

## **Philosophic Encyclopedia**

### **In the Land of the Living Dead by Prentiss Tucker**

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#### **Chapter I**

##### **A Visit to the Invisible Planes**

It all came about from a German high-explosive shell.

Nothing happens without a cause. We might say that this story began in Germany when Gretchen Hammerstein put the finishing touches on a certain high-explosive shell and with the contact of

her fingers filled the shell with the vibrations of her hatred for the Americans. We might note the various occurrences which, each the result of an endless train of circumstances, contributed to the fact that this particular shell was brought to the German front at just such a time and just such a place. But to follow up these lines of happenings, almost infinite in number, would require an infinitude of patience.

So we will take up the history of events when this high-explosive shell burst in the American trenches, scattering, besides its material and visible charge and fragments, the hatred for Americans which Gretchen Hammerstein had packed into it.

Jimmie Westman was leaning against the trench wall nearest the German line and was peering through the well **camouflaged** peephole which was used in watching the dreary and awful wastes of No Man's Land to guard against any surprise attack. The shell burst within a few feet of him and to the rear, but Jimmie did not know it. It was, in fact, a long time before he found out just what had happened, and it is of the things which came in between the bursting of the shell and the time when Jimmie was able to reconstruct the whole affair, that I wish to tell. They were quite remarkable events; they produced a great impression upon Jimmie and completely changed his ideas of life.

It was, as I have said, a long time before Jimmie regained consciousness after the explosion. To be exact it was practically three days. While he is lying in that condition of **coma** let us take a little look into his life and history.

Jimmie was not born of "poor but honest parents." His parents were honest but not poor; neither were they rich, but they had given him a good up-bringing and a good education. He had gone

through high school and was engaged in the study of medicine when the war broke out. I say he was engaged in it. I like Jimmie and am reluctant to say that he was putting far more of his time into the sports of the gridiron and the diamond than he should have done, but, nevertheless, that was the case. He was a specimen of the clean, honorable, somewhat careless American boy, eager to succeed, eager to stand high in work and sport alike, but glamoured to a certain extent by the adulation paid to the prominent athletes in the college which he attended.

However, he was engaged in the study of medicine, partially engaged, perhaps I should add, and he was really deeply interested in his chosen profession although he had not progressed so far as to be very profound in his knowledge of **materia medica**. He had imbibed some of the scientific spirit of the lecturers to whom he had listened, and his mind had taken on a rather skeptical tinge which had given his mother some little worry; still she well knew that her early teachings were deeply rooted, and that the character of her boy was too strong for the scientific skepticism of his surroundings to do much more than ruffle the surface of his clean young life.

But Jimmie had an inquiring soul, and while the seemingly illogical and unscientific platitudes, which he heard from the pulpit when he did go to church, produced little effect upon him, yet the objections put forward by the doctors and students with whom he was associated seemed to him to be also lacking in force and weak in reason. He was swayed between the two but controlled by neither, though at heart he was inclined to be deeply religious as most people are if they have the chance.

In the first year of his college life the great war began. It was practically at the end of the first year just before the final

examinations, and when he went home for the summer vacation the whole country was seething. Farsighted ones knew that the war would involve the United States. Jimmie began to think and turned over and over in his mind the state of the world, and when he went back to his study in the fall it was with the settled conviction that the United States would soon be forced to enter the war and that he would necessarily be involved. At that time no one had foreseen the shortage of doctors, and Jimmie, feeling sure that the fight was a righteous one and that it was his duty to help even though his country still held back, during the second year of his medical course enlisted with the Canadians. He paid a short visit home first and succeeded in making his mother and father see the matter in his way, though it was the hardest task he had ever attempted.

It was when he was home on this errand that he got the news of the death of an old friend of his. She had grown up with him and the loss of her dispelled a dream which had half formed in his mind and toward the realization of which he had unconsciously been working.

So he enlisted and was whirled into the great seething cauldron of war.

By the time the United States came in, he was a war worn veteran of wide experience in spite of his youth, and he sought and obtained a transfer from the Canadian troops to those of his own country by whom he was welcomed with enthusiasm. At the time the shell burst which made so great a change in his life he was second lieutenant with a good chance of promotion.

He had not heard the shell, and as I have said did not know that it had exploded, so was somewhat surprised to suddenly find

himself in a part of the country which he did not know. It was a wide, meadow-like stretch of land sloping gently upward and he was walking leisurely along as though he had all the time there was at his disposal. He was walking up this gentle slope, wondering a little in his mind because, as he remembered it, he should have been at his post in the trench. Things were a little different somehow, but just how, he could not for the life of him understand.

He seemed to be moving with considerable ease, much more than he was accustomed to, for the ever-lasting mud of this country did stick to one's boots terribly and it was often hard work to place one foot before the other. Now, however, he was stepping along easily and without effort, but he did not know where he was going, or where he came from.

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The trench was not in sight but he was walking so entirely without effort that it made little difference to him, for he could find it, doubtless even though his knowledge of French was quite limited.

Thank goodness! he was not behind the enemy lines.

But stop!

If he were behind his own lines and did not know how he got there, why might he not be behind the enemy lines equally without his knowledge?

His mind was coming back to him more and more. It was as if he had awakened from a deep sleep and was just coming to himself.

But if he had been asleep, why did not some of the boys come and wake him up before the whole line had been pushed forward like this?

For goodness sake! where was the trench? Where was the camp, the communication trenches, the roads, everything? Where was this place, this nice, easy meadow sloping gently upwards?

The line must have gone forward and he had been left behind in his sleep. That was evidently so, because if the line had gone backwards, he would surely have been awakened in the retreat; or if not then, the enemy would have waked him up when they took the trenches. No, the line had gone forward and somehow he had not waked up but had evidently walked in his sleep to this place, wherever this place might be.

He could not remember leaving the firing post where he had been watching through the peephole, but that was a mere detail. The main thing now was to find out where the command was and rejoin it. He could easily find it because he knew how to keep his direction by the sun.

Involuntarily he looked up. The sun was not visible, although it was broad daylight and there was no haze apparent.

Never before in France had he seen so long a stretch of country with no signs of humanity. Either there were towns and hamlets and farms or there was the awful desolation where the enemy had passed, but this meadow showed neither the one nor the other. It was certainly an enormous meadow, especially for France. Put a number of tractors on this place and the dread of famine would pass away for there was land enough here to raise food for a kingdom.

But time was passing and he must hurry; also he must think of some kind of excuse for his absence, for the captain was pretty strict and sleep-walking might not be taken as a valid reason for being away from his post of duty.

"Why don't you **glide.**"

"What do you mean by 'glide'?"

He turned to see who spoke, for he had heard no footsteps and had thought he was quite alone. He saw a girl walking along beside him or, at least, moving along beside him, for apparently she was not walking the conventional way. He knew her well, and as he recognized her he felt his face grow pale, for the girl beside him was one who had been a particular friend of his. But he had been told on his last visit home that she had—had—well, that she had died while he was away at college and just before his return to say good-bye to his parents previous to enlisting. He must have been misinformed, somehow. He looked at her, edged away just a trifle, pinched him self, and was quite at a loss just what to do or say. It must be that she had not died but perhaps she had been sent to an insane asylum and had gotten over here to France somehow by mistake; and here she was talking nonsense to him about "**gliding**".

He glanced at her again. By Jove, she **was** gliding! For heaven's sake! Had he gone crazy too?

A merry peal of laughter interrupted his amazement. It was the old, joyous, hearty laugh of the girl he had known so well.

By Jiminy! she was laughing at him. Bewildered? Well, who wouldn't be bewildered in such a case?

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Thoughts flash through the mind at times with terrific rapidity, and the thoughts which I am setting down apparently took a long time to occur, but in reality they were almost instantaneous and practically took no time at all; yet they had a logical sequence and seemed to him at the time to be slow and careful reasoning.

She was laughing at him! Ghosts don't laugh. It is not—not—well, it simply is not done, that's all. Everybody knows that ghosts don't laugh. And she was talking to him about **gliding**. That showed that she was crazy and upheld the insane asylum theory but, and here he glanced again at her feet—she really **was** gliding. At least she was not walking by lifting up one foot and putting it down again in front of the other. No she was gliding and laughing at him.

Besides, ghosts are gloomy, distraught, lovers of darkness and graveyards and midnight and mystery and of frightening people. Yet here was one, if she really were a ghost, who was looking at him with a really beautiful face, happy, apparently joyous, and frankly and unaffectedly amused at him,—at him!

