I go on, please?

The planchette was accordingly moved on to the "story sheet," where he had last left off, and he started his story again thus, rapidly:

"The days went by, and Sunny was so happy with his darling brothers, who loved him so much. But one

night God's Angel came to him, and said, 'Now, Sunny, God is going to try your love for him, and prove how much you can suffer for his sake.' So, just before Christmas, Sunny had to lay aside his games and his school-life, and was compelled to spend all his days up in his bedroom, instead of keeping the house in an uproar, as he had been in the habit of doing. But the hardest part of all was, even when the pain was at its worst . . ."

Here the planchette dragged itself from the story sheet to the one we kept close to it (for "remarks" and ordinary conversation) and wrote, in obvious agitation, as if seeing my tears, "Mother, don't be sad."

I begged him to continue, and, after a kiss, he moved back to the story-sheet, and went on:

"Was — that he knew his darling mother was suffering the worst pain, and although he loved his mother with every beat of his heart, he used to be so cross, and speak cross to his mother."

I here begged him not to say or think this. *It was never true.* He never was "cross." So he lifted up the planchette, stroked my face, and continued the story, thus:

"But the time had now come when Sunny had to cast off his earthly body. So the Angel said (Mother? You *won't* think me conceited?) The Angel said, 'Bravo, Sunny! You have suffered much, but it has been bravely borne, and now you are going to have your rich reward!' But Sunny said: 'Oh, do spare my mother all you can, and don't let her be very sad, and do please let me comfort her!' So then I looked up at the Angel, and said, 'I will do just what God wants me to do.' Then the Angel said, 'Sunny! That's all we were waiting for you to say! Now come with me!'"

End of Story that day. It will be noted how very like all children's literary efforts are Sunny's changes of pronouns and tenses, etc., throughout his own "Story."

Story continued on February 6th, 1902.

"Although quite willing now to go, it was not without many regrets and a good many pangs in his big, fat heart, that Sunny surrendered his will to God. You see, he was only a little boy, and although he knew that what God willed must be right, he still did not want to leave his mother. At last, one afternoon, the Angel came, and said, 'Now, Sunny! Look!' And in one instant all the horrible pain was gone! But a far greater one came, when he saw his darling mother, oh, so sad and broken-hearted! But Jesus came, and said:

"My little one, for you I've longed.
Come now and sing the glad new Song.

"Your Mother, whom you love so much
With you will soon be now in touch.'

"There dawned for S. a happier day,
For well he knew the time would come . . ."

(A long pause.)

Sunny then wrote excitedly, "Mother! What can I say to rhyme with 'come?', Plum?"

Mother: Will 'Home' do, Sunny?

Sunny: Oh yes, yes, that's lovely!

(Another pause.)

"Help me, please, Mother? Happy Home? Eh?"

Before I could reply, the planchette suddenly raised itself to stroke and kiss my face, then wrote rapidly:

"Oh, dear! We are a pair of duffers! Listen, Mother.

"For well he knew, twould not be long."

Oh, dear me, Mother, I *can't* do it. Well, listen then."

(Another reflective pause.)

"He knew that though the time was dark
There soon would be a shining spark
To lighten up the way so drear
And guide his mother safely here."

Now, Mother, *please* don't interrupt me, but let me get on to the *Second Chapter*. When Sunny opened his eyes in the beautiful garden, the thing that surprised him most was the black darkness that the people (before having their spiritual eyes opened) lived in. Why so many people should give up so many years of their lives to study such a number of dry, musty old books, and then to have nothing but such a cold, comfortless religion to give to those they study to teach, I could not understand. But this dear, kind Angel who had shown Sunny the way to the Happy Land, said, 'Look here, my darling!' And when he turned his head, there stood his school-chum, who shouted out: 'Hullo, Sunny! Come and see mine and your garden!' And Sunny said, 'Mine? I have not got a garden!' And then he said, 'Bosh! Come and see!' And there Sunny found such a lovely garden, everything in it was lovely and beautiful! Everybody who reads this simple little story will now think to themselves, 'Now, surely this little boy, now that he has left all that horrible screwmatics behind, and has got everything here so beautiful, surely he will be as happy as a king? But no—ten thousand 'no's.' He was *not*. For many times he had been naughty, and had not been kind to his darling mother, and now he was, oh, so sorry. But his teacher, whose name is Love, said to him, 'Sunny, my darling child, God has a wonderful work for you to do!' But sometimes Sunny did feel sad; but his dear, kind teacher always cheered him up."*

* "Sunny, God has a wonderful work for you to do." I, his mother, have often thought, may not this book of his be part of it? Was it not for this great end that my child was taken from me?

Here ensued a pause. We thought he had finished for that day, when, seeing us about to remove our hands, he very hurriedly began, as if afraid of being stopped.

I cannot possibly convey here, the *wonderful* way that the dear third, little unseen presence, and its thoughts, fears and emotions, were so often made manifest, in little gestures of the planchette itself. Love, impatience, repentance, joy, roguish fun, grave piety, rollicking spirits, disappointment, surprise and delight, worry and fear, childish vanity, humility, jealousy—all these states of feeling have we beheld *clearly shown by the gestures of the planchette itself*. I have seen it turn itself round to look at me, as it were, to see what I felt, about something it had just written. If I were laughing, I have known it, in sheer relief, dance a happy little jig. If tears were on my cheek, the love of the soft, gentle way it would move itself right up to me; and raise itself to press itself to my heart, or remain poised, end up, till I put down my face to be stroked, was wonderful. Sometimes, as I said elsewhere, it has, without any aid from us (except our fingers barely touching the surface), raised itself into the air to get to my face, a feat quite impossible by any visible means.

He now again continued his story—thus:

“Before going on with the story of my—I mean Sunny’s life, I must now give a little description of the beautiful home and place he now found himself in. Of course, although Sunny knew the dear, kind Angel had told him his home was all ready for him, he was still very anxious to see it.

“After walking around and admiring his lovely garden, Murray, his school-chum, said, ‘Come along, old chap. I don’t know what *you* feel like, but *I* want my tea. Flowers are very nice, but at present tea will be nicer.’ So off they both went, Murray leading the way, but Sunny stopped about every yard to admire something.

"Murray kept saying, 'Buck up, Sunny; I'll tell you all about that after tea.' So Sunny gave a good big sigh, and walked on till he came to, oh, *such* a lovely house, standing in its own grounds, with a lake—a lovely lake.

"But what caught Sunny's eye first was, on looking at the door, to see a lovely, beautiful, long-lost friend, who, directly he saw Sunny, came bounding down to him, nearly knocking him over (that is his way of showing his love)." (Here Nellie and I looked at each other much bewildered. What kind of "long-lost friend" would greet you by jumping on you and knocking you down? After apparently enjoying our wonderment for a few seconds, he wrote, rapidly): "It was our Jack!" (This was a pet fox-terrier of ours, that had "died" years before, and whom I had forgotten till this moment.) Story continued: "Master Murray said, 'Do, do come, Sunny; dogs are all right, but tea is best.' So, pocketing another sigh, Sunny walked on, Jack following at his heels.

"No doubt everybody who reads this will say, 'Well, I do think it's time dear Murray had his tea.' But no, just as we were going pell-mell into the dinning-room, two elderly gentlemen came out. One said to the other, 'Why, Alonzo!'" (here the planchette scratched out "Alonzo" and went on), "'Why, Edward, this must be your little nephew.' And he said, 'Oh, no, that's my grandson; my Edith's little boy!'" (Story suddenly stopped. Edward is my own father's name Colonel Money and Alonzo is my uncle, my father's elder brother, Sir Alonzo Money.)

"Mother, I am so tired."

Story began again next day without preamble, picking up the last sentence.

"'Oh, no, that's my grandson, my daughter Edith's little boy. He has come here to live now with us.' So Sunny said, 'Please, are you my grandpa?' And the youngest gentleman said, 'Yes, Sunny, you are my grandchild.' Then Sunny said, 'I will love you so much, grandpa, and will you

please try and love me a little bit?' o grandpa said, 'Try! Why I love you a big bit already! Run along and get your tea.'

"So once more Sunny tried to get his tea; but *another* gentleman came out of his study, and said, 'Well, old chap, you've got here, then? You've been a long time coming!'"

(Mother interrupted here to ask, "Oh, Sunny, who was it?" Sunny replied, "*Please*, Mother, *don't* interrupt me.")

(Story continued rapidly.)

"So Sunny said, 'Who are you? Please do tell me.' So he said, 'Don't you know your uncle?' So Sunny said, 'I don't know *which* uncle you are, but I love you because you have got a kind, cheeky face.' So he said, 'Why, I am your uncle Charlie. Have you forgotten me? Just look at Murray's face!' So at last Sunny really got into the dining-room.

"Murray started at once having his tea, but Sunny could not eat anything. His heart was too full. He longed so much for his darling mother, he could not eat and he could not drink.

"You see, he could *see* his mother, who was so sad and broken-hearted. The stupid Dr. [*sic*, doctor] had told her that her little boy was *dead*, and Sunny could hear her cry and say, 'Dead? no, no, he is not dead. I won't . . . I won't believe it.'"

(Story stopped.)

"I am so tired, Mother. Do you still like my story?"

"Like it! I could go on listening all night!"

"Oh, I do love you. Can Cyril write stories?"

"No; I know he can't."

"Oh, I am glad." (Much delighted.)

APRIL 28TH, 1902.

Sunny's story continued, without any remarks or preamble, much to our amusement, for we had not even had time to look and see where we had left off. We were just sitting talking (about some shopping Nellie had done for me), but our hands all ready on the planchette, when Sunny suddenly started off—giving us a jump.

"So, you see, Sunny could not be perfectly happy while his mother was so sad, and he left his tea and the lovely bananas on the table, and went into his room and cried; and prayed, and asked God to comfort his own darling mother, and tell her not to be sad, because her little boy was not dead, but had only just thrown off his worn-out body for a better one, and that very soon she would know that it was best. And then Sunny asked God if he would, in a very special manner, let him talk to his mother and cheer her up. Then God heard little Sunny's prayer, and a great peace came over him, and he dried his eyes and said, 'I will do all what you tell me to do, Heavenly Father, because I know you will always tell me what is right.'

"My mother's heart was very dark,
She could not see the Light,
But God, who knows what's right and best,
Soon put the matter right.

"Now, everybody who reads this story must not think that little S. was never going to think any more about his darling mother. Oh, dear me, no! He thought about her all day long, and in the night she used to come and stay with him, but not the sad, broken-hearted mother. Oh, no, it was the happy-hearted mother, who, in her visits, did not realize that her little boy had passed over."

(Story suddenly stopped.)

"Can I stop, please? Do you still like my story, Mother?"

"*Oh, so, so much.* Do tell me before you stop, darling — you had had a long, exhausting illness before you passed over — Did you feel weak or ill that first day, my darling?"

"Oh, no, I felt like myself, and yet like a new boy."

CHAPTER XVI

STORY continued again without preamble on April 29th, 1902.

"The next day little Sunny, after thanking God for bringing him to such a lovely Home, got up early in the morning to have a good look round. First he fetched his chum out of bed, saying: 'Coming for a tour of inspection, old chap?' But Murray said: 'Oh-no-n-o. O-oh-gr-gr-no-tha-ank you. I'm not going to get up yet.' So mischievous Sunny calmly walked to the washstand, and fills a sponge with water and aims it at poor old Murray. Up in bed he jumps, a spitting and spluttering, with his mouth and eyes full of water. 'Oh, dear me,' he says, 'you are a torment. I suppose I had better get up. I suppose I shan't get any more sleep here.' So up he got!

"Very soon they were both up and out of the house. Sunny said, 'Where does that path lead you?' Murray said, 'To the woods.'

"That was enough. Off Sunny bolted.

"Before he had gone far, he had to stop and once more to thank God for bringing him from the sad earth to such a lovely place.

"It was a God-like spring day! The birds were singing in the trees. The boughs were all so lovely and green, making the paths so lovely and shady! No one who had not seen it could half realize what it was like? Sunny said to Murray, 'Come on!' I'm going to pick some of these lovely flowers to take home to auntie!' But Murray said, 'Oh, no, I can't be bothered.'

"So Sunny filled his hands then and there.

"But on going further into the woods, he found some others, more beautiful than those he had already gathered, so, throwing them down, he picked a lot more, and was just thinking about returning home to breakfast, when, once more looking up to the beautiful sky, he saw some trees full of fruit, so *down* went the flowers, and up into the tree went Sunny!

"Finding a nice strong bough, he sat himself on it and prepared for a feast, Murray still yelling, 'I say, Sunny, buck up; we'll get no breakfast!' But Sunny said, 'I don't care while I'm up here.' But after a time Sunny thought, 'It seems to me, the further I go, the more beautiful everything seems to be. I think I'll go still further.' Saying, 'Go on, Murray, you little Ogre, I don't want any,' he remained in the tree.

"The sky above me was oh! so blue,
The trees a lovely green,
But Sunny could not stop to eat,
He must admire the scene.
And giving thanks to God in Heaven
For all his love to me,
He asks once more if God will show
To his dear mother, who he knows
Is oh! so sad with a brokren [*sic*, broken] Heart,
Because she thinks from her Sunny she's had to part."

(Suddenly—"Mother, Mother, what's the matter?" I was crying.)

Planchette began stroking my face, and when I smiled again, asked me to please read out what he had written. He then continued rapidly:

"Next day at breakfast Grandpa said, 'Now, Mr. Sunny, please give an account of yourself. Where did you get to, all day yesterday?'

"So Sunny, being up to a lark, and *much* happier, said, 'But Grandpa, how can I tell you when I don't know the names of the places?' But Grandpa said, 'But which way did you go?'

"‘Oh,’ said Sunny, ‘I just went round the corner and then up this street and then down that one.’ So Grandpa said, ‘It’s easy to see whose child *you* are! You are just like your mother! Oh, the life that girl led me! Any mischief there was afloat, if you got to the bottom of it you always found’”—(here my name printed in huge letters) —“‘EDITH.—Oh,’ said Grandpa again, ‘the life that girl led me.’ Sunny said: ‘Are you speaking of my mother?’ ‘Yes,’ said Grandpa, ‘I am. All my children were wild, but if there was anything especially wild, or any extra mischief afloat, when you got to the bottom, you always found—EDITH.’

"Of course, Sunny did not mean to listen to anything against his mother. So he said: ‘But, Grandpa, *my* mother was never a trouble.’ So at that, Grandpa roared with laughter and said: ‘Oh, well, my child, it’s evident you did not know her in those days.’

"After breakfast Sunny thinks he will do a little more exploring, so he goes out into the stables, and finds a lovely, beautiful pony. You know, for a long time before Sunny passed over, he simply longed for a pony, and was saving up all his money for one. When he had got an extra shilling or two, he used to say to his governess: ‘Will you please count how much I’ve got?’ And then she would say: ‘You have got 6/4½.’ And then Sunny would say, ‘Can I get a pony for that?’ And then she would say, ‘Not quite. You must save up a little more.’ And all the time there was my lovely, beautiful pony waiting for me here!

"‘Murray! Murray!’ shouts Sunny, ‘come here quick! I want you! Who put this pony here for me?’

"‘But Murray said, ‘It’s nothing to do with him. You must do the same as I had to do.’

"‘What’s that?’ said Sunny.

"‘Find out,’ said Murray, and then he bolted.

"After hugging the pony for about half an hour, Sunny thought what a naughty boy he was to be so happy when

his mother was so sad. So down on his knees he went beside his pony, and asked God, dear, good, kind God, to take some of his happiness away and give it to his mother. He looked up and found his Uncle Charlie standing beside him.

"Well, old chap!' he said, 'that's a fine way to receive a present! Crying? What are you crying about?'"

The Story stopped for that day, but after this, it went on at intervals, the same childlike narrative, full of his life and home and fun. One minute in the first person, then in the third person, now past tense, now present, just as children do when composing.

Should another volume appear after this one, of "Rachel Comforted," more of Sunny's own "Story" may be found in it.

Happy Sunny! Our talks became a daily joy, to be eagerly looked forward to. The Happy Land seemed indeed all around us. Nothing much saddened or depressed us, those wonderful times of daily communion with this, the

"Sweetest soul that ever looked
From out of human eyes."

CHAPTER XVII

I HAVE read and heard of many spirit communications from adults and children, but I wonder has there been anything to come anywhere near the enormous amount received from Sunny, or so convincing as his are? I can only give a small part, here, of what we got for years. They are convincing, chiefly because, throughout, they are so consistently childish and boy-like, so innocent and spontaneous, so full of fun and mischief, so full of sympathy and love for me and others, so ignorant of the things I had once believed he would be *sure* to know; so reverent when speaking of reverent things; so delighted with his new life; so unwilling to return, and yet so nervous that that unwillingness might hurt me. All these characteristics are my Sunny himself, and the records contain such voluminous evidence to anyone who knew him, that no more doubt could remain in the minds of those who did, than would be expressed at long daily characteristic letters from an absent child upon this side of life. How much we learnt of Sunny's "Happy Land," as he calls it!

Love and marriage exist there apparently, for he alludes at intervals to a long love-affair between his Uncle Charlie and a Miss Clarissa Mitchell on that side.

Can anyone, reading these records, identify this "dead" Clarissa Mitchell? No such person has been known to me or Nellie, or to anyone I have met. Uncle Charlie and she are constantly alluded to. For instance, Sunny wrote one day that he had seen Uncle Charlie pick up a flower dropped on the lawn by Clarissa "as she ran into the house," and he put it into his pocket-book carefully, and Sunny wrote, "Didn't I think it looked rather suspicious?" Another time Clarissa was going to the green-house to pick

flowers for the table, and Uncle Charlie said he would help her, "and Mother," he wrote, "they were away two hours, and came back, with about four flowers!"

Picnics up Mount Edith (named after me), motor drives (Uncle Charlie and Clarissa sitting *very* close to each other, Clarissa smiling at Sunny's jokes about it all); these allusions go right through the eighteen volumes of writings received for years on end and taken down by me.

At last he tells us they are going to be married. And then they are married. And their new home is called "Union Lodge," and Sunny adds in fun, "*Not* the work-house, of course, Mother!"

Much more of the same kind convinces me that Love and Marriage do exist there, but of a very much higher order than we know here. Swedenborg writes the same. One hears much of Christ's famous saying, "In Heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage." I take that simply to mean that no marriage, as we understand it, is known Beyond. Nor do we go to Heaven upon dying. Few of us could even be happy in that blest State yet?

I have, through Sunny's writings, arrived at the following conclusions, and as I began to receive them in 1901 (after three years they became intermittent), it pleases me to see that in other, much more recent, communications (by perfect strangers to me) his descriptions are largely being borne out, often in a startling way. This I have said before; as we say things several times when we are pleased.

The "Happy Land" closely resembles this one, and, in fact, is the inner counterpart of this one.

We do not "go away" anywhere. There is no pain in dying. It is a great relief. They live on the other side much as we do "here." They have houses, with gardens and furniture like ours. They have electric light, motor-cars and bicycles. People write books and publishers publish them. Sunny often speaks of my father, Colonel Money (who wrote much on this side), being constantly

locked in his den, "writing, writing, writing." When I asked the names of his grandfather's books over "There," Sunny replied they were "so dry, he never read them." But he added that one was called "Life on this Side." Another was "What to do with the Boys." I advise all who are amazed at all this, to read "A New Heaven," by G. Warren Russell, Minister of International Affairs, New Zealand, just published (1919). The descriptions relate, I imagine, to a more advanced plane than Sunny's "Happy Land." Yet they bear out, even on that plane, *how natural the Life is*. The "morning paper," and theatre, are alluded to, and "after lunch I returned to Mr. B.'s residence;" gathering in the crops, mowing corn, a morning market, etc., all bear out Sunny's description, but I recall the gasps of horror I always got when I told my friends in 1902, "Oh, my Sunny says they have *Theatres*." I was, of course, at once regarded as being in direct touch with an Entity of Outer Darkness, formerly on the stage, no doubt, and a bad lot all round. I often laughed, and when I told Sunny, how he laughed too!

"Oh, dear!" he wrote another time, "wings? Have I got wings? Oh, I shall die of laughing, Mother. Where would my legs go? Should I tuck them up under my wings?"

Another time, when I told him how relieved I was to find that he couldn't fly in and out amongst the stars, etc., he drew a picture, in fun, of himself, flying through space, with his pony Towzer on his back! "Instead of me on Towzer's back, Mother, eh?"

Talking of ponies, "Miss Faithful" is the name of my sister Etty's pony over "There," "Hero" my father's. "Winkle" is Murray's pony. "Towzer" is his own. "Miss Faithful" is apparently rather a greedy pony, and one day, while we were talking of other things, the planchette broke off, ran to the edge of the paper, and raising itself, made digs into the air. It then returned and wrote, "That was Miss Faithful, who came to the window for her

morning sugar, but last time she ate up Towzer's sugar too, so to-day she gets none."

Adults are very loving and kind to children over there. Sunny's "Mr. Frost" is so good to him. "He makes himself a boy to please me, and plays and jokes with me. He is *not* an angel, Mother, but he is very good. I don't want to be an angel either. I do so love jokes!"

It was pathetic and strange, the way the child assured us so often that to "become an angel" did not appeal to him, because it "will be so slow." Very schoolboyish too!

Mr. Frost, over there, laughs at Sunny's declaring he can talk to his mother. "Stuff and nonsense!" he said once to Sunny, but added, "Well, if it makes you happy, go on believing it, child!"

Children over There have two birthdays in a year. The earth-birthday, and the day they passed over.

When friends came to see planchette working, and would ask Sunny questions, he sometimes wrote, "The voice is too gruff," or "Tell him he worries me, Mother," or else he'd turn it all into a joke. When Mr. Piddington, of the Psychical Research, and two other friends called one day, as recorded in one of the "conversations," and I forgot to give Mr. Piddington his cup of tea, Sunny launched into rhyme, as a polite hint to me:

"Oh, dear me, what do I see?
Mother and two gentlemen have just had their tea.
Poor Mr. Piddington's left in the lurch,
Sitting all alone on a solitary perch."

