

Widening Trails

by

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This edition was published in 1954 by the Psychic Book Club as one of the outstanding psychic books selected for their members to whom it is issued exclusively at a privilege price. Particulars of membership can be obtained from the Psychic Book Club, 48 Old Bailey, London, E.C.4,

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
LOWE AND BRYDONE (PRINTERS) LIMITED, LONDON, N.W.10

It Had My Number

We were directly over Berlin! It was a bright moonlight night. The glow on the clouds below seemed to radiate peace. The heavens above were very near - so near that I wanted to stretch out my fingers and 'touch the Hand of God!' But I was soon rudely awakened from my reveries.

"Captain," shouted our bombardier over the intercom. "Bandits at 2 o'clock high!"

"Roger," I replied. And then to the gunners, "Try to make it hot for 'em. We're on our bomb run now!"

There below us lay the beautiful German capital, quiet and serene, resting securely in the knowledge that they were God's peculiar people, and no harm could come to them.

"Bombs away!" the bombardier called as our target loomed up but only a thousand feet below us.

Suddenly all hell broke loose, as we tried to hide ourselves in a nearby cloudbank, not waiting to see the dreadful devastation wrought upon Der Fuehrer's own beloved city. Terrifying explosions and fires which made the whole heavens glitter as a crystal palace were all the proof we needed that Schickelgruber's haven of refuge was not invulnerable. Revolting though the explosions were, a curious satisfaction filled our young souls, as we soared far above the earth on the homeward journey. But this serenity was not for long. Soon we were surrounded by a bunch of Messerschmitts, intent on punishing us for daring to devastate their hallowed ground.

"109's from 6 o'clock high," shouted my gunner, as our beautiful fleecy white cloud cover gave out on us.

Tense as the moment was, I could not refrain from uttering a shout of triumph as one of our antagonists burst into flames and fell through space for the last time.

"Our number one engine has been hit," announced one of my men.

"Give 'em all you've got, fellows. At least we'll take some of them with us!" I shouted over the intercom as I automatically feathered the number one prop. Another Jerry felt the sting of our guns. But we too had received a deadly blow. Our bomber was out of control. I knew the end had come.

"Bail out," I commanded. One by one I watched our brave men step into the unknown over enemy territory.

"What are you going to do?" called Charlie, my co-pilot. "I'm sticking with the ship," was my curt reply. "You bail out!"

"I'm sticking too," responded the disobedient but loyal Charlie.

Down, down we went until we reached the friendly haven of an obscuring cloud. Charlie reached my side. I saw he had been hit; blood was running over his blanched face. With an almost superhuman effort I righted the plane. For a few moments she traveled normally. During that brief interval of time I had visions of taking Charlie to a hospital. I saw the doctors coming from the operating room. I heard them say, "He shall live." Then I realized that we were in a hopeless spiral. Smoke was pouring from our engines. But somehow I was not frightened. I put my arm around Charlie, and was conscious only of a desire to protect my co-pilot. All went black.

How long a time elapsed I know not. The next thing I knew I was floating through space. I was somewhat dazed. "Where am I?" I asked. "Are we on another bombing mission?"

"Not this time." The voice was very close to me, but I could see no one.

"Who are you?" I queried. "Where are you? And where are we going?"

"I am George," the same mild friendly voice responded. "You are very tired. I will let you rest awhile and I will come again to guide you." The voice seemed to trail away into the distance.

I was lying on a lovely grassy meadow. The fragrance of white clover was all about me. I thought of my father's hay fields in dear old Iowa. Surely I must be back home! I was a little boy again. I could hear the ripple of the brook. I listened. Yes, it was Walker's Creek, where I had fished so often! What fun that was! I remembered how we sometimes caught a minnow scarcely four inches long, and how patiently mother, had cleaned and cooked those precious morsels! After that good meal I fell asleep - when I awakened I felt better.

"Where am I?" I wondered, "Oh, yes!" I thought, "Germany." I remembered the crash. "This must be Germany and I am uninjured! I must get out of here!" But for some mysterious reason everything seemed so peaceful that I just lay where I was. Birds were singing, flowers were blooming. I could hear the laughter of little children, but I could see no one. I listened. They were talking, not in German, but in English! Then I felt something moist upon my face. A little dog was kissing me! "Why Trixie!" I cried, as I clasped in my arms the faithful canine whose death I had mourned two years before. As I lay there with Trixie in my bosom, it seemed as though nothing else mattered. A feeling of contentment such as I had not known for a long time engulfed me.

"Trixie," I said, "how did you get here? In Germany of all places! And I thought you dead." Trixie's only answer was to snuggle her head closer in my neck, as though she feared I would leave her. I held her back from me that I might examine her more closely. "Yes, of course you're Trixie!" I muttered. "Those same expressive eyes with an intelligence far beyond the average could never belong to another." As I held her close the war seemed a million miles away.

"Oh, yes! The war!" I thought. Then suddenly I felt myself wondering about Charlie.

I remembered our bomber going down. "Surely he must be near."

"Charlie," I muttered. There was no answer. My voice gained strength. Again I called that familiar name, "Charlie."

"Eh?" sounded my co-pilot's deep bass voice almost at my side.

I raised up on my elbow and to my utter amazement found Charlie had done the same. Our eyes met in a laughing embrace.

"Is that really you, Captain?" he queried. "I must have been asleep. I dreamed about you."

"But - but your face," I said. "I thought you were injured. I saw blood running down your cheek."

Charlie ran his hand over his face. "It's all healed now," he said. "The rain must have washed it as I lay here." And he sank back. "I just want to lie on here forever. Who would have thought Germany could be so wonderful?"

"Germany!" I reiterated. "Good heavens man, we'll be captured. Let's get out of here!"

"Where to?" asked Charlie, as unconcerned as though we were deciding which show to attend. "We cannot stir before dark. As for me, I want another sweet dream." And he sank back in the soft grass with an utter disregard for safety.

Strange to say I couldn't muster any apprehensions, in spite of the fact that I knew we must be many miles from friendly territory. With Charlie sleeping peacefully, apparently whole in body and mind, and my faithful dog by my side, there seemed no immediate cause for alarm. I, too, fell fast asleep.

Some time later I was awakened by the thumping of Trixie's tail on my breast, as though she were welcoming a friend.

"Good old Trixie." It was that same gentle voice that had promised to come back to be my guide.

I could see no one, but Trixie was apparently licking a hand that stroked her. "Is that you, George?" I asked, and, as if by magic a form appeared in front of me! It was a khaki clad figure. A captain in the American Air Force. Thrilled beyond words, I sprang to my feet to greet a fellow countryman. At first the features were hazy, but when I grasped his hand, the lines of the face became radiant. "George - George Burns!" I gasped. "I - I thought you crashed behind the German lines six months ago!"

"I did," was the calm reply.

"And I thought all the time you were dead! Why," I told him, "we had a memorial service for you the last time I was home on furlough!"

George smiled happily as I continued.

"You old son-of-a-gun, you owe me three bucks! I spent that in flowers for that service."

"We'll see what can be done about it," replied George, as he went over to rouse Charlie.

"Wake up, Chuck," he said. "We have a journey to make." Charlie sat bolt upright, rubbed his eyes as if to clear his vision. "George Burns! How the dickens did you get here?" "By the same route you did," replied George.

"But I do not savvy," I interrupted. "Is this a German concentration camp? How can we get out of here?"

"Do you want to get out of a place like this?" asked George, still smiling happily.

"But the war!" I exclaimed. "We've got to get back to England to continue our bombing raids."

"That's what I thought at first," responded George. "But now I know we can do more good for the war effort from this angle."

"In a prison camp!" ejaculated Charlie, who until now had been almost too dumbfounded for words.

"Look," I said, pointing to a group of German soldiers walking towards us. "Our chance of escape is over."

George grasped the hand of one of the German boys, greeting him warmly. "Here," he said, "are two of my college chums. John Livingstone Stamp and Charlie Hagle."

The Jerries saluted politely and to our utter amazement we found ourselves giving the Nazi salute.

"Where are your guns?" I asked, and immediately bit my tongue, for having had the nerve to question our guards.

"My name is Carl," said the foremost one. "Just call me that. We need no guns here."

For a moment I was too perplexed to speak. "No guns in a German prison camp!" thought I to myself. "Pinch me, Charlie," I said. The group laughed as Charlie gave the requested pinch.

"You're awake all right," Carl informed me in perfect English.

"But I'm not," interrupted a young German by his side. "Yes, you are, Fritz," and Carl turned to us, "You see, this is the boy you shot down after leaving Berlin."

"The boy we shot down!" echoed Charlie and I in the same breath.

"But I saw his plane burn," I continued. "He could not possibly have escaped."

"I do not understand it either," volunteered Fritz.

"You all speak perfect English," I said in amazement.

"No, we don't," said Fritz. "I don't know a word of English, I wish I did. You talk high

German as if you were raised with it.”

“Now I know I’m dreaming,” said Charlie. “‘Nic verstah’ is the only German I ever knew.”

George and Carl were laughing happily as we tried to untangle the language mix-up.

“I studied some German in school, but it was always ‘Greek’ to me,” I explained. “Far be it from me to try to talk it.”

George then came to our rescue. “Here,” he explained, “we talk a universal language which is understood by all.”

For years I had dreamed of a universal language as the best method of insuring future peace - but that, I knew, would take several generations to work out. But to think of it being practiced in a German prison camp was incredible! I looked at Charlie. He had a broad grin upon his face. But as he caught my eye he tapped his forehead significantly. I tapped mine in reply much to the amusement of the others.

“If we have to go crazy,” remarked Charlie, “this is a mighty pleasant way to do it.”

Just then I heard voices behind me. Upon turning I spied two young men sitting on the bank of the creek absorbed in deep conversation.

“Two Chinese” I exclaimed in amazement. “How did you get Chinese prisoners in Germany?”

“Not two Chinese,” corrected George, still highly amused. “A Chinese and a Japanese!”

“Now I know I’m crazy! Come on Charlie,” I said, “let’s investigate this.”

Together we walked toward the two new arrivals. Strange though these bewildering perplexities were, we had no fear. A strong desire to scrutinize almost captivated us.

“Hello there,” I called, as we neared the two orientals.

The young men immediately arose, smiled broadly and respectfully saluted.

“Hello friend,” responded the one I took to be Chinese. “Tong Lee is my name. Welcome to our little party.”

“I too welcome you most heartily,” added the Japanese “My name is Foo Yong. Just call me Foo.”

For a moment Charlie and I stood open-mouthed - now surely convinced that we were mentally deranged.

“But - but,” I finally muttered, “you both Speak English!” “No, no, not I,” said Tong Lee. “You are speaking Chinese!”

“No, you speak Japanese!” interrupted Foo.

The perplexity was growing greater.

“I never knew delirium could be so entrancing. I hope I never wake up. Call it mental

madness, lunacy or anything you like. It is most interesting,” concluded Charlie, with an air of finality.

Just then George and his German friends came up. “How do you like things?” inquired George.

“Too complex for me,” I replied.

“Haven’t you guessed yet where you are?” continued George.

“Of course, we know it must be a German prison camp. But it’s all so wonderful we do not understand.” The crowd laughed happily.

“Don’t you know you were killed in that plane crash?” said Carl. “We were all war casualties!”

“Killed!” echoed Charlie and I in the same breath.

“Do you mean - we’re in heaven?” I managed to mutter through my perplexity.

“You don’t think this is ‘the other place’ do you?” commented George, with that same happy grin upon his face. I turned to Charlie - his face was radiant.

“Captain,” he said, “I didn’t think they would let guys like us in here!”

The little group laughed happily.

“Deeds of valor are always rewarded,” commented George.

“But we didn’t do anything beyond the path of duty,” I argued.

“You gave your lives for your country. What more could you do?” was the placid reply.

“So did Fritz here - and he’s a German!” I at once was chagrined to think I had uttered that last remark.

But George seemed to understand. “Patriotism is equally noble whether in friend or foe.”

“You mean deeds of valor are eternal things” I asked, almost surprised at my own meditations.

“Most certainly,” responded George. “You learned that in Dr. Bland’s class at college.

“Perhaps I did,” I said almost to myself. “But in the gaiety and thoughtlessness of youth, such philosophies made no lasting impressions.”

“Over here,” explained George, as he sensed my musings, “such eternal things are valuable assets.”

Astounded

For a while we were in a state of ecstasy; almost like children in a zoo for the first time. We were absolutely entranced with the novelty of it all. George had said he thought we had better get acquainted with things for ourselves.

"We'll see you later," he announced, and with that he disappeared as if by magic.

"Well, what do you know about that!" I gasped.

Charlie felt my shoulders. "No, nothing there! That's strange," he added.

"What's strange?" I queried.

"I thought you grew wings in heaven," and he laughed almost apologetically.

"Perhaps we're not really angels!" I ventured, as we began our stroll of inspection.

We walked through the fragrant clover, with a few friendly bees buzzing around. A gentle breeze wafted silver lined clouds slowly across the sky. The very air seemed surcharged with vivacity. We climbed a hill, but neither of us had any sensation of exerting energy. When we reached the brow we both gasped! I looked at Charlie. "Do you recognize that?"

"Yes," he said. "That is the landscape that hung in a golden frame over our mantel piece, when I was a boy! I think I always admired it. How wonderful it is to see the original of that old painting! Let us sit here a while and enjoy it."

"How strange!" I mused, for I had never seen the painting over the mantel piece in Charlie's home. "What struck me," I volunteered, "was that huge wild cherry tree with its massive branches stretching far into the heavens. It is so like the one in Dad's pasture field where we used to swing. I can look at it and almost hear the Tarzan call we made." Just then a soft echo of the old Tarzan days floated across the air. I was sure I was dreaming, but one look at my companion showed me that he too had heard that familiar sound.

"Come on," I suggested, and in a moment we were little boys again, swinging from limb to limb. For it was indeed the selfsame tree.

Soon we were dumbfounded by the repetition of that Tarzan call, not loud and shrill, but soft and melodic, as though it were tempered by the serenity of the surroundings. We looked about us questioningly.

"Did you make that call?" I asked.

"Not I," replied Charlie. "I never could imitate Tarzan."

Again the call was repeated. This time it came from the very topmost branches of the tree. Soon it was followed by a little chuckle, which struck a familiar chord in my memory.

“Roderick!” I uttered, as my memory went back to the little playmate who had been killed almost twelve years ago.

“Hey Bud,” came the answer in Roderick’s usual greeting. “Here I am. Can’t you see me?”

It were as though a screen had been lifted from my eyes. There on a branch just a few yards from me sat Roderick with that boyish grin upon his face.

“Glad to see you, Johnny,” he said. “I knew you’d come to this tree, so I waited here for you. Glad to see you too, Chuck.”

This last sentence nearly took my breath away, for I knew he had never known my co-pilot. I myself had never met Charlie until I went to college, and found that the “powers that be” in that famous hall of learning had placed us in the same dormitory room.

“Thank you, Rod,” was Charlie’s only reply. He seemed to be taking these singular things for granted, while I was still floundering around in bewilderment.

“Hang it all! Roderick,” I said. “Why all this mystery? How do you do it? Why this cherry tree? Why – why - ?”

“Do you mean to tell me,” said my young friend, “that you have grown to manhood years, that you have been to college and studied philosophy and science and do not yet know that thoughts are things?”

“Thoughts are things!” I repeated slowly as the idea began to dawn upon me. “Do you mean that I thought this tree, and here it came?”

“Now, you’re talking sense,” was the astonishing reply.

And at once I realized that the afterworld was a world of thought; and we could make of it what we wished. So startling and revolutionary was the idea that I felt I must have time to think it over. I hopped from the tree upon the grassy sward below and here sat down in an effort to comprehend my new surroundings. The complexity of everything was to me quite colossal. It was indeed an immense step from the psychology class of college days to this broader conception of a mental existence. How long I sat there I will never know, but when I looked around I realized that I was alone. My companions had left me. But I had no sense of solitude. I wondered where the other boys were who had fallen under the enemy guns, and soon forms began to appear; at first hazy and quite indistinct. I walked towards them. They were in uniform. I could scarcely contain my unbounded joy as the features became clear, and I recognized first one, then another of my company companions. Needless to say, they welcomed me with outstretched arms, and all together began to sing “Hail, hail, the gang’s all here”!

I think I hugged each one in turn. What a reunion that was! Everyone was happy.

“Johnny old boy!” exclaimed Fred. “We have been waiting for you. You’re the boy we

need to help us put it over!"

Fred had been a roommate of mine in barracks in North England. He was always aggressive and anxious to get things done. But this idea of "putting it over" in the spirit world was something of which I could not conceive. However, my feeling of consternation was short-lived.