He remembered her well. He had known her well. He had been—er—well to tell the truth—he had thought that perhaps when he got started in his profession—oh! shucks, he must be dreaming. He was in France, had come over to fight the Kaiser and to make the world safe for democracy, and that was a serious job.

Yet here she was laughing at him. How could such a mistake have occurred? They had told him all about it. They had gone over it again and again for they knew how he had—cared for her. Yet they must have made a made a mistake. He had to believe the evidence of his own eyes.

Dear heart, but she was pretty now! She ad been pretty before, beautiful, he had thought, but now she seemed radiant. Now she was walking and with that little dancing step which cannot be described but is called "tripping."

She moved slightly ahead and half turned toward him, laughing at him in such a natural way, just like her own old self, that he began to laugh too. Things had seemed pretty serious, but with so much merriment around and such a pretty girl mocking him he could not realize that the enemy was so near and that so much human suffering was going on.

She instantly grew serious as though she had divined his thought.

"I couldn't help it, Jimmie, you looked so bewildered."

"I surely am bewildered. How did you get here, over here in France? And why did they tell me that you had—er—gone—" he groped helplessly for a way to express the thought.

She answered him with a rippling little laugh at his dilemma.

"Don't be afraid to say it, Jimmie."

He **was** "afraid to say it" however and he countered with—

"How did you get here?"

"I was sent."

"Look here, Marjorie, don't fool me. How did you get over here in France?"

"Truly, Jimmie, I am not 'fooling'; honest Injun, as we used to say, I **was** sent, really and truly I was, but I asked to be sent,"

she added. "You see the others were so busy and there was not much that I could do, but I knew that I could help you and I knew that you would be glad to see me, so I asked for permission and the Elder Brother gave it to me; he is always so kind to me."

The insane asylum theory received a new impetus with this statement. The "Elder Brother" must be one of the doctors, but she didn't talk like an insane person. She was radiantly beautiful now, far more beautiful than she had been when he had seen her last, and she was talking rationally, but who in the dickens was this "Elder Brother"? She was an only child. It must be the doctor.

He had been through an insane asylum once with a party of sight-seers and had not noticed that any of the women inmates were beautiful. Even if one of them had been pretty, the expression of the eyes would have offset any mere physical prettiness. But this dancing, gliding, tripping girl beside him, with her blue eyes and fair hair, was so bewilderingly, dazzlingly beautiful, and her eyes had not a trace of that fixed stare or lack of focus which makes the insane person so terrible to look at.

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And, besides, she **could** glide! Great Scott! He had forgotten that. She could **glide!** How in the dickens could any one **glide?** It just couldn't be done, except on skates—

"It's easy to glide. You can do it yourself!"

"Me! How did you know what I was thinking of?"

"Why, I can tell from your aura."

"My—what?"

"Aura. Your aura! Don't you know you have an aura?"

"Never heard of it before. I got a medal for sharpshooting, but they didn't give me any aura and I know I didn't bring one over with me."

She danced around in front of him as he walked, gliding, tripping, and looking tantalizingly at him first from one side and then from the other, and all the time laughing at him with that thrilling, tinkling laugh of hers, so full of merriment and fun. She was laughing so that she could not speak for some moments. He did not understand what the joke was, but it was evidently a good one and she was so happy over it and so pretty that he reached out and took her hand and they danced along together, laughing, she at him and he at himself, for the joke he could not understand.

By Jove! He had forgotten!

By all the rules he ought to be worn out. Since the big bombardment had commenced several days ago he had not known what it was not to be tired; yet here he was, dancing along with this pretty girl just as though he were as fresh as a daisy. Ah! He felt tired now, dreadfully tired; it just showed the force of mind over matter that he had forgotten his weariness for an instant in the joy of this new-found friendship. He could hardly drag one foot after the other.

She drew her hand away with that old, familiar expression of pretense at anger.

"You're not tired, either! You just **think** you are. Now make up your mind that you're **not** tired!"

"I can't Marjorie! I'm awfully tired. Why I haven't had any sleep for two nights, and tramping around in that mud and all—why—Marjorie, a fellow can't do that for three days and **not** be tired."

"Now, Jimmie, don't you **know** you didn't feel at all tired at first? When we were walking along and you were wondering how I came to be here, you were not tired at all because you were not thinking of it, and now just because you **think** you **ought** to be tired you go and **get** tired. Let's sit down awhile."

"It's too damp here for you to be sitting on the ground; you'd catch your death of cold."

She laughed at him.

"No, I won't catch my death of cold. It's quite dry here. See how dry the ground is. Besides I **can't** catch my death of cold. There are reasons. That's what I came to tell you about, but I don't know how to begin, Jimmie."

He looked at the ground. It really was perfectly dry, just as she had said.

"Well, let's sit down, then. But remember I've got to hurry back and report and so I can't stop but a minute or two. But what did you come to tell me about? And why can't you tell it? I never knew you to be unable to hold up your end of the conversation, Marjorie. What is it you want to tell me?"

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"Oh, Jimmie! It's hard to tell you. You won't believe me."

"Yes, I will Marjorie. I'll believe anything you say. But there are some mighty queer things happening this morning that I don't

understand at all. Now, how did you come here?"

"Just as I told you. I was sent. But I **asked** to be sent because I wanted to help you. And now I don't know how to say it."

"Who sent you, Marjorie?"

"The Elder Brother. Oh, he is so kind and good to me."

"Who is this 'Elder Brother'—a doctor?"

She smiled, a little sadly but very sweetly.

"Do you remember what you thought first when I spoke to you and you looked around and saw who it was?"

"Yes, I remember what I thought but—but—you don't know what I had been told."

"Oh, yes I do, for I was there when you were told, and I saw you turn around and swallow something in your throat and I know you were told I was—was—dead."

"Yes. That's just what I was told, and I believed it because everybody said it and they took me out and showed me the—the—grave and—and—"

"Yes, Jimmie dear, I know all about it for I was there and heard it all, and I saw how you went out that night, way out into the country and into that old lane in which we used to walk, and how you cried and cried when you thought no one knew. Yes, I know all about it, Jimmie, for I was there."

"You!—there!"

"Yes, Jimmie, my dear friend, my dear, **dear** friend. I was there and I saw your grief and I put my arms around you and tried to comfort you. I was there, for it was true—what they told you—it was **true**."

"You were—you are—?"

"Yes, dear friend, I **was** dead. There! I might as well say it." She smiled through the tears for she was frankly crying now.

"I might as well use the hateful word. It has to be used though it is untrue—untrue, Jimmie. We never die. Neither you nor I are dead. No! We are both more alive than we ever were before for we are one step nearer the great Source of all life and love, and I know it is true for the Elder Brother told me. He is so great and good and he knows everything, Jimmie, and he knows you and all about you and he loves you too, Jimmie. I knew I **could** Help you, and I have permission to tell you more than is told most of the soldiers because you are able to bear more than most of them. I know that you will believe what I tell you because it is what the Elder Brother has told me. And, oh! Jimmie dear, it is nothing to worry about for now you will be able to do so much more work when you have learned about the war and the other things and about the Master."

She spoke now with almost a whisper and with awe making her beautiful face even more lovely than it had been.

"You will learn about the Master and how we can work for Him and maybe, maybe if you work hard for Him, Jimmie, some day you will see Him. I saw Him once," she added proudly; "I saw Him once at a distance. I think He looked at me and I felt so happy that I just danced and sang for a long time. But that was before they had let me do any of the war work that is going on here.

They told me at first that the conditions were too terrible for me to try to help until I got stronger, but since then they have let me help a little, especially with the children. I do love to take the little ones when they first come over, so terrified and so frantic, and soothe them to sleep and work with them until they realize that they are surrounded with love over on this side and not with that awful hate which has so filled poor Belgium. I feel so sorry for the dear little mites. I have helped in this way a good deal lately."

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Jimmie had not known what an aura was when the thing was mentioned but now he saw Marjorie surrounded with a glowing cloud, a radiating light of which she seemed unconscious but of which she was the center. It made her far more beautiful than she had been, and Jimmie shrank back a little, feeling unworthy to be so near one of God's own saints.

"Since I began this work I haven't danced much," Marjorie continued, "not nearly as much as I have today, for I am so glad to see you and to be allowed to come and help you. It is the first time they have allowed me to meet any of the soldiers who have come over for it is a dangerous thing sometimes. It needs great strength and wisdom and I have neither, but I have one thing that counts for more, far more." She turned away and whispered the words to herself; Jimmie was not sure but he thought the words were—"I have love."

"Oh, Marjorie! Do you mean that I am—what we just now said?"