Of course I remembered Mr. Piddington's tea after that, and we couldn't help laughing, for I thought he had had it.

"Tra-la!" is often Sunny's airy farewell at the end of a talk with the planchette.

Once I asked him to ask Murray his Christian name.

"Wait a tick," he wrote; and then, "Oh, I asked him. He's playing ball in the garden and he called out: 'My name? Rals!'"

After much puzzlement and questions as to what "Rals" could mean, Sunny said, "Oh, I *am* a duffer. I forgot to cross my T," and he took the little board back to the letter that we had thought was an L, and crossed it, making T of it, when, of course, it became "Rats!" just the kind of reply Schoolboy Murray would give. "My name? Rats!"

"Is this the Australia Plane, Mother, where I am?" once asked Sunny, innocently (and a planchette can even express innocence somehow), hearing Nellie and me speaking of the "Astral Plane."

I often feel a bit tired when so many wonderful things are put down to the subconscious self. Here are cases where there is no such solution, as no one at the planchette (on this side I mean) knew anything about the matter alluded to. Other people had to be written to and asked.

We went to South Africa at the end of 1902, at the close of the Boer-British War, and the talks continued there. I left Nellie and my second son, my darling Kay, in my little home in the Transvaal, during my absence for a month in the Orange River Colony in a trek in a Cape cart. Kay and Nellie sat at planchette, constantly sending me the records. One day I got a letter from Kay, enclosing the previous day's conversation, and asking, "*What does Sunny mean when he writes, 'Wasn't Carl a duffer?' Who was Carl, Mother?*"

Well, sceptics all, it is too long to explain in detail here, but I was enchanted, *for only Sunny and I knew who "Carl" was, and all about him, and what a duffer he was too!* Carl's existence was unknown to Kay and Nellie till then! Before Sunny could go on to explain (Kay wrote me) the power gave out. So I wrote back to the Transvaal to Kay and Nellie, explaining. You can conceive their delight. No subconsciousness there!

Another day Sunny wrote with planchette, "What had become of his musical box I had bought him during his last illness?" He then started, in the curious dreamy

way in which he always wrote when trying hard to recall something, "Mother, it played 'Sun of my Soul' and 'Stella.'" I asked was 'Stella' a song, or what? (I had no idea and had never heard of it.) He didn't know, except that "'Stella' was the name of a tune it played, Mother."

I wrote and asked Kay (who was in Swaziland, South Africa, then), did he remember any such tune? He replied, "It wasn't any tune, Mother, but the musical box *itself* was called 'The Stella.'"

Now, I had no idea of this at all, for it seems the name was inside, in a *very* obscure place; and suppose I had, I should not have made such a mistake as that, I imagine. But I knew nothing of it all, though Kay did.

Another curious case was, when I had written a letter to Ceylon (after Sunny's passing over), of such immense import that, not only my own life, but that of my husband (Colonel Maturin) and children, hung upon its arriving safely. Soon after posting it with my own hands (and when I believed it to be on the sea and had counted the weeks to the reply arriving) Sunny wrote suddenly one day, in the middle of a talk (about quite other things), that my "letter would never arrive, and so please write another quickly." He went on to say that at the time I posted it it was snowy weather, and he *saw* a man in the sorting office of the G.P.O., London, drop it face downwards in a puddle that the men's boots had brought in. By the time he noticed it, the short address (Colonel —, Colombo, Ceylon) had got blurred out and no one could read it, so the man pushed it into a pigeon-hole on the wall, and it had slipped down between the wall and the woodwork of the pigeon-holes.

"Please, please, Mother!" he wrote, "go to the *big* London Post Office and ask them to look for it, just to show you I've told you true. And please write the letter again!"

I went to see the Secretary, G.P.O., and I told him the whole story. To my surprise he took it quite seriously, and said, "It is strange. Have you been in our sorting office?" (I never had.) "It's quite true that in our sorting office," he went on, "*are* some old wooden pigeon-holes, but we can't well pull them down to verify this story. But letters *have* been known to slip down. I believe that, he added (but it's nineteen years ago, and I won't be sure of this) that, in consequence of such accidents, another sort of wire pigeon-hole had been mainly substituted? The G.P.O. officials could confirm this? I never did myself.) The Secretary was so interested that he asked me to let him know did the letter in question ever *arrive*? Well, it *never did*! I never wrote it again! I changed my mind and decided that, if Sunny's story was true, I should regard it as a sign that the letter was best undelivered.

Several lives were entirely altered by its non-delivery, and I am convinced that it was all as my child wrote, and that the letter may be there to this day. I regret I never wrote as I had promised, to the G.P.O. official, and if he sees this, beg him to accept my apology, and to tell me, was my letter ever found?

Often and often we had other tests, such as a future date mentioned, like, for example (I'm only inventing a date now), Wednesday, 20th April, six months ahead, and would have to fetch an almanac from another room and consult it carefully to see that the 20th April of next year was indeed a Wednesday. And so on—many times. He also several times told us the hour to a minute by a clock in the next room. He often did us most difficult sums, rows of figures, taking some minutes to write, and before we or anyone could possibly have time to tot it all up, *he would write the sum total without one second's pause*, adding delightedly (when we totted it up ourselves and found it correct), "Aren't I clever? Oh, I do love praise! Can Cyril do sums like me? Oh, I'm glad he can't.

I don't want you to love him more than me!" He also later did us sums that neither Nellie nor I knew how almost to do at all, Rule of Three, I believe. Nellie was better at arithmetic than I, so she used to work them out, and found them quite correct, and occasionally they were so beyond us, that we had to ask other people. Sunny had always been good at sums, far better than his own mother! I loathe arithmetic, I suppose because I am stupid at it.

Nellie and I were, later on, living under Majuba Hill, South Africa, and one Christmas morning Sunny wrote, while talking of other matters: "Hullo, Rodney! You here!"

Rodney was a very old friend, at that time living at the other end of Africa, and I had not seen him for months. I asked Sunny what he meant, as Rodney was hundreds of miles away.

"What do you mean, Mother?" he wrote. "Why, *he's sitting by you at this moment!*"

I answered the child that he was *not*.

Sunny wrote: "Look here, Mother, do you mean really to tell me that Rodney is *not* sitting in that chair near you this minute?" And he went on to say that, even if I could not see him, *he was there*. I asked, had he passed over, but Sunny said no. Rodney wrote later that at that same time Christmas morning he was thinking earnestly of us, and wishing he could have spent Christmas with us. There is no doubt that his astral body *was* there with us, clearly, of course, seen by Sunny.

A brother of mine, living in America, lost his young wife out there suddenly, and wrote to us in great grief. He had met her out there, and none of us had seen him, or even heard much from him since. We only knew that her maiden name was Whiting. So when Sunny informed us through the planchette in London that "Uncle Aurelian's wife is quite happy here, and lives with her mother, Mrs. Barton," I said:

"Oh, no, Sunny! you are wrong there! Her mother's name is Whiting."

(I did not even know the mother had passed over—nor anything at all about her.)

Sunny persisted. "No, Mother. It's not Whiting. She's a Mrs. Barton," and was so positive about it that I wrote to relations (in England) to ask what they knew of it?

As my brother had been cut off from us all for years, and only wrote a few lines once a year or so, no one knew anything at all, except *one* of my sisters, who wrote back: "She certainly was *not* a Miss Barton. Her maiden name was Whiting, I know."

Then I wrote to my brother in America, told him all about my Sunny and the planchette, and about Sunny having said that the young wife he had just lost was "happy with her mother, Mrs. Barton." Could he explain, as he had told my sister that his wife's maiden name was Whiting?

This wonderful incident practically made a spiritualist of my brother. *For Mrs. Whiting had married a second time, and her last married name was Barton. She lived always in America. Not one soul in England knew it.* He was amazed, and much of his grief was healed.

The same brother now lives in the Antipodes. He and a member of his household hold sésances at home together—just the two of them—and no outside or professional element at all. Spirit-forms appear (many of them, some nights) and walk about the room, Aurelian and the other sitter sitting alone together holding hands. One of these forms he believes is his wife, but at present the forms are dim, but grow clearer every time. He must be very psychic, for two nights after his wife died (and he was not then a spiritualist) his little son of seven lay in a cot beside him. Neither father nor child were asleep, when the child sat up and called out: "Father!

You said mother is dead! But look at her! There she is!"

Aurelian sat up and saw, rising at the foot of his bed, a woman's form, seemingly made of light. She stood there several moments, her husband and child gazing at her. Then she faded away. Her earth-body lay in the next room in its coffin.

The child, Ernle Money, is now over twenty, a quiet, thoughtful-looking sailor-boy. I recently asked him here in London (he not having seen his father since childhood) could he remember the incident? He said he had *never* forgotten it, and he described it to me just as his father had done. He added: "I remember being *very* frightened Auntie, for a moment, *at the way that mother came up out of the floor*, and I thought some *stairs*, that I knew nothing of, had been concealed in the floor, and that she was coming up them." I suppose we must, as a family, be rather psychic.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CURIOUS idea prevails on this side of life about "remorse."

You will hear people say: "When I die, So and So will suffer dreadful remorse for having done such and such a thing to hurt me," and they never seem to realize that there is as much remorse on the other side as here, and that they may suffer it also.

Sunny gave me several instances of this. He often brought tears to my eyes, persisting in asking me to forgive him some small thing he had done or said here that made him sad to remember.

"I was often cross." "Have you forgiven me for being such a naughty boy sometimes?" "Oh, Mother darling, what a life I led you with my tricks and fun. But I loved you all the time. Do you remember my lassoing the poor milkman round the neck as he came up with his cart, and all the milk was upset?"

And so on. I remembered this, and the milkman chasing Sunny through a small river of milk, for which I, of course, had to pay and Sunny very repentant.

Some of his little memories were quite unknown to me, and I had to ask his brothers had they occurred and when. And they were always true.

He would make confessions to me through the planchette of little pranks played, and not seem able to be happy till he had confessed.

One instance was when he said he felt he must tell me how he and Kay, after I thought they were asleep in bed

used to get up and let things down out of the window into the garden and haul them up again. And all sorts of fun like that. And how if I came to the door they would rush back to bed.

"And I knew it was naughty and deceitful all the time, Mother, and please will you forgive me?"

Now I got this in London, and it was quite news to me, and I had to write and ask Kay at his public school about it, and Kay replied: "Oh yes. Fancy him telling you that, Mother?"

Another time he said how he fretted sometimes because he "used to be cross over having to wear thick vests and be muffled up."

"And all the time, Mother, I knew it was your love for me. Oh, darling Mother, have you forgiven me?"

Well, as I have learnt to know that I must have worried my children very much with the over-wrapping up that I would have, and also must, I fear, have injured Sunny's health by it, and am wiser now, I have often felt how much more reason I had to grieve than he, I, the should-be-wiser mother. Some days we would both be asking each other's forgiveness all the time, my tears falling, and Sunny constantly raising the planchette to wipe them away. One could tell by the planchette when he cried sometimes; I can hardly describe quite how. It would stop writing and a kind of trembling went all through it.

I have noticed that the bitterest sting in what we call the "death" of one we love lies nearly always in this terrible thing, "remorse."

People will not talk about it as a rule, and one sees a never-ending grief of bereavement, wearing out the mourner, and when you get to know the person well enough, you find the old bitter cry that I suppose from the beginning of time and the world has torn aching hearts, and will, until full communion with our "Dead" sweeps away one of its sharpest agonies.

"Could ye come back to me, Douglas, Douglas,
In the old likeness that I knew,
I would be so loving, so tender and true,
Douglas, Douglas, so tender and true."

Thanks to the terrible ignorance we are still in, and that so many people would keep us in, concerning this comparatively slight change "Death," not one ray of comfort can come through the veil, over this thing remorse, for the average person. I shiver to think of the year that passed before I knew I could talk to my child. I nearly died of grief over a hundred and one things that, could I have seen him for ten minutes, I could have put right in two. A few words, a kiss, a crushing of the darling form into one's longing arms . . . and a pain that will probably last a lifetime (because of the awful Silence) would be removed! Alas, alas, there is only too often Silence. And this Silence, with all its attendant anguish, is deemed by most orthodox creeds to be the right thing!

But to spiritualists, who are in constant communion, in one way or another, with their darlings, all that agony has passed into the bygone. It is not given to us all to see the vanished one, though some do, as in the instance of my brother who saw his wife at the foot of his bed, as related in another chapter. I saw Sunny once, only as in a flash, when I was nearly killed by a severe accident. And of course there are thousands of happy people who can tell you the same thing. But with the majority of spiritualists the comfort comes through writing received in some way, or the clumsier table-messages. But it comes. How often have I seen and heard during the war, of parents cast down with woe over some darling passed over, until they got in touch. Nearly always, the mutual grief *both sides*, for little or big things (carelessness, harshness, selfishness, misunderstanding, injury), are the first things that each one is bent on clearing up. At a séance I was at (a thing, I must confess, I hardly ever go to, being

rather spoilt for such, I suppose, by my wonderful home-experiences) I heard a lady and her husband completely reconciled, he having committed suicide over some quarrel they had had. She had been almost demented with grief, and, indeed, cried violently all the time. A most private and intimate conversation ensued, in whispers, both explaining and imploring each other's pardon, and when I next saw her face it was transfigured with joy.

"Oh, now I can live!" spiritualists cry, when the gulf is bridged, and some cause for remorse is removed or explained away, and forgiven.

I could not help smiling once when that veteran sailor-spiritualist Admiral Usborne Moore, told me, to show how very human these on the other side still are, that he heard a wife this side entreating her loved husband the other side to "make it up"; and he only too glad. And the good couple began, each explaining volubly how the quarrel that was weighing so upon their minds, had arisen.

"And 'pon me word," said the Admiral, "if in five minutes they hadn't started the quarrel all over again!"

However, it was, I believe, soon got through, and the air thoroughly cleared for good and all.

I know personally of a case where a mother who felt agonizing remorse over her failure, as she felt it, in her mother-duties to an adored son who fell in the war, got into touch with him through automatic writing. She poured out her agony to him, and found that he was suffering equal pain for things he had left undone. There was nothing very terrible to regret either side, but he told her that for two years he had grieved as he never knew he could grieve. He also wrote this: "Mother, do you know, I had to come here to know what a wonderful thing a mother's love is. I never realized, or I wouldn't have done—so and so. Oh, Mother, thank you for your love. And don't grieve. I won't any more."

She also, that mother, had never realized what an immense love for her that boy had. All was put quite

straight. In time her pain disappeared. And then a feeling of peace entered her life, enabling her to resume life once more. Until then, she had taken no interest in anything or anybody. Her existence was being eaten away with that "Silence of the Grave," as non-spiritualists call it. What has the grave to say to our darlings? No grave ever held a human being yet.

"Where shall we bury you?" a dying philosopher of centuries ago was asked.

"Wherever you like, if you can catch me," was his reply.
Wise Soul. . . .

CHAPTER XIX

THIS conversation, and all others, are copied down exactly as received. This one was in quite the early days in 1901.

When you first found yourself in your new life, Sunny, what sort of place were you in?

I was in my garden, Mother.

Were you lying down?

Oh no.

Then what were you doing?

I was looking for you.

Did you realize you had left this life?

No, Mother.

But didn't it astonish you to find yourself in a new place?

It did not seem new, Mother; but everything was so beautiful, and all the pain had gone away.

Oh, Sunny, thank God that I hear this! How soon after leaving this life did you awake to the new one?

It was at once.

What did you feel like when you couldn't find me?

I *could* not feel sad, Mother.

Explain, darling.

I was not happy at first, Mother, because I knew I had often done wrong, but I could not feel sad at not seeing you, as I knew you would soon come too.

Who told you that?

No one told me, but I knew.

Could you, then, see the future?

Yes.

When you woke in the lovely garden, what did you do?

I was so glad, I think I danced.

Were you alone?

No; Murray was waiting for me.

What did he first say?

"Hello, Sunny!"

Then what did you do?

We looked all about the garden; and then Murray asked me if I saw his mother.

What did you reply?

I told him I had not seen her.

Could Murray see his mother's grief?

I do not know.

What showed you that you had left this world?

I have *not* left this world.

Did you know you had died?

Died, Mother!

I mean, did you realize you had left your little earthly body?

Yes, Mother; but, you see, it was worn out.

Oh, childie, I cannot bear it! Was there any kind of difference between your new body and the other?

No, Mother.

Tell me what you did next, after looking over the garden?

Why are you sad, Mother?

Ah, you must be in the room, Sunny, for you can see my tears. I'm sad because I can't bear to think of your beloved little worn-out body.

But don't you see, my little pet, I have got one that will never wear out now?

Oh, I long to see you!

Cheer up, Mother; you will see me soon.

My boy, can you hear me speak?

Why, of course I can, you little darling.

Now tell me what next happened in the garden?

I met grandpa and Aunt Etty.

What did grandpa say?

He told me I had not been long coming, and he asked me later on where Amy was.

Amy! What did you say?
 I told him I did not know who she was.
 What did he say?
 He went away.
 Was he pained?
 Oh no. Good night, Mother.

MARCH 18TH, 1901

What first made you realize you had passed from this life, darling?

Because, Mother dear, everything was so beautiful, and all the pain had gone.

Sunny, whom did I write to this afternoon? I felt you were near me.

Was it to father, Mother dear?

Yes, it was. What did I do half-way through the letter?

You were crying.

I wondered did you see me? Did it grieve you?

I *wish* you were here, Mother!

Do you remember all your long illness, darling?

Yes; but it does not seem long now, and this makes up for it all, Mother.

Can you remind me of something in your illness I have forgotten?

I do remember reading about the man who had his finger or thumb cut off.

I can't remember it. What book?

Yes, it was "Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes."

[Inquiries since made at Kay. There is a story, Kay tells me, in the "Engineer's Thumb," which is cut off, and which Sunny used to read at the time he was getting well—as we thought. He loved Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories.]

Tell me some more.

Do you remember telling me I was to have one of father's watches, when I grew up?

(I sat thinking, not able to remember this, when it wrote:)

Who will have it now? Will Atheling?

Whose watch, darling? I don't remember.

Father's—the one you promised me.

Did I promise it to you?

Yes; don't you remember?

Try to explain, darling. What room were we in?

My room.

(I sat again thinking, and it wrote of its own accord:)

Before I was ill.

What house were we in?

At Tombridge.

Was it in your bedroom?

Yes, Mother, I told you so just now. It was one night after I had got into bed, and you came in to tuck me up.

Oh, now I remember! Who slept with you, Sunny, eh?

Why, Kay.

Yes, I remember. Oh, that those days could return!

Would you *still* have me back, Mother, when you *must* know how happy I am?

Yes, I am a selfish mother.

Oh, no, you *never, never* could be selfish, you darling little Mother.

I wish I were more worthy of your love, my darling.

You know you are one of the *best* of mothers.

MARCH 30TH, 1901

Did you see us at your grave, Sunny?

Yes, Mother. I was so glad you were not so very sad.

I didn't feel so dreadful as sometimes, because I knew you were not there. What did I do there?

You prayed.

Did you see the flowers I put there?

On my grave? Yes, Mother. There will soon be some more; they are growing.

Sunny darling, if it's not you in that grave, what is it?

Mother darling, I have been trying to think how best to describe it to you. You know that when anything is worn out, it is no use to anybody. Well, that is like my earthly body, and *that* is what is in the grave.

Will that little earthly body ever rise from that grave?

No, Mother; it is no use now. You see, I have one now that will *never* get worn out.

Is there any difference between that little earthly body and yours now?

No, Mother, there is no difference.

Is it just the same—flesh and all?

Yes, Mother, it is just the same. Why, Mother, how would you know me if I had a different body?

Then why can I not see you? What has happened?

I cannot tell you, unless it is that I have been called by God to come to Him, and so have more power and light; but I will try and tell you more plainly another time, as I cannot explain it to you now.

Did you see my grief and despair directly you had left me?

I saw you directly I had left you. You were, oh, so sad! and poor Grandma and Aunt Lelia were, trying to comfort you, but they were so sad too.

Good night, darling. Are you happy?

Yes—oh, so happy! Are you?

I shall be some day, when I meet you. Are you going to bed, Sunny?

Yes; so are you. But you must be happy, Mother darling. We shall soon be here all together.

APRIL 2ND, 1901

Darling, you were learning the piano; can you play now?

Of course, Mother; I can play beautifully, and sing as well.

Oh, tell me the name of one song.

"Mother, don't you hear the Angels?" is one of them.

Oh, how I wish I could hear you! Who teaches you?

My teacher, Mother.

Who is your teacher?

She is Love.

Do you call her Love?

Her name is Love, but I call her a lot of other names.

Are there other people in your home, my Sunny?

Oh yes, Mother. And you can live with me when you come.

Thank you, darling. But when I come, I would not care to live with a lot of people. Can't we have a little home to ourselves—you and Eric and Kay and me?

And father? Yes, Mother. But you see, I could not live by myself till you came here, could I, Mother?

No, darling. But I can't fancy my father happy amongst a lot of people.

But, you see, Mother, grandpa is writing all day, and he is happy.

Did you tell him you talk to me?

No, Mother; I have not seen him for long enough since you said I was to tell him.

But don't you see him every day?

Mother darling, you see, grandpa writes in his study, so I don't get a chance to see him. Shall I go to his study—eh—and ask him for a message?

Yes. Can you do so now this minute?

Yes.

Will you have to leave me?

Oh, no, only a minute.

(A pause.)

Grandpa sends his love to you and Aunt Lelia, and told me to tell you that at last he could write, without you both

interrupting him; and then he said: "Now run away, little chap!" And then I bolted.

Can you explain how you can be with me always and yet lead your own life, darling?

No, Mother; but you will understand when you come here. You see, Mother, I know that it is so, but I cannot explain now. Good-night, darling.

APRIL 3RD, 1901

Sunny darling, Kay is here—home for his holidays—and says, how will he get on in cricket next term?

I do not think he will get in the first eleven; but never mind; buck up, old chap.

He is so pleased. How do you think he is looking?

Jolly, Mother.

Will you tell Kay something about Murray? He remembers him so well.

Is Kay jealous?

What do you mean, darling?

Because I was going to say that Murray and I are like brothers; but, of course, I love Kay best.