George Burns appeared on the scene and cheerfully announced, "Johnny has not been over long enough to enter into any of your schemes. Give him time. How about a game of football?" he continued. "Two of your old college teams are here and there are plenty of other players."

I looked around and there stood Bud Ferney and Jim Lippincott, of the good old school days. They were wearing the college football uniforms. I grasped a hand of each. "Boy but it's good to see those football togs again!"

"The uniform looks good on you, too," replied Bud.

I looked at myself - and lo and behold I was wearing the identical uniform I wore on the Iowa football fields! I knew it was the same, because my initials were on the sleeve, where Kathleen, my first love, had sewed them. The boys laughed as they saw my unbelief.

"You'll get used to this," explained George. "Now on with the game."

Someone blew a whistle and we automatically lined up. No one seemed surprised when I gave a whoop of delight upon seeing that our adversaries were all clad in the uniforms of our rival university team, which had been our great competitor in the days gone by.

The game went smoothly. Never before had I known such coordination. Everyone knew his place and acted accordingly. It was absolutely the cleanest game of all my experience. Soon a great crowd gathered to applaud our efforts; from whence they came I knew not; but it seemed as though we were once more on the old Iowa campus.

The game over, we jumped into the river and splashed around in its warm waters in friendly co-mingling. I soon found myself beginning to wonder if this new life was all fun. Immediately a voice by my side quoted the old altered proverb, "All fun and no work makes Jack a dull boy." Before I realized it, I found myself quoting the old familiar answer, "All work and no fun makes 'jack'."

My companion laughed heartily. I knew that laugh. Many a time I had heard it in class when I had given some outlandish answer to a question too deep for my untrained mind to solve. I turned and somehow was not surprised to find myself sitting on the grassy bank of the river beside Dr. Bland, my old philosophy teacher. He looked just as I had known him. His face radiant with an inner beauty. His little chin whiskers as trimly groomed as in the days when his class struggled with the intricate problems, of the universe.

“Why, Dr. Bland!” I ejaculated. “Imagine my finding you here!”

“Where did you expect to find me?” came the astonishing reply.

“Of course, I should have known. But what are you doing here?” I just could not quite conceive of Dr. Bland doing nothing but playing football and swimming as we had been doing.

“Oh, I find plenty to do. I always liked to teach, you know, and here one finds ample opportunity to develop those qualities so feebly started on the earth plane.”

“But I do not understand,” I interrupted. “Do you mean to say you have colleges here, and that you conduct classes?”

“You might call it that, if you wish,” and he smiled his old benevolent smile. “Do you think you would be content to play all the time?” he continued.

That was a new thought to me. The idea of work in ‘the next life’ had never been in my category. But as I looked at Dr. Bland I suddenly realized that I did not want to sit still. “I want to progress,” I found myself saying. “If you have room for me in one of your classes, please count me in.”

“That I will,” responded the aged seer. “When you have been around and learned a few things for yourself, I will come again.” His voice trailed off into the distance and I was alone.

I sat there for some time contemplating the greatness of the occasion. I felt tremendously honored to think that Dr. Bland, who must, I thought, be now occupying a high pedestal in this heavenly kingdom, would take the trouble to give me a personal interview. I knew then that I did not want a flowery bed of ease. I knew that my greatest happiness did not lie in the affluent path of luxury. Of course I liked fun - who didn’t? But I knew that the deepest satisfaction would be in the realization that progress was being made. If I could someday climb to the high level of mental and spiritual attainments that Dr. Bland so richly possessed, that would indeed be heaven! But I had yet to learn that progress is only made through service.

The grim realities of the war through which we had just passed had placed an unusually heavy burden on the shoulders of our young men, but we were able to laugh through it all. It was that capacity for fun that proved a saving grace. And that same fun-loving spirit naturally followed our young men as they passed from earth plane to the greater world beyond. We had all been filled with dreams. Dreams of a rosy future, as we built ‘air-castles’ towering almost to the sky. The passing from earth plane to the next world might momentarily cut off these visions, but it could not kill them. The more I thought of it the more I sensed that all life was a progression, either upward or downward. I soon came to the realization that here in the spiritual realm was a great opportunity to advance. Here we were unhampered by the eternal struggle for things material. These satisfying thoughts were still surging through my mind when I saw Charlie coming toward me.

“Come on, Johnny,” he said. “I have been seeing a lot of things. We want to go back to earth to help in bringing about a speedy termination of the war and we need your assistance.”

It seemed to me that Charlie was right at home in his new environment. He went about as though he belonged here always, whilst I scarcely knew which way to turn.

“How in blazes can we go back to earth? And what can we do for the war effort now?” I asked, scarcely believing that I had heard aright.

“We can probably do a great deal,” explained the man who was my co-pilot on many bombing trips over occupied Europe. “I have met a bunch of pilots and they are all eager to do something. They have some really remarkable ideas. I told them of your illustrious thoughts for a new carburetor which would make possible doubling the length of long distance flights.”

My enthusiasm was at once aroused. “Where are these boys?” I asked. “I don’t yet see how we can speed the day of peace, but it will be fun to work on a machine again.”

“Here they are,” Charlie informed me, and immediately we were standing by a work bench surrounded by a dozen young men; several of whom I had known in camp.

For a moment I was breathless. It seemed as though I would never get accustomed to the fleetness of this thought world.

“Hey Johnny!” exclaimed several of the workers.

“Hey there Bill!” I responded. “And Jim and Roy! What are you doing here?”

“Look at this,” and Bill held up a portion of a plane carburetor. “Don’t you think we could save a lot of gas by adding this coil like this?”

I took the part in question in my hands, as happy as a child with a new toy.

“I had figured it like this,” and I adjusted the fine precision parts as I had always wanted to.

“Wonderful!” said Bill. “I never thought of it that way. That should help a lot.”

“Let me see,” I mused, sitting down with my chin on my hand in my old characteristic attitude. “Things seem different now. I worked a lot over this idea, but knew it was not just what we needed.”

For the first time I realized that I could see things more clearly than in the days when I lay awake nights dreaming of long distance flights that might materially help the war effort. Suddenly the idea came to me, as clear as crystal. “I’ve got it! I’ve got it!” I shouted, jumping up and down in glee.

The boys laughed heartily, but watched me with intense interest, as I took the machine in question apart, and one by one placed the intricate portions in a slightly different adjustment, using a file and pliers here and there to make a few alterations.

“There,” I said, with a sense of real satisfaction. “That should be adequate for all occasions.”

“Whee!” whistled Bill. “That will do the trick! Why couldn’t I have thought of that?”

“Johnny has been thinking of something of this kind for a year,” explained Charlie.

“But I never could see it as clearly as this,” I interrupted. “This seemed like an inspiration of the moment.”

Again the group of would-be mechanics laughed at me, and I wondered why.

“That is altogether the best effort yet,” and Roy stepped forward as if to take charge.

“Now to get this idea across to our plane manufacturers in good old U. S. A.!”

“To get it across!” I gasped. “It has been fun working on it, but it cannot do us any good here.”

“You’re right there,” agreed Roy. “We simply must get it across.”

“But how in thunder can it be done?” and I guess I looked my incredulity.

“It can be, all right,” volunteered Bill. “But newcomers like us are too incoherent for this intricate precision work.” “Who then can perform this unbelievable miracle?” It was Charlie speaking up for the first time.

Somehow I was glad to hear him ask this question, for it had seemed to me that my co-pilot had adjusted himself to his new surroundings much more quickly than I. But now, this slight evidence of disbelief brought him down to my level.

“I know an old scientist, Benjamin Franklin, who has got many useful suggestions over to earth plane.” And as Bill spoke, the venerable scientist appeared in front of us busily engaged in a new laboratory experiment. He looked just as he was pictured in our old school books.

We were all thrilled beyond words to think we were standing in the presence of so great a hero!

Benjamin Franklin looked up from his work. His smile was all inclusive. “What can I do for you boys?” His voice was rich and vibrant.

Roy explained that we had been working on a new carburetor by means of which a plane could fly from San Francisco to Tokyo and return.

“Good,” replied the stately old gentleman. “Let me see it.”

He took hold of our work of art. I could swear that it glowed with a fiery grandeur under the touch of his experienced hands.

“Explain it to me,” he said, looking right at me.

I had heard of people being in a seventh heaven, but I think my heaven was seventy times seven, as I stepped to the side of the great scientist and gave in minute detail my reasons for the various adjustments.

“Good. Very good, indeed!” was the kindly response to my efforts.

“Thank you, sir,” was my only reply. But I readily sensed the fact that he knew how much his appraisal was appreciated.

“This should help in bigger things than war,” commented Mr. Franklin.

“Bigger things than war!” echoed Charlie and I in the same breath. For to us who had so recently given our lives in the world’s greatest war, nothing could be more important.

“Winning the war is something,” continued the scientist, “but winning the peace is something infinitely greater.”

I looked at Charlie and some of the more recent arrivals. That phrase “winning the peace” had a vaguely familiar sound, and for some unaccountable reason I found myself harboring a thought which heretofore would have been altogether foreign to my philosophy.

“Yes,” went on our new found friend, as if reading my mind. “Those words were coined in heaven.”

I knew then that when Franklin D. Roosevelt had used that phrase, it had come as an inspiration. Slowly the thought took place in my mind. I had heard it said that certain writers were inspired, but somehow the idea of that inspiration coming from those who had gone ahead had never registered on my all too practical mind.

“Do you get the idea now” asked Roy, as though seeking to assist me through this maze of bewildering newness. “If words of inspiration can get across to those we have left behind, why cannot ideas be conveyed in the same way?”

I saw what he was driving at. It sounded reasonable in a way, but I could not quite comprehend how our new carburetor could be transferred to another world.

“Let’s leave it to Benjamin Franklin,” said Roy, with an air of finality. “He is used to making impressions on earth scientists.”

That did not quite satisfy me. I was from Missouri and I wanted to be shown. “But sir,” I ventured, “do you really think you can influence some worker in the United States sufficiently to show him this piece of machinery in all its detail?”

Benjamin Franklin looked at me with a kindly generosity. “I think so,” he replied. “Have you ever heard of visions?”

Of course I had, but I guess I did not understand them. Right then I remembered one occasion when I had a vision. A dream, I called it. I had gotten up out of bed and drawn a picture of a mechanical tool I had been trying to perfect for a week. When morning came my dream was very hazy, but upon scrutinizing the drawing upon my table the new instrument became very real, and I soon had completed my first invention.

“Yes,” I admitted, “I know what a vision is, but what I cannot understand is how you

can get a vision of things on this side over to someone back home.”

“Someday you will comprehend all these things and will perhaps be able to send such communications yourself,” explained Mr. Franklin. “You know ‘thoughts are things.’ All things are vibrations. Sound and sight are the same, except for a wide difference in the rate of vibration. When a radio is tuned to the right vibration a message comes across. Some people,” he continued, “are attuned to a higher rate of vibration than others. Some are more sensitive to the vibrations around them than others. If we can but get the proper vibration we can get any message we wish across.”

I thought I partially understood, but I knew I would have to have more experience before it would all be clear to me.

“But how can you get into the vibration of the one you seek to influence?” I asked, still anxious to know the why and wherefore of things.

“It is not always easy,” responded my informer. “Sometimes it takes quite a while to so impress the party in question that he has a true conception of what we are seeking to instill upon his mental television screen.”

“Do you really think you can get this carburetor idea over to someone?” I asked, still a little incredulous.

“Perhaps so,” was the reply. “At least we can try. It may take some time.”

“I feel it is needed now to help the war effort,” I ventured, in my desire to get things hurried up.

“Did we not decide that it might be of greater use in peace than in war?” the good old man reminded me.

My youthful friends had gone, but I lingered on, eager to absorb any new ideas my companion had to give. “Why would it be of such great value in peace time?” I asked.

“If those on earth who have plenty to spare could make travel to interior China or India, or even to Japan, quick and inexpensive, food could be taken to those starving millions. Is that not better than carrying bombs to them?”

“Of course,” I agreed. “Something like that might prevent future wars.”

“Their standard of living is so low,” continued my new found friend. “If transportation to and from all the backward portions of the earth could be made easy, those who are more fortunately located might bring about an undreamed of transformation in the lives of those underprivileged; and indirectly derive great benefit for themselves morally, spiritually and financially.”

As the idea soaked in I began to wax warm, for I had so recently viewed the deplorable poverty of the Sicilian peasant.

“Wonderful,” I thought. “If those folks could have comfortable homes and enough to eat.”

“Yes,” continued my instructor, as if reading my thoughts. “Comfortable homes and enough to eat! That would be Heaven on earth!”

“Heaven on earth!” I repeated eagerly. “If we can influence such things from this side, why don’t we do it?”

“That takes time,” explained Mr. Franklin. “Man must work out his own salvation, getting assistance from any available, source. If he can get in tune with things over here, we can frequently render him invaluable service.”

“Why didn’t I know about such things when on earth?” I asked, still battling with the bewildering idea.

“You said you once had a vision, did you not? Where do you think that apparition came from?”

“From God!” I replied, as I slowly absorbed the new philosophy.

“Is God not in all good works?” queried the great scientist. “Mink it over,” and with that he was gone.

As I sat alone at the desk of the great Benjamin Franklin, I tried to interpret the baffling experience through which I had just passed. “God in all good works!” I muttered. “That is the explanation, ‘God in everything!’”

So overcome was I with the astounding newness of everything that I had to have time to think. I walked leisurely to the brow of a nearby cliff - from whose pinnacle I could view a never-ending sea of beauty. As I sat there so far removed from anything I had known in the past, countless questions came to mind.

So many surprises had been mine; the innumerable innovations I had encountered compared to those I had known on earth, led me into many phases of deep contemplation. I was certain I knew but little of my newly found surroundings, and certainly but a meager pittance of the methods to be used in preparing for those advances my inner soul coveted. I had learned the virility of thought, and was astounded because of the speedy consummation into realities following any definite type of thinking. But still there was in me a natural ambition to understand more and more of the vaster, fuller plan of progress. It was made plain to me that I was a resident in one of many planes or areas wherein dwelt the innumerable hordes of souls who had departed from the earth during the centuries that had passed since its creation, and that each individual was at that moment occupying a respective position within areas coinciding with personal temperaments and character. I wanted to know, if possible, how far I was from the lowest strata and particularly how far I yet must climb to arrive at a sphere wherein souls might be termed masters.

These thoughts came into my mind with almost exclusive possession as I sat meditating. No sooner had my mind focused on this desire than I was accosted by a form in stature and beauty excelling anything I had yet encountered. I was at once

conscious that my mental magnet had drawn unto me a soul of some higher realm whose eagerness to serve those on lower planes had impelled its immediate presence.

I was not ill at ease, as I might have been in the presence of an exalted personality on earth. Somehow I could sense the deep and sympathetic interest emanating, like a loving aura, from this presence. It was equally apparent to me that this visitor was conscious of the genuineness of my desire. Hence I found instantly that we were en rapport one with the other, and my relationship toward this being was one of intimate friendship.

“You have called me,” were the initial words that flowed smoothly and eloquently from the lips of my visitor. “We of the higher planes always hear the pleas that arise from others who truly and sincerely seek assistance. You have been in this realm but a short while, and your prayer for aid merits the approval of all those who have travelled this road and now dwell in advanced areas to which you crave to go. I know your wishes, and I am here to aid you.”

“I would have knowledge of the paths I am to follow if I am to come continuously along the road to higher things,” I replied, with an ease that was almost surprising. “Where am I and where may I go in my strivings to find the upward path. Is this place I am now in the highest plane to which I may aspire?”

“Nay, nay, my child, this is not the ultimate goal. But there is such a goal, the realm of perfection, the final stage in the long, long processes of life. No one who arrives from earth is thus prepared to enter this sublime domain. But it shall be for them ultimately. The path is long and the way slow. Plane by plane the ambitious soul passes upward. None of us, who come here, seeking to aid others, has ever seen the highest plane. I guess it is that when we no longer seek to climb to greater spheres of helpfulness and influence, we cease to grow. Hence an all-wise God created an ever expanding goal.”

The entire explanation, up to this point, seemed so natural that not one objection or phase of argument presented itself to my mind. Apparently the visitor sensed this complete trust on my part, and proceeded to open unto me further vistas of the vast and mighty system of life.

“Each person, having completed earth life, and coming into after life, whether by accident, sickness or any of the afflictions that terminate earth living, immediately gravitates to a plane of like people. As one leaves the earth one begins his post-life existence. Whatever the plane may be into which he enters, whether low or high, the same rule holds. He can climb onward, after plane, ever advancing, ever more refined, ever approaching the status of perfection. How long the most ambitious soul may require to attain ultimate joy and bliss is not for us to know. Only do we know that a higher plane exists.