"Yes, you are, Jimmie, but don't let it worry you for it is really an advantage. There are lots of reasons why it is a great thing to be here and I am going to tell you some of them. But you are lucky for the Elder Brother is coming to meet you."

"I don't want to meet any Elder Brothers. I want to talk to you."

He reached out and took her hand.

"If I am dead then you are too and so neither of us has any advantage. I'm sure you don't **look** dead a bit and I don't **feel** dead. I can't make head or tail of it."

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## **Chapter II**

### **A Sergeant's Experience**

"O Jimmie, the Elder Brother is coming! Oh! Oh! I'm so glad for it must be that he wants to talk to you himself."

"Well, I wish he'd stay away. I want to talk to you—"

"Here he is—"

Jimmie turned in response to a gesture from Marjorie and saw standing before him a man, somewhat past middle age, tall, erect, and with nothing so prominent about him as the ability to inspire in others the feeling of being in the immediate presence of great power. The man bowed slightly and while Marjorie and Jimmie were rising, spoke:

"I know you very well, Mr. Westman, partially through the help of our little friend here," and he touched Marjorie's curls gently and lovingly. "I sent her to meet you first but we must not tax her strength too greatly. I want you to come with me for a while, and later you may have a long talk with her."

The newcomer's manner and tone bore such an air of quiet authority that Jimmie never for an instant entertained a thought of appeal. He merely responded to Marjorie's little graceful gesture of

adieu and turned to walk beside the man whom Marjorie had called the "Elder Brother."

They walked for some distance in silence, a silence which Jimmie thought it best not to break, for in some way which he could not explain, he felt as though this man was quite a "big bug" in this country, and so he walked on silently until the man himself might feel moved to begin the conversation.

Some rods had been passed in slow pacing before the silence was broken. In the meantime Jimmie had cast a furtive glance around to see how far Marjorie had gone, but to his surprise she was not in sight at all although he was sure he could see a couple of miles in any direction.

"You have had a good rest," his companion said at length, "and it will not be too great a tax upon you to map out briefly some of the duties which it will be your privilege to attend to in this new life upon which you have entered. But before that I will show you a little of what has happened and is happening, and as soon as you are ready for the information I shall show you just why this war was allowed to come upon the world and in just what manner your help will be needed.

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"Things are somewhat different here from what you have been accustomed to, and I want to call your attention to one thing which Marjorie hesitated to dwell upon and that is the method of your locomotion. You do not need to walk in the old way; it is much more convenient and much quicker to progress by what Marjorie suggested to you at first—the glide. We all of us here move that way. It only requires a slight effort of the will and is as such superior to walking as walking is to crawling on the hands

and knees. In fact there is hardly a limit to the speed of the glide and without it we would find it impossible to do the work which has to be done in these strenuous times. Try it."

At the word he began to glide just as Jimmie had seen Marjorie do. Jimmie then made the effort himself and to his surprise found that he could move along as he had often done on ice when skating, only this movement was the result of an effort of the will and required no exertion of the body at all. He was as delighted as a child with this newly acquired power and glided around like an ice skater cutting the old familiar figure eight and other patterns a number of times before he once more steadied down at the side of his new acquaintance.

There is a great deal of the boy in every man just as there is a great deal of the man in every boy, and Jimmie was frankly more absorbed and interested in the possibilities of the glide and in the fact that he had resumed his place at the Elder Brother's side without being in the least out of breath or feeling any of the effects which usually follow such strenuous exercise, than he was in the tremendous fact that he had really and truly crossed over the "Great Divide" and was in the very act and article of learning what was on the "Other Side of Death."

Slowing down to the more dignified progress of his guide, he felt somewhat abashed at his exhibition of enthusiasm and began to apologize in an indirect manner.

"This gliding business is quite a novelty to me and it seems to be just what I have always wanted to do. I've dreamed of just that very thing at times, and when I once realized that I could actually glide, it was like doing some old, familiar stunt over again."

"You were not mistaken. It is an old familiar 'stunt.'"

"It must be that my ice skating is what made it seem natural to me."

"No. It was familiar because you have often glided and you were really used to doing it. In your sleep you have always spent your time over on this side. On most nights you were not actually conscious, yet you were partially aware of what you were doing though you were not able to take the memory back with you."

"Gee! Well, what do you know about that!"

"It's an improvement on walking, isn't it?"

"Well! I should say so. I'll sure teach it to the boys when I go back.—"

He stopped short, realizing that there was no "going back."

The man's face glowed with sympathy.

"No," he said, "there is no going back, but I think that when I have shown you that which lies before you and which is so much grander and greater than what lies back of us, you will not want to go back, you will want with all your heart and soul to go forward.

"I am going to take you back to the trench where your company is, for one of your friends is going to pass over. As he will not go in the same way you did he will recover consciousness almost immediately and I want you to take charge of him. In this way you will learn a good deal about some phases of what your duties will be later on.

"And now," he continued, "before you begin actual work, I want to impress upon your mind that this war was necessary, because in no other way could the human race be saved from an impending

and overwhelming fate. This fact does not in the least excuse those who are responsible for bringing it on, but I speak of it because the great conflict and awful suffering have made some think that the powers of good were helpless before the powers of evil. This is not so. God rules over all and as the sparrow cannot fall without His knowledge and will, so no war can be started without His knowledge and will; but, as said, this does not excuse those who bring it on." His face grew very stern but withal tender, and his eyes had a look in them as though his thoughts were far away over the centuries that are to come before the good which is to result from the great struggle shall have formed its pattern on the loom of time.

"Now," he resumed, "we will travel a little faster and you can use that newly found power of yours, the glide."

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He began to glide as he spoke and moved faster and faster. Jimmie kept gliding along by his side, occasionally forgetting and fixing his mind on something else, and when he did this he found that he was apt to stop altogether. This he explained to himself by saying that walking had become so much a second nature to him that he could do it and still think of something else, but that gliding was yet new and so he had to center his mind on it all the time.

The Elder Brother moved faster and Jimmie followed him as well as he could, though when his companion left the earth and moved through the air Jimmie was a little dubious as to his ability to follow so strenuous a leader. Soon, however, he became more and more accustomed to the new sensation and began to take a little interest in the landscape. Now he noticed that they were passing

over a part of the country which was familiar to him, and in another moment or two he saw that they were nearing the trenches. He heard the reports of the great guns and saw the planes flying far above, for he and his guide were again nearing the earth, and I another minute they had alighted on the edge of that section of the trench where his firing post had been.

There it was yet with one of the men of the company in it, and Jimmie motioned to his friend that they had better jump down into the trench where they would be safe. It was not until the Elder Brother smiled at him in a quizzical way that he remembered the fact that the danger of bullets was over for him, that they could pass through his present ethereal body without causing discomfort.

The Elder Brother laid a hand on Jimmie's arm and pointed to a man somewhat over forty, in the uniform of a sergeant, who was sitting quietly in a little dugout smoking a cigarette and looking at an old magazine. As they watched him he threw away the stub of the cigarette, laid down the magazine, rose slowly, and stepped into the trench. He walked leisurely to the firing post, raised his head to look through the little opening, and was neatly drilled through the forehead with a rifle bullet. He stood still for a moment, then as the muscles lost their vitality they slowly relaxed, and the body as slowly leaned against the wall of trench, quietly sinking down. That was what the horrified rifleman on duty saw, but what Jimmie saw was that the sergeant quietly stepped out of his body and stood there, looking at the rifleman with a puzzled expression on his face. Jimmy needed no guide to tell him what had happened, and he called to Sergeant Strew who looked up at him and said quietly:

"Hello, Jimmie, glad to see you. When did you blow in? I heard you'd 'gone west.'"

"Hello, old fellow," said Jimmie, "I just came out and brought a friend of mine."

He turned to the Elder Brother and said:

"I'd introduce you to my friend, Sergeant Strew, sir, if I knew your name."

Sergeant Strew seemed to evince no great surprise that Jimmie should have come out to the firing line in such a manner, bringing a friend with him as though the front trench were a visiting place, nor did the unusual circumstance strike either of them as at all out of the ordinary. It is often thus with those who have recently passed over and who had not had their powers of observation and reason trained. The sergeant knew as a matter of fact that Jimmie was dead, or at least he had been told so and had no reason to doubt the fact. Yet when Jimmie appeared alive and well and apparently comfortable, the sergeant merely accepted the fact without any hesitation. Had he seen Jimmie, however, before the sniper's bullet severed the connection between his physical and vital bodies, the case would have been entirely different.