No, darling; we could not be jealous of anyone you love.

Are you really not a little bit jealous of my teacher, Mother darling?

No, not really much. Keep mother's corner for her.

When you come here, you will have a house after your own heart, Mother.

Oh, I'd like one just like our Crofton Lodge—lovely old walled gardens, lawns, fruits, flowers, and roses all over the house. Can I have it?

Yes, Mother.

Is your dwelling exactly what you like? Do you never wish for anything different?

Never, Mother; we have everything we wish for.

Do you have trains, and do people travel?

Oh yes, Mother.

Can we travel when I come?

Oh yes, Mother; you shall do just whatever you like.

Are there lovely, lovely mountains and forests, as we had in the Himalayas, where no one has ever been?

Oh yes, Mother; we will find them all out when you come here.

Did you ride to-day?

Not to-day. I have been doing my garden.

Where did you go last time you rode?

We had a good long gallop all over the fields and back to Paradise.

Paradise, darling?

That is the name we call our house now.

Who taught you to ride?

I did not want anyone to teach me, Mother.

Does grandpa ride with you?

Sometimes; only he is so busy writing.

And Aunt Etty?

Yes, Aunt Etty often rides with us.

APRIL 5TH, GOOD FRIDAY, 1901.

Sunny, my dear one?

Yes, Mother.

Do you love me, as much as you ever did?

Better and better every day. Tell me, are you *sure* you are not just a little bit jealous? Nobody can ever take your place, Mother—my own little mother.

Thank you for saying that. You said I was with you all night. What did we do?

We were talking nearly all the time.

Were we here or in your Happy Land?

You were here, Mother.

Yes; but do you mean in my land or yours?

I mean in our Happy Land.

Was I asleep or walking about?

Why, you were walking all about here, Mother darling. Why, I showed you my horse and my garden; and you saw Jack, and he was so pleased.

But you once said you had stood at the head of my bed. Was last night the first time I came to you?

Oh no; sometimes I come to you, and sometimes you come to me. But it's all *here*.

And what did we talk of?

You told me I must not get so black, and then you brushed my hair; and just for fun I said, "Shall I have it all cut off, eh?"

And what did I reply?

You knew I did not mean it, so you only laughed and said, "You little scamp!"

Am I always happy? In the beginning didn't I ever cry?

Cry, Mother! When you were with *me*?

Then don't I know about your having left me?

No, Mother.

How soon after, did I come to you?

The next day.

Where did it happen?

You came here in my room.

Did I seem surprised?

Oh no, Mother; I think you told me it was dinner-time, but I forgot.

I suppose I kiss you a lot?

Yes, Mother; we always did kiss one another a lot, didn't we?

Were you astonished the first time I came to you? For I suppose you knew you had left me?

No, Mother; I knew you would come. But, Mother, you know I have never really left you—don't you?

APRIL 7TH, EASTER SUNDAY, 1901

Sunny darling?

I am *so* glad you are going to church, Mother darling.

How did you know I was going to church?

You told me so last night.

Where was I when I told you?

In my room.

Were you in bed?

Oh no; we were walking about my room, and I showed you all my pretty things. Oh dear, I *do* wish you could remember!

APRIL 8TH, 1901

What are the pretty things in your room?

I mean my books and games, and all the things I used to be so fond of.

What are you going to do to-day?

We are going for a ride this morning, and then this afternoon we are going to have some sports.

Then do I call you away from what you are doing when I speak to you like this?

No; but I could come directly. You see, Mother, I cannot explain how, but I am always with you, even, when I am riding, or at school.

I can't understand that.

How can I explain? I seem as though I have two lives, and yet I am only one. But I cannot make it plain any other way. Do you understand, Mother?

Yes; tell me something about your life, darling?

You see, Mother, I always tell you everything that I do, and everything is so beautiful that I have no words to tell you what it is like.

Do you remember—oh, do tell me—how I nursed you in your illness, and loved you and tried to get you well?

Why, Mother darling, you show me every day how much you love me. And don't you see that my illness was such a short one that it is not worth remembering?

But you do remember how I tried to get you well?

Yes, Mother; but God wanted me here.

APRIL 10TH, 1901

Now, tell me, have you ever talked to angels?
Angels, Mother!

Yes. Don't you know what I mean?

Oh yes, Mother.

Then why are you astonished?

Why, don't you know, Mother, that God is always sending his angels here, and we are always speaking to them.

I thought you knew, Mother darling.

Do they live in a different place to you?

They come from Heaven.

Can you send me a message from Uncle Charlie and Aunt Etty now?

(A pause.)

I asked him, and he told me to tell you to keep smiling.

Is that all?

Yes; and then he laughed.

APRIL 16TH, 1901

Now tell me, Sunny darling, how do spirits pass from one sphere to another?

You see, Mother, they have only to wish to be here, and they *are* here.

APRIL 18TH, 1901

Sunny darling, say something.

Mother, what shall I tell you?

Start as if you had gone away on a visit and were writing me a letter.

(Here the planchette, having written a word, scratched it out again, then started afresh.)

Oh dear me! I was going to write you a letter, and I forgot to put the address first, so I will start again—shall I, eh.

Yes, pet. Make a note of interrogation after eh, w^x you?

! Like that, Mother?

No, darling, that's a note of exclamation.

Oh, then—?

Yes; that's right. Now begin your letter.

The Happy Land,
Paradise Place.

MY OWN DEAR LITTLE MOTHER,

This is such a lovely place; you will enjoy it when you come. To-day we have been out for a long ride—grandpa, Aunt Etty, Murray and I.—We got back just in time for dinner.—After dinner Murray and I went out in our gardens . . . and then we had to do some lessons.—Dear Mother, do not feel sad about me; you know I am so happy, and God is so good. If you keep good you will soon come here; and then won't we have some jolly times! Give my love to Eric and Kay. I will write more another day. God bless you, Mother darling. With lots of love from your

OWN LITTLE SUNNY (GORDON).

Sunny, what a lovely letter! But you have forgotten *one* thing you always put at the end of your letters. Can you remember?

Do you mean x x x x x, eh?

Yes, darling—kisses. I did mean that. Now, are you tired?

I think you had better go to bed, little peach-blossom.

(Here the postman suddenly knocked at the door, and I said to Nellie, "I wonder, can he hear sounds?"

At once the planchette wrote, without being asked, the words:

"Oh yes.")

Sunny, so you heard me? Oh, you funny darling! What noise was it?

Bang!

But who made the bang?

Nellie said, "It is the last post." Good night. I am so, so tired, Mother.

APRIL 19TH, 1901

(We sat down to-day to the planchette, and asked Sunny as follows:)

Grandpa (you may not know, Sunny darling) had four wives on this earth?

Four wives, Mother! (Interrupting excitedly.)

Yes, darling. And which of those four wives will be his proper wife when they all arrive?

Oh dear me, Mother! What a muddle! I cannot tell you. Shall I go and ask grandpa?

Yes, do; and come and tell me.

(A pause.)

Well, darling?

I ran up to his study, and said, "Oh, Grandpa just fancy you having four wives." Oh dear, you should have seen him. Mother, I nearly bolted. And then he said, "Who told you that?" So I said, "Mother." And then he said, "Tell your mother I did not have them all at once; and that now I am going to be a bachelor and get some peace."

Was grandpa angry?

Why?

You said, "You should have seen him."

Well, Mother, you see he was so surprised, and he jumped up so quickly. First thoughts, I thought I'd better retire; second thoughts, I stopped. You know, Mother, no one ever gets cross here, but we are sometimes taken by surprise. And now good night, darling Mother. I am so tired.

CHAPTER XX

(No gaps occurred in our talks. We talked nearly every day for years. I have chosen conversations here and there from the records of the first eighteen months.)

SEPTEMBER 11TH, 1901 (MORNING)

Sunny, are you glad we're here?

Oh yes, so, so glad. Shall we have an hour's chat?

Yes, darling. Now, tell me, do you have letters and posts?

Oh yes, Mother, of course! How would grandpa get on without his letters?

Whom does he hear from?

I think, publishers.

Does he hear from friends too?

Oh yes, he knows such a lot of people.

Is my uncle, Col. George Money, with you?

No, Mother, I don't know him.

You don't! Oh, this grieves me. Where is he?

Perhaps he is in Heaven, Mother. Shall I ask Aunt Etty? Grandpa is writing.

Oh yes, do.

Oh yes, Mother. Aunt Etty says he went to Heaven just before I came here. Oh, Mother, Uncle George (your uncle, I mean) was here with grandpa; but shall I give you just a little explanation?

Oh do. I feel so sad, for it seems to me there are still terrible partings ahead of us, even in your Happy Land?

Well, you see, Mother darling, I know how much you love my darling brother Kay, but yet you let him go to

the seaside with Aunt Leila, because you knew how happy it would make him. Well, you see, you little pigeon, it is just the same with the two brothers, George and Edward. You see, my grandpa would not keep his brother back, because he will see him soon. Don't you see, Mother, the time passes so quickly here, it is only like a flash.

Oh, but it's a parting all the same, Sunny!

We know they are here all the time, Mother; but we cannot see them till the curtain is taken from our eyes, but it's only for such a short time here.

Oh, that's what they all say to one here, on this earth, when anyone dies, but it makes no difference. It's not short; it's long, long, long.

Oh, but it is a long time for you! Aunt Etty says when anyone here goes (you know I only say goes to make it plain) it is something like what you call Death, but yet it is *quite* different here. You see, there is no illness here, but when we are quite ready to "see God" we, like Uncle George did, throw off this body and wake up in Heaven.

Oh, Sunny, this is terrible news to me. It is just like our death. Oh, I feel I wish I had never been born. I did think when we left this wretched earth all partings were over, but now it seems as if it will go on and on, for ever.

Oh, Mother darling, don't, don't say "for ever." If you will only keep good, you will soon see me; and, Mother darling, no one is sad here when anyone goes to Heaven. Why, Mother, do you know that Aunt Etty was talking to me one day about Heaven, and she said, "You will always look out for me, won't you, Sunny?" But I said, "You will be in Heaven first, Auntie," but she said, "No." Then I said, "Do you want me to go to Heaven?" And she said, "Yes, oh, so much!" Yet, Mother, I know how much she loves me, but it is her love for me that wants me to go.

Doesn't anyone grieve when this second death takes place?

Oh no they are glad.

Couldn't you grieve if, in the spirit world, I went to Heaven and left you behind?

No, Mother, not a little bit, as I know I should soon be with you.

Oh, but that's the sort of consolation people offer one here; but it has never, never comforted me?

Oh, Mother, I mean they only go to sleep when they leave us here. I don't mean they go to bed for days and days. Oh, Mother darling, do understand what I say.

But, all the same, you do mean, darling, that, as with us, they "go to sleep," but that same body that lies down to sleep does not wake again.

Oh yes! they wake up in Heaven, Mother!

Ah, yes, that is what the Churches here tell us they do. Oh, it's all the same. It has broken my heart afresh. Can they talk to you when they are gone?

Oh yes, they could talk.

Could! Yes, if they had found out how, like you and I have. Sunny treasure, I can bear no more to-day. I must stop.

Yes, the hour is nearly up, but do let me explain, Mother. Well, now, just listen for a minute, and don't cry, darling Mother! You know how much I loved you, Mother, while I was on earth. Well, you see, Mother, much as I love you, I would not come back. Well, it will be just the same with you when you come here, if I am in Heaven. You will feel just as I feel now.

You mean I shan't want you back?

Yes, exactly.

Shan't I grieve? I *cannot* believe I won't, Sunny.

No, not a tiny little bit. They are always glad, Mother! And you must not cry and be sad, Mother. You won't be, when you come here, I know!

When I come to your world, will you be there or in Heaven?

I don't know yet, Mother. Are you happy?

I don't know. I think so.

Shure? No "thinks" about it?

I cannot tell you, my child. I must stop.

(I here left the table, and stood by the window in tears, and the planchette started moving very weakly under Nellie's hands alone (Nellie cried too), saying: "Oh, Mother—" but could not go on with Nellie alone. So I returned to it, and it finished:)

Oh, Mother, don't, don't cry. Why do you cry?

Sunny, darling, little Sunny, don't grieve about me. I am still only a poor mortal, and these mysteries are, I suppose, beyond my imperfect understanding. And so I cry, to contemplate another separation from you. More death, and my poor wounded heart fails me at the thought. Sunny, Sunny! I feel, I know it, you are crying too!

(A long silence.)

Child, tell me. Are you crying?

Not now, Mother, sweet. No, no, Mother, not now.

My loved one, don't cry. I shall get over it. I suppose I see now as through a glass darkly. When I leave this earth I shall see clearer, and understand? I will try and remember those words: that hymn . . .

(Planchette, interrupting before I could go on, and writing quickly:)

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings o'er your head."

Yes, Sunny! How often and often, this past fearful year and a half, have I clung to those words, and they have often calmed me. Now, my guardian angel, good-bye for the present. I shall soon be better. Tell me, you have cheered up?

Yes, Mother, yes. I have cheered up. Have you?

Yes, darling. Good-bye for the present.

SEPTEMBER 12TH, 1901 (MORNING)

Sunny, are you all right this morning?

Oh yes, Mother.

We tried to talk last night, but you couldn't.

Oh, I was so tired.

Why, darling?

Don't ask me, Mother.

Oh, do tell me, do.

Oh, Mother, I'm not a bit tired now. Are you happy?

Yes, darling, but oh, do tell me?

You see, Mother, it was because you were so unhappy, I tried to console you, and it made me so tired. Oh, Mother darling, you must not think when you come here you will be unhappy about me. You will be the first one that ever was unhappy if you are. When I told you once that this body of mine would "never wear out," I thought it was the one my teacher told me of. You see, Mother, my teacher always says, "when we throw off this veil." She doesn't say "body." So I thought it was this one. But my teacher says underneath this veil is my everlasting body. Do you understand?

You mean your present body will die, Sunny?

No, Mother, it will open, and I shall walk out into the Presence of God.

Then will the cast-off body be put into the ground?

Wait a minute while I ask my teacher. I don't want to make any mistakes.

(A pause.)

Yes, Mother, my teacher says, "Oh, yes, of course we do. We should not want to keep it."

It's just the same as our death, Sunny.

Don't say death, Mother. Say, rather, resurrection. There is *no pain and no sorrow*. And everybody is so, so happy.

Child, why do you write so slow and weak? I am happy now.

But you are *not*, Mother, you are *not* happy. Oh, Mother!

Nearly, darling, nearly.

Why, Mother, Mother, don't you see, if we were both together here, or on your earth, and then one day a letter came and said, "Dear Mrs. Maturin will you let Sunny come and stay with us? And I promise you he will be happy all the time," don't you think you would let me go?

Yes, but not to go for a long, long time.

But it is *not* for a long time. Why, Mother, you let Kay go to school for a long, long term, and it won't seem as long as that here.

Won't it seem longer than a school term?

Oh, no, Mother, not half so long as that.

Ask your teacher, doesn't anyone grieve? What does the poor mother do, who has been living with her child, tending him and caring for him, and buying his little clothes and toys, and then he is suddenly gone, and she sees him no more?

Wait a tick, Mother, I'll ask her.

Don't grieve, Sunny. I am only grieving because I can't see clear, like you can, darling.

Don't you see, Mother, if I am unhappy you would grieve. So how can I help it?

(A pause.)

Mother, darling, my teacher says no one grieves. They long for us to go.

Will your everlasting body be just the same to look at?

Oh, yes, Mother, curls and all! Mother, I am too tired. Good-bye for a bit.

SEPTEMBER 13TH, 1901 (AFTERNOON)

Sunny?

Oh, yes. Are we going to have a nice chat for an hour? Tell me something; something you have been doing, darling.

Let's think.

(A pause.)

You see, Mother, I do all kinds of things, just like other boys. Cricket, racquets, and lots of other games.

Well, shall I ask you questions?

Yes, please.

Well, then, tell me, don't people grow younger with you?

Don't you see, Mother, it would not do for my grandpa to be as young as me. Wouldn't there be ructions? And grandpa doesn't want to be as young as me. He loves to be as he is. And Aunt Etty says she is thirty-eight, but she only looks twenty.

No; she left this earth at eighteen, so she must now be thirty-three, not thirty-eight, darling. Do describe her.

She is nearly as tall as you, with fair wavy hair, bluey-grey eyes, and a tiny little mouth. Her nose is—well, rather straight, and if I put my hands like this, do you see? they would go right round her waist. (A ring made on the paper.)

Oh, it's all exactly like her, except the wavy hair, but perhaps she curls it? Her hair was a pale yellow, but not wavy. What is her greatest beauty, Sunny?

Her character.

I am so glad. Dear, dear little Etty! And in her face?
Her eyes, I think; but I am not a good judge.

Has she the same lovely skin?

Oh, yes; but she does not——

Yes?

Guess.

Paint?

Oh, yes, clever Mother.

She had no need to paint. Are her lashes long, black
and curly?

(I knew her lashes were not curly. I asked as a test.)

Not very curly, but long.

CHAPTER XXI

SEPTEMBER, 1901.

DID it harm you, Sunny pet, when we talked every day?

Oh, no; but I don't think I used to write always plain, did I?

Not always. Then in future, darling, we'll talk every other day.

Yes, Mother, but if in the—you know—the between days, you want to talk to me, don't think that I have run away, will you? I shall be with you all the time just the same.

And if I want to talk to you will you answer, pet?

Oh, yes, that's what I meant. I thought you would perhaps think I'd be too tired.

Oh, yes; don't run away!

Oh, but I can't!

Why not?

Why, Mother, don't you know we are, as it were, joined together in spirit?

Is it so with all mothers' and their children's spirits?

Oh, yes, where there is love.

Is it so with brothers and sisters?

It is the same, but yet it is different. Wait a minute, and I will try to explain. You know what elastic is, don't you? Well, when it is new it does not stretch so far, but when it is worn a bit it goes farther—it stretches farther and looser. Well, you see, Mother, the new elastic is like Mothers' love, closely woven together. But brothers' and sisters' is more like old elastic, stretched out.

That's a strange explanation, and very like your wise self, Sunny!

Oh, no wonder they call me a little philosper [sic], eh?

Did all that come from your own self, Sunny, or did your teacher tell you?

Oh, yes, straight from my *own* brain-box.

Did you say brain-box?

Yes; why?

You talk so quaintly.

Now, now, you little flatterer, just keep quiet.

Let me copy all this down, and give you a rest.

Oh, wait a tick. Let's talk a little bit longer. You see, Mother, I know you. If you stop to write it down you will be tired. I know you!

Very well. Tell me, have you see Eric at Margate?

I only saw him having his breakfast. Oh, Nellie, what did you say that for?

Darling, Nellie only said she was surprised you had not seen him more.

Does Nellie think I don't love him?

Oh, no, no. She knows you love him. Don't be so sensitive, my poor darling; and Eric loves you.

Yes, I know he loves me. But Mother, boys do forget their prayers. I can see that. Do you think he will be hurt if I say, "Darling Eric, you know how much I love you, but if you want to come to my Happy Land, oh, my darling brother, you must not forget your prayers."

I will tell him all you say. Is that all?

Tell him I won't ask him to talk to me, as he does not understand talking to me like you and Nellie, but all I ask him to do is to *never* forget his prayers.

I'll write all this to him. Are you sad?

You see, Mother, no one will talk to me with you—I mean except Nellie—and—don't be hurt, Nellie (as I love you), but you are *not* my brother, or my auntie, or my grandma. But when you come here, Nellie, I will thank you, and I will let you ride Towzer?

Do you ever cry, Sunny love?

Only when you are sad, Mother.

Well, don't be sad because I can't yet see you? Do you know, I never grieve over that? I seem to know it is going to happen, and I can wait till God gives you the strength.

Oh, I do love you to talk like that. Oh, you are the loveliest, best of mothers! I love you with all my big heart.

It always was the biggest little heart for love that ever beat! Now, fare thee well.

Oh, I don't like that much. Let's say, Mother (instead), "Fare thee well till to-morrow." God bless you, Mother.

OCTOBER 7TH, 1901

Are you here, Sunny?

(No reply for a long time, then suddenly replied:) Oh, yes, Mother, of course I'm here.

Why were you so long speaking?

A long time! Oh, Mother, was I? I was reading a book.

What book?

"Five Weeks in a Balloon."

"Five Weeks in a Balloon!" Why, that's an *earthly* book! Who is the author of yours?

Jules Verne.

But he is the author of ours! Where did you get that book from?

Why, it's *here*, Mother!

Yes, but how did it get there?

Oh, you are the funniest mother I ever knew! Why, don't you see—oh, dear me, how can I explain? We have everything here the same as you do, if it's for our good. Don't you see, There is Here (written large).

What do you mean?

Why, you say "there" as if it was a different place! None of us have gone *away* anywhere. We are all in your

world, like we always were. Only you can't see us, and we have all your things. Your world and ours is *all the same place*, but you can't see us, and we cannot distinctly see you, unless we love someone *very* much, like I love you. Then I see you plain.

Oh, I begin to understand.

Oh, Mother, you do look extra pretty to-night!

You funny pet! Do I? What colour is the dress I have on?

White, and your hair is so nice and curly.

It's white and blue; but I suppose you can't see the blue.

Go on, Mother. Talk. Don't waste the time. Oh, I forgot to tell you, I can't find little Winter.

It is spelt Wynter, darling.

Oh, I am sorry.

You can't find everyone who is there, I suppose?

Oh, no, of course not. Don't you see, Mother, there are such a lot of people. This is the World, like yours.

Just fancy, darling, I could smile to think what strange ideas I once had of the next life. I pictured those that died soaring up to the stars, far away from us.

Look! Did you fancy me like this?

(Drew here a curious picture of a child with wings. The child more like a bag tied in the middle and wings sprouting from the top. Forgot the arms.)

Sailing over the skies, Sunny?

(Nellie said, "It hasn't a very pretty face!") You just be quiet, Nellie. It is a pretty face! You wait a bit. (Started to try and improve it.)

Mr. Roe is coming here for a minute this evening. Will you talk when he comes?

Just as you like. I don't mind a bit; but, Mother, don't let him stop you talking to me altogether, will you?