Nor do we feel any impatience that thus far none of us has attained the ultimate

goal, because, in each plane we live and think in terms and feelings so much advanced over those of former planes that we are continuously happy in the living. The beauties of this plane at this moment are to you in excess of those to which you have been accustomed. When you shall so have lived and progressed as to merit transmittal into the next higher plane you will there find expressions of color, of art, of music, of love at the minimum as were those on this plane at maximum."

"But," I interjected, "do none of those who thus climb upward to the higher levels ever doubt or become apprehensive as to the ultimate outcome of this ever progressive spiral of advancement."

"Not so," came the rejoinder. "Faith in the ultimate justice of God and the ultimate salvation of the soul becomes stronger as one progresses. Should any soul become contaminated by doubt, which is quite unlikely, seeing he has graduated from the lower or lesser strata of faith, he would immediately 'fall from grace' and plunge downward in vibrations into the next lower plane, only to be required to proceed upward again over the path he has so lately come."

Silence prevailed for a moment. I was digesting the strange and colossal truths just uttered. Then I found my voice again.

"Then I have passed from earth to spirit, and by so doing I am now in a position to attain more peace and joy and beauty than could ever have been mine had I remained on earth?" I asked it as a query, to which my visitor replied, "Words of wisdom doth thou speak."

Again I pondered. Then said I, and I marvelled at the philosophical turn my mind had taken, "Then neither I nor those I left behind should grieve or be disturbed because of my death."

"Again hast thou wisely spoken" spake the vision. "Into the pathway of certain attainment thou hast already come. Ponder well this knowledge, and, should my services be further needed, send forth thy thought and I shall be with thee."

And my visitor was gone.

3

Reunion

As a very small child I had been interested in 'The Land of Makebelieve.' I remember how gladly I crawled into bed because I knew that was the signal for my mother to commence a tale that carried me off into the land of fairies. Then when I came to manhood years, as I flew through the skies on my errands of war, I oft-times felt that that fairyland was very near. Sometimes I sensed the presence of those selfsame protecting angels who had peopled my boyhood years. I knew that I possessed a vivid imagination and to that attributed my aerial visitations. As a young man, I

knew very few persons who had gone through the experience called death. My maternal grandfather was about the only inhabitant of 'that world beyond' whom I knew was any kin to me. Several times while in flight training, when I was soloing far above the clouds, I was conscious of the nearness of my good grandfather. Once I even put out my hand to touch him, and he was gone. These things I told to no one for I knew they would think I was ready for a psychiatrist, and would have a lot of fun at my expense.

As I sat alone in what I thought of as 'Benjamin Franklin's Park' " the memory of those sky tours came back to me.

They were indeed so vivid that I again heard the hum of an airplane motor. At first I rubbed my ears to see if I heard aright - then I rubbed my eyes, before me was the instrument panel. I closed my hands upon the steering gears.

"Johnny, my boy." It was the voice of my grandfather. how I knew it, I cannot say. I looked at him, scarcely daring to speak lest he disappear. There he sat, erect and stately. His dark moustache, and smiling grey-brown eyes, just as I always pictured him. I put out my hand to him. He clasped it warmly. Then I knew that he was real. I was only five years old when he passed to his reward. My mental picture of him may have come from photographs. But one incident of those good old days I did remember. He once gave me a little tin house filled with candy. Whenever I thought of grandfather I thought of that houseful of candy.

"Grandfather," I exclaimed, "Is it really you?"

He laughed and held out that identical tin house of candy.

"Thank you, Grandpa," and I took the proffered toy. "Does it contain the red and white sugar sticks that you gave me in Iowa?"

Again my companion laughed. "Open and see," he said.

I took out a red and white candy stick, which I gave to my grandfather. I had heard my mother say that he was fond of candy. But most of all I think I really wanted to see if he would eat it.

"May I eat one," I ventured, still feeling that the candy could not be real.

"Of course. What do you think I brought them for?" And with that my grandfather opened his mouth and ate as naturally as any human being.

Together we devoured the candy, saying very little. I felt supremely happy at the wheel of my plane again.

"Tell me, Grandpa," I said. "Did you ever ride with me as I floated above the clouds over Texas.?"

"Yes," he said. "Over Texas, once over Florida, and again over France."

"Why didn't you speak to me?" I asked. "I would have answered you."

"I did speak to you," was the reply, "but I couldn't make you hear me. Once I really thought you saw me, but you never said anything."

Then I knew that those moments of illumination that I had had when on my solitary flights were indeed real. "I had a 'hunch' to speak to you that day," I told him, "but my practical schooling threw up too great a barrier."

"I knew that," he informed me. "But you were of a receptive mind, and I think I could have gotten across to you if I had had a little more experience."

"Tell me, Grandpa, do you think I can ever go back and ride with some of my pals?"

"Perhaps so," was his answer, "when you have been a little longer here. But now wouldn't you like to see your grandmother and some of your relatives?"

"My grandmother!" I echoed. I had not thought of her. She had died before I was born, so had never been very real to me. Then suddenly it dawned upon me that I had not yet seen any women in this new world. Before I realized it, I found myself asking, "Are there any women in heaven?"

At this my grandfather laughed heartily. "Would it be heaven to you without women?" he asked.

I then joined in the laugh. I had never thought of them. So many interesting things kept presenting themselves that I had had no time to note the absence of females.

"I would like to see grandmother," I muttered to myself, scarcely daring to voice the wish.

Somehow our plane had gone. My astonishment knew no bounds when I saw in front of me an elderly lady, sitting in a rocker, beneath a spreading chestnut tree busily knitting a child's sweater. My grandfather stepped over to her and calmly placed himself behind her chair, smiling down at her with an air of satisfied possession. At once I recognized the picture my mother had had enlarged and hung on her bedroom wall.

The lady looked up from her knitting. Her face was aglow with a light of welcome. She arose and came toward me with outstretched arms. In a moment I was hugging my grandmother! It seemed as though I had known her all my life.

When I placed my face against hers, she felt something wet.

"Now, now, Johnny," she said. "There must be no tears here."

I thought then that hers was the sweetest voice I had ever heard.

"They are tears of joy," I explained. "You are so like my mother."

I sat down at her feet and there we talked for a long time, chatting intimately about nothing in particular, just as I had always pictured a boy and his grandmother.

Presently I saw a younger woman coming towards us. She was an attractive 'blonde.' I stood up to greet her.

“Celia,” said my grandmother, “here is Johnny. Johnny this is your Aunt Celia who used to live in California.”

“Aunt Celia!” I took her proffered hand, struggling hard to recall her.

“Glad to greet you, Johnny,” she said. “I have seen you frequently since you came here, but you have been too preoccupied to notice me.”

“I’m sorry,” I told her.

“Forget it,” she said. “Do you remember me? I went to California when you were five years old. You came with your parents to the depot.”

“Yes, of course, I remember that.” And at once I could see that big train puffing up to the depot. I saw my father place a safety-pin upon the track and saw him pick it up after the train had gone. That incident had made a much greater impression upon my childish mind than the fact that my aunt had gone.

“Here it is,” said my grandmother, and she pulled from her work-basket that selfsame pin!

We laughed happily at this incident; then it was as though we had known each other for years. My new found aunt told me of many of my childhood pranks, and we laughed gaily together. Then she said, “Wouldn’t you like to meet some of the great personages of this sphere?”

“Of course, I would,” I replied, and then realized that I felt no natural shyness over the prospect of meeting really important people.

“But tell me, first,” I continued, “is life here simply to be one grand new experience after another?”

“You may find it so,” was the comforting reply. “Life here, or anywhere else, is always an experience. If you progress as I think you will, you will always find it intensely interesting.”

“Are there some who make no progress here?” I asked, almost apologetically, for I couldn’t quite see how anyone could stand still.

Some are not as well prepared for this change as you are, Johnny. You have an open mind and are eager to learn.”

We had strolled to the river bank as we talked. For a moment neither of us spoke. Giant live oak trees with their huge branches, draped in Spanish moss, overhung the river. Slowly the moving stream carried by a few hyacinths in full bloom.

“Oh, Aunt Celia!” I said. “It’s really the same river where I had so much fun swimming and boating!”

Before I realized what I was doing, I reached down to take off my shoes. Aunt Celia laughed at my consternation when I saw my feet were already bare. We were both in bathing suits!

“Come on,” and I ran into the water followed by, my companion. That was real fun; but my greatest joy came when I beheld floating beside me my blue and white Kayak. The little canvas boat which my chums had helped me build when I was a boy in high school. The boat was empty. The paddle lay invitingly over the seat.

We climbed in and were soon floating lazily down the familiar stream.

“Now, Aunt Celia, you asked me if I would like to meet some really great personages. How can we contact these important people? Can we see them at will?”

“Not quite so easy as that,” was the reply. “You see, when people progress far enough they move on to higher planes. If we are on a lower plane, it is not easy for us to go to them. But they can come back to us.”

“But,” I said “if they have been promoted, so to speak, would it not be a demotion to come back to where they started?”

Aunt Celia looked at me. “When you have been here long enough to ‘know the ropes,’ as you used to say, do you think you would object to helping some friend who had just arrived?”

“Of course not,” I answered. “I can think of no greater pleasure.”

“That is exactly it,” commented my aunt. “There is no greater pleasure than in rendering service to others. You had a relative,” she continued, “David Livingstone, who came to this world over seventy years ago. He was a great doctor, scientist and missionary when on earth, so was in a position to advance very rapidly here. He is away beyond us, yet I have met him several times.”

“David Livingstone!” I exclaimed. “Do you suppose I could meet him?”

Dr. Livingstone had been my boyhood hero. He was a cousin of my great grandmother, and I had always been proud of our relationship.

“He comes frequently to talk with your grandmother, and I am sure he would be glad to converse with you.”

“David Livingstone glad to converse with me!” I repeated to myself. “I would give my right arm for such an experience.”

I had just paddled our little Kayak to the shore. “Here’s where you lose that arm,” and my aunt laughed, as she vanished into thin air.

As I gazed questioningly at the spot where she had stepped from the boat I saw another standing in her place. That tall gaunt figure with the slightly stooped shoulders was undoubtedly Dr. David Livingstone. I think I would have known him anywhere. I believe I was ‘awe struck’ for the first time, in the presence of so great a one.

As I stepped lightly ashore I found myself uttering those now famous words of Henry M. Stanley, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume.”

“Johnny, my lad.” The voice was so reassuring and the handclasp so friendly that I at once felt at ease. “Let’s go out upon the river where we can have a real talk.”

We climbed into the Kayak and I paddled into the middle of the stream. After that I forgot the paddle and we just floated. For some time, neither of us spoke - words seemed unnecessary. As I looked into that rugged face with those kindly eyes, I thought of Abraham Lincoln, and told him so. Then I remembered that Abraham Lincoln had been considered homely, and I at once apologized.

“No apology necessary. I consider that a great compliment.” And my companion’s face beamed with delight.

“By the way,” he said, “I sometimes meet Abraham Lincoln. He is a grand fellow and is doing a wonderful work here.”

“You meet Abraham Lincoln!” My enthusiasm almost ran away with me. “Do you suppose I could ever meet him?”

“Perhaps so,” was the calm reply, “when you have developed sufficiently to come to our plane.”

I did not ask him what he meant by developing sufficiently, but he seemed to read my thoughts.

“You know, Johnny, we were all placed on earth plane to develop, and - ”

“Some make a funny mess of it,” I interrupted.

“Quite true, quite true,” agreed Dr. Livingstone. “These people have very little to start with here. Some make splendid progress and are then in a position to move ahead.”

The idea of progression was gradually soaking in, but I knew that I was far from comprehending the vastness of it all. I felt that that could wait.

“Tell me about yourself,” I said “I have often boasted about you to my companions.”

“I was pleased when you were named John Livingstone Stamp, the Livingstone after me.”

“How did you know that?” I asked in bewilderment. “Someday, you will understand,” was all the answer he gave me.

Then I heard a sound as of rushing water. My companion cupped his hand back of his ear. His face lit up. The waters became so rough that our little Kayak bounced about like a feather in a windstorm. We rounded a corner and there in front of us, not more than a mile away, or so it seemed, was a great waterfall. I had visited Niagara Falls as a boy. This waterfall did not look like Niagara. I looked questioningly at the man in my boat. He was enraptured at the sight before him. Like a flash it came to me.

“That is Victoria is Falls, is it not?” I asked.

“Yes! Victoria Falls,” was the reply. “I gave them that name in honor of our great Queen. At that time we marched for weeks through fog and jungle, through fever infested swamps to find this great waterfall.”

“And now,” I interrupted, “you think of them and they are here!”

“You are catching on fast, my boy. When you find your work, I am sure you will progress rapidly.”

“Find my work?” I repeated, too much astonished to thank the great explorer for the fine compliment he had given me.

“Yes, find your work,” he said. “You surely do not want to spend all your time in idleness.”

Of course I didn’t, but I just couldn’t see work to be done. “What kind of work would you like to do?” Dr. Livingstone was genuinely interested in me.

I learned later that much of his work was in helping others. Many people had risen to higher planes as a direct result of the inspiration given to them by this man, who had given so many years of his life while on earth to the betterment of the black man in Africa.

I thought of the various works I had always wanted to do. “I think I ought to go to school some more,” I told him. “The war came before my college course was completed. I always wanted to be an inventor, but I realize I need to possess a greater knowledge of things in general.”

“Yes, you would enjoy school. I think Dr. Bland can make room for you in his class here. He comes back to this plane for one of his classes.”

How he knew that I knew Dr. Bland was more than I could fathom; however, I was getting somewhat used to these surprises.

“To be in Dr. Bland’s class again would be heaven to me,” I said. “But before you go I want to ask some more questions about yourself.”

“I am in no hurry. What would you like to know?” and he sat down on the bank of the river.

I sat down beside him ready for a real chat. I had no recollection of having got out of the Kayak. Neither did I see it disappear, but it was gone. These things seemed trivial compared to the fact that I was talking intimately to the great David Livingstone.

“Were you proud of being buried in Westminster Abbey?” I asked.

“No, that made no difference to me,” replied the famous Missionary. “But the kindness of those black men who carried my body twelve hundred miles through swamp and jungle meant a great deal to me.”

“Where are those black men now?” was my natural question. “Do you ever see them?”

For the first time, I realized that I had not seen any colored men in this spirit world.

"You will meet them some day, Johnny. There is one of them on my plane. He is working with me, and has proven an invaluable assistant."

"One of those very same men who carried your body to the African coast!" I exclaimed, not being sure that I had heard right.

Dr. Livingstone laughed. "Yes, the very same. I will bring him to see you some day, if you wish."

I said it would give me a great deal of pleasure to meet him and thank him personally for that trip.

The good doctor arose. "I like you, Johnny," he said. "When you are ready, you may get into classes and study, then you will be in good shape for those inventions you spoke of. I must go now," he concluded, "but I will come again for another ride with you in your little Kayak."

By this time I was used to the magic disappearances of those who came to me, and I wondered if I would ever be able to come and go at will so easily. I got up and started walking slowly through the woods, trying desperately to digest all these wonderful happenings. I recalled David Livingstone's words, "attend classes and study." But I wondered how I could study, for I had seen no books in this new world. I blinked my eyes as though waking from a dream. Without being conscious of any exertion on my part, or even any movement of any kind, I was standing in a huge library lined with books as far as my eyes could see.

For a moment I was too much overcome with surprise to move. I stood gazing at the interminable rows of pent up knowledge. In fact I almost felt as though I were infringing on sacred ground. Surely those books so exquisitely bound could not be there for my use. But my trepidation was transient. Soon the guideposts to the various departments became visible. I could see in bold outlines the words Electricity, Biology, Sociology, Poetry, Music and an endless number of other subjects. I was entranced, but was soon aroused from my reverie by hearing a footstep back of me.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" The voice was sweet and gentle. There was a vaguely familiar ring about it.

"Why Adele Masterville!" I said, as I extended a hand to the librarian who had been so willing to help the boys during our college days. "Fancy finding you here!"

"What is so strange about that?" replied the librarian.

"It is not so strange after all," I admitted. "You were a wonderful librarian, so why not continue it here?"

"Why not? I always loved the work. Here it is even more entrancing as we are never hampered by lack of material. "Come," she said, as she led me to a corner labeled

“Recent Inventions.” She took down a neatly bound book from a shelf and handed it to me. “Open it,” she commanded.

