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Philosophic Encyclopedia

In the Land of the Living Dead

by Prentiss Tucker

Chapter IX

An Experience With Nature Spirits

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In a kind of waking dream passed the next few months of Jimmie's life, a life made very busy by the demands of his work and tintured by a curious feeling that something was soon to happen, a feeling of uneasiness, of waiting, of suspense. He wrote to Louise regularly and received answers which were apparently satisfactory, to judge by the number of times that he read and re-read each letter. In his "sleep life," which was becoming more and more distinct and real, he was developing rapidly.

Every night he slipped the cable and soared out into the great world which lies unseen about us, and every time he did so he was more deeply impressed with the wondrous exaltation which the "atmosphere" of that world produces.

Much of this, of course it is impossible to describe for the reason that it is not to be communicated by language, much less by the printed word. I can think of only one way in which my meaning can be made clear to those who read this little story. Did you ever have a very vivid dream in which you went through some most

delightful experience or adventure? Can you not remember, in a faint and very imperfect way, the wonderful "atmosphere" of that fairy country which you dreamed you visited? Can you not recall how, when you tried to describe your dream, your words were so very cold and colorless? Can you not remember that the great thing which made you so enthusiastic about that dream was not so much the adventure itself as it was the strange, wonderful, tingling glamour of the thing? Glamour is not the right word but, as I said, there is no word in our language to hint at, far less to describe, the strange, exhilarated feeling which one has in that beautiful country. It is a feeling which must be experienced to be realized. It can never be portrayed to one who has never felt it. A man born blind can listen to your words of description of the beauty of color and the splendor of the sunset, but to him your words mean nothing. You speak of a "riot of color" when you have in mind some wonderful exhibition of atmospheric coloring in the western sky as the sun sinks to rest.

The blind man knows what a riot is and he has an academic idea of what color is, but of the combination, which is so clear in your mind, he has and can have no conception whatever.

So, to those of us who are not able to visit those glorious regions, the description of them seems cold. And, what is more unfortunate, the actions which are based upon familiarity with those regions and their laws seem foolish.

It is but another verification of the Biblical statement that "the wisdom of God is foolishness to men." We are yet so steeped in selfishness, even those of us who most pride ourselves upon our unselfishness, that when we come face to face with real wisdom we are like the man in the Bible, "speechless."

The morning and evening exercises given to him by the Elder Brother Jimmie kept up faithfully, for he had now come to see the philosophy of them, and he felt ever more and more their tremendous effect. He had long ago quit smoking and meat eating. These departures of his were a never ending source of wonder to his comrades, who could not understand why any sane person should quit eating meat except, possibly, to cure rheumatism, while the giving up of tobacco could be accounted for by only one word, "fanaticism."

He liked to attend church, not only for the strong spiritual vibrations which were present in the church, but also to practice reading the colors in the various auras. The minister of the church to which he usually went thought that his sermons were the main attraction and took Jimmie's regular attendance as, in part, a compliment to himself. But Jimmie knew, as every esotericist knows, that on Sunday the vibrations all over the land are different and vastly better than on week days. Jimmie had in some of his excursions visited foreign lands and had watched their various religious rites, and he was in a position to compare the vibration there to the vibrations which were prevalent over his own country on a Sunday. The tremendous contrast impressed upon him the fact that the western world is on the eve of something "different."

As the time passed on in work and drill, in various social activities, and in his more and more absorbingly interesting esoteric development, the terrible Russian debacle began to feature more and more in the news of the day and in the thoughts and words of men. Something of it Jimmie was able to watch at times when he made excursions during his sleeping hours. But he was hampered greatly by the fact that he had not as yet learned how to leave his body consciously, and so he was not in the full

possession of choice as to where his wanderings would lead him. Generally if he made up his mind strongly before he went to sleep, he could determine the locality of his visit, but to do this required interest in it and as on the occasions when he had visited the country of the former Czar he had not been able to understand a single thing which he had heard, this interest was more or less mild when compared with the intense longing to spend his time on the battle line with his old comrades, now and then helping one of them across to the other side of death.

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The question which will occur to many at this time, a perfectly normal question, is this: Why did not Jimmie use his newly found power to visit Louise, since he was really in love with her and corresponded with her?

The reason was a twofold one. In the first place, Jimmie came of gentle people and his boyhood training had been such that it would have been impossible for him to have used any esoteric power to spy upon his sweetheart. The other reason, which would have operated had the first not been his guiding impulse, was the warning which Mr. Campion had strongly impressed upon him that the esoteric law will not permit the use of esoteric power for any motive of curiosity or selfishness.