Jimmie's very respectful mode of addressing the Elder Brother, too, was indicative not only of the atmosphere or aura of dignity and power which surrounded the Elder Brother but showed the fact that these auric vibrations were not impeded by the physical body, hence were a thousand times more potent than would have been the case on the physical plane. Jimmie knew nothing of mental vibrations and had not the slightest idea that the cause of his attitude lay outside of himself, but of the fact of this respectful

attitude he was aware, and he promptly set it down to his own good upbringing.

The name which was given I may not divulge, but in its place I will substitute one, and say that the Elder Brother gave the name of *Campion*.

The introduction over, the Elder Brother said:

"Jimmie, come to me in about an hour and bring your friend."

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"All right, sir, but my watch has stopped and I will have to guess the time. And where will I find you, sir?"

"I will send for you when the time comes."

The Elder Brother apparently made a step from the bottom to the top of the trench and moved off toward the rear. The sergeant yelled to him and jumped to interfere but Jimmie caught him by the arm. Strew turned on Jimmie—

"Stop him! Call him back!"

"Never mind him," Jimmie shouted, "listen to me—"

"All right, Lieutenant, if you say so. But Jiminy! I'm glad to see you again. Say! did you notice the way that friend of yours took the whole height of the trench at one step? Some man, that!"

"He certainly is."

"This'll be great news for the boys to find you're all right again. We heard that you got killed three days ago. I'm mighty glad to

find it was a mistake. But where have you been all this time?"

Jimmie had come up at a time when there was a lull in the fighting, and Sergeant Strew's was the only casualty at the time. The sergeant was so busy looking at and talking to Jimmie that he had not noticed the group of men gathered about his dead body, and Jimmie was at a loss just how to break the news to him gently. He had never had such a job to do before—

"Well you see, Sergeant, the funny part about it is that what you heard was true."

"What was true?"

"Why, that I got killed."

"You got hit on the bean, that's what's the matter with you."

"No, I didn't either. I'm giving you the true dope. I got killed."

"Jimmie, go back and tell the doc to fix your noodle. You've got a bad case of 'bats in your garret.' I might have known it was like that or you'd never have brought that spry old gent out here with you which you very well know is against all the regulations even if you are a lieutenant, and I don't see how in thunder he ever got so far, past all the officers."

"Well, you see, it's this way, Sergeant, lots of men get killed and never know what's happened to them."

"Yes, an' some think they're killed when nothing has happened. Why, if you'd been killed don't you see you would be a ghost now, and then how in the dickens could I see you and be talking to you? It can't be done, Jimmie. You're just as much alive as I am."

"That's true, too, Sergeant, but if you'll look behind you a moment you'll see that you're just as dead as I am."

Jimmie pointed past him to the dead body which had been laid out on the boards at the bottom of the trench ready to be taken to the rear if things kept quiet after dark, and the sergeant turned and looked. He looked long and quietly. He walked over and stood beside the body and looked at it carefully. He spoke to the sentry in the firing post; when no answer was made he spoke again, more sharply, and then walked over and shook the man by the shoulder, or attempted to shake him, but finding that his hand went through him he gave up the attempt, turned back to Jimmie, and said in a matter of fact way:

"I guess you're right, Jimmie. I've cashed in."

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Jimmie looked at Sergeant Strew and Sergeant Strew looked at Jimmie. Neither knew what to say. The situation was a novel one, and though Jimmie might have found words with which to offer comfort to a friend who had lost some dear one, yet even that task would have been hard; but when it was the friend himself who had died and the one who sought to offer comfort was also dead, the situation began to assume something of the comical. Jimmie smiled a little. Things were too serious to laugh about, yet there was the element of humor and that very fact of itself struck him as funny, for humor and the life after death had seemed to him before this as being as far apart as the poles. No one had ever connected the two to his knowledge. The sergeant, however, was very grave.

So it's come at last, he said, partly to himself and partly to Jimmie. "It's come at last and it's not nearly anything like I

thought it would be. Say!" he looked at Jimmie, "You have been over here for three days and you ought to be feeling at home kinda by this time; where are they?"

"Where are what?"

"Why, heaven, though I guess us fellers wouldn't go there just at first anyhow; but where's all the things the parsons talk about, hell and the devils an' the other things? This is just like where we were before an' I don't see much difference except that yap, Milvane, couldn't hear me when I spoke to him; but what does a feller do here? Do we go an' hunt for a harp to play on or do we go on fighting or what? 'Spose a lot of German ghosts come along, what are we to do?"

"Darned if I know", said Jimmie to whom the idea was new.

"Well, I don't know what we can do but I bet I can lick any blankety blank German ghost that ever lived."

Jimmie felt a peculiar sensation. He had never been a profane boy and his worst expletive had usually been the mild word "darn." Stronger than this he seldom spoke but now that the sergeant used a few words of what the majority of the company would have classed as swearing, that is as *real genuine* swearing, Jimmie felt a sensation almost akin to pain. It was a mixed feeling, not physical pain and yet much like it; it was much more than mere repugnance to something he formerly would not even have noticed. He remembered the Elder Brother's request and wondered if the hour was up, and if it was, whether he ought to take this friend of his into the somewhat awesome presence of that strange man. His doubts were solved for him by the sudden appearance from nowhere of a laughing little child who came dancing up to him, singing in a semi-chant as children often do:

"Come along, Jimmie, the Elder Brother wants you."

Jimmie turned to the sergeant who was attempting to interfere with a soldier busily engaged in removing the ammunition belt from the sergeant's discarded body.

"Come on, Sergeant, Mr. Campion wants to see us."

"T'hell with your friend. Look at this gutter snipe here trying to rob me of all my cartridges an' he knows blame well I got all my tobacco in one of them pockets an' I'm responsible fer that belt. Drop it, gol darn you!" This last was addressed to the soldier at whom and through whom the sergeant swung a right hand blow that would, under former circumstances, have almost felled an ox, but the soldier paid no attention to it. The sergeant was inarticulate with rage.

Jimmie had to stop a minute to get the situation clear in his own mind, and then with a laugh he interposed between the fuming sergeant and the unconcerned robber, who was not a robber at all but merely a soldier obeying his orders.

"Come out of it, Sergeant! You're dead! Get me? You're dead! You can't hurt that guy. Come along with me. You're dead!"

The sergeant stepped back a pace, looked at Jimmie with a puzzled expression on his face for a moment and scratched his head.

"Danged if I ain't," he said thoughtfully, "I forgot that."

"Sure." Jimmie smiled at him. "And what good would your tobacco do you anyhow? You can't smoke now."

The sergeant stopped short and straightened with a jerk, looking at Jimmie, his eyes growing wide with horror.

"Ain't that hell?"

Again Jimmie felt that painful feeling surge over him at the sergeant's words, and again he doubted the advisability of taking this profane soldier, brave and honorable though he knew him to be, before the Elder Brother, who was, as Jimmie had "sized him up" something in the nature of a "Gospel Sharp" or "Sky Pilot." The army seldom used the word **minister**, and Jimmie had fallen into the army vernacular. What would this friend of Marjorie's think if Sergeant Strew should forget himself and casually utter an expletive?

Again the little child with the smiling face danced before his eyes and repeated the message.

"Come along, Jimmie, the Elder Brother wants you."

This time Jimmie determined to obey.

"Come along, Sergeant, it's orders that I've got to bring you with me."

The sergeant came along, pensively, muttering to himself something about tobacco and the utter uselessness of any locality or state of being where the solacing weed could not be smoked. Nevertheless, he followed in a preoccupied manner, climbing out of the ditch after Jimmie and then nervously looking around as though just remembering that the sight of him might excite Fritz into starting a bombardment.

"Don't worry," Jimmie said, noticing the sergeant's apprehension, "Fritz can't see you and if he could he couldn't hurt

you. You're just as dead as you can get."

"That's right, I never thought of that. I ain't got used to the idea of being dead yet."

He drew his hand across his forehead wearily, then gave a gasp of dismay as he felt the hole in his head and took his hand away covered with blood. He felt gingerly of the place where the snipers had drilled him. "Say, I better go an' get this fixed up. This is a bad place to get hit. I might have got—it's a wonder it didn't—"

He stopped short and looked at Jimmie wistfully. The wound had evidently startled him in a way, for the fact was that in spite of the evidence he had not yet realized that he was dead. Often it takes a long time to realize a thing which we know and admit readily as a mere statement of fact. While the sergeant knew that he was dead, yet he had not realized it nor had he learned to co-ordinate his thoughts with what he knew to be the truth, and the old impulse to get a wound "fixed up" before any complications could set in was too strong to be shaken off.