Life had been nothing but surprises, ever since I left earth plane, but I think the biggest surprise of all came to me when I read the title, “Speedy Carburetor” and saw my name on the fly-leaf above a picture of the carburetor I had recently designed and explained to Benjamin Franklin.

“There you are,” and my companion’s face was radiant with delight. “That is your carburetor, with comments by Benjamin Franklin.”

“My carburetor!” I gasped. “What is it doing here? Why put it in a book?”

“Someone will read it who can get the idea across to the earth plane where it may be very useful,” explained Adele Masterville.

“May I read this?” The question was unnecessary, for I was already devouring the little volume.

“Sit down at the table here, and if you want me for anything I will be at the desk,” and with that she disappeared.

I sat down eagerly reading every word in the book. When I looked up I could see Miss Masterville in the distance, just as she looked in the days gone by.

“Yes,” I thought to myself, “it is most natural that she be a librarian here.”

4

Ferry Service

How long I had been in the celestial realms I did not know. Time meant nothing. Every moment had been chuck full of thrills. I had been around a lot and thought I was beginning to understand this new existence. I liked the idea of going to school again. The prospect was rosy, and I was indeed very happy. I had been so preoccupied that I had forgotten all about Charlie. Suddenly I thought of him and wondered what he was doing. Was he on the primrose path as I had been? I did not have long to wonder, for there seated on a grassy knoll not fifty feet from me sat my co-pilot. He was not alone - by his side sat a lovely girl dressed in the uniform of an army nurse. They were engrossed in earnest conversation. This was the first young girl I had seen since coming here, hence the surprise was really disarming. I stood still, quite content to watch them. I do not know why I hadn’t thought there would be girls here, for I knew that the general run of the feminine sex was better fitted for such a place than was mere man.

Charlie looked at me. “Hey there, Bud! Where have you been?”

“Hello, Chuck, you surely are a sight for sore eyes!” and I clapped him on the shoulder just as I used to do.

"Oh, pardon me, Johnny," said Charlie. "This is Miss Maxine Miller. Maxine, this is Johnny Stamp."

We shook hands and exchanged the usual 'Pleased to meet you' greetings.

"I hadn't expected to find a beautiful young girl here!" I blurted out.

They laughed heartily at my candor.

"Do you think girls belong elsewhere?" asked Miss Miller, much amused.

"Not at all," I apologized. "It was just that I had not seen any here. But I might have known that Charlie would find a girl if there were one to be found."

"'Twouldn't be Heaven to me without the fair sex," admitted Charlie. "Where have you been all this time that you have not run into any?"

"I have been meeting some wonderful people," I told them. Some of them were women, but not young girls like Miss Miller."

"Call me Maxine," said the pretty nurse. "Before you have been here very long you will realize that all companionship is based on intellectual and spiritual qualities."

I was already beginning to sense that, so when Maxine put it into words it became very clear.

"Tell me," I said, "are there many more like you here." "There were twenty-nine others who came over when I did," was the reply.

"Nurses on Bataan?" I queried.

"No. Torpedoed on the Atlantic."

"What a loss to the army!" I thought.

"Not at all," Maxine answered me, as though I had spoken my thoughts. "We can do as much or more for the army personnel here than we could in the flesh."

Somewhere that suggestion had come to me before, but its significance had not soaked in.

"That's true," it was Charlie speaking up. "Even a poor nut like me has been helping the army. I must away now. There is another bunch coming in. Will see you later."

"Well," I said, turning to Maxine. "What does it all mean? What has Charlie found to do so soon?"

"Sit down," said the girl, "whilst we talk this all over." I took the proffered seat beside her and waited for her to speak.

"I came here a few months ahead of you," explained Maxine, "so have had some time to adjust myself. But I find there is yet much to be learned."

"That is what makes this place so interesting," I commented.

"The fact that we can be of service to others is my greatest pleasure," said the little

nurse.

"I haven't found any way to serve others," I admitted. "Where do you find this work?"

"Oh, yes you have!" Maxine laughed, and pulled out from beneath her arm the book explaining my carburetor. "Charlie and I were just discussing it."

"Jumping Jehosephat! Where did you get that?" And I took the book from her hand none too graciously. I had supposed there was just the one copy in the library, and I had not thought of asking to take it with me.

The girl smiled. "There is a copy for all who want one. Invention seems to be your line. I hope you will go on with it."

"I may not be much good at it," was my reply, "but it is intensely interesting. I mean to go to school to get a more liberal education; then I may be better fitted for the work."

"Splendid," said Maxine, with real enthusiasm. "You will be able to do very much more than you ever could on earth plane."

"Earth plane!" I repeated. "My time here has been so full that I almost forgot about a past. You said, Maxine, that you could help the war personnel from here better than back there. What did you mean? How can you be of any assistance to them now?"

"Oh in many ways!" she explained. "You see I was a nurse. I can still work in that capacity whenever I am needed."

"Whenever you are needed! There is no sickness here! What can a nurse do?"

"Come with me," was all the answer my companion gave. She took my arm, and together we walked down a little by-path. "There are some boys who have just come over. They are tired and somewhat confused. A nurse can do a great deal to reassure them and make them feel at home in this new realm." I was astonished to see a long row of men in uniform. Soldiers who had undoubtedly been killed in battle. There were American uniforms, Canadian uniforms, British uniforms, Russian uniforms, and also German uniforms. Some were lying as though asleep; others were sitting up, looking the surprise they felt. Nurses were going around among them, talking in accents soft and sweet. As they spoke the dazed look seemed to disappear from the confused faces.

"That is the kind of work I have found to do," said Maxine. "Don't you think it is worthwhile?"

"Wonderful," I told her. "But how do you find these people? I never would have met them if you hadn't brought me here."

"Perhaps not," was the thoughtful answer. "This is not your type of work. You can do more in the invention line."

"Every man to his taste," I mused. "What a wonderful world!"

A soldier sleeping on the grass nearby stirred. Maxine went to him, bent on her mission of cheer. As I watched her, Charlie appeared in front of me bearing in his arms a man dressed in the uniform of an American Air Force Colonel.

"Charlie!" I exclaimed. "Where did you find that?"

Charlie smiled, "Colonel Adams," he announced as he laid the man on the grass beside me.

"Colonel Adams!" I could scarcely contain my astonishment. I was beside the man in an instant, for he had been my superior officer and a man whom I very much admired. I took his hand; and tried to lift one tired eyelid.

"Let him rest a little while," said Charlie. "He will soon be O.K."

I looked at my former co-pilot. He was supremely happy. "Where did you find him?" I repeated.

"Oh, I went to the plains of Germany for him," explained Charlie, as casually as though it were an everyday occurrence.

"To the plains of Germany! How! When, why, where?" I wanted to ask a hundred questions at once.

"Not so fast, Johnny. It wasn't easy at first. Maxine told me of the need. I wanted to help so here I am."

"But how? How do you do it?" I was still bewildered. "Oh, I didn't go alone. There were plenty of other boys in our rescuing party."

"Rescuing party!" I repeated. "I do not understand."

"You see, Johnny, when these boys have been in crashes, it is quite a help to them if some of us are there to guide them across. Probably you didn't know it but George Burns guided us over here."

I remembered seeing George Burns when I first opened my eyes in these new surroundings. At that time I did not realize where I was.

"So that is it!" I said. "But I do not yet understand how you do it."

"George Burns has a squadron organized for the purpose, and I have joined his group."

"Why don't you take me with you?" I asked.

"I will sometime," was the reply. "But this is not your work. You are an inventor."

Colonel Adams began to stir.

"Look after him. I must go for more," and Charlie disappeared without even leaving a ripple in the air through which he vanished.

"Colonel Adams," I said, as the man opened his eyes. "Wake up, you are all right."

"All right?" muttered the dazed officer. "Am I all right? I thought we fell."

"You are O.K., Colonel," I assured him.

"But the plane crash? Where are the others?"

"They are all safe," I told him:

"Thank God," was his only response, as he turned over for another sleep.

Maxine was again at my side. "Let him rest," she said. "I will look after him and you can come again when he is ready to talk."

"Sit down, Maxine," I said, "I have a million things I want to ask you. You see I'm from Missouri!"

"Shake," replied the nurse. "I'm from Missouri, too."

That hearty handclasp seemed to bring us nearer together, and I felt free to go on with my questioning. "Were all these nurses torpedoed when you were?"

"Oh no," she said. "Some have been here much longer. They help us and show us what to do. Some have only been here a short time."

"What I really mean is, are all the twenty-nine nurses who came over when you did in this group doing this work?"

"Not at all," was the astonishing reply. "About twenty of the girls are doing this work. Some here and some elsewhere." "And where are the others?" My curiosity was aroused, and it had to be satisfied:

Maxine hesitated a moment as though loath to disillusion me. "You know," she said, "that all nurses are not fitted for their work. Some do not really care for nursing. Those who prefer other lines naturally find something else to do."

"Are all twenty-nine of those nurses in this realm?" I insisted, feeling that she was not telling me everything.

"You are persistent," was her reply. "I think I have met twenty-five of them on my rounds."

"Then where are the other four?"

Maxine laughed. "If you must know, they are not on our plane. You will understand that after a while when you are in a position to help them."

"To help them!" I repeated. "Do they need help? I do not understand."

"Oh, yes, plenty of them do. With proper help they can progress more rapidly, and will eventually reach this plane."

"Do you mean that they are on a lower plane than this?"

"Exactly that," replied Maxine. "There are many who are not fitted mentally or spiritually for this plane. When they are ready they will advance."

"Do they always advance?" I asked.

“Yes, I think so,” said the girl. “But some are very slow about it.”

“How do you account for that?” was my next question.

“Well, you see, they have not had the good training that those who came here have had,” explained Maxine. “Those with whom they mix in their plane are of their same caliber, hence it is more difficult to advance.”

“To be shut up there, away from all the better type of people must be hell,” I thought, but did not dare to put it in words. . .

“Call it hell, if you want to,” continued my companion, “it is the fruits of their own sowing.”

“Tell me, Maxine, you said we might have a chance to help them sometime. How can that be?”

“They cannot come to us who are on a higher plane, but we can go to them.”

“Then let’s go,” I interrupted, rising.

“Not so fast,” and the nurse put a restraining hand on my arm. “I have never been there. We have to have more experience before we can go to other planes. It is only when we can be of real service to someone that we are able to go to a lower plane.”

“Do you suppose, Maxine, that all those people want to come to our plane?”

“Yes, I understand that they do. Don’t you see, Johnny, things are different for them now. When they were on earth they liked their type of company, because there were plenty of other types all around them. Now when they are closeted with only their own type, it is no fun. They can see now the folly of their ways.”

“When you see your mistakes, then you are ready to advance,” I soliloquized.

“Exactly,” replied the nurse. “It has been nice meeting you. I will see you again, but I must be going now. Look after your colonel friend.”

I started to tell her how very much this talk had meant to me, but she was gone. I was talking to no one. I looked around and to my surprise saw Colonel Adams sitting up, with a look of amazement on his face. I saluted as was my custom. Colonel Adams arose and returned the salute.

“John!” he said, as he extended his hand. “Fancy seeing you here.”

“I didn’t expect to see you either,” I replied. “But I’m mighty glad to welcome you.”

“Where are we, anyway? I thought you were killed,” said the genial Colonel.

“I was,” I smiled joyously, waiting for the idea to soak in. I remembered the fun the boys had trying to persuade me that I had passed through that thing called Death.

“You seem very much alive to me,” commented my superior officer.

“More alive than ever,” I told him “and happy as a lark.”

“I came down over France,” the colonel said. “I was sure I’d be killed, but I don’t

even appear to be injured,” with that he slapped his arms and legs to make sure he was all in one piece.

“Fit as a fiddle,” I said. “The boys will be so glad to see you.”

“The boys!” he ejaculated. “What boys?”

“There are a lot of boys here who were under your command. You will see them soon.”

“Where is here? Are we in France? Is this German occupied territory?”

“No, Colonel Adams, this is not France. You were killed in that plane crash. This is ‘the after world’.”

A look of bewilderment crossed his face, then a look of contentment, followed by a smile. “I should have known,” was all the comment he made. He closed his eyes as though he wanted to be alone.

Just then I spied Charlie coming in with another passenger and went to his side. This time he had a young girl as his prize. He laid her gently on the grass and one of the nurses came to his assistance.

“A girl! Charlie, where did you find her?”

“She is a German lassie, who was killed during one of the raids over Hamburg.”

“Trust you, for finding the girls,” I laughed. “But tell me how you do it.”

“If you are needed for this work you will be given instructions,” Charlie told me. “It’s a lot of fun.”

I was about to ask where I could get the necessary instructions, when someone touched me on the arm. It was Colonel Adams.

“Charlie,” he said. “This is a surprise!”

“You’ll find lots of surprises here,” and Charlie took his proffered hand, and grasped it warmly. “The boys are anxious to see you.”

“What boys?” inquired the Colonel.

“Come with us,” was Charlie’s response.

Together we walked to the brow of a hill overlooking a river. As we drew near we could see smoke rising. I think I was just as much amazed at the scene that confronted us as was the new arrival. We stood on the river bank for a few moments. There on the flats by the water’s edge was a bunch of air pilots with a string of fish. They had built a bonfire and were busily engaged preparing and frying their catch. Much laughter and shouting indicated a merry mood. Charlie did not seem at all surprised, whilst I was even more nonplussed than was our guest. Neither of us spoke.

Charlie said, “Come on,” and he led the way to the group. As we approached we

could discern the features. Lo and behold the whole bunch had been in the same squadron with us under Colonel Adams!

“Got any extra fish?” shouted Charlie.

The boys looked at us and let out one simultaneous whoop of joy. Instantly every man was on his feet eager to greet us. They danced about in great excitement, uttering words of welcome.

Frank Allen, who had been a roommate of mine at Drew Field, Florida, changed the trend of things as he addressed Colonel Adams. “We were just wishing for someone like you, Colonel.”

“Chuck the colonel stuff here. Call me ‘Jim.’” was the genial reply.

“All right, Jim - but Colonel fits you better. You see we wanted someone to lead us. And we should give a leader a title.”

“Lead you?” Colonel Adams repeated. “What do you mean? Surely you do not have wars here.”

“No, not here,” was the answer. “But you know we all gave our lives for a cause. We want to still help that cause.”

“Of course,” replied the Colonel, “but how? That is beyond me.”

Charlie interrupted for the first time. “I believe we are all getting in over our heads. How about finishing up these fish, and then maybe we can think more clearly.”

To this the boys heartily agreed. We turned to the almost forgotten fire, stirred up its embers, piled on some more fuel, and amid much merriment were soon enjoying an old-fashioned fish fry. The meal over, we sat down on the river bank and sang some of the air corps songs we used to sing. The Colonel’s clear tenor voice rang out above the others.

“That’s just what I mean,” said Frank. “Colonel - Jim, I mean - you were leading us in those songs. You are a natural born leader. We want to form an organization of pilots, for study, work and play. We want you to be our Colonel here, just as you were back there.”

Colonel Adams looked very serious. “You do me great honor. There is nothing would give me more pleasure than to feel that we were again working together but as you know I am absolutely new here, and could not possibly be of any help to you.”

Charlie spoke up. “We’ll give you a while to find your bearings. It won’t take long.”

Up to this point I had said nothing, though I had been intensely interested. My curiosity was not yet satisfied, so I spoke up.

“Frank, you mentioned wanting to help the war effort from here. How can that be?”

“That is what puzzles us,” was the answer. “We know there is a way of helping. It will take some study and training, and we feel if Jim would be our Colonel again, we

could accomplish something.”

“What makes you think you could be of help to the fellows back there?” inquired the Colonel, now really interested in the new idea.

Frank looked thoughtful. “I have met those who tell us that it is possible for us to go back and ride with some of our pilot pals when on important missions. They say we can learn to guide and protect them.”

I thought then of what my grandfather had said about riding with me, and I knew the idea was not fantastic.

“I believe it can be done,” I said, “but we are still green and need to be shown.”

Frank smiled his approval. “That’s precisely the case. We need to be shown. With Jim as our leader to keep us together and encourage us, we could have a capable teacher from a higher plane show us the way.”

“It sounds interesting. You can count on me to do what I can.” And the Colonel arose, intent on exploring his new surroundings.

Then suddenly, and quite as mysteriously as had been all the other kaleidoscopic events of these wonderful times, I was alone lying in a grassy meadow. The sky was opalescent in prismic colors, and the breeze wafted softly and kissed my cheek with kindness. The entire atmosphere was charged with a type of satisfying serenity that was conducive to meditation. And without effort my thoughts ran on excursion, and, unsolicited, there softly entered my mind the story told so frequently among fliers several months prior to my crash.