When any one is developing the ability to see on the other planes and to travel in "foreign countries," he must have practice, and to that end he is allowed to watch the auras and the play of auric colors about strangers; he is allowed to travel and examine distant lands and to watch people and their lives but only to do so for the purpose of study and practice. Abuse of spiritual power brings its own peculiar and terrible punishment. But aside from

any dread of punishment it would have been utterly foreign and abhorrent to Jimmie's nature to have attempted to spy upon his sweetheart. The idea never occurred to him, for he was, above and beyond all else, a gentleman.

The one remaining way of honorably communicating with her by means of sending out a call on the higher planes he had promised not to do, since she was busy all the time and her sleep was taken when she could get it instead of at regular intervals. Had he called her she would have come, but the call might have been sounded just at a time when her attention was needed for some critical operation—it might, possibly, have cost a life. So Jimmie had promised, and being a gentleman, he loyally kept that promise. Therefore his only means of communication was by the same post upon which all the rest of American sweethearts had to depend.

But no such rule applied in the case of Marjorie. In that case he was at liberty to call when he got upon the other side, and in a very little while Marjorie would come dancing up, full of gaiety and happiness, and the two would embark upon a long "glide," sometimes half around the world.

It was Marjorie who introduced him to the nature spirits with whom she was a prime favorite, and Jimmie made the acquaintance of the elves and the brownies and even the fairies themselves. He learned that there are many more tribes of these strange creatures, some of whom avoid man as much as possible while some are actively hostile to him.

As a rule, those whom he met in his wanderings were gentle, timid folk, or gentle even if not timid. He grew to be very fond of the brownies in particular, whom he could always meet in out of the way forest countries. He loved to talk and play with them, and

they grew to love him too, for they are of a rather affectionate nature but distrustful of men, since the vibrations of the average man are very coarse and unpleasant to a being of sensitive nature.

The fairies were harder to know, but with the help of Marjorie he made many friends among them, who used to visit him sometimes when he was out alone in the woods.

This phase of his extraphysical life was full of adventure and was like one long fairy story, but I am mentioning it now for a single purpose and that is to show what a tremendous dynamo of energy is the human will.

Jimmie had few holidays, but once in a while he was able to get away from the camp and plunge into the woods, which he could reach after a very short railway journey. He liked to go out into the forest for the reason that it was here the little people were to be found, and after they discovered the fact that he was harmless to them they used to flock around him whenever they caught him wandering alone, and together they had a merry time.

It was on one of these trips that he had not gone far into the woods when he was aware of something wrong with the vibrations in the ether. He heard no one calling, but somehow he knew that there was trouble at hand, and he about to find it. It was only a few minutes after first sensing the etheric disturbance that he saw in a little glade one of his brownie friends trying to defend himself against the attacks of five most loathsome beings. I shall not attempt to describe them beyond saying that they were apparently semihuman, semi-animal. Evidently they were not of the harmless type of nature spirits, for the little brownie was having a hard time of it. He was not fighting with any weapon but would make motions at the creatures, and as he did so they would shrink back,

much as though he had struck them. At once, however, they would recover and press in on him again, and Jimmie knew, though this was his first experience of the sort, that he was witnessing a combat on the etheric plane.

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As he came up the brownie tried to break through the circle, but he was evidently weakened in some way, and three of the creatures blocked him and drove him back.

They did not touch the brownie nor did the brownie touch them, yet in some way or other the contact was a most practical one since Jimmie could tell by his little friend's movements that he was much distressed and that the odds were too great for him.

There was not the slightest hesitation in Jimmie's action. Never before had he seen such a thing as a fight upon this plane of being, but he did know that there was such a thing as a contest between different sets of forces. Evidently it was some such thing which he was witnessing now and he knew why the little brownie was getting the worst of it.

On the other plane a contest is a contest, not of blows or of what would correspond to physical force, but of the will. It is not entirely of the will either. For instance, a number of evilly inclined spirits may be tormenting another, yet when one of the "Masters" happens by and puts a stop to the affair, he does not do so by physical force nor yet by a supreme exercise of a stronger will, though of course he has stronger will. His power to stop the cruelty is the result of a stronger will combined with the fact that his higher position in the scale of being has given him an aura whose vibrations are so strong that a being whose vibrations are less good or positively evil, simply cannot endure the higher

vibratory rate of the Master's presence. This is an extreme instance, of course, but it holds good on all planes of nature where the higher vibrations can be felt, and it would act with full power on the physical plane except for the fact that the higher vibrations here are so dulled by the flesh that they lose their force and can only act slowly. It reminds one strongly of a line in a hymn which says, "Where Thou are present, evil cannot be," and the statement holds true in all cases where good is brought into contact with evil, the effect varying with the degree of difference between the intensity of the good and the intensity of the evil.