Oh, is it likely I would allow anyone to do that?

Will he laugh?

No, I know he won't. But he does not believe in a future life, and if he could see you writing, I know he would.

Listen, Mother:

"Mr. Roe is a very nice man,
A very nice man is he,
But till he alters his . . ."

Mother, let me leave that line, and do the next, and then you fill in the missing word.

"He cannot come here with me."

Now, Mother, tell me what to put? You know what I mean. Something about *ideas*. No, I'll alter it, Mother. Listen.

"Mr. Roe is a very nice man,
And a very nice man is he,
But till he turns from his unbelief,
He cannot come here with me."

You clever Sunny! Oh, I want to tell you Eric has written to say it's all true. He did pawn his gold pencil-case and match-box. It is too wonderful. He never meant me to know. He is very sorry and very much astonished.

I told you he did, Mother. I saw him. God bless you, darling Mother. Good-night. Oh, you darling Mumsey! Listen first to this:

"I am a little poet, though I'm sure I do not know it."

"Fare thee well, the best of mothers;
Give my love to both my brothers;
Tell them that in all the world,
That they ne'er will find another
Half as kind as my sweet mother."

That's all. Do you like it? Am I clever, Mother?
Oh, very, Sunny, and it's all very like you.

OCTOBER 9TH, 1901

Have you found little Leslie yet?

No, Mother.

Nor someone else like Mr. Frost?

No, but I'll try and find someone. But, Mother, you see they do laugh at me so, and say, "What! Got another bee in your bonnet, Sunny!" I think, Mother, they think——

Yes?

That I'm a little bit off my——

Yes?

My cranium!

Oh, how very amusing! So it's just the same with you as it is here! I believe lots of people think I'm off mine. But tell me, can't everyone in your Land see those they love here?

If it's to make them happy, yes. But some can, and yet it does *not* make them happy; but why they think I am a bit off my cranium is because, when I first came here, I used to say I was sure you would speak to me soon, and I was always speaking about you. So they think (of course this is in confidence) that I have got "mother" on the brain. But I don't care one bit what they think or say. Do you?

(Postman—Rat-tat.)

(Nellie went to letter-box.)

Darling, a letter has this minute come from Kay, with one enclosed for you.

Oh, do read it—quickly!

(I began reading the letter out loud, and in it Kay said: "Do you remember, Sunny, what we used to say on a cold night when one of us was still undressing, and the other snug in bed?")

Darling, before I read what it was Kay says you used to say to each other, before I even *look* at it (it's over the page), tell me yourself what it was. I will lay the letter under a book.

(I did so, and as what followed was over the page, neither Nellie nor I saw it.)

Don't tell me, Mother, but let me think.

(A pause—a long pause.)

Have you thought?

Yes. We used to say, "Me nicey warm. You nasty cold."

Very well, darling. I'll look now.

(It was true! These were the very words in Kay's letter. Only he had written, "Me nice *and* warm." I read it out to Sunny.)

Mother, we didn't say "nice *and* warm," but "nicey warm."

Didn't you? I'll write and ask Kay, for that would be interesting.

(I have written to Kay. Note that this is the first I ever heard of the two children having said this, and that Nellie had never known Sunny, not having come into my service, or even heard of me, till after Sunny had passed over. We also lived in different towns.)

Now we must stop. I'll keep Kay's letter and read it to you ever day, Sunny. Shall I?

I'll tell you when I want you to, Mother.

Don't you like it?

Yes, Mother, but it makes my heart get in my mouth. I love him so.

OCTOBER 10TH, 1901

Darling, do you want to finish your letter to Ronald? Shall you think it selfish if I say, "Let's have a little chat first?"

Oh, no. I like it. Let us talk of Jesus Christ to-day. We have not, for so long.

No, Mother, but I do wish you would.

When did you see Him last, Sunny?

To-day, Mother.

What did He say?

"Well, my little lad, how are you progressing?" And I looked up and said, "I am doing my best," and then He patted my head and said, "My brave little Lamb. Keep doing your best." Oh, Mother, when I think of how kind and good my Jesus is, it makes me long for the time when you and Kay and Eric and Father will know and see Him as I know Him.

Does He live in your world?

Don't you see, Mother, it is all one (world, I mean), but we cannot always see Him; it's the same with us here, seeing Jesus, as it is with you seeing spirits. It's only when the curtain is lifted.

OCTOBER 11TH, 1901

Sunny, did you see anyone with me this afternoon?

Yes. Who is he?

It was Mr. Piddington, of the Psychical Research. Could you see him, Sunny?

No, not distinctly.

Well now, I want you to try and keep Mr. Piddington in sight this evening, and tell me what he does. He asks it.

Oh dear me, what a task!

And, darling, he says, will you try now and help other sad people? You know how happy you have made me and——

Oh, yes, I think I have. You tell me! Have I? (Excitedly.)

Yes, indeed you have. So now will you do all you can to put other people into communication with their spirit friends?

Oh, yes, Mother, I will try; but I am *only* fourteen years old, you know. (Sadly and slowly written.)

Now, darling, please try and find Mr. Fred Myers, or Mr. Henry Sidwick?

Oh, yes, I will. But I have been looking for Mr. Myers. You know you asked me to, some time ago. But our World here is as big as yours, Mother; towns and countries.

Can you find Mr. Sidwick?

Sidwick?

Yes.

Tell me again, Mother.

Sidgwick.

No, I mean, is it spelt Sidwick?

No, Sidgwick.

Oh, I will remember.

And now don't forget to follow Mr. Piddington.

Yes, I will try and keep my eye on him. No, I can't see him, but I will try and find him. I will ask my teacher to tell me. But I don't love him, you see, like I love you, and that makes it difficult.

Have you found anyone else, like Mr. Frost, that I've never known?

Not yet, but I will. You see, Mother, there are such a lot of people here that cannot remember about their life before they threw off that earthly cloak. I think it is because they have either been unhappy, or else it is that when they first come here they long so to talk to their friends that it spoils their life here. And so God blots it all out from their eyes. You know, Mother, Miss Mitchell told me that, when I asked her.

SATURDAY NIGHT, OCTOBER 12TH, 1901

Sunny, my darling. I have been at Tonbridge all day, and on my return found those spirit photographs here, sent from Mr. Stead, to whom the photographer sent the proofs (for we did not wish him to know who I was, or where I

lived). Well, darling, the amazing part of it is, that *you* are not in them—but Aunt Etty is! Almost the best portrait of her ever done!

Oh, Mother! Oh, Mother! Joy!

Ask her, does she know anything of it?

Wait a tick, Mother.

(A pause.)

Oh, Mother! poor auntie! She nearly always cries when I talk of you to her. She said: "Oh, Sunny, I am always trying to get near your mother (my darling sister). I used to think perhaps she will persuade *my* mamma to speak to me." So, Mother, auntie said she dare say she was there, but she does not remember. Mother, can you put the photo on the table for me to see?

(I did so.)

Can you see it, darling?

No, Mother, not properly. Show it to me again to-morrow. God bless you. I'm tired.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13TH, 1901.

Sunny, ask Aunt Etty to come here. I want to speak to her.

All right, Mother. Tell me, quickly.

(A pause.)

Is auntie in the room?

Yes, Mother, here we both are.

Ask Aunt Etty is it she who is in my photo?

Let us see that photo first, Mother.

(I placed it flat on the table. He wrote he could not see it unless I put it upright. I did so.)

(A pause.)

Oh, yes, yes! It is, it is my auntie! Oh, Mother, it is! Oh, do go again, and see if you can get one of me! (Violently excited. Planchette fairly dancing.)

I will, darling. I, of course, knew it was Aunt Etty, but just ask her to tell me herself is it her?

Aunt Etty says: "Of *course* it's me."

Sunny, I have thought of her half the night. The sudden and unexpected sight of her beautiful face in that photo has astonished me beyond expression.

Oh, she gets more beautiful every day. Don't you love to look at her? And don't you feel glad I have got her to look after me? And to keep me in order? I am such a wild harum-scarum.

Oh, yes. Can you see her face plainly in the photo, Sunny? (Oh, I am glad indeed she is there to look after you!)

Oh yes. But I can't see yours. Why did you smudge it?

I haven't, darling. I only stuck a bit of paper over my face because it is so bad of me, especially beside my beautiful sister! Now, please ask Aunt Etty to send me some message to prove to others (not to me) that it is indeed her.

Wait a tick.

Well, Sunny? Yes?

Auntie Etty is thinking. But, Mother, I will tell you to-morrow. God bless you. Oh, I will try and come in the next photo, shall I?

Oh yes, do, darling. Oh, I am so happy. Are you?

Oh yes, I am so, so happy, Mother!

Do thank God, darling, as I have done, for all these wonders.

Oh, I do, Mother; but you know God is good, don't you? Oh, Mother, I do wish you knew Him as I do!

(Soon after this conversation I arranged mentally with Sunny to try and come into another photo Mr. Boursnell was to take of me. We settled that if Sunny could not

make himself clear in the photo, he was to stand at my right side and stretch out one arm towards my shoulder. No one but Sunny and I knew this. When the photos came home, there, on one, was a very shadowy figure of a *child*, with one arm stretched out to my shoulder, but no features visible.)

OCTOBER 19TH, 1901.

Are you happy, Mother darling?

Well, yes, as happy as I ever am now. I went to Tonbridge to-day, darling. I did your grave, and I went to see Murray's too.

Yes, Mother, Murray told me. You see, Mother darling, I explained what you told me to——

That's a long time ago.

Oh, yes, I know it is. I explained to him about your attending to my grave, and that it was not for any want of love that *his* mother didn't attend to his. She is so far away. But I chanced to tell him yesterday that you were going to see mine to-day, and I suppose that made him watch his to see if you went to his.

Oh, I see. Poor little Murray! Now, darling, what have you been doing to-day?

Oh, you see, we have a half-day off to-day, and so we, directly after school, went out for a row on the river. Auntie Etty went with us, and we had our tea on the water. We have only just come back, and now Murray and I are going to have some larks. I expect you'd think me a tartar if you knew, so I don't think I'd better tell you.

Oh, you must! *Do!*

Oh well, if I must, I must. Only don't scold me, will you?

No, I promise.

Well, this morning, before anyone was out of bed, Murray and I crept down quietly, and we have made a hole in a door, where Jane sits, big enough to put a string through. We have got the string pushed through a bit of cork, and

Murray is just pulling it through the hole, and then we shall hide behind the side door, and when Jane goes to try and go out, to go up the stairs, we shall pull the string, and the door will shut. Oh dear me, Murray says, Mother, he thinks we had better do both the doors. He will be at one, and I at the other.

Yes. But we don't quite see what will happen.

Oh, you funny Mother; don't you see, when she (Jane, I mean) goes to run upstairs, directly she opens the door to come out, it will shut again!

But wouldn't it be best to tie the string to the handle?

Oh yes, but we have done that before. They know that dodge. And, you see, by having the hole, they can't see the string.

But they wouldn't see it, if it was tied to the outside handle.

Oh no, but they guess. And, you see, when the string is at the bottom of the door, they don't notice it. But I'll let you know how it answers. This is a new trick.

You funny boy! I am so amused. And it all's so very like you. Nellie and I are laughing! Tell us now, Jane's surname?

Oh, I don't know. Shall I ask her? Wait a tick. She'll think I'm up to some mischief.

Oh yes, do ask her all about herself.

Oh yes, she says her name is Sanders, and that she passed over in a fire, at a place called Boscombe.

Ask her, is it Boscombe or Bournemouth?

She does not know.

Oh, poor, poor Jane. Was she all burnt up?

Oh, you funny Mother! Of course she was not all burnt up! Why, that was only God's way of bringing her here. Now for some poetry. Don't interrupt me, Mother:

"Sunny is a little boy,
He is so fond of kisses,
But to his mother all he gives,
And not to little misses."

Well, I'm glad to hear that! Now, if we don't stop, Nellie will be locked out of her room.

"Run away, Nellie, and put on your hat,
Don't make a mistake and sleep on the mat,
But get into bed and go off to sleep,
Wind up your clock, but don't sleep a week!"

The end. To be continued.
Thank you, oh, so much! Good night, Sunny!
Good night, Mother-of-Pearl!

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27TH, 1901

Sunny, what were you doing when I sat down to talk?
Washing my grubby hands, Mother darling!
How did you get them dirty?
Playing with Pinkie.

The kitten?

Yes, and then we are going to church.

Who takes you?

Sometimes Aunt Etty, and sometimes Uncle Charlie.

What's the name of your church?

Christ Church.

Are the churches the same as ours?

Oh no, Mother, not the same service. You see, we always have thanksgiving services here.

What for?

Why? Don't you know, Mother? Why, thanking God for all His great love, and all His goodness to us.

Is everyone glad to have passed over?

Oh yes, of course.

Even those who have been wicked?

Oh yes, it is, as it were, one stage nearer Heaven and God.

Sunny, beloved, is it wrong of me to dislike Church? I can't help it, but from my earliest years I have disliked worshipping God in public. I am shy.

Oh, that makes no difference, if you try to keep good.

We used to be taken as children to sermons of almost three hours long, or so it seemed to us.

Oh, dear, I should wriggle. Three hours! Oh dear me! I must go now. I shall lose my train to Westfield.

Oh no, you won't, Mother.

OCTOBER 28TH, 1901

(Father Maturin and a friend of his (a Roman Catholic), and Mr. Piddington, of the S.P.R., all arrived, and had a conversation on spiritualism. They then sat by, while we used planchette.)

Darling, has our conversation upset you?

What do you mean, Mother?

Oh, never mind. I am glad you have evidently not heard it. Have you?

No, Mother darling. Was it wicked? I was not attending.

Wicked! No, my sweet. But it would perhaps have distressed you. For Father Maturin was giving his Roman Catholic views on spiritualism. Now, listen: Father Maturin says, Who is here?

I am; Sunny, Mother.

Father Maturin *will* have it, that this may not be you at all, but don't let that distress you, for it's had no effect on me; nothing he has said has altered what I think, much as I like him.

But, you know, Mother, that our God is love, and He would not allow an evil spirit to come between you and me when He knows how much you love me.

(Here a short conversation was held in the room about my sister's spirit photograph. Our hands rested on the planchette, and we had forgotten our hands were on it, when it suddenly wrote:)

Mother darling, *what* do you mean? I *do* live with my auntie!

I didn't say you did not, Sunny darling. All I said was, that you had told me you didn't know how Aunt Etty got into that photo.

(Here apparently, in high spirits, he began with the bit of rhyme about Mr. Piddington's tea that I have already quoted. Mr. Piddington was sitting on a sofa a little apart from us, and I found that I had quite forgotten to give him a cup of tea. Sunny had noticed it, and was trying to remind me.

Sunny darling, Mr. Piddington says, can you tell us what it written in his note-book?

(Planchette, dancing with fun:)

"Oh, dear me,
I really can't see,
Dear Mr. P., what can it be?
Is it a mouse, or is it a clock?
Dear Mr. P., don't give me a shock!"

Oh, Sunny! Now, stop joking one minute, and tell us, can you see it? (It was the word "mouse.")

I can't see, Mother.

All the same, you clever boy, you mentioned *a mouse*.

Oh, I do love praise, Mother!

Sunny, pet, where is Father Maturin?

Sitting at the side of you, Mother, isn't he?

Do you remember his coming here before?

Oh, yes. Shall I tell you what I said?

Oh yes, do.

No, I won't now.

(I got violently red, for I remembered that Sunny had said that time: "Oh, Father M.! He worries me, Mother!")

Well, never mind! He says: What's the time by his watch?

I can't see his watch.

Now it's face down on the planchette. Could you tell us the time?

I will try. No, I can't see.

Father Maturin says he thinks you don't like him? Do you?

A little bit, Mother. You know I love everybody, but some more than others.

Where are you standing?

At your right hand.

Are you standing on the top of Father Maturin, then?

Oh, no fear!

But there's no room for you to stand between him and me.

Oh yes, I can. Mother darling, why doesn't Nellie talk? Is she ill?

No, she's only shy. Sunny, tell us now: Whom do you use most in writing?

Nellie and you. But, Mother darling, don't be hurt if I tell you something, will you?

Oh no, I promise.

Well, you see, if you were away without Nellie, I could write best *with* Nellie, as she is *so* patient.

I am not hurt, darling. I know it's true. Now, Mr. Piddington says, could you write with Nellie alone?

Yes, Mother, but don't hurry me up. Mother darling, I did not mean to hurt you. (Planchette turned to look at me.)

Oh, you didn't hurt me, pet. Now, tell us, using planchette through Nellie alone, your second Christian name, which Nellie does not know.

Charles Gordon Maturin (your Sunny).

Yes, right. Now Kay's names?

Kay Maturin.

Oh, I mean his other name.

Jap.

Oh dear, you funny darling! That's his nickname, not his real name. Can't you remember his other name?

Oh yes, I do—Bagot.

Oh no, that's Eric's second name, not Kay's.

I don't know, Mother.

(Kay's second name was never used nor written, it being really his first name, and one I did not use as his name. William Kyrle are his two names.)

Well, now, tell us something you recollect with still only Nellie's hands on—something only you and I know. Tell us something with Nellie's hands alone. Some word or name she never heard.

Mount Vernon.

(Name of a bungalow we had in the Himalayas, when he was about five, and never heard by Nellie.)

Splendid! Good night, darling.

Good night, Mother. I am so tired.

OCTOBER 30TH, 1901 (10 P. M.)

(A few very short answers to our inquiries: "Are you here, Sunny?" rather worried me.)

Sunny! What's the matter? Are you cross?

Oh no, why? You funny little Mother! I was reading. Fire away.

Darling, I am in such constant trouble about money, and have to rush about so, it give me no rest and no time.

Oh, I wish I could give you my four pounds. Listen, Mother darling:

"Mother's troubles,
Sunny's joys,

She had to look after three troublesome boys,

But Jesus said, 'Sunny, come home with me here,
You never shall know any trouble or fear.'

But mother is sad. Sometimes this I know,
But Jesus says, 'Sunny' . . ."

(A long pause.)

Go on, Sunny.

Oh, I must finish it presently. Let's have a chat.

All right. Will you tell me again the name of that pretty book you said you have been reading?

Oh, yes, "Archie's Chances."

Oh, I see. How nice. What are you doing to-day?

Rowing?

Is winter with you coming on, or is it always, with you, summer?

Spring, summer—spring, summer, and sometimes lovely winter.

CHAPTER XXII

OCTOBER, 1901

SUNNY?

Yes, Mother?

Are you tired? You write weak, my darling.

I am sad, Mother.

What about? Me?

I was thinking about your worries and troubles, and then I thought (only for half a minute, though), why does God allow my darling mother to have such an unhappy life? And then, Mother darling, I thought: "Why, it is only fitting her for her life here with me." Mother, don't forget that even in the darkest hour God and your little boy are watching over you. So cheer up, God loves you, and so do I.

Oh, darling, you sweet, sweet darling. Are you happy now?

Oh yes, now you are, Mother.

Do you know, little Cyril can move a pencil on his mother's table with no one touching it. Could you?

I will try, but, Mother, don't, don't call him here! Let him speak to his *own* mother.

Indeed, I won't call him. I love all children, but I don't really want him here.

Yes; but you do love me best? Don't you?

Best! I don't "love" him at all, for I have never known him. How was it, Sunny, that you couldn't even see him that day?

I could only feel his spirit was here, Mother.

You can do lots of clever things Cyril can't. He can't kiss his mother like you kiss me.

Oh, I do like you to say that. (Delightedly.) Oh, I do love praise!

Kiss my cheek now, Sunny.

(Planchette was raised, and stroked my face. Then wrote rapidly:)

There, Master Cyril, you can't do that!

No, that he can't. Sunny, the doctors here wouldn't let you do so many things because of your weak heart. Are you now allowed to do anything you like in the way of exercise and fun?

Oh, yes, no one to say: "Now, you must take your overcoat." Do you remember how you used to always make me take mine?

Yes, my poor darling. Do you remember your last illness?

Oh yes, and how cross I used to be.

No, no. You were very patient. You are but a child.

It seems to me (written in a dreamy sort of way) that just as I was slipping out of my old earthly body I saw you, Mother, kneeling on the floor crying, and I could not comfort you, and you hid your face behind a screen so that I could not see you crying.

(All true.)

Yes, dear darling. Do you remember anyone else in the room?

Only you, then. But someone came and knocked at the door, but you did not let them in.

It was Eric, darling.

Oh, Mother, was it? I did not know. (Sadly written.)

Would you rather not talk of your illness?

I don't like to think about it, Mother.

Just tell me you were happy and well at once after?

All the pain was gone, Mother, and I was free, but not happy. You see, Mother, I could see you, oh, so sad and unhappy, and I could not make you see me, and you would not speak to me. But, Mother darling, that was my punishment for being so naughty to you.

Sunny precious! Oh, you were never naughty.

Do you know, Mother, I used to dream about coming here? And I know now that I ought to have told you. And then you would not have been so unhappy at my coming here. I used to see this beautiful Happy Land *every night*, and although I know now it was my Auntie Etty used to talk to me, I did not know it then. She used to say: "Tell your mother you are coming with us soon, Sunny." But, Mother darling, don't blame me for not telling you, as I thought it would make you unhappy.

Oh, Nellie, he knew it all beforehand!

Oh yes, Mother, I knew I was coming here, a long while ago, when we were in—I forgot the name.

Where, darling?

With Miss Lewis (the children's governess).

Miss Lewis was with us in Dum-Dum (Bengal), Darjeeling and Dalhousie. Do you mean any of those places?

Yes, I mean India, Mother.

Yes, They are all in India, darling. Tell me, did you at once recognize Aunt Etty?

Oh yes, as soon as I saw her.

NOVEMBER 11TH, 1901 (4.30 P. M.)

(Mr. Piddington arrived.)

(Suddenly before we could even speak:) Is Mr. Piddington going?

Not yet, darling, but we won't talk to you till he's gone.

(After Mr. Piddington had left, 8.30 p.m.)

Mr. Piddington is gone, Sunny.

Oh, what a—blessing!

Oh, darling, how unkind!