Those tales to which we listened when we sat serenely in our barracks subsequent to the excitement of our flights over enemy territory, and after we had related the weird and almost unbelievable experiences through which each had passed, were, after all, climaxes even to our superhuman deeds. They were tales of other pilots who had flown the last mile and in whose crashes only silence and death ensued. They were tales of those whose luck didn’t hold, and who had paid their sacrifices bravely and uncomplainingly. There were other tales whose endings were more favorable, but whose experiences were supernormal and mystic.

Well could I recall how we listened in rapt attention, and then came the reactions.

“I don’t believe a word of it,” would respond one pilot. “The whole yarn is a figment of some ranter’s imagination. It just isn’t that way.”

And his deductions echoed the sentiments of many.

“It might be true,” was the response of others. “Maybe there is a great vast and extended realm from which aid is vouchsafed to those of us who risk our lives in perilous flight.” And this conclusion stated the convictions of others.

As for me I had been “on the fence.” I just didn’t know. And now, with vivid colorings and intense impressions, the entire panorama came slowly into my

consciousness and passed, event by event, through its labyrinths.

The plane, guided by a friend of mine, Captain Roy Parsons, was well inside enemy territory. Flying was precarious. Danger lurked on all sides. Then came the dreaded warning by way of sizzling shell, closer and closer, striking now and then. Death was riding the air. Pilots were tense. Suddenly a third member came into the pilot's cab. Silently he arrived, out of the ether, a visitor not scheduled on the flight. Delicate hands overlaid those of the pilot. Strangely the airship responded. Onward they flew. And then they were out of danger. And as suddenly as he came, the aerial visitor vanished. He was gone, and Roy and his companion were again alone in the cockpit of the plane.

Pilot and co-pilot gazed at each other in wonderment and awe. Neither said a word until the plane was safely grounded at its home base.

"Well, what was it?" queried the astonished pilot.

"Danged if I know," was the response. "One thing I do know," commented Captain Parsons. "He was both a stranger to me and an expert pilot. And somehow his hands quieted mine, and the plane soared through to safety."

At the time when Roy told the story we were all much impressed. Significant things were happening hourly. His experience, for somehow even then I felt it was a real experience, incredible though it seemed, meant much to me.

"You are lucky to have a guiding spirit," and I congratulated the fortunate pilot with a hearty clap on the back.

"He can come as often as he likes," stated Roy. "I sure need him."

Several "Amens!" were heard from the spellbound listeners, and we 'turned in' for the night, knowing full well that we would have need of 'a good luck spirit' on the morrow. That night I lay awake for a long time pondering the story told by Roy Parsons, and when I went to sleep it was to dream of celestial figures guiding our planes about at will.

Now from the spirit side of life I could look back and realize how very real was my friend's experience.

Again I recalled a story written in our army paper, "The Stars and Stripes." It was the tale of another flier who had met the final mile and had crashed into eternity with the fall of the plane. It was reported that even he, long gone over through the channel of death, had somehow wigwagged his message back to those who still were flying the dangerous skies in this terrible war.

"I am a pilot," he was reputed to have said. "I was killed in the battle of Britain. I was flying a Spitfire. One day in October we went up, and I was shot down. I remember the shot. One minute we were flying along, and the next thing the plane and I - I don't know exactly how to describe it, - we shook ourselves free from the wreckage and continued on flying. It was the strangest thing that had ever happened. There

was color and light and beauty such as I had never experienced.. .

“Suddenly I heard a voice. I thought it was my station calling to me on the intercom. It said, ‘My son, you have gained freedom. Your soul is traversing the magnetic paths.’

“This was absolute double Dutch to me. I didn’t know what was going on. Then I heard another voice. It was that of my old squadron leader, whom I had seen shot down a few days before. He said, ‘Get off it, chum. You and I are flying together. We don’t have to land just yet. Keep on flying until you’re sleepy, and then I’ll take over.’

“I flew along, and it seemed to me that my squadron leader was there in the plane with me, right at my Shoulder.”

Vividly through my peaceful mind these scenes revolved. Now their significance, hardly definitely formed when I heard them in camp, assumed added meanings. Pilots who had perished in the steam and heat of battle were participants in both events. Apparently they had died. Yet somehow they were still alive. And here was I - maybe I too was one of these.

Over and over these tales revolved in my mind, and with each revolution they became more vivid and more certain. They were real experiences. They did open vast ranges of life I hitherto had believed only in the sense of the visionary. Heretofore they had been so filmy and vague that I had refused to commit myself definitely when they were recited in the camp. Now I was a stellar performer within the scenes of similar surroundings.

Then I returned from my reverie. The sky was as purple and rosy and red as before. The gentle breeze was as intriguing and the substance of the atmosphere as soothing. And my understanding was opening to admit a colossal and strange phenomena. I had passed through the portals called death. The transition had been tragic. It was almost instantaneous. I had had little time to meditate or to give voice to my consternation, if consternation were present. But in a flash I had been squeezed out of my body. I had been knocked out of my physical organism by an impact so tremendous as to push me away from it without an instant’s delay. And now I am here, in an environment just as alive and just as positive as any I had hitherto experienced.

Over these things I pondered. Somehow I was impressed that these instances, more or less lightly reviewed while I was yet under orders of war, now loomed with brilliance and understanding.

Ambassadors

I had always liked school. I had appreciated my fellow class-men and my teachers. I had enjoyed the social and sports life of the college atmosphere, but never before had I received the thrill out of the discussions that I got out of Dr. Bland's classes. He was always a master mind, often too deep for me; but here his thoughts were clear and concise. My powers of concentration were so improved that I could follow the trend of his thought without any apparent mental effort.

One day when I was particularly impressed with the subject matter we had been studying, I wandered off to the riverside to be alone, that I might think over and fully digest the purport of the whole thing. I had not been there long when I saw a figure approaching. I arose to my feet.

"Maxine!" I exclaimed. "Gee, but I am glad to see you!" She clasped my hand of welcome. "Sit down," she said, "I have so much to say to you."

"The pleasure will be all mine," was my reply as we sat down on the grassy slope not two feet from the water's edge.

"Want to?" she smiled as she slid nearer the limpid stream; taking off her white nurse's shoes, she dangled her feet in the cooling waters.

"Yet bet," and I followed suit as rapidly as possible.

There we sat like two school children splashing the waters with our toes. For a time neither of us spoke. Words seemed superfluous.

It was Maxine who broke the silence. "How are you enjoying your classes?"

"Marvelously," I replied. "I never knew there was so much to be learned."

"I have been learning a lot too," said Maxine. "Now I hope I am ready for some real service."

I looked at her in amazement. "What do you mean by real service? The last time I saw you, you were ministering to new arrivals. That's what I call real service."

"All that was helpful," admitted my companion. "But there are many others here who could do that work. I want to go where there are not so many helpful ones."

"Shoot the works," was my response. "You've got me guessing."

Maxine laughed. "Are you willing to be shot into another plane with me?"

"Anywhere, with you as guide!" I still did not understand what she had in mind, but instinctively I knew it must be something worthwhile.

"Last week, Charlie and I went to a lower plane where we found much work to be done."

"Charlie?" I repeated. "That boy seems to get ahead of me every time!"

“You don’t mind, do you?” and my companion looked astonished.

“Of course not,” I reassured her. “I just wonder how he does it, that is all. I guess he is smarter than I.”

“Not at all,” was the comforting answer. “It is simply that this is more his line of work. You have an inventive mind, and it is best that you be educated for your own particular kind of service.”

I thought I was beginning to understand. “But don’t you think a little diversification would be a good thing?”

“Yes,” the nurse replied. “That is what I had in mind. A little practical service along with the mental training you are getting would make a well rounded career.”

“When do we get shot?” was my next question. “I’d like to know of what that practical service consists.”

“Not so fast,” laughed my informant. “First I want to tell you a little of what Charlie and I found there, if you are willing to listen.”

“Barkus is willing. Proceed.” And I told myself I would not interrupt again. For I could see that Maxine wanted to tell it in her own way.

“We found there many people who need encouragement. People who on the earth plane had not been fired with any particular ambition; hence, they had not received the development necessary to come to our plane.”

“Do they now think they would like to come to our plane?” I asked.

“O, yes,” she said. “They realize when they are with people, none of whom are of a higher type, that they have missed a great deal, and they are quite anxious to advance.”

“How long will it take them to get here? Where do we come in, in this scheme of things? And how do we get there?” My questions were again coming thick and fast.

“There are boys there whom you knew on earth plane. Boys whom you knew in school; boys whom you met in army camps, all of whom you could help if you wish to.”

“Nothing would give me more pleasure,” I responded. “If I knew just how to render the necessary assistance.”

“By helping others we ourselves grow,” continued Maxine. “You know how much Dr. Bland’s visits to this plane mean to you. What he is doing for you, you can do for those boys back there.”

“Do you mean classes? Do you want me to organize and teach study groups there?” The idea was becoming clear in my mind. “How do we get there? You haven’t told me that.”

“There are many ways,” my informant told me. “We may travel on ‘The Wings of

Love.' We may sail on the waves of thought, or we may fly in your beloved plane."

"In my plane," I gasped.

"Yes. Charlie and I went by plane."

"But my plane burned up!" and I guess I looked my disbelief.

"Did it?" Maxine grinned. "Grab the wheel and let us go." I had long ago decided that I would never get used to these sudden thought transitions, but now I felt more certain of it than ever. A moment before we had been sitting by the river, kicking the waters with our bare feet. Now we were fully clad sitting in my very own plane. I looked at my feet and lo, I was wearing my military shoes. I looked at Maxine's feet. She had on her nurse's shoes! "But the plane - how could it be the same one?" I asked myself.

"It is. Isn't it?" queried the girl by my side.

"I'll tell you in a moment," and I put my hand under the instrument panel, and pulled out a picture of Kathleen, the girl friend of my Iowa days.

"Yes," I admitted, "it is really the same."

"Now, let's go," was all the comment Maxine made.

The engines were humming beautifully. I looked at the gasoline gauges. They showed full tanks.

Maxine laughed. "That is force of habit I guess."

"Do you think habits formed in life follow us over here?" I asked.

"Most certainly," declared the nurse. "We are a part of all that we have met."

Cautiously I adjusted the instruments. The plane began to move, and we were soon soaring through space. The old familiar feel of the wheel gave me a real thrill. We darted in and out of fleecy clouds like lambs at play. I had not had so much fun for a long time. We spoke little, but I could see Maxine was enjoying it too. A sudden desire to climb seized me - up we went, higher and higher. I looked at the little lady riding with me. She seemed to be enjoying the ride immensely.

I knew we must have been riding for quite a while, so instinctively I looked at my gas gauge. The tank still registered full. I turned to my companion for the answer.

"The tank will always be full," she said, "when you are on an errand of mercy."

"How wonderful!" I thought. Maxine had not told me where to go and I had not thought of asking her. But as we dipped down through a cloud we saw a beautiful sandy beach, which had just been packed down by a receding tide. I had a feeling that I wanted to land.

Yes, let's land," said the girl.

The beach had a familiar look.

“Daytona Beach?” I muttered to myself.

“Yes, Daytona Beach, Florida,” confirmed Maxine.

I set the machine down on those hardened sands and we both leaped out and began to walk down the famous race course.

“That was a marvelous ride,” declared the young nurse. “If we both start up classes, I hope we can often come this way.”

“The pleasure would be all mine,” I found myself saying. “Did you say both start up classes?”

“Why yes,” she said. “I have already organized mine. There are nurses here who need assistance, and there are girls from many walks in life who now realize the futility of their idle life on earth and are eager to make up for lost time.”

I do not know why the idea of Maxine teaching surprised me. I knew she had been in the spirit world longer than I, and had certainly learned a great deal more of the art of service than I had.

“Of course,” I said. “That is splendid. They are lucky indeed to have a teacher so well qualified. Tell me,” I continued, “do you find many of the idle rich here?”

“Some,” was the reply. “I have a millionaire’s daughter in my class. She knows the opportunities that were hers and is anxious to make amends.”

We were strolling through a meadow. I knew this was not Daytona Beach, but had no recollection of leaving the sea side. I did not know where we were, but was quite content to let the lovely nurse lead me where she willed.

“Where are all the other millionaires we had in America after the last war?” I asked.

Maxine smiled at me. “That is a big question. Some are on this plane, some are on our plane, and some are higher.” “And some? - ” I did not finish the question.

“Yes, some,” interrupted Maxine, “are on a yet lower plane.”

“A lower plane!” I ejaculated. “Is there a yet lower plane?”

“O, yes,” was the response. “We have no hardened criminals here. Theirs is a much lower plane.”

It seemed as though my curiosity would never be satisfied. “Do they have to stay in that lower plane always?” I asked. “Not necessarily so,” answered Maxine. “One of them is in my class. Her’s has been a long hard struggle. She told me she wanted to join my class, so that when she knew enough she could go back to help those unfortunates she left behind.”

“It sounds to me as if one with those ambitions is about ready for promotion, is she not?”

“Well,” replied Maxine, “she’s getting that way. Her service to others will help her lots. There are a great many things she has to learn yet. Her life on earth was such a

miserable failure that she had absolutely no background to start with.”

There were so many things that I wanted to know that I continued asking questions. “Do you suppose she can ever get to a really high plane?”

Maxine laughed heartily. “I’m not a walking encyclopedia,” she said. “I’ve only been across a few months longer than you, and cannot be sure of all these answers. However, I do know that Judas Iscariot is on one of the higher planes!”

“Judas Iscariot!” I echoed, scarcely believing that I had heard aright.

“You know he has been across for nearly two thousand years. That should give anyone time to do something,” explained Maxine.

“I suppose so,” I admitted. “I just hadn’t thought of his type being advanced. But he must have had some possibilities or Jesus would never have chosen him.”

“Everybody has possibilities,” and Maxine quoted from Alfred Lord Tennyson,

“‘Nothing walks with aimless feet,
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void
When God hath made his pile complete.’”

Deep down in my heart I think I had always had that philosophy, but scarcely dared express it.

“Here we are,” announced Maxine. “My class is over here, already assembled. You go that way and make your own arrangements.”

“Where shall we meet to ride back?” I asked.

“I believe we had better each find a way back,” was the reply. “We will not be through at the same time. The wings of thought will carry us over.”

Maxine went to her class and I moved on in the direction she had indicated. I saw a young man coming to meet me; as he drew nearer I saw that he was wearing the dress suit of our college glee club.

“Jerome Roebuck!” I said. “This is a surprise!”

“Yes,” said Jerome, extending his hand. “This is really me.”

Jerome had been the wealthy playboy of our college group. He had flunked his classes and I had heard nothing more of him.

“Killed in battle?” was my natural question.

“No,” admitted Jerome. “I wish I had been. Then I might not be here. It was an automobile accident. We had all been drinking.”

“Don’t you like it here?” I asked.

“No!” was the definite answer. “This place is a world of regrets.”

“Regretting what?”

“Johnny, old boy,” explained Jerome, “you tried to help me in those good old days at College, but I muffed my opportunity, and now I am paying for it. You spent hours of your precious time trying to help me with math. I couldn’t get calculus through my befuddled brain. Why did you waste time on me?”

“I liked you, Jerome. I knew you had it in you. You were simply handicapped by too much money. I would like to help you now. Tell me what I can do for you.”

“No, Johnny,” answered the former playboy. “I had my chance. I threw it away. I will take my medicine, and try to pull myself up by my own shoestrings. The Lord knows I don’t want to stay here.”

“You’re a brick, Jerome. You’ll advance all right,” was my response. Just then I saw in front of me a familiar tree, with a seat built in to its lower limbs. “Come on,” I said, “let’s sit down. I have much to say to you.” I climbed up. My friend stood still, as though frozen to the spot.

“The old apple tree in my father’s back yard!”

“The very same,” I said. “Do you remember the night we talked there until the wee sma’ ‘ours that time I went home with you for the week-end?”

Jerome sat down beside me. “How could I forget it? That was the most serious talk I ever had. I almost decided that night to cut the old gang and go along with you. But when another day came I hadn’t the courage.”

“Tell me, Jerome, why you don’t like this place,” I said. “I really want to know.”

“It’s all right,. I guess,” was the answer. “It’s more than I deserved. But it’s the company. They’re all like me - people who have thrown away their chances. I tell you it’s hell being with your own type of people all the time, seeing yourself and being seen for just what you are. Everyone here regrets the muffed opportunities. Mind you,” he continued, “I’m not blaming anyone. It’s all my own fault.”

“You need a tonic,” I laughed, reaching up and grabbing two luscious apples from a swaying branch, above us. “Let’s munch these as we talk.”