Now the brownies are a gentle, likable, little race, but they are nature spirits, and while innocent and sensitive to a great degree, their innocence is not the result of a positive and long drawn out fight against temptation, but is more like the innocence of childhood, and therefore is not a source of power. They are remarkably like little children in many ways, with a child's affection and a child's intuitive likes and dislikes but with a good deal of a child's helplessness against aggression.

So this little brownie, who was so bravely fighting against terrible odds, did not have the strength which would have been his had he been the product of a long evolution of physical plane suffering and training. He was like a little, helpless child, striking bravely but futilely against a pack of wolves who are restrained only because they think him to be stronger than he is.

Such was the state of affairs when Jimmie came upon the scene. A sharp exclamation burst from him and in a few strides he stood by the brownie and faced the loathsome elementals who were attacking him. Jimmie merely looked at them, pointed, said "Go", and used his imagination and will to sweep them together and disintegrate them. They leered horribly at him and mouthed and

gibbered, but the human will, the result of long evolution, was too strong for them and they simply faded from sight like a vanishing picture on the screen.

The brownie had fallen in a heap when Jimmie took the fight off his hands but recuperative power on the etheric plane is rapid, and the elementals had hardly disappeared when he sprang up and with one bound threw himself in Jimmie's arms and clung to him, sobbing incoherently for all the world like a child; and since his height was only about eighteen inches, it is not to be wondered at that Jimmie had the same feeling which one would have after rescuing a child from a vicious dog.

This was the first time that a brownie had ever touched him, for they are a shy little people. But now that his friendship was proved, this one brownie, at any rate, clung to him and caressed his cheek and stroked his hair and kept repeating:

"Jimmie, my friend; Jimmie, my friend."

They walked on for a few minutes, and since the brownie weighed nothing, being an etheric entity, Jimmie simply held him as he would have held a child and tried to soothe him gently and help him recover from his fright. Thus they were situated when a whole troop of the little people came dancing out of the denser forest and spied them.

Chapter X

A Crisis in Love

When the band of brownies spied the most unheard of sight which greeted them as they swept out of the cover of the woods and came face to face with Jimmie holding his little brownie friend in his arms, they showed signs of greatest excitement.

Very naturally and just as human beings might do, they jumped to the conclusion that at least one brownie had turned traitor to his race and kindred. They surrounded Jimmie at a respectful distance and began to shout to his little companion in their own language, which Jimmie recognized since it was a sort of universal language, but still he could not tell what they were saying.

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His little friend understood, however, and showed the most unmistakable tokens of distress. Finally, the accusations becoming too harsh for his endurance, he leaped out of Jimmie's arms and ran straight for the brownie who seemed to be the leader of the band. He then began an explanation of the occurrence. Jimmie could follow him quite well although he talked faster than any Frenchman he had ever heard. The little fellow's powers of gesticulation were wonderful.

Acted out before him and accompanied by the most rapid verbal performance to which he had ever listened, Jimmie saw the whole adventure. The little brownie would have made an incomparable actor could he have been enticed upon a stage and given a more material body. The surprise by the horrible elementals; the desperate seeking for some way to escape; the tremendous fight and the awful weariness which was fast giving way to the certainty of death; the mouthings and grimaces of the hostile circle around him, and the despair which overcame him when each attempt at escape was blocked; then the tremendous relief when suddenly this great giant of a human being with that terrible human will power stood at his side and took his part in the unequal struggle.

"You see," the Brownie shrieked at last, "It is all right. He is my friend. You see!"

Here his enthusiasm overcame him, and with one tremendous leap he landed squarely on Jimmie's shoulder and began to jump from one shoulder to the other, every now and then giving Jimmie's head a friendly kick as he passed over it. This, since he was an etheric entity, did not give Jimmie any inconvenience and seemed to amuse the crowd of brownies immensely.

They crowded in a little closer, and Jimmie was aware of the change in their attitude by the friendliness of their glances, the frequent smiles with which they greeted him, and the bantering manner in which they spoke to his active little friend.

As a general thing the vibrations of the human race are offensive to the little people for the reason that most human beings, on account of their habitual line of thinking and acting, have built into their etheric bodies most undesirable etheric matter.

To a great extent this also holds true of their desire bodies, and as the brownies are on the borderland between the two kingdoms, they are affected very adversely thereby.