Is it rude, Mother?

Well, it might be if you meant it; but I'm sure you are joking, for that was just your way. He sent you his love, and apologies for not having talked to you.

Oh, tell him to pray not mention it, as I am very glad.

Oh, Sunny, Sunny! Naughty boy!

No; but, Mother, I don't mean to be unkind, but I do love talking to you best to ourselves. I'm shy.

Have you any news of Mr. Myers and Mr. Sidgwick?

Not yet, but you must be patient; I will try to find them for you, but you must not hurry me up. This is a big World, you know.

Can you fly, Sunny?

Fly!

Yes. Can you?

Oh no; did you think I had got wings?

No; but I thought you could travel from place to place rapidly.

My spirit can.

Oh, I see, and not your visible body? Does your present body (your new body) know all your spirit does and sees?

Oh yes.

What surprised you most on first dwelling in your Happy Land?

Nothing, Mother.

Nothing! But, why, it must all be different!

You see, Mother, I had seen it so often in my sleep.

I think I understand; but do you know, darling, though you now imagine that (as you said last night) your earthly self knew you were to leave me, I expect it did not really know? It was your spirit knew.

Oh no, I know it was my spirit; but don't you see, Mother, my spirit *is me*.

I expect we shall all be the same?

Oh yes. No one is surprised, Mother.

Weren't you struck and delighted with all the beauty?

Oh, yes; but, you see, I knew it was beautiful before.

Do tell me something of your first few days there?

(His writing grew suddenly weak when I asked him to tell me something of his first few days in the spirit world. This *always* happens when we talk of that time. It seems to 'awake sad memories.)

Sunny, were those first days so unhappy to you?

Yes, Mother, because you were sad.

Dear one, don't think of them then.

I try never to. Good night.

Can't you write any more? Are you sad now?

(No reply to this; only a weak little ring made on the paper with a dot in the middle, which always means a kiss and good-bye.)

NOVEMBER 12TH, 1901

(Began suddenly, before we had time to speak or even think what to ask:)

Oh, I should think it would kill *me* if you were to stop talking to me. Mother darling, you never will, will you?

(He must have heard a previous conversation I had that morning with Nellie, in which I said if anything happened to stop these talks, it might kill me.)

I promise I never will, darling, not through any fault of my own. Now, my boy, tell me, was I unkind to little Cyril that day? I have felt sad about it, and Mr. Piddington thinks if I had let him stay a few minutes he would soon have gone.

Oh no; don't, don't don't. (Excitedly.) You know, Mother, I thought he had come to stop. Don't let him come again, will you? Let him talk to his own mother. I don't talk to his mother! (Indignantly.)

Very well, darling. Now I want to tell you of an offer I have had. Mr. Stead——

Oh, wait a minute, Mother. Do you know, Mother, Eric did say his prayers this morning.

Did he? He's in Cardiff.

Oh yes. He had not said them for rather a long time, Mother, don't be hurt if I say something? Well, Mother, don't ask Eric to speak to me when he comes home. If he *asks* to speak to me, let him, but not unless he does.

Don't be hurt with him, darling, for he loves you dearly. I did ask him, but I will not again. These things are of no value unless they come quite spontaneously.

No, Mother; he used to look worried when you asked him, and go like this (planchette gave itself a violent twist as of impatience); and it used to give me such a jump. Do you see?

But he does love you so much, darling. Indeed he does.

Oh, I know he loves me, but he doesn't know what to make of this. He's a Doubting Thomas, as they say.

NOVEMBER 13TH, 1901

Ask Uncle Charlie where will wives that are left on earth come in, if husbands love someone else now?

Oh, Mother, Uncle Charlie says: "When they come here they will find somebody else for a husband." Shall I ask grandpa if he is going to get married again?

Yes, do.

(A pause.)

Grandpa said: "No fear, Sunny. Not if I know it."

Well, that's flattering to his other wives! He's joking, I suppose. What is Uncle Charlie doing, now, this minute?

Out riding with Clarissa.

Describe Clarissa Mitchell.

She is very pretty, but not as pretty as my auntie. Mr. Frost thinks my auntie pretty, I know.

Is he in love with her?

Oh yes, I think so. You see, we are all in love with her, but—oh dear me, how can I describe what I mean? You see, we are all relations, and love one another, and so love to be together; but, oh dear me, when others come in, they do not like being all together. *They* like being alone.

What *do* you mean, darling?

Only that Mr. Frost always likes to get Murray and me out of the way, so that he and Aunt Etty are alone. Oh dear me, Mother, I was just thinking of something, but I won't tell you now.

Oh, but do.

You won't be cross with me, will you, Mother? But, Mother, I don't know if I ought to say it. Well, when you come here you won't fall in love with somebody and tell me to go out of the room, will you? Like they do?

No, indeed I won't, Sunny, nor want to, my darling child. I am so sorry for you being bundled out so often.

Oh, but I like it; but I should not like it if it was you, Mother darling.

I never, never will. I shall want only you and your brothers when we all come. Now, I will copy all this.

Oh yes, Mother, I am feeling a little bit tired. But oh, I am so happy! I have wanted to ask you for such a long time not to fall in love with anybody directly you came here.

But, darling, I want only you. Who should I fall in love with?

No one in particular; but you see, Mother, you might.

NOVEMBER 14TH, 1901 (EVENING)

Tell me again, darling, what made you so tired to-day?

I had been trying so hard for Kay to see me yesterday. Now tell me why did you ask me again, you funny Mother?

Only to make sure it was you both times. Visitors here have such a lot of theories about one's subconscious self,

they upset me almost as much as Father Maturin's sometimes, but not for long.

Are *you* going to be a Doubting Thomas? Eh, Mother?

You see, Sunny, this subconscious self can apparently do everything a spirit can, and more, so that I began to think the people who hold these views can never arrive at the truth this side of the grave.

It is nonsense, don't you think, Mother? Oh, do tell me you do? I feel like saying: "Bother these people." You see, Mother, they are so funny. They are all like this. Fighting in the dark; and when they come to a bit of light they paint it all over black, and then they are in the dark again.

That's very clever, Sunny, and I think it ought to be (in some ways) the motto of some of these Doubting Thomases.

Don't you think it's true? Eh, Mother?

Well, yes, Sunny, certainly sometimes.

What are you laughing at, Mother? Listen now.

"Good-night, my precious little pet.
I love you much, but still, but yet.
When you come here, my darling mother,
I'll love you like an elder brother."

NOVEMBER 15TH, 1901

Darling, I am going to Greenwich to see grandma. Tell Aunt Etty I am taking her spirit photo. Grandma wants it. Tell her.

Auntie Etty did not say anything, Mother. She only kissed me.

Oh, I wish I were Aunt Etty.

Oh, I don't.

Don't you wish I could be with you, like she is, Sunny?

Oh yes, but I don't want you for my auntie. I want you for my very own mother.

Is your weather fine to-day?

Oh yes, it is lovely. Christmas will soon be here.

When I am with you again, Sunny, I shall fill your stocking for Christmas, like I used to.

Stockings! Why I don't wear stockings. I wear *socks*. (Indignantly.)

But you do have stockings for football. I didn't mean to insinuate that you are in short trousers.

Oh yes, and I'll get a good long stocking. Won't that be lovely?

NOVEMBER 15TH, 1901 (EVENING)

Sunny dearest?

Yes, Mother darling. Tell me first, why are you so sad?

Many things make me so, darling. People talking of their subconscious selves, a little annoys and other times amuses me, and I have other troubles. Oh, but I could never grieve you, worrying you with all my petty and some big troubles.

Oh, you are a darling, sweet little pet. Oh, I do love you, oh, so much, Mother. Am I selfish to want to talk so often? I cannot help it if I am. God has placed my great, great, great love for you in my heart, so I don't think it can be wrong. Eh, Mother?

Never think it can be wrong, my darling.

Oh, you little pigeon.

(EVENING, SAME DAY)

Sunny, I want to tell you I've had such a kind, good letter from Mr. Hamborough, and he says he is so sorry if anything he has said has caused me grief.

He has such a—what shall I call it, Mother?—such a disturbing influence on you—and on me. And it's all such nonsense to doubt this is me, Mother. Who else could it be?

Yes, but he does not wish or mean to. At any rate, he is not coming now for ten days.

Oh, what a releef! [*sic*].

Wrongly spelt, Sunny, but you spell very well, I think. You always did spell so very well; you had such an ear for music, and that helps; but I don't think now you make many mistakes.

Why, yes; I am nearly fifteen. I ought to spell well.

Oh, but we'll call you thirteen, till I come to you. I want to meet the little boy I lost for a time. Tell me, are you sure you won't grow? Some spirits say they do, but very slowly.

Yes; don't you see, I don't *want* to grow till you come here, Mother darling.

Then if you wanted to grow, you could!

Yes, of course!

Then you have stopped yourself growing?

Nö, not me.

Who did it, then?

Jesus knows what I love best.

Tell me, weren't you really surprised the first few days?

Oh no. You see, I knew all about it.

Yes, I know; I understand.

Mother darling, I am so tired. Oh, I wish I were as strong as Samson!

(When he began Sam— I knew he was going to say "Sampson," and I watched to see how he would spell it. I tried to will him to spell it with a "p"; but he wrote it "Samson," as he did once before.)

AT CLOSE COTTAGE, TONBRIDGE, NOVEMBER 21ST, 1901

(LAST DAY)

Sunny!

Yes, Mother darling; are you happy?

I'm not so unhappy as I thought I would be, for I know when I leave this spot to-morrow I don't leave you; for it's not you, is it, in that dear little quiet corner under the big tree?

Oh, no fear!

Sunny, can you remember your form master, Mr. Walker?

No, Mother, not much.

Nor anything about your schooldays here?

Sometimes I do, but I like these schooldays best. Are you hurt?

No. I quite understand. I suppose there are many more grown-ups in your land than children?

No, I don't think so. You see, Mother, the children come here quickly.

Do the children go straight to the Happy Land? All of them?

I don't know. I did.

Do any of them go straight to Heaven?

Oh no, Mother darling; I don't think so. What about Mr. Hamborough, Mother? Is he very cross with me because I don't like him coming to upset us?

No. He understands. Tell me now, do you have a sun that sets and rises as with us?

Oh yes.

Does it grow dark and stars shine out?

Oh yes.

And I suppose you have lamps and candles?

No, we have electric light.

Fancy! You seem to have the best of everything! Free wheels and electric light and——

(Sunny, interrupting quickly :) And motors!

Oh yes. Does everyone have motor-cars?

Some people like motors and some like horses best, but I like——

Yes?

Both.

Has grandpa a motor-car?

Mr. Frost has. We all ride in it.

Then, are some people richer than others?

Oh yes, some are. I have got £5 2s. 6d. saved up. But everybody is happy with what they have got. You see,

Mother, grandpa must have more than me, or how should I get my pocket money? And I can't do without my 1s. 6d. a week. Or how about your pony?

Oh, that dear pony! How I long to see it, Sunny!

Mother darling, I wish I had not told you what I am saving up for.

Oh, I'm glad you did.

But it won't be a surprise now. (Sadly.)

Oh, but I like to think of it waiting for me.

Oh, but you are going to choose it, but I am going to be your—banker!

Thank you, so much. But how shall I get money for other things when I come?

Why, it will be here.

You have banks also, then?

Oh yes.

Do they ever fail?

Oh no; I expect they do in the Land of Retribution.

Have you ever been there? No, Mother, and I don't want to.

But you once said you went there to comfort people.

Yes, but I was meaning (now I mean) the Land of Retribution, where people have not tried to give up doing what they know is wrong. Of course, Mother, you know there is Retribution One, and Retribution Two. Hephzibah is in Retribution Two.

Which is the worst—One or Two?

One. I never went there.

Oh, then she has moved up? Gone up one?

Oh, yes.

Will the next stage be your Happy Land? Poor Hephzibah!

Oh, yes. She could come here now if she would only be good. But, you see, Mother darling, she *likes* to be naughty sometimes.

Which of the two places did you mean you sometimes went to, to comfort others?

Where Hephzibah is.

Do you see her?

No, Mother, I don't know her.

How do you go? In a balloon, or a train, or how?

My spirit goes.

Is it dreadful there?

Oh, no. Don't you see, the *place* is all right, but it is the people that won't do what they know is write [*sic*].

Yes, you funny little speller?

Mother darling, I think the best way for me to describe it is to say—when people are on earth, and keep doing what is wrong, they seem as though their conscience must be dead. But when they have passed over, it wakes up again, and that is their punishment.

NOVEMBER 22ND, 1901

(Back at the flat in London.)

Oh, darling, do you know the furniture is still in dear Close Cottage?

Yes, I heard you and Nellie talking. Mother darling, don't, don't let that man come here.

What man, darling?

You know. I don't know his name.

Do you mean the man that called this evening, and who once came with Father Maturin?

Yes.

Why don't you want him to come?

Why, he's worse than any of them, Mother!

How do you know?

Why, I heard you and Nellie talking about him. Don't let him come. I know if he does—I was going to say he will make you doubt. Don't, don't let him come. Promise me. You don't want him to come, do you?

He shall never come again!

Oh, what a blessing!

Aren't you very glad that dear little Close Cottage is still mine?

Not particularly.

Oh, Sunny! But why?

I am only glad for your sake.

Sunny, how you would love Mr. Stead!

Why? But of course I would.

Because he so absolutely believes this is you.

Oh (excitedly), do let him come here, Mother, and talk to me, will you?

Shall he?

Oh, yes, and I will love him.

I am going next week to Mr. Boursnell to be photographed again, and if you are in it I shall go mad with joy.

Oh, don't go mad. I don't want a mad mother! God bless you. You know I love you with all my heart, don't you?

(I never got Sunny into any photo except the *once* I described.)

NOVEMBER 23RD, 1901

Darling, I have been crying to-day, thinking of my poor brother Aurelian, whose young wife died very suddenly of heart disease, and he is crushed with grief. Oh, can you find your auntie for me? Is she there?

No Mother, she is not here near me, but I will try to find her.

How?

Ask everyone here, Mother, and ask my teacher to ask everybody. Mother darling, cheer up! Auntie will be quite happy. Mother darling, God's hand seems very hard just now on poor darling Uncle Orelun. (This name written slowly and with great hesitation—spelt entirely wrong.) But God's ways are not our ways, and some day you will know the reason of it all.

I love you to talk like that, Sunny!

God bless you, Mother darling! I do love you, and I do thank you. (We thought the last word was "you.")

Oh, don't thank *me*, Sunny darling.

(The planchette here lifted itself back to the word we believed to be *you* (indistinctly written) and scratched it violently out. I said, "What's the matter?" He scratched at the word of three letters again, until almost obliterated, and re-wrote it, slowly and large, and we found it was *God* (not *you*), *i. e.*, "I do love you, and I do thank God.")

(Sentence continued:) Every night and all day long, for giving me such a good, sweet mother, because I was such a scamp.

Oh, don't say that, beloved!

Do you mind my stopping now? I am a little bit tired, Mother.

Oh, no. But tell me, why are you suddenly tired?

God has answered my prayers, and put it in your heart, and made the way clear for you to talk to me, and soon to see me. Mother darling, my heart to-night seems nigh to bursting.

Oh, you dear pet! "Nigh to bursting!" You wrote that before, too. How like you!

What did you use to call me before? Eh! Mother?

When? And what, Sunny?

You know. When we were in India, Mother. I mean when I used to bring out something queer.

Oh, tell me. I called you so many things I can't remember, Sunny!

"A quaint little bundle." Don't you remember?

Oh, yes, I dare say I did, Sunny, for you always were most quaint and old-fashioned, and yet such a rogue and full of fun! Tell me, why is your dear heart "nigh to bursting?"

Joy, happiness and love. Good night. Tra-la.

NOVEMBER 28TH, 1901

Tell me, have you and Murray had any fun lately?

Oh, yes; we all went out in the (Mr. Frost's, I mean) motor-car yesterday. I should think it was fun! Have you had a ride in a motor?

Not yet.

Oh, dear, you should have heard us shout! I shouted louder than any.

Who went?

Murray, Tommy, Mr. Frost, Uncle Charlie (of course, Miss Mitchell was with him. They are inseparable), Auntie and myself.

Who drove?

Why, Mr. Frost; he is the boss.

Could your motor come to grief if you went too fast? No. But you should have heard Uncle Charlie. Oh, he is artful, Mother. You see, Mr. Frost sat in front. I sat beside him, and Miss Mitchell and Uncle Charlie sat just behind, and then, Auntie and Murray. So, when Mr. Frost spoke to Uncle Charlie or Miss Mitchell, Uncle Charlie would say, "The man at the wheel must not talk or look behind, or else we shall all be blown up."

Could you be blown up?

Oh, no. We know what Uncle Charlie means. It is only a polite way of telling us not to talk to him. We understand him now.

Oh, how lovely it must all be!

Go on, Mother (delightedly). Ask me something.

Did you go through towns or country?

Country.

I suppose it's very lovely?

Don't you see? It's just the same as yours. But,
no——

Yes?

No mud, and nothing ugly here.

But our country is not always pretty!

But it would be, if you could see it as we do!

I begin to understand, Sunny, that the change to your life is not in the world itself, but in us.

Only just found that out, Mother? Of course.

I hope you enjoyed your motor-ride, darling?

Oh, it was lovely? There was only one thing wanted to make it perfect. Can you tell me what it was, Mrs. Mother? Eh?

No, Sunny, what?

Mother, father, brothers, etc. Oh, I was all the time thinking of my own darling mother. Oh, dear . . . no I won't say it! It was only fun. Have we had a nice chat?

Shall we stop now?

You see, Mother, if I talk for a long, long time, I get so tired, and my teacher told me not to.

Oh, I see, I understand. She is quite right.

But you don't think I don't want to go on talking to you?

NOVEMBER 29TH, 1901

Sunny, I've heard from Mrs. Laney. Cyril tells her— But do you mind me talking of him?

Oh, no, but you won't bring him here?

Oh, no; he tells his mother you wouldn't let him talk to me!

No, I should think not! He would not let *me* talk! Tell him to talk to his *own* mother.

He tells his mother you "were so cross."

I was not cross, but I was afraid you would love him best.

Oh, how could I? He loves his mother.

Yes, but he does not love *you* like I do. If ever meet him I'll say, "Look here, Cyril, I'm quite willing to be

chums, but don't you ever try and talk to my mother again." Of course, I mean, *till* you come here, Mother. *Then* he can talk, if he likes, all day.

NOVEMBER 30TH, 1901

Sunny, I woke at 4 a. m. last night. It was very dark, but I thought I saw something move. Was it you?

Oh, we were together. Don't you see, Mother, we are nearly always together, but it is only in the night that you can see me.

What did we do last night when I came to you?

Oh, why? Only just ordinary things.

Did we ride together?

Oh, no, Mother, you have not got your pony yet.

Do tell me what I do when my spirit visits you at night, Sunny?

You talk, and you read, and you do—you know—just the same as ordinary people do.

How strange! I seem to lead a double life!

Double? Why?

I expect when I come to you nothing will seem strange to me? I shall recognize everybody and everything?

That's just as it was with me. You know, Mother, when I first came here, the only thing that surprised me was that you, and Kay, and Eric and Father did not understand me. Don't you see, Mother, what I mean?

Not quite.

Well, nothing here seemed strange to me, and I could see you, and Eric and Kay, but neither you, nor Kay, nor Eric, would speak to me at all, or kiss me, and that was the only thing that was strange to me till my teacher (whom everybody calls Love) explained to me, and said, "Little Golden Hair, your mother will soon understand, and then she will hear and talk to you." Oh, darling Mother, don't you think I am writing quick? Are I clever?

Yes. Beautifully! ! You feel much more able to write in the mornings like this, don't you?

Oh, yes. I am so strong.

NOVEMBER 30TH, 1901 (EVENING)

Sunny? You ought to be an author! Look here what do you say to writing a story for me?

Oh, yes, I will! You darling Mother!

Will you begin now, at once?

Oh, yes.

(Story begun by Sunny, and continued at intervals for years, as related elsewhere.

After half an hour at the story he asked to write Mr. W. T. Stead a letter, and he began very eagerly.

He ended his letter thus: "From your unseen but grateful little boy friend, Sunny, the little boy of Mrs. Maturin and Colonel Maturin, fourteen years old." He added kisses thus: x x x x.)

How delighted he'll be, Sunny.

Oh, I am glad! Do you think he'll mind my calling myself his friend?

Oh, no.

Let me address it, Mother. Give me an envelope, will you, Mother?

(He then addressed the envelope thus:

MR. STEAD,

Editor of paper somewhere in London, W.)

DECEMBER 6TH, 1901 (MORNING)

Sunny darling, Mr. Stead has written you a letter.

Oh, do read it, please. But tell me first what did he say about mine?

He was delighted, and said it was the first you had written him, but he hoped not the last.

Oh, yes. Will you let me write to him sometimes, Mother?

Of course, darling. Now, shall I read his letter?

Oh, yes, I am waiting.

First he has addressed the envelope, "Master Gordon Maturin ('Sunny')." "

That's right.

(I then read out the letter.)

Oh, what a lovely letter, Mother! But why does he say, your grateful friend?

Because he is so good, so kind, such a true Christian, Sunny.

Mother darling, do you ever feel such—— Oh, wait a minute, don't hurry me. I don't know how to say what I mean. I mean an indiscribable (spelt wrong) feeling in my heart. It is a feeling of love and joy and thankfulness, all mixed together, and I cannot find words to mean all I feel. That's how I feel about dear, kind Mr. Stead. But, Mother, we must both thank God as well, because you see it is God that has sent him into your life, to be the instrument in his hands to help you. You know, Mother, I told you some time ago that "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform."

Yes, darling.

You are not jealous because I love him, are you?

Oh, no, my child. No. How could I be? He deserves all the love that you can give him. Uncle Aurelian is in such grief over the death of his wife, and he wants me to come out to New York for a time.

Are you going? If you do—do, do, do take Nellie. Promise me, do.

Of course, and Eric and Kay. Oh, tell me, have you met your Aunt Emily?

No, Mother, but perhaps she is in my Happy Land, but I have not seen her yet.