“My favorite apple!” and Jerome’s old happy smile came back.

We ate several apples each, as we sat there in earnest conversation. At first he was quite determined that I should do nothing for him, but I finally persuaded him that he could help me.

“I haven’t much to give,” I told him, “but what I give I give gladly. I am having the wonderful privilege of attending some of Dr. Bland’s classes, and I would be an ungrateful rat indeed if I did not wish to pass on some of the good things he is giving us.”

“Dr. Bland!” and Jerome’s face lighted up. “Do you really see him? He was the only teacher I ever had who could hold my attention, rattle-brain that I was. I think if I had had another year under him, everything would have been different. Do you

suppose I could ever get to one of his classes?"

His voice was so eager that it thrilled me through and through.

"Of course you can," I assured him. "You assist me in rounding up any boys here whom you think I can help. We'll organize a class here, and you'll be ready for our plane before you know it."

"Come on," he said, as he jumped down from the tree.

Together we walked to a small stream. We crossed on a little rustic bridge, and there entered a garden of new-blown roses. There were small roses, big roses, yellow roses, red roses and white roses. The air was permeated with a faint fragrance. I stopped before an unusually large white rose. I thought I had never seen anything quite so beautiful. I turned to my companion for an explanation. But he was gone! Instead I saw a man, evidently the gardener on his hands and knees, loosening up the soil around one of the bushes. I gave a little cough to attract his attention. He looked up, gave a little gasp and rose to his feet.

"Johnny Stamp!" he exclaimed, extending a hand of welcome.

"Joe! Imagine seeing you here." I threw my arms around him and hugged him till he squealed. Joe had been one of my roommates at Primary Flying School. "What are you doing here among the roses?"

"I guess I'm the thorn among the roses," he quoted, laughing. "How did you get here, Johnny? I suppose I should call you Captain."

"Not at all, Joe. I was always Johnny to you."

"But I heard you had gone to the next plane. How come you are here?" asked Joe.

"I wanted to see you fellows and find out what you were doing, so here I am," was my explanation. "Tell me, Joe. How did you get here? Did Fritz get you?"

"No," replied Joe. "I never got across. We crashed in advanced flying. I'm sorry I didn't make your plane. But I'm getting what I deserved. You know I never had a serious thought. Here I have had plenty of time for thinking and -"

"Tell me, Joe," I interrupted, "are you happy here?"

"I wasn't at first," was the response. "In fact, I was very unhappy. I missed the company of such fellows as you and was inclined to be resentful; 'til someone from your plane showed me my mistake and got me started in this work."

"These are wonderful roses," I commented. "But whatever made you choose this work?"

"I worked in a nursery as a boy, and became very much interested in developing improved roses. Look at this one," and he led me to a more wonderful rose than any I had ever seen. "This is my creation," he continued.

"Marvelous!" I whispered in an awestruck voice. "Are you doing this work all alone?"

“No, not me. You know I always liked company. I found some fellows who were just as disappointed as I had been. They are now finding themselves in useful work,” and he pointed down an avenue to where some men were at work.

“You are doing fine,” I told him. “You do not need any help from me.”

“O yes we do,” was the astonishing reply. “Charlie said you would be here to organize a study class, and the boys are all rarin’ to go.”

“Charlie!” I repeated. “How the dickens did he know? I didn’t know anything about it myself until Maxine suggested it this afternoon.”

“Remember when we used to tell Charlie he was psychic?” said Joe. “He often predicted the future. Perhaps he had an inner sight.”

“Perhaps,” I said, for I could think of no other explanations.

“Come,” he said and together we walked to the edge of the rose garden. There under giant moss festooned live oaks was a large group of young men. They cheered as we approached. Jerome Roebuck seemed to be leading them. He had rounded them up as I talked to Joe.

I recognized a good many of them. They were boys I had known in school and in training fields, a few were foreign - Chinese I thought. But they seemed to welcome me as heartily as any of the others. That was really a great reunion. The boys were genuinely glad to see me. I told them I didn’t know what I had to give them.

Jerome immediately chimed out, “Give us what Dr. Bland gives you.”

I looked at Jerome. “You are happy now, aren’t you Jerry?”

“Happier than I have ever been,” he said. “A call came yesterday for some helpers to go to a lower plane to give instruction. I refused. After talking with you I volunteered and am to go later today. I know now what I never knew before - that one’s greatest happiness is in service to others.”

“You’re progressing O.K. I’ve no fear for you.” And with that I turned to address the crowd. “Now, let’s see about a class. Do you approve Jerome’s suggestion of a re-echo of Dr. Bland’s classes?”

A clap of universal approval came from the group. Not many of them had known Dr. Bland, but Jerome had been telling them about him and how he came from a really high plane to teach the class I was in; hence all was in readiness.

“Let’s go over here,” suggested Jerome.

As we turned to follow him imagine our amazement when we beheld an open air amphitheater of huge proportions. Its mammoth circular seats faced us invitingly. Its beautiful pillars towered almost to the skies, where they seemed to support a roof. Looking beyond the pillars was a scene of transcendent beauty. Ponderous oaks adorned with brilliant purple orchids made a suitable background for this hall of learning. We could hear the ripple of running water and the harmony of classic

music blended into an unbelievable atmosphere of peace and expectancy.

"Jerome, you rascal!" I shouted in glee. "This is your doings. You always liked beautiful things."

"I didn't know I could produce it," admitted Jerome. "Truly this is the greatest moment of my existence," and his face showed the exaltation he felt.

"This exquisite, superlative beauty has done something for me," I told him. "It will make my classes here a thing of joy."

This exhibition of iridescent grandeur was reflected in the face of every man present. Instinctively I knew that it was the first time that anything so majestic had come into their lives - and I was sublimely happy.

I knew none of the credit for this magnificent celestial university belonged to me - it had been the inspiration of Jerome Roebuck - and I knew instinctively that he had found himself and that he had started on the upward path. The seats were soon crowded with eager souls each intent upon every word that fell from my lips. I never dreamed it possible to be so inspired.

I think Dr. Bland himself would have felt highly flattered if he could have heard, the picture I drew of him. Once I felt his presence and turned around to speak to him, but he was not there. I always meant to ask him if he visited that first class of mine, but have not yet done so. Jerome's face was an inspiration to me. It fairly shone as I expounded Dr. Bland's theory. I knew he was thinking of the time he had heard that same philosophy in the Iowa Halls of Learning and it had slid off his gray matter like water off a duck's back. Now he was understanding it. I could tell that, as I followed his thoughts. After the lecture we had an informal discussion. Most of the boys spoke freely. I enjoyed their candor. After it was over and arrangements had been made for regular classes, most of the boys moved on. But Jerome and I lingered behind.

"Tell us, Jerome, about the trip you are going to make to the lower plane," I said.

"Yes," Joe chimed in. "I want to know about that too. Would there be anything I could do there?"

"I do not know," was Jerome's answer. "You see I've never been there myself. They say it's no bed of roses."

"What of it?" said Joe. "Won't you count me in?"

"Sure I will, if you really want to go. I would like to have you with me."

"Thanks, Jerry. When do we start?" and the florist looked eager for the new adventure.

"I'm ready but I don't know how to get there," said Jerome. "Can you give us any advice, Johnny?"

I laughed aloud. "How can I give any directions when I have never been there myself? My problem now is to get back to where I belong. This is new work for all of

us. Why don't you go by plane?" I added, remembering the fine trip I had enroute.

"Got any more jokes like that?" asked Joe. "We don't have planes here. Boy, what I wouldn't give for a ride in my old bus!"

"Hop in then," said a voice behind him. We turned to see a plane with a door invitingly open.

"Hello there!" called Jerome. "Do you have room for another?"

"Sure thing," was the reply.

I stood there watching the plane disappear in the distance. Then I thought of my own trip home and wondered how it was going to be accomplished.

"What's bothering you?" 'Twas Charlie's voice, apparently coming from nowhere. I looked around and could see no one. Charlie laughed. Then I knew for certain that it was he. He was always a practical joker.

"Come out of it, Chuck," I commanded. "Where in blazes are you?"

I felt a hand upon my shoulder and the man who had been nearest to me on so many earthly flights stood right beside me.

"I do not mind telling you I am delighted to see you, Charlie, for I scarcely know how to get back to our plane."

"I knew that," was the response. "I came for the precise purpose of escorting you home."

"You slay me, Charlie," I told him. "How do you know all these things, and why am I so dumb?"

"You're not dumb," declared my would-be guide. "It is just that our training has been along different lines. You have been studying philosophy and science, whilst I have not aspired to such heights."

"What have you been studying?" I asked, still rather dumbfounded over my companion's ability to come and go at will.

"I took a course in navigation and transportation. That was more fitting to my brain capacity," and Charlie's happy little laugh showed that he was enjoying my apparent confusion.

"You remember the day I brought Colonel Adams in from the earth plane?" he asked.

"How could I ever forget it?" I replied.

"That," said Charlie, "was part of the work taught us in navigation. I have been doing a lot of that."

"I am afraid you will have to teach me some of it," I said. "I wouldn't have had the slightest idea how to get home from here alone."

“Don’t fear, we’ll never leave you stranded. Before you come here again I will have you meet my teacher. I know how to make the journey, but he can explain it more clearly than I.”

I felt a slight movement of air. “Hold on,” laughed Charlie.

I wondered what there was to hold on to. I looked about me, and trees appeared below. We settled down and lo, we were resting on the library steps in our own plane. How we had come I knew not.

“You will soon catch on,” and Charlie moved off. Turning around he called back, “Remember the meeting of Colonel Adam’s pilots tomorrow,” and with that he was gone.

I sat on the steps for some time, thinking of the events of the day. Somehow I was strangely happy. I thought I was happy before, but this new exhilaration far surpassed anything I had known; for now I had found a really worthwhile work.

6

Remorse

I had been going to the lower plane for my periodic classes for some time, and was thrilled with the progress of my students. Their faces were eager, and I knew instinctively that they were happier than when I first met them. Jerome Roebuck proved to be one of my brightest pupils. He responded instantly to every new thought I expressed.

One day after class he said to me – “Studies are a delight here. Why was I so dumb back in Iowa?”

“You were not dumb,” I laughed. “Just plain lazy.”

“It wasn’t even fun being lazy. Do you know Johnny,” he said, “that I often envied you fellows who could keep up with your classes, but I hadn’t the will power to cut the gang I went with. I see my mistake so clearly.”

“You’re doing O.K. now,” I commenced. “You even look happy.”

“I am happy,” was the response. “Ever since you came into our lives, our outlook has been different.”

“Thanks, Jerome, old boy. You have done me worlds of good. But tell me, are you still going to the lower plane to help others there?”

A shadow of gloom passed over his face as he answered my query. “Yes, I have been there several times. I wish I could do more for those boys.”

“Tell me about them,” I urged. “Is there anyone there I know?”

“Several. I have told them about you, but they are so discouraged that even the

thought of, 'so great a one as thou,' cannot arouse much interest. I am going there now. Would you like to come along?"

"Would I? What are we waiting for?" and before I knew it, we were soaring through space in my beloved plane.

"Now tell me, who would you like to see?" asked Jerome.

"Who? I don't know who is there. You didn't tell me."

"O, I forgot," replied my guide. "Do you remember Bob Waters? He was kicked out of college for being periodically drunk."

"Sure, I remember Bob," I said. "He was never in our gang, so I did not know him intimately. What became of him?"

"Think I'll let him tell you that for himself. It may do him good. He has not been here very long, and cannot get hold of himself."

Our plane landed on a parched meadow. It seemed as though fire had recently scorched the earth. Nothing green was in sight. The bare limbs of trees stretched out to the skies, as though imploring Heaven to send them a drink. Light fleecy clouds floated by, but there was no rain in them.

"Does nothing grow here?" I asked, in horrified amazement.

"O yes, when people become interested enough to cultivate things, this place can be made much better. Their spirits are so low that ambition is almost lacking."

"That's where you come in," I thought to myself. "Yes," Jerome read my musings. "I try to give them some ambition, but it is not easy."

"What are your plans today?" was my next question. It seemed to me an almost hopeless task.

"I am still, organizing my classes," was the reply. "Very few are interested enough to come. But each meeting finds a few more despondent souls who have been persuaded to come, by those who came to the first meetings."

"Do you notice a difference in those who have been coming?" I queried.

"O, yes. That is why I keep on coming. Some are actually showing some ambition; and I believe will eventually rise to higher spheres. You stay here," continued Jerome, "and I will send you a guide who can much more vividly portray to you the conditions which exist here."

I sat down to wait.

Despite the fact that I seemed to be learning rapidly the intricacies of this new life, I was considerably perplexed because of the innumerable, complex and truly odd situations and conditions I encountered. Thus was I pondering as I reclined meditatively beneath an overhanging leafless tree.

"Would that I might understand," thought I, and instantly by my side stood a radiant

form wreathed in an enticing smile.

“The thought, my friend, is parent to the reality,” quoth the voice. “This is the land where thought is supreme. Wilt thou learn the truth? Come with me.”

Delighted almost to the point of rhapsody to be thus so fortunate as to engage the companionship of one who seemed so well versed in the finer and more delicate intricacies of this land, I leaped with delight to his side.”

“What wouldest thou learn?” queried my guide.

Almost emulating the desire of Solomon of old, I cried, “I would understand the laws of mind, mind in action, mind in creation, mind in character.”

“That,” smiled the guide, “is a most laudable ambition. Shall we begin our excursion into the ranges of lower thinking, and there behold the results of inferior ambitions?”

Instantly we were in the midst of a motley mob, each individual of which betrayed coarse and unrefined conditions. There was a babel of voices, recriminations, discontent; feuds and insatiable desires seemingly suspended above the heads of many who milled about in the maelstrom of beings. Quickly the guide pulled me to one side where writhed upon the ground a poor wretch grovelling in the mire and dirt.

“Give me drink,” cried he in anguish. “I must have liquor, dope, whiskey,” came the plea.

“Men’s habits, urges, weaknesses are part of character, and, at death are not disassociated from the individual,” explained the guide.

“This man on earth was a drunkard, a victim of an evil habit. He frequented dives of lowliness, and when he passed over to this side, he forfeited his stomach and his physical ability to imbibe. But the craving exists. He has just returned from earth where he tarried in his accustomed place of evil. He called for drink but the bartender heard him not. He grasped the bottle but could not lift it. He rushed to the water spigot; endeavored to snatch cocaine; pleaded with the loiterers for a dram of wine: but no one heard him; no one knew of his presence.”

“How terrible,” I replied. “Is there no way to rehabilitate this poor wretch?”

“Ah, yes,” came the answer. “No man is beyond reclamation. Only so long as one THINKS in terms of liquor, brothels and intoxicants will the insatiable urge persist.”

“But can he desist and reform?” I asked in true earnestness.

“It is possible,” was the reply. “If some better soul who has found the way into realms of higher living comes to him, and he listens, and learns to eliminate his evils, the time must arrive when he finds himself freed and ready for a step upward in the long gradations of progress. But come with me again.”

We stood before a pitiful hovel. In the doorway sat a soul in tatters and rags.

“Why,” exclaimed I, “should anyone be required to live in such a miserable dwelling?”

“No one is so required,” corrected my guide. “The hovel is the vision of the highest type of individual thinking. This person was a pessimist, a failure, satisfied with mediocre conditions. He brought that mind with him and instantly mind created the replica of his thought.”

Again we moved. We stood by the side of a tall, forlorn and sad faced woman. Her dress was somber black and her face cynical and cold.

“Why does this woman wear such a sinister garb” asked I.

“Her thoughts on earth were most morose. She was a defeatist. Everything was black to her. She wore only dark thoughts; and now, in this land where mind commands the garb, the home, environment, she becomes the living reality of her dominant thinking.”

“Now, let’s be off,” urged the guide.

By the side of a neat, trim cottage we paused. Within dwelt a lady whose face wreathed a smile. Choice flowers bloomed by the side of the dwelling. Bright hued birds sang cheerful songs in the trees. I felt an impulse to congratulate the dweller.

“How simple and how charming,” I exclaimed. “How come this lady to be on this plane?” I asked, in utter unbelief.

“This lady’s earthly training was demoralizing!” was the explanation. “Though she often had glimpses of beauty, and soared above her sordid surroundings, her environment was her undoing. In a drunken brawl she killed a man then took her own life.”