Jimmie did not know and so could not explain to the sergeant that the blood with which his hand was covered was merely the result of his own firmly fixed idea that there ought to be blood where there was such a large wound. Subconsciously the sergeant felt that if he were dead and a ghost, then it would follow that a ghost could not bleed. Yet he was bleeding, for was not his hand covered with blood? So, partly by conscious and partly by subconscious methods he reached the point where he doubted whether he were really dead or not. Theories were thrown to the winds. The wound was a practical and compelling fact.

"Say, Jimmie, I've got to go an' get this fixed up. I'll come an' see your fried some other time. I gotta go before this gets worse."

It was, indeed, a ghastly wound, not only where the bullet had entered the forehead but much more so where it had come out at the back of the head for there the wound was much larger. Jimmie realized the necessity of getting it "fixed up," but then the thought flashed across his mind— **where?**

Merciful and devoted as the Red Cross was, there was yet no hospital he knew of, where a man who could not be seen could be treated for a deadly wound of which he had already died.

"Where you goin' to, Sergeant," he asked, "where do you think you can get that thing fixed up? Don't you know that's what killed you?"

"Don't they have no hospitals over here?" demanded the sergeant. "Where do ghosts go when they get hurt?"

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"They don't get hurt."

"The dickens they don't! I'm hurt, ain't I? If I don't get this fixed up somehow I'm liable to—to—"

"To what, Sergeant? Come to life again?"

"Darn you, Jimmie. This thing hurts like the dickens. It's a wonder you wouldn't flag a stretcher bearer or an ambulance or somethin' instead of standin' there grinnin' like a durn fool. Of course they have ambulances over here. Naturally they would."

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## **Chapter III**

### **A Soul Flight**

"No, there are no ambulances, Sergeant, but I will take you where you can have your wound attended to."

Jimmie turned to see who it was that had spoken and was somewhat startled to see the Elder Brother standing quietly with just the faint trace of a smile on his lips.

"Please come with me, both of you."

Both followed as a matter of course, It never occurred to either to question that gentle voice, which for all its gentleness seemed to carry a note of finality and authority.

"Take his hand, Jimmie," said the Elder Brother, at the same time grasping the sergeant by the other arm. Jimmie did as he was told and was amazed to find himself traveling rapidly. In a few minutes they "lit" as he afterwards described it, and he found they were on a level lawn some hundred yards distant from an enormous building of the old Grecian style of architecture, constructed with huge symmetrical columns topped by Corinthian capitals, and with a peculiar iridescence or glow surrounding the entire structure. Jimmie was not sure at first, whether he actually saw this; indeed, he did not see it continuously, and Sergeant Strew, who seemed to be just coming out of a dream, apparently did not see it at all.

They passed, still hand in hand across the lawn and up the rows of steps which surrounded the building and wound their way between what seemed endless rows of columns until the Elder Brother opened a door and motioned them before him into a room.

He, himself, followed and having closed the door, turned to Sergeant Strew who was apparently faint from loss of blood.

"And now, Sergeant, you must forgive me for having waited so long before attending to your injury."

He opened a little cupboard and took from one of the shelves within, a small vial filled with a dark colored substance of much the same consistency as vaseline.

"Now, Sergeant, on this side of the veil we can accomplish results far more rapidly than on the side you have just left, and you will find that if you will do as I say, your wound will be entirely healed without even leaving a scar."

He stood in front of the sergeant, smeared a little of the dark substance on his own finger, and said:

"Please stand perfectly still, Sergeant, and concentrate your mind on the way your forehead looked before you were wounded. Think of it that way and imagine that the wound was never made."

He touched the sergeant's forehead lightly with the finger on which the dark substance was smeared. The sergeant closed his eyes and screwed his face into what he thought was the right expression for one who was concentrating.

The Elder Brother removed his hand and to Jimmie's amazement the sergeant's forehead was as clean and smooth as the forehead of a child—smooth, that is, except for the wrinkles produced by his extraordinary facial contortions in trying to obey the Elder Brother's command to "concentrate."

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"Well! Well!" said Jimmie.

Sergeant Strew opened his eyes.

"Your wound's all gone, as though it had never been there at all."

"Thasso?" He felt gingerly and inquiringly of his forehead.

"Doctor, I sure have to hand it to you for a first class doc. You'd make a fortune in the States. Gee! But you must be a crackerjack!"

The Elder Brother smiled.

"You did it yourself, my friend. It was your own imagination and will power, not my skill, which healed you."

Sergeant Strew looked rather mystified and furtively felt of his forehead as though in doubt of the permanence of any change wrought by his own imagination, but the wound was still healed and he gave a little sigh of relief.

"Whew!" he said, "If I'd only known how to do that before!" He turned to the Elder Brother: "You really mean that I healed myself?"

"Exactly that. You healed yourself, and the stuff I smeared on was merely to help you concentrate. If you had had your arm blown off and had come over with only one arm you could have replaced your arm with as much ease as you have healed this wound. Matter on this side of the veil is wonderfully amenable to the power of the will, and the task which I wish to set you about at once is that of meeting your comrades when they pass over, quieting them and showing them how to heal their wounds and also drawing them away from the battle lines.

"For those who pass over, the war has ended, and it is their duty as well as their privilege to help, not by fighting, but by getting

others to stop fighting and to begin to turn their thoughts away from the earth plane and towards the great future and the tasks and duties which it holds."

"But suppose the enemy makes a raid? What shall I do? How can I help fighting?"

"By simply refusing to fight. You are not now on the physical plane where you could be compelled to fight. The Germans cannot hurt you even if they do make a raid and surround you. All you have to do is to obey orders; ignore the Germans unless you can speak German, in which case it is your duty to help them to stop fighting and to heal their wounds just as much as it is your duty to help your own comrades.

"And remember that while you are doing this work you are doing the work of the Master, and the power and the strength of the Master are with you so that nothing can hurt you. Only if you disobey orders and let your anger rise and attempt to injure anyone—only then could you be hurt. To put it shortly—obey orders and you are perfectly safe even if your work takes you into the middle of the whole German army. Disobey or let your passions lead you into hatred and anger and you will not be safe even if alone on an island in the Pacific Ocean. Do you understand?"

The Elder Brother drew himself up as if he were a soldier standing at "attention." The sergeant was much impressed and clicked his heels together as he saluted, saying,

"Your orders shall be obeyed, sir."

"Just a moment, Sergeant."

The Elder Brother stood very still for a moment, apparently thinking. He had stood in this attitude for about a minute when the door opened and a man in the uniform of a Canadian soldier entered.

"You called, sir?"

"Yes. Please go with Sergeant Strew and show him how we do our work. You would not be called into active service so soon, Sergeant," the Elder Brother went on, addressing our friend, "but the Germans are about to start another drive and a great many on both sides will be killed; and we need all our workers and many more. I am sure that you will do what you can to help those whom you can influence to quit the fighting and turn their attention to other things, now that they are on this side of the veil."

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Sergeant Strew and the Canadian saluted and went out.

What happened to the sergeant and the manner in which he was inducted into the work of the great band of invisible helpers who are striving with might and main to avert a grave disaster to the world, Jimmie learned later. It was replete with adventure and many terrible things, also some that were almost comic, but that is not really a part of this narrative.

The Elder Brother stood for a moment lost in thought after the departure of Sergeant Strew, and Jimmie watched him, waiting for him to speak. After a few minutes Jimmie broke the silence himself.

"You spoke of my having certain duties, too, sir?"

"Yes. But yours are different from those of the sergeant. You are to learn as much as possible because the field of your activity will not be here. You are going back."

"Back?"

"Yes. You were not killed but only stunned, and when the right time comes you will be sent back to work in your own body again on the physical plane. There it will be your great and high privilege to tell, so far as lies in your power, the wonderful things which will be shown you and taught you here."

"But if I am not dead, then is not all this a dream? And Marjorie told me I was dead. Did I only imagine I saw Marjorie?"

"No. You really saw Marjorie and talked to her; also, you are really over here now, because it is not necessary that one die in order to come over to this country. Marjorie was mistaken and very naturally so; the fact is that for some little time it was uncertain whether it would be possible to re-integrate your etheric body quickly enough. But your work is needed on earth; you have earned the chance in your former lives and as there is a very great need, special help has been given you. Neither you nor Marjorie stopped to think that you have no wound."

"That's right," Jimmie said, "come to think of it I haven't any wound. I hadn't stopped to think of that before. And yet I remember that I've seen lots of dead men on the fields who had no wound."