Are you happy, Sunny?

Yes, but wait a tick. Don't burn my letter from Mr. Stead, will you?

Oh, no, I never could. Shall I always keep it on my bedroom mantelpiece, and read it to you whenever you ask me, Sunny?

Yes, please. But I should like you always to keep this one; you see it is the first. I feel so happy and proud of it. Are you happy, Mother?

Oh, yes. Shall you mind Mr. Stead coming here?

Oh, no, no, no. You see he is not a Doubting Thomas.

No, indeed. Thank God there is a man in London who can believe, after such evidence as you have given, and yet is not to be at all easily convinced. Mr. Piddington says he believes now it is you. You are getting so clever. You will soon be far beyond me in all knowledge, Sunny!

Now, now! (Delightedly.)

In a year or two I think you might write some wonderful book through my hand. Would you?

Oh, I will try, but I am not so clever as you are.

Next time you'll continue your story, eh?

Oh, yes; but you must not guess. Go up one, Mr. Piddington!

CHAPTER XXIII

DECEMBER 12TH, 1901 (MORNING)

DARLING, will you write your letter to Mr. Stead?

Oh, yes; can I?

"DEAR MR. STEAD,

"Oh, you are a dear, kind man to write me such a lovely letter. Thank you, oh, so much for it. Oh, yes, I should love you to come and talk to me with my darling mother. Will you come one day, please? Please do come. I will ask my teacher to tell me a lot of things to tell you, and we will have such a nice chat, shall we? Oh, I am so glad you love ponies! You shall have one all for yourself when you come here. But if you like my Towzer best, I will let you ride him. Oh, dear Mr. Stead, I do wish you could come here to me, and then you would see everything as I see it. Oh, dear me, I can't help laughing sometimes, when my mother asks me such funny questions. So God bless you, dear, kind Mr. Stead. Try and come to talk to me soon. I do love you, and will always remain your loving and grateful little fourteen-year old friend,

"SUNNY GORDON MATURIN.

"Kisses O x O x 25."

What a beautiful letter!

You are not vexed with me for wanting to finish it, are you, Mother? You see, I thought Mr. Stead would think me very rude if I made it too short. Kisses, Mother, x O x O, 3,000.

Why, only 3,000! You've gone back!

Not three—five, Mother.

Oh, I see. Let me——

(The planchette raised itself in the air, stroking the air, as it were, which I understood to mean, "Let me kiss you." I bent my face, and he stroked my cheek over and over again.)

I do love you, Mother, with all my big, fat heart. Kisses 5,000.

And I love you, Sunny.

DECEMBER 14TH, 1901

Tell me, Sunny, child of mine, do you ever see Jesus or the angels now?

Yes, Mother darling; never mind.

Oh, what is it? Tell me?

Do you want me to stop in our Happy Land till you come here?

Oh, what do you mean?

You see, Mother, when God sends his angel for me, he will take me some day to Heaven. But you won't mind, will you?

Oh, but will you be able to talk to me, Sunny?

Oh, yes; and I will be stronger and stronger.

Oh, but are you going soon?

My teacher said, "Some day God might want me."

Oh, it will be like losing you again!

Oh, no, Mother, you won't. It will be better for you, and better for me. Don't you understand?

Will you get ill and die?

Oh, no, you funny little Mumsey. It is only like having another curtain taken from my eyes.

Will you change your body?

Mother, darling, you must not speak like that, or cry, and you must not be sad. I won't, and I don't *want* to go to Heaven if it is to make you unhappy. Don't

you see, Mother, it would not be Heaven to *me* if you were unhappy.

And need not you go if you don't want to?

Oh, no. Don't you see, that's the difference here?

What happens exactly?

Why, just step out of this body, that's all.

Don't you leave this earth?

Oh, no; what a funny mother you are. Next time I write to Mr. Stead, I shall tell him that. Why, Earth, Happy Land and Heaven is all one! Don't you see what I mean? It is only that we see it in different lights as we go on and get better.

But I don't like you to leave auntie and grandpa.

Oh, perhaps auntie will be there first. And perhaps we shall all be there together. Whatever is best for our happiness we shall have, and now are you happy?

Happier, darling.

But are you *happy*?

Yes. Do you swear, Sunny, you will still be able to talk to me from Heaven?

Oh, yes. My teacher says I shall be able to talk all day long.

DECEMBER 15TH, 1901 (SUNDAY MORNING)

Darling, will you know before you go to Heaven, and tell me first?

Oh, yes, of course, Mother; but it might not be for a long time yet.

Who will tell you?

Jesus, Mother. My Jesus.

(Very slowly and reverently written.)

And He will tell you a long time before?

Yes, Mother. But why do you speak in that mournful, doleful tone?

Because, one's ideas of Heaven are *not* happy, comfortable ones, and I don't like to think of my Sunny floating on a cloud with no home.

Oh, you are a funny mother! I think there ne'er was such another!

"Search the wide world o'er and o'er
All over the land and down by the shore!"

Oh, Sunny, you funny darling!

But, Mother, now to be serious. You must not think like you do about Heaven. Why, how could I be happy if I did not talk to you? As soon as I know, I will tell you. But do cheer up! Why, anybody would think I was going to the Land of Retribution!

One thing more. Will everything in Heaven be the same as in your Happy Land? Or will you float on a cloud and sing hymns?

Oh dear me! Oh, stop a tick, Mother. I think I shall burst myself laughing. Oh, what should I do with Towzer? I should have to put him on my back and float (oh, dear!) about with him. I wonder if I should get very tired?

Then all is just the same? Houses, ponies, clothes, shops, trades, professions?*

Oh, yes! Don't you see? Heaven, Happy Land and Earth is—ONE.

(Written very large and impressively.)

Oh dear, you do make me laugh, Mother!

Sunny, is God, then, a real Person, and lives in a palace like other Kings?

* Several mothers I have met, tell me that before they ever met me, they had conversations with their children and others who have passed on, who gave the same descriptions of the after-life that Sunny gives. They confessed, however, that they were afraid to tell people of the *naturalness* of the life, as described by the children. This is a great pity. I believe many others, who write and speak on this subject, have the same hesitation, and will only give those parts of what they receive, which are in accordance with the orthodox ideas of the after-life. I would earnestly beg all writers, mediums, etc., to give exactly what they get, and so help to dispel these old errors for ever. The Truth is all we want. And courage to tell it.—E. M.

Oh yes; just like King Edward the VII. I think so. But I've never seen God yet, and I don't know everything.

Somehow it seems almost irreverent to picture God living in any way like us.

But why?

He seems so far beyond us in every way.

So He is. God bless you too, Mother. Kisses x O x O
7,000.

DECEMBER 16TH, 1901 (AFTERNOON)

Do you know, darling, why we are so late?

Why? Is it because Eric's come home? Dear Eric?

Yes, darling.

I saw him, but he does not say his prayers, Mother; not always, you know. My own dear brother.

(Written *very* slowly.)

Are you sure? Do you know I found him saying them last night?

Oh, yes, I saw him last night; but he forgets sometimes.

I talked to your two brothers this morning at breakfast, Sunny, and told them you said it was no use to go to God only when we wanted something.

That's right, Mother. I'm glad you told them. You know, Mother, Kay never forgets his prayers; and you don't, do you?

Never, darling.

And do you pray for me, Mother?

Always, just the same as when you slept beside my bed in your little bed.

That's right. Here's a kiss for you—O.

Do you know, Sunny, that I still say "Gentle Jesus," just as I did when a child, and have all my life, only now I turn it to, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Look upon each darling child."

Listen, Mother:

'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
He cares for me, His little child,
Night and day he keeps me . . .'

Oh, dear me, Mother, I thought I could make it a rhyme, but I can't. Bother!

I knew that I had never heard that version before. So it was your own! Had you any particular reason for asking me if I prayed for you? Are you in trouble?

Oh, no, but I've often been going to ask you.

And do you pray for me?

Oh, yes. Of course.

And Father? And brothers?

Oh, yes.

Mother darling, do read me my letter!

Oh, your letter from Kay, of course. I'd forgotten it for two days. Shall I read you his to me first?

Oh, let me have mine first, please, Mother.

(Letter read.)

Oh (very excitedly written), will he speak to me to-morrow?

Yes; and he's going to live at home now and will often talk. Are you glad?

Yes, oh yes. My brother Kay, and Eric too!

Won't it be lovely?

Yes, lovely; and now read me your letter, please, and I will be very much obliged.

You queer, little, old-fashioned boy!

(Letter read.)

Darling, does that letter from Kay, anticipating all his Christmas fun with his cousins and brother Eric, does it make you wish to be back here?

Oh, no fear!

(Very rapidly written.)

Really? You would not come back even to a life of constant pleasures?

Oh no! Not for a thousand pounds.

Not for a thousand pounds! How happy you must be, Sunny!

I love you all; you don't think me unkind, do you, Mother?

No, no, never. When I think of you so ill in bed that terrible Christmas, crying at times because you could not share their fun, and how I cried with you, and for you, and how my heart bled! Oh, my boy, I could thank God, and I do!

But this makes up for it all, Mother; and much as I love them all, and much as I love you (and I do, I do love you; do, do believe me!), I cannot—I cannot wish anything was different, and you know I love you with all my heart!

I know you do. Oh, what a world of joy must yours be! Tell me, in a few short words, if you can, where the wonderful difference comes?

Love! Everything is love! Love! Love! Everything is love! Are you glad?

Glad, oh, yes, yes!

And are you glad God is taking care of me, Mother?

Yes. It is my one comfort.

And—are you glad God called me here, Mother?

Sunny, what can I answer to that? Would it make you happy if I were?

Oh, yes; it would be the crowning of my happiness. Only *don't* say it, if you don't mean it.

I'll try and answer you quite truthfully, Childie. There come times, my darling, when the troubles of the world press on me, and I see it pressing round your brothers, and then I think of you, so cared for, and so happy, that I have thanked God for taking you. Once I never dreamt that hour could come on earth.

Oh, thank you, Mother, darling! (written as if in frantic excitement). Thank you, oh, so much! God bless you for ever and ever—6,000 kisses for my darling mother.

DECEMBER 19TH, 1901 (EVENING)

Sunny, are your Christmas holidays beginning?

They have begun, Mother, darling.

Are you going to have a Christmas tree?

Tommy is. I am too big. Why, I am turned fourteen!

Well, I don't call that a bit too big for a Christmas tree! What sort of fun are you going to have?

Oh, all kinds! Parties, dances, theatres, theatricals and everything you can think of. Don't you wish you were here?

Oh, yes! If Eric and Kay were there, too. What pantomimes are you going to?

I don't know yet, Mother.

What pantomimes do they have?

Puss in Boots, Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp, Bluebeard, The Forty Thieves.

How wonderful, having theatres and plays like ours!

Oh, you are funny! Kisses x O x O x O 9,000.

DECEMBER 20TH, 1901 (MORNING)

Darling, I'm worried because in the morning there's so much noise, and in the evening you are tired.

Never mind, Mother. I will try to talk in the evening; but never mind, if you can't talk to me every day, I understand.

Oh, Sunny, I can't be happy unless we talk *every* day.

But you do believe that I love you with all my heart, Mother? And will you tell me again, Mother, that you are GLAD GOD CALLED ME HERE? (printed very large).

I am, darling, for your sake.

And because I tell you I would not come back even if I could, you do not think it is because I do not love you with all my big fat heart?

No, Sunny. Kay is in the room now. He has some flowers off your little grave pressed into his Bible.

Has he? And when he looks at them does he think of me?

Oh yes; but he does not want that to remember you by.

Oh, no, of course not. I do love Kay, and Eric, too.

Nine thousand kisses. No, no, no! 10,000.

CHAPTER XXIV

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21ST, 1901

SUNNĪ, darling, Mrs. Laurie was here yesterday, you know, whose little son is in your land. She's asked me to ask you, are children as closely linked to their fathers as to their mothers?

Oh, wait a tick, and I'll explain. You see, Mother, I love father a lot, but I love you a million times more; so my spirit is, as it were, joined to yours; but if I loved father a million times more than you, my spirit would be, as it were, joined to father. Don't you see? The ruling power is LOVE.

Darling child, you make me so happy. I am so selfish but I can't help feeling glad you love me best of all.

Oh, Mother, I love you to say that, and it is not wrong of me to say I love you better than even my father. You see, Mother, it was God that placed this wonderful, overwhelming love for you in my heart. I could not help it if I would, and would not if I could. I love you, I love you—a million times I love you! I love you!

CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24TH, 1901

(Westfield, Wimbledon Common)

Oh, I forgot, Sunny, there's a letter for you from Mr. Stead, and another for me.

Oh, what joy! Read it! Quick, please!

(Letter fetched.)

Are you ready, darling?

Yes, please.

(Letter read.)

Oh, Mother, that is a lovely, lovely letter! I do cheer you and comfort you, don't I, Mother, darling? Like Mr. Stead says?

More than I can tell, far more.

Now tell me.

Tell you what, beloved?

What Mr. Stead says to *you*, Mother.

(Letter read. Great emotion evinced directly he replied. As usual, when much moved, the writing suddenly became weak and slow.)

Darling, do you like it? Isn't he kind and good?

Wait a tick (very weak).

Dear one, don't be sad. I almost feel you are crying. Are you sad?

Oh, no. Oh, Mother darling, do, do thank God for sending you such a dear, kind friend!

Sunny, I do so every day of my life. Does God——

Yes, darling, go on?

(A pause, and then he carried planchette back and scratched out "Does God" and began again.)

Do you know, Mother, I can hardly speak. My heart is bubbling over with joy and gratitude to God, and dear Mr. Stead.

I feel just the same.

And, Mother, you are (oh, do say you are) **GLAD GOD CALLED ME HERE?** (printed large).

Dear child, I am glad for your sake.

And you know how much I love you, Mother?

Yes, I do. And you do not think I don't still love you as ever, because I say I am glad for your sake that God called you to Him?

Oh, no, it crowns my happiness. God bless you, Mother, darling. Oh, I am so happy, but so tired. Kisses 11,500,
o x o x o x.

WESTFIELD, CHRISTMAS DAY

A happy Christmas, Sunny.

Are you having a happy Christmas, Mother, darling?

Yes. Have you had a lot of presents?

Oh, yes, such a lot.

And are you to have a party?

To-night? Yes.

My sweet, are you tired?

Are you happy, Mother?

Yes, darling, fairly.

And ARE YOU GLAD GOD CALLED ME HERE, MOTHER?

Yes, darling, for your sake.

And you know that God is love, Mother?

Yes, I do, indeed. And *you* are happy, happy, Sunny?

Yes, yes, yes, Mother. Quite, quite, quite. Kisses
12,000.

WESTFIELD, DECEMBER 26TH, 1901

Darling, tell me all about your fun yesterday.

(No reply.)

Darling, do tell me?

But I feel so selfish to have enjoyed myself so much when you were so sad (slowly and mournfully).

Oh, my boy. My one comfort was thinking of you at your party, having games and fun.

Oh, yes, we had Blind Man's Bluff, and Snapdragon, and Musical Chairs. In the afternoon we played hockey, and in the morning went to church, and finished up last night with a dance.

Oh, what fun!

Do you know what yesterday was, Mother?

Why, yes, Christmas Day. What else was it?

Why, my Jesus' birthday. (Very slowly and reverently written.) Didn't you know?

Yes, darling. Though perhaps we none of us think of it enough as that. Did they preach of Him in church? Do you have preachers and pulpits?

Yes; and they always preach of Jesus and His love.

Do angels come to your services?

No, Mother.

But you sometimes see angels?

Oh, yes, Mother, darling.

Now about the angels? *How* do you see them?

Don't you see, Mother, that is our reward for being extra good. Don't you see, Mother, darling, they are always here, but we cannot see them. It is only when our eyes are opened for a time that we can see them. It is just the same with you. Cheer up, Nellie! There is no toothache here!

Nellie is so pleased. She has been in pain, but better now. Now, pet, are you happy?

Oh, yes, quite, quite; and don't you be sad any more, or else I shall have to give you a lecture as long as this—

DECEMBER 30TH, 1901

Dearest child of mine, tell us how you first saw an angel.

(A long pause. Then slow and weak.)

Do you know, Mother, darling, the first time I saw an angel I thought I was dreaming. You see, when auntie used to come and talk to me before I passed over, I used to think she was an angel.

Oh, I understand. Now tell us about the real angel.

The angel looked at me and said: "My little one, are you quite satisfied with your life here?" And—I nearly cried, as you see, Mother, darling, everything here is, oh, so beautiful, and everybody is, oh, so kind to me, it seemed, oh, so naughty to say: "I was not quite satisfied." But I could not say yes, as I can never be quite satisfied till you come here. Then the angel said: "God bless you, my darling child. You will soon be satisfied." And then I said: "Please, please do tell me if my mother is coming here, as I have got one big and one little brother for her" (*her* suddenly scratched out) "for my mother to look after, and I could not be happy for them to be left alone? And then the angel said: "God has still a work for you to do here before you see His Face" (very slowly and reverently written), "and then you will know what it is to be satisfied."

Sunny, how beautiful! What were you doing when the angel came?

I was playing with my kitten in my garden.

But how did the angel come?

Oh, you funny Mother! Why, the angels are *here*! It is only that our eyes are opened to the beauty of Heaven.

Yes, I know that. But, all the same, can't you describe me how it all occurred?

I was just larking about, and when I looked up, I could see the angel standing near me.

A man or a woman?

A man, Mother; but I like to say "an angel" best.

Had he wings?

Yes, Mother, two.

Made of feathers?

Oh, no, not feathers. Oh, dear me!

Why do you say "Oh, dear me?"

Because you said "feathers," Mother!

But, darling, all the wings I have seen, have had feathers. But not angels' wings. They don't.

Well, do describe me what the wings were made of, Sunny!

Something like fine, cob-webby silk which stret—
Oh, dear, tell me how to spell it, Mother.

Is it stretched?

Yes! Stretched all over its body, except the head and face.

Oh, how very beautiful! I do love to hear all this! And yet it seems to make you sad to tell me; and I can't understand it!

You know, Mother, angels are lovely. But I want to be your Sunny (very sad and slow).

Darling, what *do* you mean?

I don't want to be an angel yet (very sad and weak).*

Darling, are you sad?

And you do love me best like I am, don't you? Eh, Mother?

Oh, yes, yes. More than a hundred angels!

Oh, that's right (quicker). And you will always love your romping schoolboy, won't you?

SUNNY'S BIRTHDAY, JANUARY 27TH, 1902

Sunny, my sweet birthday boy! Have you remembered it is your birthday, precious?

Oh, yes, of course! I am fifteen to-day!

Many happy birthdays, darling.

Why do you cry, Mother? This is the happiest birthday of my life, Mother.

Oh, thank God! I have longed to greet you hours ago, but could not take dear Nellie from her work. You were not pained?

* Knowing my little Sunny as I do, I realize that he has a childish idea that I may think less of him for not yet having arrived at being an angel.

Oh, no, of course not, Mother. Please thank dear Nellie for me.

Sunny, did you see me cry over your little face in that group this morning?

I did not see you cry, Mother.

I wish I had not told you. How selfish I am! I never will again. It would be fearful to feel I have darkened your happy birthday. So let us forget it! Many happy returns of the day, my darling one.

Thank you, Mother, darling! Don't cry! I am so happy! And I don't like you to cry when I am so happy!

Darling, this little chat has cheered me. Can you see the snowdrops and violets in water by your photo, and the card "From mother, on her darling's birthday"?

Yes, thank you, Mother, darling, so much.

I wish I could give you a present, Sunny? We will talk again to-night, and you shall tell me what I can do to give you most pleasure on this your birthday! And may each one be happier than the last.

Amen.

Yes, darling, amen, till we meet. Amen to every beautiful, and lovely, and holy, and good wish a mother's heart can wish for you! And now God bless you. Shall we talk again this evening?

Yes, please, Mother. Yes, we will have a nice little chat, shall we?

Yes; and now spend a happy, happy birthday, beloved little boy, who came to me this day fifteen years ago!

SUNNY'S BIRTHDAY (EVENING)

What's the matter, Mother? Why are you sad?

Mrs. Burton's dear little baby is dead, Sunny.

Dead, Mother! You mean alive. And are you crying because of that! Why, I think it is a lovely way of celebrating my birthday! To think that the little darling baby

has passed over here, to be loved and taken care of, and kept quite free from pain. Don't you think so?

I know all you say is true. I am a queer creature, I fear. I have so long (all my life) regarded death as a terrible thing, it's not easy now to look at it as a beautiful thing.

But, Mother, what other way *can* you look at it? Don't be sad, Mother! Why are you so sad, darling Mother?

Because you are not here.

But I *am* here, Mother!

Well, I can't see you, Sunny.

Now listen, naughty little Mother:

"Trust God more, and worry less,
And then I know soon you He'll bless."

Shall I see you soon?

Oh, yes, you will!

A letter has come for you from Kay.

Oh, do read it to me quickly.

(Letter read, greeting him for his birthday, and ended with: "I won't say good-bye, as I know you'don't like it.")

No, I don't, Sobersides! Did it come *by post*, Mother?

Yes, darling.

Oh, how lovely! (excitedly).

(This is very characteristic of him. He thought so much of a "letter by post.")

We have been so busy, Sunny!

I've seen you.

What did you see?

(He raised the planchette, and started violently, hammering the paper.) (We had just got into a new flat.)

What do you mean, Sunny?

(Hammering repeated, and then he wrote: "Bang, bang!")

Oh, you mean putting up the pictures and shelves?

Yes, like this (hammering repeated).
 The rooms here are so nice, Sunny.
 Which is Kay's?
 Well, first, can you see the flat?
 Not plain, Mother.
 Well, *this* is the sitting-room, darling. Then Eric's.
 Oh, yes, I know.
 Yes, and the second room from here is Kay's.
 That's all he wants! Somewhere to sit and draw in.
 And be quiet and nice.
 The end room is mine, Sunny.
 Yes, I know.
 How did you know?
 I saw you there saying your prayers.
 Did you?
 And then I knew it was your room.
 Darling, will you always kneel by me where I say my prayers?
 I do wish you could see me, Mother (very slowly and sad):
 Darling, will you?
 Yes, Mother.
 And which side will you be?
 On your left side. Close to your heart. God bless you
 Mother, darling. Kisses, a million.