“This lady, on earth,” explained the guide, “was a modest and sweet character at heart, but was easily led astray by misguided companions. In her better moments she loved beauty and coveted the artistic. Hers was not always a home of her wishes. But through adversity she carried a mind of cheer and sometimes had a glimpse of better things. Her ambitions were often slanted on the upgrade. When she arrived on this plane, instantly the impediments of earth that pertained to commercial things were gone and thought took over. And as instantly her ideal of her inner mind became a reality. Listen to her song. She loves her home, the product of her own wishing.”

“She did not build this attractive little cottage in a day,” I mused.

“Oh no!” was the response of my conductor. “She has been here many years according to earthly calculations. Hers has not been an easy climb. She has done much good here.”

“Is she not about ready for a higher plane?” I asked.

“Almost,” replied my companion.

I was amazed at the swiftness and easy acceleration of our voyage. We thought where we would wish to be and instantly we were there.

As though divining my meditations, the guide said, "As a man thinketh so is he." There is no time nor space here. All is a present now. Whithersoever you would be, there you are. Whatever you would be like, that you are. Your home is as you have made it MENTALLY. If you think of your earth life, you clothe yourself in the garments of the moment which engages your thought. This is the ever changing kaleidoscopic land of mind."

"But," eagerly I inquired, "if the man in the hovel THINKS of a palace, does a palace at once become a reality?"

"Far from it," replied the guide. "Only thoughts that are untarnished and pure are effective in higher realms. The sot we first beheld may often wish for better things, but so long as the habit thoughts of evil exist, no other thought rises above that level in effectiveness. Think you that a soul, craving vileness, could live in an environment of beauty? Would not his very thoughts, were it possible, tarnish and besmirch the delicacy of his ideal? Ah, yes, many men wish for better things, but are loath to relinquish the lesser, and ever and anon these lesser continuous thoughts determine the maximum height to which the soul may gravitate. Each soul is on the level of his dominant and controlling thoughts, and not of his occasional flights of imagination."

These truths I pondered, and then suggested that we return to where he found me that I might have time to absorb the wisdom thus revealed, before Jerome returned for me.

"It is well that such be," agreed my companion. "Tarry thou alone and meditate upon these truths, and then some day again we shall make another visit."

Without appreciable pause we were again at our starting point. Holding my hand, and looking with winsome eyes into mine, my adviser smiled and sweetly said, "Goodbye, old chap. Your eyes are opened. Upward you shall climb. Guard well your thoughts. If progress is not swift, seek the retarding influences and bid them be gone. Years ago, back on earth a sweet souled lady, whose name was Ella Wheeler Wilcox, gave forth these lines which I leave with you and which shall be the nucleus of your meditations.

There is an unseen cord which binds
The whole wide world together
Through every human life it winds –
This one mysterious tether.
There are no separate lives; the chain
Too subtle for our seeing,
Unites us all upon the plane
Of universal being.

Former Contacts

I strolled down by the river to think things over. Events had been happening so fast that I seemed to need time to catch up with my thoughts.

I climbed up a little promontory just at the bend of the stream where a huge moss-festooned live oak extended its branches out over the water. There was something vaguely familiar about this tree, but not until I climbed it did I realize that it was the tree on “my promontory” overlooking the very river where I used to swim. There I had often pictured a lovely little home under the branches of that spreading oak with its porch extending out over the water. I did not know how I had got there, or how I would get back, but I felt quite content to remain there as the tree gently swayed in the breeze. How good it seemed to watch the flowering hyacinth float by, to see the trees on the opposite bank mirrored in the water and to hear the splashing of the little ripples on the shore.

I was just above the spot where we used to swim. I felt like diving in, as of old, when my attention was drawn to a little party of picnickers nearby. I watched them spread out their baskets of ‘goodies,’ then heard someone remark, “Wonder where we can find some wood.” Up to this point I had felt that the picnickers were of our spirit plane, but now I realized that these jolly folk were really of the earth plane. How I was able to see them was a mystery to me. I knew that Charlie had had contacts with earth, but he had taken a course in Spirit navigation. I had planned on asking Charlie how I could get in on his course, but had not yet done so. Just then I heard a little laugh nearby. It was Charlie’s laugh! I turned around to find him sitting on a limb beside me.

“Chuck! How the deuce did you get here?”

“I came here with you,” he said. “You didn’t think you could come to this party alone, did you?”

“So that’s it! You brought me here. But Charlie, I did sail down this same river in my little Kayak one day.” “You weren’t alone, were you?” reminded my co-pilot.

“No,” I admitted. “I wasn’t. I guess I just do not know how to travel alone as you do.”

“Someday you will,” promised my companion with a laugh, “even if I have to teach you myself. Want to go over and see who they are?” and Charlie hopped lightly to the ground.

I followed suit and together we walked toward the happy party. My surprise knew no bounds when I recognized each and every one of the picnickers. They were friends of my family with whom we had often picnicked on this very spot. I turned to Charlie for an explanation, but he was gone. What fun it was to be there with them again! I sat down at the edge of the group, but no one seemed to notice me. I tried to speak,

but could not make my voice audible. Once when I joined in a laugh at someone's wisecrack, I distinctly heard my voice, and wondered why the others could not hear. 'Billy,' the jolly girl who had been a particular chum of mine, turned and looked at me. For a second I almost thought she saw me, but she turned away.

"Remember how Johnny Stamp used to love these picnics?" she said.

I knew then that I had at least made an impression on her consciousness, and I was buoyed up with the thought that perhaps later I could penetrate the invisible wall that seemed to separate us.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Leonard, the mother of my most intimate chum. "I thought of him when I was making this cake."

I went over to the cake, one of those big three layer affairs with luscious nutty icing. I wanted to take a piece and demonstrate to them that I was really with them. I reached over to the cake, but was powerless to do more. I wanted to pick up a piece and hand it to Billy, but could only make a little dent in the soft icing. I had left my finger print. I could see it plainly, and I wondered if they would see it too. But my hope was short lived. Mrs. Leonard picked up a knife and cut clear through that fingerprint. I took her hand and tried to guide the knife around it, but could not exert pressure enough to influence the direction of the cut. She held the knife up and examined it as though she sensed something unusual, then wiped the icing off of it and proceeded with the cutting operation. The boys of the party, Buddy Leonard and Jim Brent, arrived on the scene.

"I'm afraid you'll have to eat your wieners raw," announced Buddy, as he and Jim held up a single stick apiece.

"Behold, our whole morning's catch," laughed Jim.

I noticed that Jim was limping; he had had a broken ankle. I went over and rubbed that ankle. Jim looked down at me, but with unseeing eyes as far as I was concerned. He touched his ankle as though conscious of something there, and walked to the table in his old spritely manner. The limp had all gone. I felt a sense of deep satisfaction in knowing that I could help him. Then and there I decided that if Jim's ankle bothered him during the strenuous days of air cadet drill that were just ahead of him, I would make an effort to treat the injured member. I thought of Maxine and felt sure that she could advise me. If I could not come myself, she would know someone who could.

"You've got to find more wood than that. Get out of here," commanded Mrs. Brent, Jim's mother. "You get no cake until you get us a fire."

"No wood, no cake," laughed Jim. "Have a heart. This place has been completely denuded of wood."

I remembered then the little pile of abandoned wood that I had seen from the tree top. It was lying beside a pile of ashes where some Sunday School class had had a

wiener roast. It was not far away, on the other side of 'my promontory.' I wished I could go and carry the wood to them, but that was beyond my powers. I tried to tell the boys to come, but they paid no attention to me. I then took Buddy by the arm and tried to pull him along. He slapped his arm with his hand as though a mosquito were bothering him. That gave me an idea. A butterfly fluttered nearby. I felt I could probably produce power enough to propel that butterfly.

"O, what a lovely butterfly," exclaimed Buddy. "You're mine."

"No, she's not. She's mine," laughed Jim as he darted after it.

That was what I had thought would happen. I mustered all the strength I could, and managed to keep that little winged creature just out of their reach. In a spirit of gaiety both boys ran after it.

"How dare you run from me like that, you sweet young thing," and Buddy leaped in the air almost catching it.

"Come here Susie, come into my arms and get thee some rest," pleaded Jim, as he closed his arms almost around his victim.

"O, there she goes," said Buddy, as the trophy of the chase sailed away from Jim. "She's lighted on that wood. We'll get her now."

The boys slowed their pace, and slipped stealthily up to catch it unawares. But as Jim's hand was almost upon it, the innocent instrument of my scheme arose rapidly, sailed high into the air and vanished from sight.

"What do you know about that!" commented Buddy. "When such beautiful things come into my life, they always take unto themselves wings and fly away."

"You scare 'em away, you mean," added Jim.

For a moment I thought they were not going to notice the pile of wood. Their little frivolities over the butterfly having occupied their attention. So I tugged at Buddy's shoe lace and was myself quite surprised to find it loosen up. I really think it was on the verge of opening anyway. Buddy looked down, put his foot upon the wood pile to retie the shoestring then let out a whoop.

"Whee, see what I see! Wood!"

"Wood," echoed Jim. "Susie led us to it."

The boys each picked up an armful of wood, and walked gaily back to the picnic party.

They started their little fire, and I sat down in their midst. Even though they were unaware of my presence I thoroughly enjoyed being with them all. Just as the wiener sticks were being passed out, a car drove up. Everyone shouted a welcome. I sat there frozen to the spot, too thrilled to move, as I saw my own father and mother get out of the car.

"The Stamps are late as usual," commented Mrs. Brent. "Yes," laughed my mother. "This time it was really a woman crying on my husband's shoulder."

"We'll forgive you," said Mrs. Leonard. "We know someone is always coming to your house with a tale of woe."

Daddy came up carrying a freezer of ice cream. I knew it would be my mother's famous banana sherbet, so I determined to get some of it. I got up and sat down close to my mother content just to be near her. I tried to say "Mummy" as I had often called her, but the words were not audible, and I wondered if I could ever make her see me. I put my hand on mother's arm. She turned and looked at me. For a moment I thought she was going to recognize me, then she turned away.

"Do you know," she said to Mrs. Leonard, "whenever we come here I have a feeling that Johnny is not far off."

"Do you feel that way too?" asked Billy Brent. "I almost sensed his presence a while ago."

"Too bad he can't be with us," was Mrs. Leonard's comment.

"It's all right," said my mother. "I have come to feel that God must have a greater work for him to do. Wherever he is I know he is doing his part."

These words coming from my mother thrilled me through and through, and I knew then that it was no longer necessary for me to try to make myself visible to them.

The wieners over, it fell to my father's lot to open the ice cream freezer. Mrs. Leonard placed a huge piece of cake on each plate. All passed by her little folding table, and each in turn picked up a plate and walked by for ice cream. I tried to pick up one, but could not gather the strength. I watched daddy lay the ice cream ladle on a plate, whilst he filled up the dishes of the passersby. That was my chance. I lay down beside the dripping ladle and there licked my fill of the delicious sherbet. Then I felt entirely satisfied, not that I was hungry, but just to get some of my mother's banana sherbet again, was worth a fortune to me.

The feast over, the group sat around the fire singing familiar songs. I sang with them, but no one seemed to know it.

As the dishes were packed up and the holidayers climbed into their cars for their homeward journey, I wondered how I would get back to where I belonged. I knew I needed Charlie to chart my course. He had promised me that someday I could make these trips alone, and I determined then and there to apply for admittance to a class in other worldly navigation, so that I could 'go it alone' if necessary.

As daddy's car was starting up, something impelled me to climb into the back seat. Later I climbed over the front seat and sat between them, supremely happy just to be there.

Later I knew why this hunch had come to me. We were driving along at probably

thirty-five miles an hour, not any more. Mother had turned on the radio, and they were listening to war news. The night was dark and our lights not very good. Dad did not see it, but I could see a car without lights coming tearing down the road careening from side to side.

"Dad!" I said with all the strength I could muster, but he paid no attention.

The other car was coming nearer. We were approaching a corner. I grabbed the steering wheel. I knew it was now or never. The other car was almost upon us. With what seemed to me a terrific lurch I turned dad's car down the side street. As we left the main road, the swerving car of the drunken man swished past our rear bumper, missing it by scarcely an inch.

"Gosh!" said Dad, putting on his brakes, and bringing the car to a stop. "I never saw that car!"

"I never saw it either," said Mother. Then she added, "If you never saw it, why did you turn the corner?"

"I don't know," answered father. "That really puzzles me." "It must have been Providence," was mother's final way of settling the mystery.

"Providential it must have been," added Dad. "I certainly never was conscious of turning that wheel."

The car started up, and I knew my mission with my parents was accomplished. I wondered about going back where I belonged, but this being my first time on earth since that fateful night when we crashed over Germany, I wanted to see more. I thought of the boys in England and wondered how many of them were still going on bombing missions over occupied Europe. Someone bumped into my arm, and I looked around to see who it was. To my amazement the boys were taking positions on the starting line. I recognized our British training station. I knew the fortresses were about ready for the take-off. I moved along the line recognizing first one, then another of my former mates. I saw Paul Hunter with whom I had played as a boy and decided to fly with him. I tried to speak to him; I pulled his sleeve, but could get no response. However, I climbed into his plane and sat beside him at the wheel. It was grand to be flying over Europe again. I did not try to talk as I knew it would be useless. No one said where they were going, but I seemed to know it was Hanover. We sailed far above the clouds until at last we reached our goal. The moon shone brightly and our bombs went straight for their targets. We were on the return journey before the enemy flares were about us. Bullets flew thick and fast; the flak was bursting above and below us. Everyone was on the alert. I knew I could see more clearly than the other boys in the Fortress. I tried to take the wheel to guide the machine aright, but I could not budge it. I felt I was there for a purpose and must not fail. I concentrated all my thoughts on Paul. Several times he looked at me. I think he was conscious of some hidden guide, for he turned the plane up and down, dodging hither and yon, exactly as I dictated. At last they were out of the danger

zone.

Bill King, co-pilot, came to Paul. "Paul, you're a marvel. I thought our time had come."

"I thought so too," replied the pilot. "Look at that perspiration. Hand me a towel, Bill."

"I think a bathing suit would be better," answered Bill, as he handed him the requested towel.

Paul said, "I don't mind admitting that I had a funny feeling for a while. I actually felt that someone else was guiding the plane."

"What do you mean? A Spook?" asked Bill.

"Call it what you like," was the reply. "I think I'll call it my guiding spirit, and trust that it will be with me on future occasions."

The boys laughed. Their tension was over, and they would be ready for another foray the next night.

Just then Charlie touched me on the shoulder. The door had not opened. How he got there I knew not.

"Come with me, Johnny," he said. The words were quite audible to me, but the others seemed to pay no attention to him.

I arose and followed Charlie not knowing how we would get out of the plane, but, the next thing I knew we were on solid earth. Charlie was bending over a flier lying on the grass. I looked at him for an explanation.

"The Heinies got him," was all the explanation that was forthcoming.

"But how could they?" I asked. "His clothes are spotless, and there is no injury on him."

Charlie looked at me for a moment as though he thought I was terribly ignorant, then he smiled. "This is the spirit body. Yonder are the fragments of what is earthly."

Then I could see a bloody mess scattered nearby, with one arm and one leg apparently gone.

"Bring him along," commanded Charlie.

Very tenderly I picked up the spirit body. Its weight in my arms was as nothing. I did not know what I was going to do with him, but was content to leave that with my co-pilot.

"Come," said Charlie, and the next thing I knew we were standing beside a tree which I had noted some forty yards away. I still had my man in my arms. I heard a faint groan. There before us lay a German soldier in the last throes of death. "A German?" I said.

“Yes,” was Charlie’s response. He bent over and laid a gentle hand on the brow of the dying soldier. I distinctly saw something flutter to Charlie’s bosom from the form on the ground. Something told me it was the spirit body of that poor German, so I asked no further questions.

“These men are both for our plane,” Charlie told me. “Let’s take them over.”

For a few seconds I thought I was conscious of moving through the air. But the next thing I was really sure of was the fact that we were standing with our precious burdens in the grassy park that Maxine had called our receiving station.

“We’ll lay them down,” said Charlie. “They need a rest. Then the nurses will take care of them.”

I looked about me, several nurses were moving among the new arrivals. I wondered if Maxine were there, and at once saw her smiling at me from the other end of the park. I went to meet her.

“Bravo, Johnny. You really brought one in!”

“I guess I did,” I admitted. “But how ‘twas done I don’t really know.”

“Come and see him,” I pleaded, for I was really anxious to know that he was all right.

“He’s O.K.,” announced the nurse as she placed her hand upon his brow. “We will let him rest a while.”

“How is it done?” I asked. “I know I brought him here, but don’t know how.”

“This is not really your work,” explained Maxine. “Other things are planned for you. This is part of Charlie’s chosen work. Perhaps he can tell you.”