"That is very true. they were killed by shell shock, and that is the very thing which **nearly** killed you by driving your vital body out of your physical almost to the point of rupturing the silver cord. But for the fact that you are needed and were given extra

help, you would be really and absolutely dead, as you call it; you would be on this side of the veil with no chance of going back. But because in your past lives you made a start on the Path, took the vow of service, and by your work earned the opportunity for more service, it came to pass that when your etheric body was driven out by the explosion of the shell, the particles of your vital body were kept from utter disruption; and when the time comes for you to go back to the physical body which is even now lying in a hospital back of the lines, you will be helped to take with you the memory of what you have seen and heard here so that you can work to better advantage. In your sleep you have frequently seen and talked with Marjorie, and you have had many gliding trips with her in your dreams. But this time you were quite different, and it is no wonder that she was mistaken."

"But I have never dreamed of her, sir; it has always been one of the great regrets of my life."

"Yes! Although you never dreamed of her, yet you and she met often and had many long trips together, for during sleep we are generally away from our bodies in Dreamland, though very few are able to take back the memory of their visits to this land of the living dead, and those who are beginning to be able to do so, take back, quite often, only distorted and mixed up memories. One of the things I hope you will soon learn to do when you go back is to carry your consciousness through."

"You say it can be done?"

"Indeed yes; it is far easier than it would seem and especially for souls that are well advanced. In fact it is a constant wonder to me that more people are not able to do it. You have earned the

privilege of doing this during your last two or three lives, and it will not be a very difficult task for you to acquire the ability."

"My last two or three lives? What do you mean by that? Do you mean that I have lived before?"

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"Exactly."

"Where?"

"On earth. And your last life was spent not so very far from where we are now, that is, it was in southern Europe."

"But I always thought that when one died, he died; and that he either went to heaven or to—to the other place."

"No! The scheme of human evolution is far greater and grander than that. And it is because it is so much more complex, and because of the great amount of work to be done and the fact that you can be of great usefulness, that you are to be helped to go back. But first I want you to take a little trip with me."

He beckoned to Jimmie, who followed him outside and took his hand in obedience to a gesture. There as a period of rapid traveling during which Jimmie caught only faint glimpses of the parts of the earth over which they flew, and before a minute had elapsed they stood in a poorly furnished room where a woman sat sewing by a small table while two little children were playing on the floor beside her. As she sewed, the tears dropped slowly down her cheeks though she made no sound, only occasionally looking towards the table where lay an open letter.

The Elder Brother stood very quietly in a corner. His grave face showed the pity which he felt, while Jimmie moved towards the table and glanced at the letter. It was the terse, formal, Government announcement that Henry L. E.—had been mortally wounded in battle.

Instinctively he drew back in respect for a grief so great. As he did so, a man in uniform entered through the closed door and stood there, his hands outstretched towards the woman, who paid no attention to him. In his tunic, just over the heart there was a little round hole, and the tunic was stained with blood.

"O Emma," the newcomer broke the silence: "Emma!" he cried, with a little break in his voice.

The woman did not answer, but she seemed a little uneasy and raised her head as though listening for some expected or hoped-for sound. The youngest child crept on all fours towards the man in uniform, uttering little gurgles of welcome which with a few months more practice might have developed into the familiar "Daddy."

With a sob the woman caught up the child; "No, no, dear! Daddy hasn't come yet. He hasn't come yet!"

"The baby sees him," said the Elder Brother to Jimmie, "but the woman does not, and perhaps it is just as well. When she goes to sleep tonight," he said, turning to the man in uniform and touching him on the arm, "When she goes to sleep tonight she will leave her body and will be with you until she wakes in the morning. Then you will remember but she will not. Every night you will be able to meet her and talk to her, and so you can help her to bear the burden. In the meantime remember that your separation is only temporary and that you will see her and be with her and the

children every night when they are asleep. You see, your parting is only temporary, after all. She has much the heavier burden to bear."

The man in uniform held out his hand.

"Thank you, Mister. You've taken a heavy load off my mind."

The Elder Brother motioned to Jimmie and together they left by the now familiar glide, passing through the wall as though it had not been there. Outside they found themselves in the environs of a large city, and the Elder Brother chose a shaded side street, and moved along it slowly, almost walking. Not many people were on the street, and those they met paid no attention to them, evidently not seeing them. It caused Jimmie no little exertion at first to dodge pedestrians as they walked unconcernedly along the pavement. The Elder Brother, however, paid no attention to the people any more than they minded him, and walked right through them with as little concern as though they had been mere shadows. Jimmie watched him, then tried it himself and found to his relief that it caused him no inconvenience to walk through a person on the street, and that it was the only reasonable thing to do.

"I have shown you a little of the suffering caused by the war," the Elder Brother said at length, "not that you did not already know about it but merely to bring home to you the fact that the greater part of the agony caused by the conflict arises from the idea that death means a complete and probably permanent separation. In spite of the fact that most people would tell you, if you asked, that they firmly believe in a future life, the fact remains that few of them believe in it to the point of realization.

"Death they can see and one half of it they think they understand, but as to the life beyond they are more or less uncertain. If they could only know, not as a theory but as a fact, that they are spirits, children of the Great Father in heaven, and as such can no more die than He can, and if they could only realize that this life is not the only one on earth, but that humanity lives again and again in constantly improving bodies and surroundings, also that their progress is ever onward and upward, it could be much accelerated and they could be spared much suffering by thus working with the Great Law. If they could only realize that they make their own troubles, and that the misfortunes which they bear are not the visitations of a capricious deity but the results of their own disobedience to His Will (as shown in His great and just laws), either in their present life or in their past lives, and that just in proportion as they obey His moral law and practice the mode of conduct which Christ, the Great Master, laid down, just so far will they spare themselves suffering and fit themselves to be helpers in the great work of uplifting their fellows."

He ceased speaking, his face glowing with light, and as Jimmie noticed a nimbus or cloud of iridescent beauty and faintly flushing colors surrounding him, there recurred to his mind an old verse which he had heard as a boy somewhere:

"How bright these glorious spirits shine."

"It is now nearly time for you to return," the Elder Brother continued, "and I cannot talk with you much more, so I will keep my promise and let you have a little time with Marjorie. But before we part I want to impress upon you that when you have recovered and are able to be about, I would like you to call on me in Paris."

He mentioned a street and number.

"But I thought—I thought you were—er—I thought you had—you see I thought you lived here altogether."

The Elder Brother laughed.

"No, indeed. I am still in the flesh, and when you are well enough I shall meet you in Paris and that will be one of the guarantees to you that all this is not a dream but a reality."

He began to travel rapidly, and Jimmie, following in obedience to a gesture of command, soon found himself on the same gently sloping meadow where he had first recovered consciousness.

"Marjorie will soon be here and I will leave you to her. She will explain some things to you, but you are not to look upon this meeting as our last nor on this as your only introduction to the land of the living dead. Your introduction to spiritual things has come in a different manner than usual, but it is not a gift, for you have earned it, and it will be your duty to work **ten times harder** from now on."

"He'll do it, too, won't you, Jimmie?"

Marjorie who had come up unnoticed, stood smiling in front of them. Jimmie grasped her hand and smiled too.

"Yes indeed, I will, sir."

"Good-bye, the, for a while."

Jimmie looked for Marjorie to say good-bye to the Elder Brother, but to his surprise they were alone.

"I've heard that you are to go back, and I'm so glad for it means that you will be able to work on both sides of the veil at once. O

Jimmie, how I envy you your chances to work!"

The rest of Jimmie's conversation with Marjorie, while of absorbing interest to themselves, does not particularly concern our story, and it would be an abuse of our clairvoyant privileges to set it down. Jimmie spoke of his disappointment in the fact that he had not been shown the great sights which had been promised him nor given any instructions as to the "word" which he was to do.

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Marjorie reassured him, and so absolute was her faith in the wisdom of the Elder Brother and so positive her assurances that Jimmie's doubts were set at rest.

His eyes had been growing heavier and heavier and an overpowering drowsiness began to steal upon him for which he tried to apologize, but Marjorie only smiled at him. His last recollection was the sight of her standing there, a faint glow surrounding her and a smile on her face as she said.

"You're going back!"

Then darkness seemed to cover all the Land of the Living Dead.

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## **Chapter IV**

### **Back to Earth—A Pretty Nurse**

A sensation of falling; great swirling masses of darkness, felt, not seen; the impression of rushing through space at dizzy speed, alone, now head first, now feet foremost, utterly helpless to control the terrific plunge, yet with it all not uncomfortable nor particularly uneasy, merely curious to know the result of this

unguided and precipitate excursion; dimly conscious of a lessening of the darkness and speed, a gradually increasing glow of twilight with no particular source and disclosing nothing in particular. Aeons of time were passing; a final appearance of the sun seen dimly through clouds and fog, and little by little a clearing of the vision. Ages passed and the clouds became lighter and more rosy; a final slow change of the sun into the glint of daylight on a swinging incandescent globe and the rosy clouds into a white ceiling and walls. Nothing more was visible. A shadow fell upon the wall, and across the range of vision moved what appeared to be the head of a young goddess wearing the uniform cap of the Red Cross.