Jimmie did not know exactly what to do so he did the most natural thing possible, he sat down on a log and stretched his feet out in front of him. One of the bolder of the brownies after several feints, took a running start and jumped over his feet, giving one of them a little touch with his foot as he passed over. Finding that he was still unhurt he jumped again, this time landing on Jimmie's foot and immediately jumping away again.

Meantime a number of them had come up beyond reach of his arms and were discussing him in their queer little high-pitched voices, while he felt many touches on his back and little tweaks at his belt and blouse. This was entirely possible even though the little folk were not on the physical plane. The seeming incongruity

did not occur to Jimmie until some time afterward, for when we see that a thing is really true we are very prone to accept the fact without question, never stopping to consider that according to all theory and reason the fact ought to be a fancy only.

"Say, Buster," Jimmie spoke to the little brownie whom he had saved from the elementals, "What's the matter with your friends? They seem to be afraid of me. Tell them I won't hurt them."

"Oh, they're foolish! They're afraid. You won't hurt. You're a friend."

He began an impassioned harangue in his own language with the result that three brownies came and sat on Jimmie's leather leggings, while some others came within reach of his arm but stood as though ready to jump at a moment's notice.

Jimmie sat perfectly still, not moving a muscle except that he kept talking to "Buster", whose name he asked in vain as the little fellow seemed to be proud of the name Jimmie himself had carelessly bestowed, and to every inquiry returned the statement that "Buster" was his name and he knew no other.

Gradually the talk and Buster's assurances had their effect, and the rest of the brownies began to lose their fear of the big human being who had saved their comrade from so awful a fate. They drew nearer and showed more interest in the conversation, and Jimmie took advantage of the fact to ask Buster what would have happened to him had the elementals won the fight. He was uncertain whether death was a possibility to any being who had no physical body, but the great relief and gratitude which Buster had evinced made it clear that an adverse outcome of the combat would at least have been highly disagreeable to the brownie.

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But Buster hated to think of what would have happened. He did not, apparently, like to use his imagination. Like a child intent on play he was impatient of any attempt to make him think seriously, and only cared for his play and the particular sport upon which he happened to be engaged. Irresponsibility seemed to be the keynote of his make-up, and concentration upon any particular thing, unless he happened to be interested in it, was irksome to him. Jimmie finally gave up the attempt and turned his attention to making friends with the rest of the band.

In this he was successful for the brownies soon lost all their fear of him and came within reach of his arms without watching him to forestall any possible hostile movement.

"Buster," said Jimmie at length, "tell me why your people were afraid of me. What harm can I do them?"

"You see," squeaked Buster, "your will power. It is so strong. That is why. They did not know as I know."

It took a great many questions to elicit the reason for the brownie's shyness, but Buster, with the help of others who took a hand in the conversation, finally enlightened Jimmie as to the cause of the disinclination which his people have towards association with mortals.

It seems that not only are the human vibrations usually very disagreeable to the brownies, but the human will power is so strong that when it is intelligently directed, they are often unable to resist it. This makes them afraid of the neighborhood of men, for some human beings are gifted with a slight clairvoyance and it frequently happens that the clairvoyant ones are not the most

advanced members of the race. Thus a low grade mortal with a little clairvoyant power can make himself very disagreeable to the brownies.

Also it developed that to touch a human being gives that being in some mysterious way an added power of being disagreeable, should he so choose. From this Jimmie could see why the brownies were so horrified when they first saw Buster riding in his arms and on such friendly terms with him.

By this time all reserve was thrown to the winds and the whole brownie band were reveling in their acquaintance with a man. They climbed all over him, they stood on his head and jumped over his feet, and it was with considerable difficulty that Jimmie could get one to stop in his play and answer any questions. It was as though their intelligence made them somewhat like a very young child—able to talk and to understand simple language but wholly incapable of any mental effort beyond that of a six or seven year old. But like children, their love and trust, once given, were without reserve.

So Jimmie spent a pleasant afternoon with his little friends until a near approach of some berry pickers alarmed them, and they scampered off into the forest after making him promise another visit. He had come to the conclusion that any real information to be obtained about them must be derived from some other source than themselves. It was the first time that he had been brought into contact with nature spirits or elementals, and he resolved to find out more about them since it was evident that in meeting them he had glanced into another one of the mansions of our Father's House, which is so full of wonders.

The brownies having gone, he started for home, walking slowly and reviewing in his mind the things he would put in his next letter to Louise and thinking a little, too, of how happy he would be when she should come home again and when the war should be over and peace declared. He would have to work hard to make up for lost time and earn the money for the little home which he wanted so much. And the great work must not be forgotten either, for he would have to plan some way to reach the great mass of people who are so hungry for every little crumb of spiritual knowledge, and who are often fed with pebbles instead of crumbs. After all, the world was a fine place to live in for one who was willing to work, and he began to feel the thrill of joy which is the reward of every earnest worker, and from which one may imagine the bliss which is the part of the great Brothers of the Light, who spend their energy to serve mankind and who renounce the rest and peace of heaven itself in order to serve.