I looked around for Charlie’s explanation, but he was not there.

“Where is he?” I asked.

“Perhaps gone for another,” was the explanation. “These are unusual times you know.”

“Well, why didn’t he take me with him?”

“Didn’t I just tell you that that was not your work,” laughed my companion. “But come, let’s sit down. I want to hear about your first trip to earth plane.”

“My first trip!” I echoed. “Do you mean there will be others!”

“Perhaps so,” was the reply, “if you want them.”

“Tell me, Maxine, have you been back to your old home?” “Yes, once when my mother had a sudden heart attack.

The family were terribly anxious, but I could see the outcome, and knew she would be all right.”

“Could you do anything for her?” was my next question.

“Yes,” was the astonishing answer. “I placed a cooling hand upon her brow and her temperature receded. I told her sub-conscious mind to make her well.”

“Did your mother know you were there?” I queried.

“Not definitely. But when she woke up, I heard her tell father that she dreamed that Maxine was home. And that satisfied me.”

“Yes, I know how you felt,” I told her. “I had a very satisfactory visit with my people today,” I continued. “I do not know how I got there, or how I can go again. Charlie took me.”

“Then why worry?” advised the girl. “If Charlie took you once, he can take you again should the need arise.”

“But Maxine, what I actually want to know is can I really go back to my people again?”

“I’m sure you can, Johnny, if they need you.”

“That is all I wanted to know,” and a feeling of satisfaction came over me.

“You guided a soldier to this world today,” said Maxine. “When the time comes for your parents to leave their earthly bodies you can most likely guide them across.”

“Too bad the people on earth plane cannot know this. It would take away all the dread of the passing,” I thought.

Maxine seemed to read my thoughts. “Perhaps someday they will know.”

8

Advanced Curriculum

As far as earth people count time I had been in the spirit world several years. To me it seemed but a day. It had been a happy period: the most satisfactory part of all my conscious existence. I had been busy constantly, but was never ‘weary in well doing.’ The soul never tires. We had a lot of jolly, carefree times in our pilots’ club. It was always a happy occasion when the bunch got together and just talked. Together we recounted many of the happenings while in training camp. Frequently we were permitted to ride again with the boys in war-torn skies.

The war did not worry us. Colonel Adams said one day, “Earth people are having an experience, let it pass as that. They will come out of the fire all the brighter for having been burned.”

Of course we knew there was suffering on earth, but we also knew the eventual outcome of man’s experience had an upward trend.

I had been given a little office in a secluded spot where I could work on my inventions at will, without interruptions from the outside world. One day I was

working on a safety device for the helicopter. I felt a strangely vibrant force within me. The picture of what I wanted to produce was more lucid than it had ever been before. I was completely enthralled with the progress I was making.

"There," I muttered, as I held the new invention before me. "That should make earth flying comparatively safe."

"I believe it will," came the answer in quiet pleasing tones from across the table.

"What!" I exclaimed, really quite startled, for I thought I was entirely alone.

Upon looking up, I saw sitting in a chair opposite me a kindly, middle-aged man with side burns and chin whiskers. I knew I should know, but for an instant I could not place him.

His countenance almost beamed. "I have been watching you for some time," he said, "and am much pleased with the work you are doing."

Then his name came to me, "Leonardo Da Vinci!" I exclaimed, and reached forth my hand to clasp his in welcoming embrace. "How come you here?" I continued.

"Planes are my hobby," he explained. "Wherever anything worthwhile is being done along this line, I am interested."

"But I have not seen you before. You do not belong on this plane, do you?"

"No," he replied. "I started on this plane as you have done, but have gone on to other spheres of influence. I have been here with you several times, but you have not seen me."

"You have! This is indeed a great honor," I told him. "But tell me, why couldn't I see you?"

"You were doing very well by yourself, and I thought it best for you to work things out alone."

We conversed for quite some time about the advantages and disadvantages of the helicopter.

I asked, "Were you interested when the Wright Brothers produced their first plane?"

"That I was," responded the great scientist.

"I was there the day they first flew. I tried hard to get some ideas across to them. I could not do much at that time in the line of thought transference, but some of the ideas they got, crude though they now seem, came from me."

"You invented the airplane, while on earth did you not?" I said, remembering my studies on flying while in school.

"Yes and no," was the contradictory reply. "I invented a flying machine of a kind, but I know now that I got much of my inspiration from the ancient Chinese, who had similar ideas many centuries before my time."

I was intensely interested. "Do you ever meet any of those Chinese inventors?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. One of them has helped me on several occasions when I wanted to get something across to earth plane."

"I would dearly love to meet them," I said.

"Someday you will," was the encouraging reply. "You would enjoy working with those fellows." Then the great Da Vinci turned to my new invention. "Do you mind if I have this written up and put in our library?"

"Not at all," I said. "My fun was in working it out. Do with it as you wish. But what benefit can there be in putting it in the library here?"

"Much good may come of it," said the scientist. "It will be of interest to many young engineers. And the more people who know of it, the more likelihood there will be of someone getting the idea across to earth plane."

I had known for a long time that suggestions did get over to those working on earth. But that was something I did not understand. So now I asked my new found friend how it was done. "Do you think I could ever make my earth friends conscious of this device?"

"Undoubtedly you could, if you really wanted to," he told me. "Some can do it very easily. Their earth friends seem to be attuned to the proper vibrations. Others need special training for this kind of thought transference."

"Can you do it?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "to a certain extent. There are some people I can influence very easily; but they are not always the ones who can make use of the ideas I wish to pass on."

"If I could only do it," I wished aloud.

"When there is need for it," he said in response to my wish, "you will be given a chance. I was here a long time before I was permitted to transmit my ideas to the thoughts of my earthly friends."

Just then I heard some men behind me laughing heartily. Upon turning around I saw two figures approaching. For a moment I was puzzled as to their identity. I knew I had seen the leader in the movies many times. I arose to greet him. "Will Rogers!" I managed to utter.

"That's me," was the reply. He clapped me on the shoulder, then sat down opposite me at the table in the same chair occupied by Leonardo Da Vinci a moment before.

Needless to say I was greatly elated at thus meeting one of my movie idols, but felt a little awe struck at first in the presence of one whom I esteemed so highly.

"Doing a little playing?" he said as he picked up my new invention. "These toys always interest me."

I watched him intently as he took my new gadget to pieces, laying the various parts carefully in a row on the table before him. To tell the truth I wondered if he could put them together again.

"Don't worry," and he looked at me with that broad grin, so familiar to movie fans. "I'll have enough parts left to make two when I get through."

I laughed and felt at ease. "All children like to take things apart," I said.

"Yes, but it takes a good man to put 'em together again," and the famous comedian chuckled as he reassembled my invention. "If I had had this thing when Wiley Post and I went around the world, I might have been kicking around down there yet."

"Then you really think it will work?" I asked, quite eager to get a word of commendation from one who had flown so much.

"Want to try it?" he said. "Let's go for a spin."

I turned around, scarcely knowing what to expect. There to my amazement sat a lovely new helicopter!

"Where'd this come from?" I managed to mutter in my consternation.

"I brought it here to take you for a ride. Get in."

As I stepped into the cockpit, my heart almost stood still, for attached to that machine was the very device that I had just completed.

"Well," I said. "I see someone has beat me to it with this machine."

"Not at all," was the reassuring answer. "I just put your new invention on here this instant. "Move over, I'm coming along to try it out."

As I moved over I felt my hand rest on something soft and warm. I looked at it. It was a girl's hand. Then someone chuckled.

"Maxine!" I exclaimed. "Where'd you come from?"

Maxine's laughing blue eyes met mine. "I've been here all the time. Will Rogers knew we liked to fly, so has come to transfer the two of us by plane to our new home."

"Our new home?" I repeated. "What do you mean?"

Will Rogers then spoke up. "They've got tired of you two on your plane, so are sending you on to our plane to pester us a while."

Maxine and I both laughed. She seemed at ease, but I was still quite confused. I did not know what it was all about. "What do you mean? Where are we going? Why are we going?"

"Hold your horses, Johnny. One question at a time," counseled our pilot.

It was Maxine who cleared the air. "Isn't it grand, Johnny," she said. "We are going to a higher plane."

"To a higher plane!" I echoed. "I would love to get just one glimpse of it."

"I hope you can stand us longer than that," answered Will.

We floated around far above the fleecy clouds for a long time; how long I do not know. It seemed to me we must have travelled for hundreds of miles. Will Rogers was in a very happy mood, as he put the helicopter through every imaginable test. Needless to say Maxine and I were equally thrilled. Times without number our power was shut off, and we settled slowly down upon the floor of clouds beneath us. When our engines were working again, we rose vertically for a few hundred feet and then soared off into the blue ethereal sky.

"This is a lot of fun!" announced our pilot. "Want to take over, Johnny?"

"No," I said. "Maxine and I are enjoying your driving." "When do we get to your plane?" inquired Maxine. "I had no idea it was so far."

"Any time you say," replied our genial host. "We could have gone there in no time. But I wanted to play with this thing, and I trust the going has not been too boring to you two."

"Not at all," we both assured him.

"I could go on like this forever," I admitted.

Will laughed. "I think I'd sit between you two if we weren't at the end of our journey. Here we are," and he stepped from the helicopter, saying, "I'll see you later," and was gone like a flash.

Maxine and I looked at each other. "What does this mean? What do we do now?" I was somewhat bewildered.

"Suppose we climb out and look around," suggested the girl.

I stepped lightly to the ground, then assisted my companion to a place on terra firma.

"Hello there! Welcome to our plane." It was Charlie's voice. He threw his arms around us, and fairly danced for joy.

"I knew you'd be coming soon," he said, "and Will Rogers just told me you had arrived."

"When did you get here, Chuck?" was my natural question. "You beat me every time."

"O, I've only been here a little while," was the casual reply.

Just then some girl friends of Maxine's came up and claimed her attention, so Charlie and I moved off.

I had always thought the plane upon which I had been living was beautiful. But this was even more alluring. The flowers flowered brighter. The sun shone gayer. The grass grew greener. Even the flowing waters seemed to have more sparkle.

Charlie and I wandered on. I did not know where he was taking me, but was quite

content to be led wherever he willed. We walked along a tree-lined pathway. With the great branches forming a cathedral arch overhead. At the end of the road a beautiful building came into view. It was of Spanish architecture, with a red tiled roof. The very type of building I had dreamed of as a boy in my teens. I remembered telling father then, that someday "when my ship came in" I would own a home of that type. I thought of this as we walked along, but Charlie was so busy pointing out things of interest along the way that I said nothing about it.

When we came to the end of the vista we stood still, almost spellbound before the grandeur of the building with its ivy-clad towers mirrored in the lake before it.

"Do you like it, Johnny?" asked Charlie.

"Like it!" I exclaimed. "It's adorable."

"Then come on," and Charlie led the way through the foyer, and up to the great front door. I did not know what to expect. In fact, I think I would not have been surprised to see a real king step forth.

Charlie pushed a button and the door slid slowly open. The halls were spacious, and exquisite in their furnishings. We tip-toed quietly around, as though walking on hallowed ground. Charlie pushed another button, and a door opened into a huge laboratory, equipped with every conceivable tool and with all the mechanical aids that any technician could desire.

"Marvelous," I muttered under my breath, scarcely daring to let the sound of my voice penetrate what to me was sacred atmosphere. We walked about the room in awed silence, admiring everything we saw. We passed by great shelves of books. The author's names stood out in bold relief. There in that vast library of scientific findings were volumes written by Thomas A. Edison, Benjamin Franklin and many other scientists in whom I was personally interested.

"I would like to come back here when I have plenty of time and browse around among these books," I thought to myself.

"You may, any time you wish," responded Charlie with a little laugh. "Come over and see this work bench," he added.

I looked at the bench indicated. It was truly the last word in inconspicuous beauty. I marveled at its symmetry of design, and also its useful simplicity. A chair turned slightly sideways at the bench looked inviting.

"Sit down," Charlie said.

I obeyed without question. "What wouldn't I give to have a work bench like this" I muttered under my breath.

"Do you see what I see?" said my companion, pointing to the name plate on the bench before me.

I could scarcely believe my eyes as I read my own name, Johnny Stamp, printed in

bold letters on the name plate. I looked at Charlie. He was laughing. "What does this mean, Chuck? Tell me, who put that there?"

"I can hardly tell you, Johnny. I believe several had a part in it. Some of your scientific friends who are interested in the type of work you do arranged this."

"But I do not understand," I said, still quite bewildered. "Do you mean this bench is for me to use?"

"Certainly," was the definite reply. "This whole building is yours. This is your work shop. Don't you like it?"

"Mine! Mine!" I kept repeating to myself. "Like it? It's marvelous! I just know I can do something worthwhile here. Do you mean I am to have this big mansion all to myself?" I asked, suddenly feeling very small amid the spacious grandeur.

"That is the idea," said Charlie. "But you need not be alone if you do not wish it so. You can call in at will any of your scientific friends who are on this plane. And often when you are doing something worthwhile, men from higher planes will come to you."

I thought I understood, and a feeling of intense satisfaction came over me. The knowledge that worthwhile people appreciated my work was the greatest reward that could come to me.

"Have you seen this?" and Charlie picked up a book from the desk and pushed it before me.

"Why?" I gasped. "How can this be?" The book was a description of my new gadget. My photo was on the fly-leaf. To me it was unbelievable. "Am I dreaming?" I asked. "It is only a few hours since I completed the invention. It could not possibly be in print so soon."

"O, thou of little faith!" quoted Charlie. "Haven't you learned yet that that is the way things are done here?"

"But I haven't shown it to anyone but Leonardo Da Vinci and Will Rogers."

"There is your answer," said Charlie. "Leonardo Da Vinci! He thought it worth putting into book form, and here it is."

"I should have known," I thought. "But I suppose I'll never get used to all these interesting surprises."

"That is the spice which makes life here so attractive," was Charlie's comment. "But come along, wouldn't you like to see more of this plane? You know this is to be your home now,"

"Of course I would," and I arose and walked with Charlie to the open spaces again. "This is wonderful," I said. "I enjoyed the other plane too. There are many people there that I would like to see occasionally."

“There is no reason why you cannot see them. You will be allowed to go to a lower plane whenever you wish. But is there anyone in particular on this plane that you wish to see?”

“O, yes,” I replied. “Lots of folks. David Livingstone for instance. I have not seen him for some time.”

“Dr. Livingstone is not on this plane. He has gone far ahead,” Charlie explained. “But he may come here to see you when he has time.”

“Look Chuck, is that not he now, getting into that boat?”

“Sure enough. Well, I’ll see you later,” and Charlie disappeared without further adieu.

Dr. Livingstone waved to me. “Come along Johnny. I’m ready for a ride in this Kayak again.”

It was my own little Kayak. What a welcome sight it was. I stepped in and took the paddle. “I surely appreciate your coming to see me, Dr. Livingstone,” I said. “There are so many things I want to know; do you mind if I ply you with questions?”

“Not at all, Johnny, my boy. Go right ahead. This is a real treat to me. What is it you want to know?”

“This plane is so wonderful,” I told him, “that I cannot conceive of a finer one. Tell me about your plane. Wherein does it differ from this?”

“Someday you will see it for yourself,” he assured me. “It is really worth investigating.”

“What do you do there?” I inquired. “Do you keep yourselves busy?”

“Would you be happy with nothing to do?”

“No, of course not,” I admitted. “But I can just hardly imagine what you would be doing.”

The great doctor smiled. “Our work is not vastly different from the work of the other planes, only it is easier. We are not hindered by the necessity of materialization.”

“Materialization?” I repeated. “I do not understand.”

“Here,” explained my genial host, “when we want a boat ride, we think this boat and it materializes. We actually step into this little Kayak, and paddle to our destination. When you invent a gadget, you think it into existence. You actually have the wood and steel before you. When you want to fly, your plane materializes. You step into it and take the wheel as you did on earth plane.”

“Yes,” I said as I began to catch a little glimmer of what he was driving at.

“By the time you get to our plane,” he continued, “you will have become so accustomed to the thought world that material things are no longer necessary.”

“Do you mean,” I interrupted, “that if I invent things they will actually not be there?”

Dr. Livingstone laughed. “You might put it that way, if it helps you. You know thoughts are things. We draw our thoughts from the great Universal Mind, God. Everything is really thought. Even on earth plane, thought is the sum and substance of everything.”

I thought I knew what he was trying to tell me. “You mean that on the higher planes you can think out your plans and your thoughts take concrete shape sufficiently to be recognized by others who may be concerned therewith.”

“Well said,” commended my companion. “Thought is the ultimate beginning and end of everything - the Alpha and Omega.”