She looked a little like Marjorie. . .Who was Marjorie? He tried to remember. The name came to him easily, Marjorie—Marjorie—who was Marjorie?

Who was he, himself? Jim, Jimmie—who was Jimmie? Where did he come from? Familiar name! they called him Jimmie. They? Who? Who were "they?" Marjorie called him Jimmie.

Who was that girl in the Red Cross cap who looked a little like Marjorie? She had stopped and was looking at him. No, she was not Marjorie. Marjorie was much prettier and Marjorie had a soft glow of light about her. Marjorie had seemed to be so much more **alive** than this girl and Marjorie glowed with light. This girl didn't glow. Probably not her fault. Naturally, few girls could glow like Marjorie—he smiled.

What was it that Marjorie had called it? Oh yes, an aura—aura.

The girl in the Red Cross cap was smiling at him now but she didn't glow like Marjorie. Still she had a sweet smile. She was a nice girl. He knew it. But she ought to glow. He would speak to her.

A Red Cross nurse, passing on her rounds among her patients, saw one without a wound, who had lain unconscious for days, suffering from shell shock, and whom they had been unable to rouse. As she glanced at him she was surprised and pleased to see that his eyes were open and that he showed consciousness. He was watching her and his lips were moving feebly. She stepped to his side and bent her head until her ear was close to his lips. Then, only, she could faintly hear his words.

"You're not glowing. Where's your aura?"

The mystified nurse stroked his forehead gently as she straightened up, a great surge of pity for this poor human wreck of battle sweeping over her. His lips moved again, and again she bent to listen.

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"Scuse me. My mistake. You've got it."

"Got to sleep now, you're very much better."

She laid her hand on his head for a few moments, and then as his regular breathing showed that he had followed her direction, she moved away on her rounds. Later, in making her report to the head nurse she remarked that number 32 had regained consciousness but was apparently a little "off," as he had asked foolish questions about why she did not glow and where her aura was.

"What is an 'aura'?" she asked the head nurse. "It seems to me that I have heard the word somewhere."

"I don't know, child. I don't think there is any such thing. He's just out of his head."

Jimmie awoke from his sleep some hours later with his head fairly clear as to outward impressions but very confused as to other things. He went Marjorie. They were vivid and distinct and he could remember almost every word, especially Marjorie's but how did he come to be here and where was "here?" There were no hospitals in the ordinary meaning of the term over there, yet he was in a hospital. Also the nurse walked and did not glide, as she had bent over him when he first awoke and had touched his forehead so soothingly she had seemed to glow—yes, he remembered that she had all of a sudden been enveloped in a cloud of faint purple. He had said something to her at the time but he could not remember now what it was. He didn't care particularly. It was enough just to lie here quietly and not think at all—not more than he had to, anyhow. This place might or might not be heaven, but it certainly was very comfortable.

The nurse again stopped at his side. He smiled up at her, too comfortable and entirely satisfied to do more than smile. But she was a competent young woman and did not approve of nurses smiling at patients or patients at nurses. She wanted to know how he felt and what his temperature was and insisted on shaking up his pillow and generally rousing him in a gentle way. But he didn't care. Who could be annoyed by the attentions of a goddess? Now that he was aroused enough to talk, he would find out where he was. He would go about it diplomatically so that she would not know what he was trying to find out. He spoke, and she was glad to hear his voice so much stronger.

"Why don't you glide?"

Poor fellow! His voice was stronger but evidently his mind was wandering. Still one can often accomplish a great deal by humoring such cases, so she answered:

"Why, don't you know that we're not allowed to dance in here, and besides, no one glides now. The only dances we have are the waltz and two or three other dance steps, but the glide is out of date."

He looked at her, puzzled. Maybe it wasn't heaven. Maybe it was—no—it couldn't be. her face was too sweet and altogether wholesome for that.

"Tell me—say—" She bent down in sympathy at sight of so strong a man lying so helpless, in expectation of some piteous revelation of shattered reason.

"Where'm I at?"

The revulsion of feeling was too much for her and she laughed outright. When she could stop laughing long enough to talk she answered his question.

"You're in the American Hospital at Paris, France, and it's certain you're ever so much better—that is, all except your grammar."

Again, in watching her, he saw that wave of color surround her like a glow of purple light and he needed no words to tell him that though she might not glide nor know what an aura was, yet she was a true sister to those compassionate ones who spend their time in helping others even as the Master does. He knew, though he knew not how he knew, that such a glowing, pulsing, gentle radiance cannot be counterfeited by any art, skill, knowledge, or power, however great. Nothing can produce it but purity, kindness, love, and service. So he was satisfied for the time and lay back on his pillow and in a few seconds was asleep.

It was a whole day later before he awoke again, this time in the full possession of his senses and memory, and when the nurse of the kindly face and the beautiful aura made her rounds, she met a look of full recognition which told her at a glance that Jimmie's mind was entirely restored.

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"Good morning," she said smiling, "how's my shell shocked patient this morning? Still suffering from dislocation of grammar?"

Jimmie grinned, "What did I say to you yesterday?"

"Oh, nothing much. You were naturally a little light headed and you said some queer things. You asked me why I didn't dance and where my aura was and why I didn't glow. By the way, what is an aura? Is there such a thing, or did you just imagine the word?"

"I don't know that I can tell you just what an aura is. I've heard the word and I think I know what it means. I'll tell you about it."

Three days later Jimmie was allowed to go out for a walk. He felt practically well and very hungry but had to promise that if allowed to go out he would not buy anything to eat.

"I don't know whether I can trust you or not," the doctor had said; "it may be better for Miss Louise to go with you."

"I think very likely it would," said Jimmie thoughtfully. "I think it would be much better."

Miss Louise did not seem averse to a little walk when the doctor asked her if she would take her patient out for a stroll, and in fact appeared rather proud of the tall young lieutenant in his newly

cleaned and pressed uniform from which all traces of the trench mud had been removed in the hospital laundry.

"Which way shall we go?" she asked as they passed out of the hospital gate.

"Do you know where the Rue de la Ex is?"

"No, but we can ask."

They asked. He asked in the best trench French, and she asked with a charming little hesitation in her accent and a most bewitching interrogatory raise of her eyebrows, but neither of them could make anything of the answers they received. The replies were hidden in such a torrent of verbosity and gesticulation that they were left no wiser than before.

"I know what's the trouble," said Jimmie after the eighth or ninth native had left them in a maze of waving hands and shrugging shoulders.

"Oh, what is it? I'm so mortified about my French!"

"Why it's all your fault."

"My fault?" her eyebrow went up in a distracting arch, "why?"

"Why, these natives take a look at you and get so excited they can't talk sense. I don't blame them either."

"Well I like that! Am I as bad looking as that?"

"I didn't say you were bad looking. I said they looked at you and got excited."

"Well! That's just the same as saying I'm bad looking. Thank you, Mister Lieutenant James Westman for your kind opinion."

"Fishing!"

"What do you mean, 'fishing'?"

Jimmie saw his mistake and was afraid. He had not realized how much her good opinion meant to him, and now that it was in danger he was distinctly nervous.

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"Why, you know, Miss Louise, just what I mean. If you don't I'm going to tell you. I mean just this—say! you won't get made if I tell you?"

"Why I'm mad now—quite mad. You said I am so ugly that nobody can look at me without getting excited."

"No, I didn't either, and I'm going to tell you now whether you get mad or not. What I mean is that you are so pretty that when anyone looks at you he just naturally—just—"

"Just what?"

"Just naturally loses his head, that's what. That's just what I do every time I look at you. Now get mad, if you want to."

Silence.

"Are you mad?"

More silence.

"Are you?"

Her head was averted but as he bent to listen he thought he caught the words,

"Not very."

It was Jimmie's nature to be carried away by his enthusiasm when he was greatly interested in a subject and he was carried away now.

"And I'll tell you more and you can get mad if you want to, just as mad as you like. I know I've no right to say it, but I thinking it and I say you're the prettiest and sweetest and the nicest and the dearest girl in—in—" before Jimmie's memory flashed the picture of that other girl—dancing, tripping, airy, gliding, glowing Marjorie, golden Marjorie, sweet-voiced gentle Marjorie, and he hesitated in his speech. Was he true, he wondered. His conscience smote him a little. Was it right to make love to two girls? He faltered. "In France," he ended lamely.