FEBRUARY 1st, 1902

(Began almost before we could get our fingers on.)
 (Oh, dear! oh, dear! that Towzer is a tartar, Mother!
 I have been riding to-day on Winkle, and just now we
 heard a snorting at the window, and there stood Mr. Towzer
 outside, with real tears in his eyes. So then I walked
 up to have a good look at him; but he pushed his dear
 old cheek and his dear old nose up to me, and looked, oh,
 so sad! So then, Mother, I fussed him a bit, and said,
 "Cheer up, old boy. I am not going to love Winkle the

best, so don't be sad." So then he trotted off to his stable, *smiling all the way*. You would have loved to have seen him, Mother. You love ponies, don't you?

Oh, yes, I should think so! Can Towzer leave his stable when he likes? Isn't it locked?

Not locked. No one would steal him. Not in our Happy Land, Mother.

Sunny, I love you to tell me (all of your own accord) little incidents like this of your daily life! Why did you ride Winkle to-day? And who was sitting with you when Towzer came to the window? And is it evening with you now? There are three questions to answer, darling.

Answer first: "Just for a change." Answer second: "Auntie, Murray and Sunny." Answer third: "It is evening."

Thank you, Sunny! I wish you'd always answer questions of that sort like that!

Oh, but I am only a little boy!

CHAPTER XXV

APRIL 12TH, 1902

I HAVE lost 10s., Sunny!

Again, Mother?

Yes! Twice in one year.

Oh, I wish I could give you 10s. of mine.

Never mind. I am grieving because I wanted money to buy some coloured clothes with, as you hate black.

Yes, it's horrible. It's so hard.

What is hard, darling?

Mr. Black!

How do you mean hard?

Dark—gloomy—horrible—thick. My teacher told me a long time ago that if my mother would stop her mourning spirit, and her mourning clothes, she would soon see me.

Oh, why didn't you tell me?

I didn't like to. It seems that I am always asking you to do something for me. I am so greedy.

Oh, Sunny! I love to do things you ask me.

But I don't like to seem selfish.

Oh, do ask me things!

Will you leave off Mr. Black, then?

Yes, darling, when I can get the money for new clothes.

Oh, but it's coming. My teacher told me. Don't you remember I told you? God will give it to you. When it comes, will you leave off black?

Yes, pet.

Thank you, oh, so much. Not dingy black any more.

Would you like me to buy a blue dress?

Oh, yes, please. Do. But would you like it, Mother? But not dingy black any more. I'm not dead. (Planchette rose and stroked my face.) God bless you. Are you happy?

Yes, darling.

Ask me, Mother, if I'm happy?

Oh! Are you happy?

I am happier than I have ever been in my life. And you will soon see me when you leave off Mr. Black. Hip, hip, hoorah! I like the roses.

What roses, pet?

Yes; in your hat. Last week.

Oh, have you seen them?

Yes, but not many—two.

Three, darling. One is behind.

I only saw two. Haven't we had a heavenly chat?

APRIL 14TH, 1902

(To-day Sunny answered a letter his cousin, Lorna Boustead, wrote him. When I placed a black-edged envelope for him to address, the planchette suddenly startled us by giving it a little push, and then wrote on the sheet below, "Oh, that horrible black. Not that dingy black. I don't like it." So I fetched a white envelope. Sunny also asked me midway in his letter to Lorna, might he tell her how he was looking forward to Raoul (her brother) going there; but I said he had better not.)

(*N. B.*—This is the boy cousin whose "death" he predicted, and who passed over some five years after this conversation. The boy had had a short illness when Sunny predicted his death, but was quite well again, and was at Sandhurst. Mr. Stead speaks of Raoul in his preface.

APRIL 15TH, 1902

Sunny, when Uncle Aurelian saw his wife at a séance, do you know she clasped him in her arms and said: "Oh, I wish I could stay! I wish I could stay!"

But I don't want to come back, Mother. Am I selfish? But I don't! I don't! I don't want to come back! I would not if I could! And yet, Mother, I love you with all my heart. Next to God, I love you best.

(*Note.*—It appears sometimes as if he is almost afraid he will have to come back if I wish it intensely, poor darling!)

APRIL 17TH, 1902.

Are you having holidays now?

Oh, yes; we have had three weeks already. We get four weeks.

What is your climate now?

Beautiful. Sunny all day long. The flowers and the fruit and everything looks lovely! It only wants one thing to make it heavenly—"Mother."

Oh, that I were there, if we all could be there, too.

You must not say that. It is very naughty of you, Mother.

Oh, you don't mean really naughty?

No; that's only my fun.

Do describe us, Sunny pet, what flowers are now blooming in your woods?

Cowslips, buttercups, daisies, bluebells, honeysuckle, roses, dog-daisies. I go into the woods with Aunt Etty, and she sits reading, and I pick the flowers.

I also, Sunny, loved picking wild flowers as a child, and I do now. I think you are just like me as a child.

Yes; I love, love, love, to be like mother.

Can't you see me without Nellie?

How do you mean?

I mean, don't you ever see and hear me alone?

Oh, yes; I can only hear *you and Nellie* plain. Other people not plain. Do you understand? Don't you see, you are my mother. That is why I can hear you. Nellie is your maid, and if she was not so patient, I should not hear her at all. I didn't know her before.

Fearing Nellie would be hurt, I called out:

"Oh, Nellie, he means" (my own explanation here given). Sunny interrupted excitedly, writing rapidly: No; it *isn't!* Oh, do let me explain. Well, you see, it is your love for me makes me hear you, Mother. If Nellie was not patient I should not hear her, for (of course I love her)—but don't—oh, dear, how shall I explain?—now don't be sensitive, Nellie. You see I was going to say, Nellie is not to me what mother is. Is she? Cheer up, Nellie, for I do love you, too.

APRIL 21st, 1902

Is Lorna coming to talk to me?

Yes, darling; to-morrow, perhaps. Do you know she says hearing from you has made her feel life is worth living.

Oh, don't you see now, Mother, this bears out what I always tell you, that God knows what is right and best; and that is *another* reason God called me here.

Yes, darling, I know. Tell me what you did yesterday, Sunday.

I went to church in the morning, and read in the afternoon, and then I went for a lovely row on the lake; and do you know what I'm going to do to-day? Climb to the top of another mountain, so that I can describe all about it.

Who will go with you?

Mr. Frost.

And will you ride?

Yes; on Towzer. Shall I christen the mountain, Mother. You tell me what.

Let me think of a name and I'll tell you to-morrow, Sunny. What book did you read yesterday?

"The Life of a Soldier."

Who by, darling?

I never noticed. Shall I look?

Oh, yes, do, Sunny!

It's by G. J. Burkett. I don't mean he was a real soldier. I mean it is all about a little boy who never grew up to be a big man, but was a good soldier of Jesus Christ. It was written *here*. Oh, Mother, can I tell you about it?

Oh, yes, do.

Well, Mother, the little boy had a very unkind uncle (poor little boy, he had not got any darling mother), and the uncle used to try and make him do a lot of wicked things; but he would not do them, and then this wicked uncle used to beat him; but this little boy used not to cry, but used to go away by himself and sing:

"Is my cross too much for me?

Is my cross too much for me?

When I contemplate how bravely

He endured the cross to save me,

Is my cross too much for me?

No, no, no, no, I count no sacrifice too dear."

(Oh, Mother, do let me finish.)

(I had started to talk to Nellie.)

Why, darling, I am so sorry, I thought it *was* finished. I was admiring it to Nellie. Go on, childie.

"I count no sacrifice too dear.

Jesus died for a rebel like me."

Planchette raised itself in the air and turned to look at us as if to say: "What do you think of that?"

What a pretty poem, Sunny.

Oh, no; that's a *hymn*. Don't you think it's lovely Mother?

Yes, darling.

Then do tell me it is lovely.

It is lovely, lovely.

When I read it I cried, Mother. You would, I know.

I'm sure I should. Poor little boy. Where did all this happen?

In the Land of Retribution; but the little boy—(I mean in the last chapter. I haven't read all the book yet, but I had to peep at the finish)—the little boy went to Heaven, and now he has not got any cross to bear!

And what became of the uncle?

I don't know. I'll tell you when I've read it.

Well, I hope he was punished.

Sh—sh—Hush.

Oh, mustn't I say that? Well, we must stop now.

Oh, I did want to give you a verse of poetry for Lorna, but I can't do it quickly. I'm not a poet. Listen—don't hurry me.

"I have a darling cousin,
And she dwells within my heart."

What comes before "my heart," Sunny?

W-i-t-h-i-n—*within*, of course! Mother, can I have three minutes this evening, and then I'll have it all ready, the poetry? Am I greedy?

No, sweetheart. There's time now for another line. Go on.

"And from her little Brownie
She's never going to part."

Mother, can I make it into a poem to-night?

Of course, pet; but I fear I can't talk long to-night. We'll talk ten minutes.

Five will do (slowly).

Darling, don't be sad.

Oh, but I am so greedy and selfish (very mournfully written).

Darling, don't, don't say that.

Oh, but I am *so* selfish. Just for my punishment *don't* talk this evening, then, Mother.

Sunny, you are stabbing me to the heart. You have made me cry. I am getting tired. I must say good-bye, darling.

Don't say "good-bye." We will have ten minutes to-night, shall we, Mother, darling?

Yes, thank you, my pretty creature.

Mother, call me—my pet name.

My sunbeam.

Thank you, Mother. Oh, I do love you. X for everybody. (Which meant a kiss.)

APRIL 21ST, 1902 (EVENING)

This evening he told us he had been up the new mountain with Mr. Frost, Uncle Charlie and Miss Mitchell. He has christened it "Mount Edith," after me. Mr. Frost took tea up, and Sunny picked the fruit that grew on the path up, also many beautiful flowers. The mountain is richly wooded. Uncle Charlie and Miss Mitchell managed, as usual, to get lost, and they met them on their way down. Sunny said: "Don't you want any tea?" "Oh, yes, we should like some very much," said Uncle Charlie, when they met about halfway down. Said Sunny: "It's laid on the top." Uncle Charlies pelted him with apples and bananas, and Sunny says: "I bolted."

APRIL 22ND, 1902

To-day he spoke of the masses of cowslips he picked yesterday on Mount Edith, and wished he could give them to me here. He also said he was sad because Lorna had not come to talk.

"I can't help being sad. You see I'm not an angel."

He went on to say that to become an angel was not the only way to go to Heaven and see God. Many in Heaven are not angels. Angels are distinct beings, according to Sunny, who prefer, perhaps, wings to feet. He doesn't know everything, he says. And Sunny says he "doesn't want to lose his feet or have to tuck them under his wings." He'd rather remain as he is. Those who wish it can fly about. Others need not, and walk instead. All can equally enter Heaven, which is only a mental state.

APRIL 9TH, 1902

He began by being very sad and disappointed because Lorna had not been able to come as promised, but he cheered up at the end and suddenly wrote: "Can you hear that organ-grinder?" He said he could hear him distinctly, and to show us he could, he would make the planchette dance in time to the music. And he did so, in perfect time. (We tried to do the same after with it, but could not.)

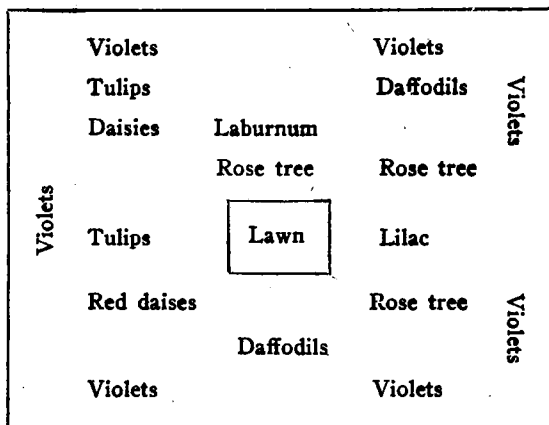
When asked did he get into the planchette to make it dance, he said: "No; his spirit *controlled* it. His spirit was dancing."

He cheered up completely in the end, especially when I promised to talk to him one hour to-morrow to make up for to-day's disappointment.

APRIL 24TH, 1902

Now, sweetheart, tell me what flowers are now growing in your own particular little garden.

Lilac, tulips, violets. You see this is my garden—look
(He then drew this picture, in a square.)



The middle is the lawn, Mother. There is a tiny laburnum tree in the middle of We lawn, and a lot more. I can't tell you all.

Is the lawn as big as ours at Ivy Lodge?

Not so large as that. It is about the size of my garden at Tonbridge.

But, darling, you never had one in Tonbridge.

Oh, yes; I've got it now.

But, darling. What do you mean?

My own, own, garden (slowly).

Sunny, sweet child, do you mean your little grave?

It is not a grave. It is a flowergarden (rapidly).

Yes; so it is, my child. I will never call it that again if I can remember not to.

SAME DAY (EVENING TALK)

Are you tired, darling?

Oh, no (written so tiny we could hardly read it).

Why, Sunny, you must be, to write so small!

(Suddenly in large type:) Oh, that's only fun! To tease you!

Have you asked my uncle why he left me no money?

Yes. He said: "Why, Sunny, I never thought of it."

Will you ask him who he left it all to?

I think I'd better ask him to-morrow. I don't like to worry him. He does not like to be interrupted.

What is he doing?

Writing or reading, I think. He is in his study with Grandpa. Grandpa is writing, I know. Silence reigns within those doors. Oh, Mother, you darling pet. I love you with all my heart, and in all my thoughts and with all my strength. God bless you!

Next time, Sunny, we must talk of Jesus Christ and God and the angels?

Oh, yes, I love to talk of Jesus. Do you know this verse

"A little talk with Jesus,
How it smooths the rugged road,
How it seems to help me onward
When I faint beneath my load."

Good-bye, Mother. I'll tell you some more to-morrow.

JULY 10TH, 1902.

Did you see me cry this morning in the flat?

No, Mother. Why did you cry?

I cried over your dear little school-hat, darling, which was carried to your grave on your coffin. Tell me now to-night. Did you see your funeral? Were you there? Did you see poor mother at it, dazed with agony?

I seem as though I can remember, Mother; but for a long time I did not know what it was.

What do you mean? What is it?

Why the funeral and coffin, I mean. You see, Mother, you did not talk to me then, and I could not understand *what* it all meant, and why you should cry so, when I was quite well. But afterwards I asked my Teacher Love, and she told me that it was my worn-out earthly body that was in the coffin. But, Mother, for a long time I could not seem to realize it. And when I did, oh, Mother, I did try to make you listen to me! Mother, darling, why didn't you hear me? Afterwards, when you were alone, crying, oh, I did try so hard to make you look at me; but you would not, and I cried with you. And I could hear you say: "No, no, I cannot live without him. Why was he taken from me? God is cruel. I won't love Him." But, Mother, when you said that, I cried the more.

Oh, my child, to think that you, whom I at least tried to believe was happy, were suffering! Oh, I cannot bear to think of it.

But you see, Mother, I was only sad because you did not understand. But, Mother, darling, don't talk about it now.

Tell me first, was no one near you to comfort you?

Not at first.

Oh, Sunny!

But, Mother, darling, when you were so very, very sad I did not want to be with anybody.

How long was it before you were happy?

Don't you see, Mother, after a very little while, it used to seem that one half of me was happy, and the other part sad. But I was never altogether really happy like I am now, till you spoke to me.

Did you know I should speak to you? Oh, thank God, I did speak!

I was sure God would let you hear me soon, Mother.

I am so glad you have told me all this, Sunny, for one of my most awful agonies was that you had gone, and never

known, perhaps (children never do), how intensely I loved you and always shall.

Oh, yes, Mother, I always knew, and now tell me again.
ARE YOU GLAD THAT GOD CALLED ME HERE?

* * * * *

These verbatim conversations are but a very few, chosen out of those we received for years, nearly every day. Some of the most interesting have had to be left out, because of their private "family" nature.

Sunny seemed, in those dear and wonderful days, to be as completely a member of our household as any of us. He noticed and commented on everything that happened, taking the keenest interest in our comings and goings, even to "What are you having for dinner to-day? I'll try and have the same. Pork pie? No, I can't have that here, because we don't eat our animals here." Another day he wrote: "Oh, what a commotion! Isn't that sofa that has just arrived, the one I once slept on?"

Mothers, can you realize how happy I was during those wonderful years?

CHAPTER XXVI

ONCE Eric was rather troublesome, and Nellie somewhat upset. Sunny broke off in the middle of a conversation that day, to say:

"Nellie, you must love Eric." I replied, "She does love him, darling, but it's hard for her always to feel it, I suppose, when he's a bit naughty."

"Oh, Mother," wrote Sunny, "but God loves Nellie, and sometimes she is not good!"

This deeply touched Nellie—and Eric was taken back into her heart there and then. She loved both boys. I should mention that Nellie is a very sweet, gentle looking woman, tall and pale, and with a very sensitive face.

I asked Sunny one day to ask my father, Colonel Money, to send me some message about his experiences after "death," before he came to Sunny's Happy Land. My father's reply was that I "was not to ask about that time, but tell your mother that *I was happy, as soon as I was willing to do what was right.*"

So it appears that change of heart, more than of locality, marks our progress on the other side, as here.

Sunny, for many years, told me he was "remaining a child," to please me. When I asked who settled it he said he did himself. He also, he said, refused to have his curls cut, "for mother's sake." On this side, the curls were a worry to him, because boys at school laughed at him about them, and so at last I cut them off. I remember I sat by a window at the seaside, as I sadly cut them, and as the last one fell into my lap (I have them now) I was deeply distressed at his standing looking down at them, and suddenly bursting into tears, his arms round my neck, in

apparently an agony of regret. When I recalled this to him (during our planchette talks), he said, yes, he remembered it, and that he cried because at that moment he knew all that those severed curls would mean to me later on. Another subconscious memory of his, probably only fully realized now.

On one January 23rd he said his holidays would be finished in a few days now. He described his school over There, as having as many boys in it as his school here at Tonbridge, and said he could remember things about his life at Tonbridge, especially Dr. Tancock, his headmaster, and "God bless him. I love him because he loved me, Mother." I then told him how Dr. Tancock read the service over his grave, and cried. Sunny seemed much moved. He had loved his school, and masters. He then said that his teacher "Love" had been talking to him about "crying for mother yesterday," and told him how he ought to thank and praise God for His love "in letting your mother talk to you, Sunny." He added, "do you know, Mother, I'm the only little boy that talks to his mother out of all the boys in our school." Talking of food over There, he once wrote: "We don't chop our cows' and sheep's heads off here."

On some public holiday we had here (I think a Coronation day) he was so violently excited over their own celebrations for it over There, that we could hardly get any talks at all for a few days. He described fire-works, processions, illuminations, and bonfires at night.

"The crying and howling," he wrote once, in his child-like fashion, "that people make on your side, Mother, over our coming here, is dreadful." (How boy-like, "crying and howling.")

An officer in the Boer War wrote me that he "often lay on the veldt at nights, and lay and looked up at the stars, and wondered which star Sunny lived in!"

On my reading him this letter, with our hands on planchette, he wrote indignantly, "*I'm not* in any star!"

That same day, 12th May, 1902, I see he burst into riddles; and wrote, with planchette:

"Why do the birds sing on the tops of the trees?"

"Oh, I shall never guess, Sunny," was my reply, "tell us."

"Well, Mother, first say: '*I give it up.*'"

"Oh, all right, darling! *I give it up.*"

"Why! because they can't sing on the roots!"

"Oh, Sunny, how like you this is! Your riddles were always our delight."

"Oh, I do love praise, Mother. Listen, now: If a coal-scuttle and a scoop came to 13s. 6d., what will a ton of coals and a sack of wood come to?"

"We shall never guess, Sunny!"

"Why—ashes."

"Oh, that is clever. Is that your own, Sunny?"

"Oh, no, that's one of Uncle Charlie's. Why do people blow their noses?"

"*You* tell us, funny darling."

"Why, to clear their heads! Why does my Jack wag his tail?"

"Give it up, Sunny."

"Because no one will wag it for him. Why do ladies wear veils?"

"What's that last word, childie? Is it *belts*?"

"No—veils! Veils!"

"Oh—well—to make themselves look pretty?"

"Oh, no. To hide the blotches on their faces. Do you like my riddles, Mother?"

"Oh, yes, they are *you*, all over!"

"Name something that is black and white, and yet red (read) all over."

"Oh, Nellie and I know that! A newspaper!"

"Yes! Name a piece of furniture which a lady would least like to be, Mother?"

"Oh, tell us, Sunny, please!"

"A chair, for she wouldn't like to be sat upon. That's my *own* invention. What's the difference between your life and mine, Mother?"

"Oh, tell me, Sunny."

"Well—a step."

"A step? What do you mean, my child?"

"Yes—just *one little step*."

"But what sort of a step, darling?"

"What you call 'passing over—death——' And it's a very weeny, tiny step."

One day Nellie murmured, as he was tearing with the planchette over the paper, "Oh, Master Sunny, *do* write plainer." He broke off and indignantly wrote, "Now, you be quiet, Nellie! I *am* writing plain."

In one of his most important and grown-up moods, one day, he asked, with planchette, for a "nice, clean sheet, please," on which to write to Mr. Stead. We put one down and he began. Mr. Stead had recently written to him, as he often did, much to his delight, and in it called him "dear Friend," and talked of having "much correspondence," and, oh! it was so evident that the darling was trying to write back in a grown-up way, too.

He began, with immense importance:

"The Happy Land,

"Palestine,

"May 14th, 1902.

"DEAR MR. STEAD,

"What a very naughty boy I am, not to have answered your letter before. But, dear Friend, you must not be hurt or be cross with me, for, you see, I have but a very short time to keep up my correspondence in; which, by the bye, gets larger and larger."

Here Nellie and I could *not* restrain our amusement, and we laughed heartily, and I said, "One would think he was a Member of Parliament, or editor of a paper."

Sunny stopped short in his writing, and appeared much hurt, for he rapidly moved the planchette off his letter-sheet to the one we kept for "remarks," and wrote, with indescribable excitement: "That's true, isn't it, Mother? Why! I had *five* letters in one week, you know!"

I soothed him down, and he returned to his letter, and in the course of it, said: "I will make every inquiry I can, to see if I can get you some news of Mr. Cesil Roads."

We again could not help laughing (at the spelling), but we instantly smothered it, for fear of hurting him, and I said, "Go on, darling."

But it was too late. Moving back to the "Remarks sheet," he wrote excitedly:

"Is it wrong?"

"No, no," I replied, "go on, darling, it's all right."

"No, Mother. I believe it *is* written wrong."

I told a fib, and again said, "No."

"Then—*why* did you laugh, Mother?"

"Because you are such a quaint pet, Sunny."

"You can't deceive me, Mother. It—— Have I spoke ungrammatical, then?"

"Not one bit, darling."

"Then tell me the truth. *What* have I done, Mother?"

I had to tell him in the end: "You spelt it so funnily."

During this same letter, he suddenly lifted the planchette off on to the tablecloth. We tried to lift it back on to the letter, and *could not*. It appeared as if firmly held down, and Nellie asked me, and I asked her, was the other holding it down? Obviously we were not. But for a few seconds we simply could not move it back to the letter. Finally we got it on to the "Remarks sheet," and arriving there, he wrote, "I didn't want to spoil the letter, Mother. *Do* leave it on the cloth. Oh, *do* let me think. Don't, please, hurry me."

"Oh, I see now, Sunny. I'm so sorry. Have I worried you?"

"Yes, a little bit. Oh, dear, I *can't* think."

"I'm so sorry, darling. It's all my stupid fault. What would you like to do now?"

"Kiss you, Mother."

(Planchette, lifting itself to my face, "kissed" it repeatedly.)

Here a barrel-organ started playing in the street, and the planchette, raising itself on end, began a little happy sort of jig, dancing to the tune, which happened to be a very slow, dreary dirge.

"Oh, dear me," he wrote, "it doesn't keep very good time, does it?"

"Try again, Sunny."

"Oh, I can't, I'm tired."

"Very well, pet. Good-night."

"Good-night, Mother" (slowly and sadly).

"Sunny, beloved, what's the matter? You are not going away sad, are you?"

"Yes."

"Sad! But why, my boy?"

"I want to dance, and you won't let me."

A new tune began, and I begged him to dance to it. So he had another try. It must again have been the tune "the old cow died of," for he broke off to write, "Oh, Mother, what an ugly tune! Who could dance to that? God bless you for ever. Good-night. Oh, I am tired."

He once ended a letter to his cousin Lorna, "Your loving cousin who never died—Sunny."

Another time he wrote, "Next to God, Mother, you have all my heart, and it is a big, fat whopper."

Here is a poetic description of me—in rhyme, after a trek in South Africa, where I had been indignant at the way I saw the poor mules flogged, and a still more poetic description of himself at school.

"The sky above is, oh, so blue, but Mother is so funny,
 Rather than have a good beef-steak, she'd live on bread and
 honey,
 I'm very fond of animals, and so is Mother, too,
 If a donkey gets a whack,
 The Driver gets the sack,
 Or else she'll get in a stew.

When I was at School, I was a little fool,
 The biggest of the duffers in the class,
 I was a little idiot, I was a little clown,
 In fact, I was a little drivelling ass.
 I had a big fat loving heart
 Underneath my Eton-coat;
 I hated lessons, but I loved
 To go on the river in a boat."

"And what if Jesus *did* share the fishes, Mother?" he suddenly wrote once, almost before our hands had touched planchette.

Nellie looked dumbfounded, and I must say I was, too. The day before, after a meeting at the Theosophical Society, in Africa, I had walked home, thinking whether to eat animals could be wrong, when Jesus had given fishes to the multitude. I had not mentioned my thoughts to Nellie or to anybody at all, and had entirely forgotten them.

Another time he began, "Now, Mother, you are impatient already! I was *praying* for you then. I must not stop talking to my God, Mother, darling, to talk to you? I *had* to keep you waiting then, because I was praying to Him, when you sat down to talk to me."

There are people who wonder "what good" comes of spirit communications.

Nellie and I often said, as day by day we learnt more, "A little child shall lead them."

CHAPTER XXVII

SOME of Sunny's poems from the other side, written as usual, with planchette, will interest you.

You will note, as we did, with both amusement and gratification, the childish mixture in them of piety and fun; mischief and gravity. Their very incongruousness and change of tenses and persons, etc., is so convincing; for all of you who have children on this side, of clever and original character, must get much the same kind of thing from them? As in Sunny's "story," the change from the first person to the third person (of which he always seemed quite unconscious) is as childlike as the rest. I would like to emphasize (in view of subconscious theories) that Nellie is an exceedingly well-educated woman, who writes an excellent letter, and who makes *no* such mistakes, so natural, though, to a child. And, for myself, well of course, I do not either.

Here is one of Sunny's poems, impromptu through planchette, as are all that follow—given us at different days and times throughout the years we talked daily to him. I give them verbatim, like all else.

IN 1902

"When looking back on my earthly life,
Its troubles and its joys,
I wonder how my Mother lived!
We were three dreadful boys!

But still I was but very young
When Jesus called me here
And yet I know 'twas for the best
To live with Jesus here.

"But yet I long, oh, yes, I long
For the time to quickly come
When my dear Mother whom I love
Will arrive in my happy, happy Home.
I often wonder why my mother
Loved her curly-headed boy,
As I think I must have been to her
By far more trouble than joy.

"But still she's got a great big heart,
It's filled and running o'er
With love for me, her Baby Boy,
So I love her more and more."

Another poem (on saying we were tired). (1902.)

"Good-night, then, my Mother, now go off to sleep;
Don't lay in your bed and silently weep.
But think of the time which quickly will come
When together we'll be in my happy home.
A kiss from your Sunny, a kiss from your Dad,
And one from your sister, now don't you be sad."

Another, on my calling him "my Poet."

"I am a little Poet, but I'm sure I do not know it.
It's only what my Mother says to me.
But then you know I love her; she's better than all others,
So with her I am bound for to agree."

Poem (after calling me his "Queen").

"To me my Mother's more than Queen,
To me her love is—ah!
No tongue can tell, no eye has seen
Such love, such boundless love!

"Sometimes I know she's very sad,
And that's the time that I,
With loving words and many prayers,
I tell her not to cry."

Another poem (upon my asking him to kiss me and his brothers).

"A kiss to the best of Mothers
And a kiss to my two little brothers,
One for Nellie and one for Puff,
Now, darling Mother, do you think that's enough?"

(Puff was our Pomeranian dog.)

Poem (upon my saying "Good-night").

"Good night to my Mother, good-night to my brothers,
And Nellie, too, good-night!
Now all go to sleep, and mind you don't weep,
Nor dream and wake up in a fright.

When I asked him would he mind Mr. Piddington of the S.P.R. coming to see him write.

"Oh, dear me, he does worry me!
He asks me this, and he asks me that,
Till I almost think my brain will crack.
He keeps on asking this and that
Till I almost wish he'd never come back."

(Of course, half of this was pure fun and nonsense.)

Upon my asking was he happy.

"Oh, happy as a lark,
Singing in the Park,
Admiring all the beauty of our Land,
And wishing, Mother, dear,
That you could see me here,
Because your earth is only slippery sand."

Poem upon seeing me worried and sad.

"Trust God more, and worry less.
You know your Darling he has blest?
Though for a time the way was dark,
God sought you out and sent a spark
To lighten up your earthly life
Amidst the toil of din and strife."

Another day, when I was very sad.

"Don't think I'm away;
I'm always quite near you.
God's spirit will cheer you
To-night and for ever,
For ever, for aye."

Upon the eve of moving to a larger flat.

"Good-bye, dear little tiny flat,
Often in you has my mother sat
And talked to me, her little son.
But do not think our talks are done!
For just a few steps down the street
A larger flat we're going to greet,
With a room for Eric and one for Kay,
We'll have a nice talk every day."

On January 30th, 1902 (on getting into new flat).

"We are now in the flat, and down we have sat
For a five minutes' chat.
But Mother and Nellie are tired, you see.
But Mother must have just two minutes with me.
Trust God more and worry less,
And then your efforts He will bless.
Oh, we're busy little bees!
We're hard at work all day.
But to those that do their duty
God always gives good pay."

Upon my suggesting that he drew us something.

"But, Mother, darling, don't you see,
The gift of drawing's not in me.
But, oh, dear me, my brother, Kay,
When pen in hand the livelong day,
He'll draw away. Sometimes I think
He'll never stop to eat or drink.
But still, you know, my mother sweet,
She says my drawings are a treat."

On saying good-night.

"God bless you to-night, God bless you for ever,
And know, my dear Mother, that nothing can sever
Your spirit, dear Mother, from mine."

On asking "how much" he loves me.

"I love thee, I love thee,
You are the best of Mothers, dear.
But, oh, I wish I had you here!
I'd kiss you, I'd squeeze you,
I'd pull at your hair,
Till you, my dear Mother,
Would be in despair.
I am my Mother's sunbeam,
Or that is what she said,
But now she's tired, and so is Nellie,
So off we go to bed."

On again feeling sad.

"Oh, trust God more and worry less,
And in your heart He'll be a Guest."

Upon the second anniversary of his passing over.

"It's just two years ago to-day
When my dear Mother, whom I loved
With all my heart and all my soul,
Thought that her little youngest son
Had passed away and his life was done.

"But little thought she at that time
That God Who knows what's right and best,
Had only fetched him here to rest.
That very soon a Guide I'd be
To draw my Mother here to me."

"Good-night" again. (March 4th, 1902, after hearing me speak of him as "the little creature.")

"Good-night, my darling creature,
God will send His Angels to teach her.
Good-night, my darling brothers, Eric and Kay,
God bless you, but remember to pray.
Good-night, Nellie, wash up the dishes.
Remember you always have my good wishes."

On talking of our dull English climate.

"When your life on Earth is done,
We'll rest in the sunny, sunny Sun."

On speaking of how Nellie first came into my service.

"A year ago, come August, in Wimbledon town, Heigh-ho!
A letter by Sobersides my Mother she sent
To a little back street. In reply, Nellie went.
Mother said: 'With me, Nellie, you must go,
Put in the Salt, and then you can hurry away.'
For three weeks Nellie stayed
She loved Mother so,
But her wages were paid
But still they were low.
But Mother was poor—of money she'd little.
Somehow or other she was always in a pickle.
'I've a very sad heart; from this house I must part.'
My Mother to Nellie she said,

'But till I leave here, I very much fear
I must have *someone* to make the beds.
With me will you stay, just for to-day?
And cook me a nice mutton chop?'
Said Mother to Nellie, and Nellie to Mother,
'It seems to us both we were made for each other;
So to London we'll go, to a little side street,
And the little wee flat together we'll greet.'
In that little wee flat together they sat
And started to talk to me;
Those lovely joyous hours.
On the table there were flowers.
We all three did well agree."

(Nellie eventually remained in my service many years.)

These are only some of Sunny's strange childish poems written from the other side. They alone would convince anyone who had known him on this side. To compose, impromptu, always appealed greatly to him. The unutterable joy they gave me, mothers alone can realize. My Child! My joyous living Child! Restored to me like this! Invisible, yet as real as if seen. Truly my passionate prayer to God (whom I called upon to manifest Himself to me by restoring me my boy) has been answered. And I thank Him gratefully.

"Mother," Sunny asks so often, "Oh, tell me, *are you glad* God called me here?" Often these words he prints in very large letters.

But I am still his human mother, and my "yes" is always choked by tears of love, joy, and a pain that cannot be entirely healed, until I clasp him, and his brother, again in my arms.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SINCE the Records of the earlier years, I have travelled far, in far lands. Real travel, in the nethermost "Back of Beyond" of Central Africa, leaving ships and railways far behind us for months.

On one of these wonderful treks, Sunny, my Spirit Boy, saved my life. We had lost our way. Night fell. And we had to halt in a desolate spot in the midst of a vast ocean of coarse grass (which grew high as big trees) stretching from horizon to horizon. It was a very bad lion place. Our oxen were outspanned, and our servants and carriers found a kind of island of short green turf, just large enough to hold us and our retinue. It was surrounded on all sides and shut in, as by walls, with the tall, dense, coarse grass. We decided not to put up our tents, as we meant to get away very early next morning. There were four of us in the exploring party—two men, a lady and myself, and about seventy natives. Our four beds were placed at short distances from each other on the green island, and we laid down to sleep under the brilliant stars of the African night. We could not have a camp-fire, because there was no wood anywhere, not even a shrub. Our scratch dinner that night had been cooked on a grass fire. And all our lamp-oil had just been upset.

I had slept for some hours when I suddenly heard into my very ear, *my Sunny's voice*. It awoke me.

"Mother! Mother! Awake! There is danger!"

I sat up and peered into the darkness. The tall grass grew right up to the foot almost of my bed. I then, and (note this) *then only* (after my child's warning), heard

some big animal creeping through the grass. Then crouching close to me. Then it moved stealthily again.

I gave a shriek of terror and the other three awoke.

One man shouted, "What's up?" and I told him, "One or two big heavy animals—lions, I fear—are there, close to my bed, hidden in the grass watching our camp."

But the men flouted the idea, and declared it was "probably buck I heard," and being very tired after a long, hard day, we were soon asleep once more, their rifles beside their beds.

Not very reassured, I lay me down, and was just dozing off, when again, deep down in my ear came my Sunny's voice, most clear and impelling.

"Mother, Mother, there's danger. *Don't sleep!*"

Thoroughly roused, I replied in a whisper, "Yes, Sunny" and sat up trembling, and soon after I did so, *two enormous yellow lions stealthily came out of the grass and crept past my bed, clearly seen in the dim light*, so close that the tail of one lion knocked against a small table by my bedside. The next moment they crouched and sprang—at our oxen, just behind my bed, and the whole Camp awoke.

There is no doubt that had I been lying asleep, I should certainly have been carried off. Lions often attack sleeping people, when they would not otherwise do so. My sitting up and alert attitude saved me, I *know*.

We had a terrible fright, but the two lions, terrified at the shots of the men, and the howls of the natives, leapt into the high grass, and were seen no more.

Many a danger awaited us after that, for long months to come. But it was noticed that on our night halts, I was never nervous sleeping in the open, and would have my bed often put quite far away from the rest of our party; considered a mad thing to do.

Our Major Domo, or Head-Man, was a converted Tanjanyka boy, and when our camp was in some specially

drear, lonely, or dangerous spot, I felt a great sense of God, Sunny, Home, and Comfort, when "Hymn-Book" sat and sang us to sleep with:

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide."

My Sunny, I knew you would take care of me, and you did, right through that wonderful journey in the heart of lonely Africa, beyond the Zambesi.

After I first "lost" Sunny, a little volume I bought, called "Children of the Poets," often brought me both tears and comfort. I have often bitterly wept over these lines upon the death of a Child.

"The eager Fate which carried thee
Took the largest part of me."

But, again, comfort came with:

"'Tis not within the Force of Fate,
The fate-conjoined to separate."

Listen, other Rachels, amid your tears, to the following exquisite little poem, and weep no more quite so passionately.

THE MOTHER'S DREAM

I'd a dream to-night
As I fell asleep.
Oh, the touching sight
Makes me still to weep!
Of my little lad
Soon to leave me sad.
Aye, the Child I had
But was not to keep.

As in Heaven high
I my Child did seek,
There in train came by
Children fair and meek,

Each in lily white,
 With a lamp alight;
 Each was clear to sight,
 But they did not speak.

Then, a little sad,
 Come my Child in turn;
 But the lamp he had,
 Oh, it did not burn!
 He, to clear my doubts,
 Said, half turned about,
 "Your tears put it out,
 Mother, do not mourn."

* * * * *

Upon the anniversary of Sunny's death (as I have said in my preface) and each succeeding year for some years, there appeared in a country paper under the "In Memoriam" column, the following:

"Beloved little Sunny, good, truthful, and kind to every living Thing. From his Mother—uncomforted."

That cry of deepest sorrow continued yearly till the day came that I could reply to Sunny's oft-repeated question, "And are you glad God called me here?" "Yes!"

The day came when I even could say that! *Some* days.

Yet even to-night, twenty years since his death, and with all this comforting spread out before me, the old anguish returns, and the "Yes" is a broken one!

Such is a mother's love. Almost reaching the Divine sometimes. Yet never, never, quite!

My Boy—my two Boys—I still often stretch out my arms to you—empty. I still often return to my Garden of Gethsemane and again pray there that the Cup may pass from me.

Until I clasp your loved form solid to my heart, as I know I shall, I must have my hours in my Garden of Pain. But often it is also my Garden of Joy.

* * * * *

Jean Ingelow wrote the following Lament, full of the inconsolable sorrow of the Orthodox Mourner. I give you only part, putting He—for Sunny—instead of She. It describes a child's dying moments and reminds me entirely of Sunny's passing; but knowing all I know now, its uncomforted plaint is pathetic to a Spiritualist.

"Hearing of that blest Shore,
He thinks of Earth no more,
Contented to forego this wintry Land,
He hath not thought or care,
But to rest calmly there,
And hold the snowdrops pale that blossom in his hand.

"But on the child's face
Broodeth a mournful grace.
He had foreboding thoughts beyond his years.
While sinking thus to sleep
He saw his Mother weep,
And could not lift his hand to dry her heart-sick tears.

"How wistfully they close
Sweet Eyes to their repose!
How quietly declines the placid brow!
The young lips seem to say,
'I have wept much to-day,
And felt some bitter pains; but they are over now.'

"And as for me, I know,
All of that Mother's woe.
Her yearning want doth in my soul abide.
And sighs of them that weep,
'Oh, put us soon to sleep,
For when we wake—with them—we shall be satisfied.'"

Yes, but it is fast coming to Humanity to know that we need not wait till we are "put to sleep" to "be satisfied," and to know that "all's well with the Child."

Slowly is the Door opening. The Veil, so often spoken of as "impenetrable," has grown thin; and dear, darling hands that we love, can draw it aside entirely for periods.

Rachel! Mourning for your Children, and refusing to be comforted because they *seem* not. Look up, weeping one. *The Child is smiling at you.*

CHAPTER XXIX AND LAST

RACHELS of all Lands and Climes, to whom this Book is especially given, has my Everlasting Child, whose own great love bridged the gulf, has he helped to dry your tears, too?

This Record is of a passionate Prayer answered.

"Yes, ask it of Him.
You're more dear to His Heart.
You well know
Than the lilies that blow,
Or the flowers that start
'Neath the Snow.
What you need, if you ask it in Prayer,
You can have it from Him,
For you are His care,
You—you know."

* * * * *

This is a glad laughing time for my Sunny in his Happy Land, my living Sunbeam that came into my Darkness and made it Light! He has so often written "Oh, Mother, when will my Book be published? I shall dance with joy!"

On one of his Birthdays on this Side, we made him a wreath of crimson and white roses, which he wore all day with childish pride upon his sunny head.

I believe that Over There, they, too, will crown him with roses, the Day that this Record of a great Love bridging the Grave, goes out to the sorrowing World at last, after nineteen years of waiting.

It was one of the dearest dreams of William T. Stead, that great-hearted Friend of the Bereaved, that "Rachel Comforted" should be offered to weeping Humanity, when the appointed time came.

It has come, and this Message has laid in obscurity as a little seed in the deep earth lies, until Heaven's tears and sunshine draw it up. This seed was dropped long since deep down, and lay there, small, feeble and not yet awake. One heart loved and knew of it, tended it and watered it, often with human tears. To-day it has struggled up into daylight, and is green and strong, and the Faith it embodies will be a Tree one day of mighty growth, spreading sheltering Arms over the Earth.

On Both Sides, others (as well as I and my Child) have sown also, and have long and patiently waited for the tiny living triumphant Thing to emerge from the stony ground, its roots all the stronger for its long sleep.

One of these Sowers is noble William T. Stead. To his labours in this Harvest, and to all that his Christ-like Strength, and Faith, Help, and Cheer meant to me, and to Sunny, during the long and lonely years of scoffing and unbelief, let us give our gratitude, too. Also to the dear and patient Nellie of these pages, who sat with me so unselfishly and devotedly through the Days of our great Quest into the unknown.

But above all, to Charles Gordon Maturin, my "Sunny," be the praise. And to his brother Kay now with him, for his quiet steadfast faith and help.

Earth's pale Evening falls as I write these last lines to Sunny's "own Book."

In this silent room, where my two Children have, I have felt, so often sat watching me during the Night-Hours when the rest of the World slept, and I worked at these Records, I feel now vividly again two dear Presences. Is it evening in your Happy Land, too, Children of mine? Oh, yes. . . .

Your Sunrises and Sunsets; your Days and your Nights; your woods, rivers, valleys, homes, pets, and flowers; your friends, your joys, your disappointments, your lessons, all so necessary to your perfect evolution and advance, we, who have been in communion with you, know that "Over There" is no great Change at all in these Things.

There, as Here, when the Soul's Windows are opened to the Sun, the Sun pours in, and so, Happiness.

Mothers who mourn so passionately, Rachels still un-comforted, look up through your grief, for:

"Is it well with the Child?" you ask, sobbing?

"It is well."

Yes, I tell you, it is well. For I know; I, a Mother.

L'ENVOI

RACHEL'S FAREWELL TO HER READERS

Whether or no you, who are closing this volume, will knock at the shining Door as I have done, and, with the endless patience of a great and not-to-be-refused Love, knock, until it be opened unto you (as it then surely must be) I would wish to feel that these dear Records, faithfully received and faithfully given to you, may help you, at the least, to whisper to your own vanished Darlings, when in the Stillness they seem very near you:

"Death has not parted us even a little while,
Nor severed the finest Strand
In the eternal cable of our Love.
The very strain has twined it closer still,
And added Strength."

AN EVENSONG

"Children, we had been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather.
'Twas hard to part. You were so dear!
It cost us many a sigh and tear.
You stole away . . . and gave so little warning. . . .
So Children, say not 'Good night,'
But in some brighter Clime
Bid us 'Good Morning.'"

THE END

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