Louise noted the falter in his voice. She did not know whether she was in love with this man or not. She had not tried to analyze her feelings, but she had thought that she was going to hear a proposal, and she was disappointed. This falter in his voice was too much of an anti-climax in his somewhat fiery speech, and while she did not understand, yet she was at a loss how to explain in any other than the ordinary way; clearly he had a sweetheart at home. Gently she disengaged herself from his grasp and slowly turned towards him.

"I—I—think I'd better go now, Mr. Westman." There was just the faintest trace of a catch in her voice.

"Louise! Oh Louise! Don't think that of me. I know what you are thinking of, but it's all a mistake, dear. Won't you listen to me?"

She hesitated, provoked that he had tried to make love to her while he had a sweetheart in America, yet unwilling, too, to break with him entirely until she was sure that there was no misunderstanding.

"Well Mr. Westman, what do you wish to say?"

"I say you're the sweetest girl in the world!

"In France, you mean?"

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"No, in the whole wide world."

"Are you sure? Don't you mean in France?"

"No! I'm sure, and I mean anywhere!"

"How about the girl back home?"

"There isn't any!"

She looked at him meditatively at first, then with a little touch of contempt in her glance. He saw it and began to realize that his situation was desperate. Like a flash of light the realization came upon him that he loved this girl and must not lose her. He **must** not.

"Then why did you stammer so just now?"

"I'll tell you and you'll understand everything. Please listen to me, won't you?"

"I'm listening now but i'm not hearing very much."

"Well, I can explain all about it as we walk back."

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. Westman, I'm not sure that I care to waste time over things that have to be 'explained.' I think you are strong enough to take care of yourself now, and I have an errand I want to do anyhow, so I'll leave you here and hurry along."

She left him in spite of his protests, and turned down a side street while Jimmie, loitering on the corner, watched her in the hope that she might relent and turn or look back. But he watched in vain.

Sadly he turned toward the hospital. There as nowhere else for him to go. He did not care to visit a club or Y.M.C.A. for he was too sore and hurt to mix in a crowd of soldiers. He wanted only to be alone and to think up something to say to her that would change her mind. Suddenly the Elder Brother's words recurred to him:

"Your introduction to spiritual things has come in an unusual way, but it is not a gift for you have earned it, and it will be your duty to work **ten times harder** from now on."

He saw now that he had wholly forgotten his promise and the great work, whatever that might be, that was contained in the magic word "duty." He had somehow carelessly come to look upon his wonderful experiences as upon a dream. He had started out to find the address given by the Elder Brother and had calmly let everything go, in order to make love to a girl! Oh, but such a pretty girl! Thus he justified himself. This was undoubtedly a tangle. He was in love with two girls, both beautiful and sweet and altogether lovely, but one on earth and one in—in—well, say in Paradise. He could marry only one. Would that offend the other? Would Louise believe him when he told her of his other love and would she be jealous or not? He thought, or at least he hoped,

that she cared for him, but such a story as his would be hard for her to believe.

Oh! the thought just struck him. The Elder Brother could straighten out this tangle providing there really were such a man. He did not know, himself, whether he believe his memory or not, and if **he** had any doubts, how could he expect Louise to believe? Was there an Elder Brother, or was his great adventure but another cloud of the stuff that dreams are made of? Stupid! There was proof—sure proof—if he could only find it—proof that would convince even Louise no matter how skeptical she might be. Hurrah! He would put his dream to the test and proof which the Elder Brother himself had suggested, and in doing so he would prove it to himself and to Louise at the same time.

Some French children playing in the street were astonished to see a lieutenant of "Les Amis" strolling slowly along the pavement break suddenly into a run as if his very life depended upon his speed.

Louise had not yet returned to the hospital when Jimmie forced himself to saunter leisurely in at the gate, but he determined to lose no opportunity and sat down in an easy chair to wait for her.

Louise came in, feeling repentant for her exhibition of tempter. After all, Jimmie was suffering from shell shock and such patients are not always fully responsible for their actions. Her vigorous walk by herself had done her good, and the brisk circulation which it had induced had made her more charitable by sweeping some of the cobwebs from her brain; and also it had brought the roses to her cheeks, though of course she was unaware of the fact.

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Jimmie sprang from his chair as she entered or at least he would have sprung if he could. As it was he got up as quickly as possible and came to meet her, and whether or not there are such things as auras and whether or not Louise would have recognized one if she had seen it, the fact remains that before Jimmie could speak a word she knew that every atom of his being was vibrant with apology and inquiry, reminding her of nothing so much as a big, playful, lovable puppy in an agony of endeavor to please. Could she refuse to speak to him for a few minutes? No, of course she would hear what he had to say, though he must hurry for she went on duty in half an hour.

And so Jimmie, who had made up his mind that the only way was to tell her exactly how matters stood, led her out into the little garden where a recreation ground had been made for the convalescent patients, and there poured into her ears the story of his adventures from the time he found himself walking along the meadow until he finally awoke in the hospital. She listened with interest, especially when he spoke of Marjorie.

"And so you see," he explained, "how very important it is that I should find that address, because if there is such a street and such a number and if there is a man named Campion living there, then it will prove the truth of all that I have told you and he will be able to help me out and convince you that the story is true."

"There is no need of that, Mr. Westman, because whether or not the things you have told me really happened does not affect your truthfulness at all. I believe every word you have said and I think it wonderful. How I should like to see some of those beautiful colors you speak of. And Marjorie, too; he must be a dear!"

Jimmie's heart throbbed violently at the joyful revelation that she accepted his story as true and consequently forgave him for his loyalty to Marjorie. It was evident that Louise did not believe in the actual truth of his account, but so intense and earnest had been his manner in narrating his experience that, though she considered the whole story the figment of a brain suffering from shell shock, she was firmly convinced that HE believed it. That was all she really cared about, for it explained his hesitation and accounted for his loving another girl as well as herself, a thing which she could in no wise have forgiven except for the fact that the other girl was merely a creature of the imagination and had not existence in reality.

"Louise! Say, Louise!"

"Well?"

"Gee! I'm glad we've had this talk. You know I've been afraid you were made at me."

"So I was. I thought you were trying to flirt with me while all the time you had a sweetheart back home."

"I don't blame you. But now that you know all about it, you've forgiven me, haven't you?"

Why, Mr. Westman, how absurd! There was nothing to forgive."

"But I believe when you thought I had a sweetheart at home you cared a little bit or else you wouldn't have got mad. Say! Louise!" he dwelt on the word, pronouncing it lingeringly. "Louise—"

"Well?"

"Don't you think maybe, after a while, after you know me a little better—"

"Well?"

"Don't you think—maybe—perhaps—you might come to care a little more?"

Silence. He took her hand as she turned her face away.

"Couldn't you?"

"Maybe—"

The next day Jimmie sought and obtains permissions for another walk and for Louise to accompany him, which he assured the doctor was a necessity on account of the dizzy spells which might seize him at any time. The doctor demurred at first and kindly offered to send an orderly with him or another convalescent soldier who would not be subject to "spells," but Jimmie's consternation was so evident that the doctor, being very human and a kindly enough man, gave the necessary permission and then disgusted Jimmie by showing a quite superfluous anxiety in the matter, through an alleged fear that the "spells" might be the result of heart disease.

Louise and Jimmie had studied the map of Paris in the meantime and had found that there actually was a Rue de la Ex, but this proved nothing, for he might have heard the name somewhere and the subjective mind with its wonderful memory might have brought that particular name out of all the rubbish with which it was loaded and have presented it to his shell shocked imagination. Jimmie knew, or thought he knew, a great deal about the subjective mind and carefully explained the matter to Louise as

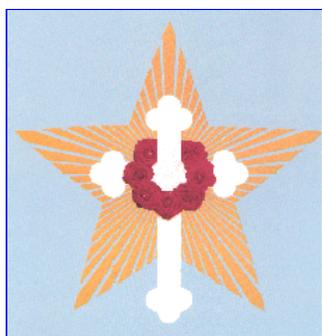
they walked along, but it is a question as to whether his somewhat technical language enlightened her to any great extent. Even if it did it must be confessed that her interest in the mysteries of the subjective mind was not particularly intense.

Before a certain house in the Rue de la Ex they halted. The house was there, but that proved nothing. The front door was in an arched passage way which led to an inner courtyard. They rang the bell. A rattling of the door announced that someone inside was in the act of opening it. The next few moments would decide the matter.

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