He walked back to the train in a sort of dream, so fascinated was he in the hopes and plans which he had made and the castles in the air which he had built. And through it all there ran that dangerous thread of vanity, which so often insinuates itself in the place of other and grosser forms of evil which we may have managed to throw out. He was not conscious that it was vanity, but had he stopped to analyze, he would have known that his dreams were all based on what **he** would do and on the service which **he** would perform, and there was lacking that one great mark of the devoted worker, namely, a thankfulness to the Master for giving him **opportunity to serve.**

It is the subtle difference between the laudable joy of service and the unjustifiable pride of service which often makes our deposits in the heavenly treasure house of humble silver instead of kingly gold.

But Jimmie was unconscious of this sinister thread which ran through the warp and woof of his dreams. He dwelt on the happiness which he hoped would be his and, too, on the possibility that he might be able to get back to France before the "show" was over, for he coveted one of the valor medals and meant to get one if he had to capture a whole German army single-handed. Here he could not help smiling at himself for his imagination was presenting him with pictures of himself driving ahead of him a whole company of "Fritzies," and with the smile he came back to earth again.

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It was a happy and enthusiastic Jimmie who entered his quarters that evening, singing a song which had been one of the trench favorites and literally bubbling over with hope and irresponsibility. And there upon his table lay a letter from France, from Louise.

He snatched it quickly and felt a slight wonder that it was so thin, but the wonder was only a semi-conscious one as he tore the envelope open in his eagerness to know what she had to say.

His face changed as he read the first few lines, and the letter fluttered in his hand. He said nothing but presently went and leaned against the wall. In a little while he came back and picked up the letter from the floor and read it again. It was cruelly short.

"Dear Mr. Westman," it ran, "I am about to sail for home on the next convenient steamer and write to tell you not to send any more letters to France for me. On thinking it over I am convinced that our engagement was not the result of a sufficiently long acquaintance, so I release you and think that it would be better to let the matter end there. I shall not expect any more letters from

you, and I trust that you will regard my wishes in the matter and forget that I ever entered your life. With best wishes for your future happiness, etc."

Jimmie felt stunned. The other letters he had had from Louise were generally short, for she was worked almost to death and he knew it and made allowance for it, but in those short letters, almost notes, she had never before given expression to a word of regret for the engagement into which they had entered. All sorts of reasons flashed through his mind only to be rejected as unworthy of himself or Louise.

Perhaps she had met some one whom she loved better. That was a possibility, he admitted to himself, but it would not explain the curtness and abruptness of the letter. Perhaps she had—Oh! He could not believe that she really wrote what was in her mind. Yet, if she did not write what was in her mind, why should she write at all? She was not compelled to write. There was no law which forced her to write. She surely could not be angry for she knew very well that he had been compelled to obey his orders and that he had not left France willingly. This was war time, orders were orders, and Louise knew that as well as he, for she had been up near the front where men were dying every day on account of these same "orders."

The more he thought the matter over the more he found that his love for Louise was a very deep and strong feeling. Well could he remember the kindly, gentle nursing, the little things she had done for him when he was helpless, how she had gone without some of the sleep she needed so badly in order to read to him when the shell shock nervousness came over him. Once when he had lain there, in no great pain it is true, yet almost screaming from the horror of those jagged nerves, she had sat by him with her hand

on his forehead, soothing him with little verses of poetry, snatches of hymns, anything that she could remember, to steady his mind and take his thoughts away from that strange, peculiar condition which is the result of shell shock and which is always different in each case.

And then, after he was well—oh shucks! letter of no letter, he would not believe what she had written until she had confirmed it with her own spoken words. He would find her and learn from her own lips.

It was characteristic of Jimmie that in all the excuses and reasons and explanations which he had threshed over in his mind, never once had he thought of Louise discarding him for any financial reasons. It was as fine and noble a tribute as he could have laid at the feet of this golden girl of his, that all the reasons which he could imagine for her action took the form of a fear that in some way he had not measured up to the high standard which she had set for him, or that he had unwittingly offended her in some way, but never once did he dream of a low or base, mercenary motive on her part. Could she have known this, it would surely have melted her heart towards him, but Jimmie himself, was as unconscious of the matter as she was; to ascribe an unworthy motive to her letter simply had never occurred to him.

He knew the little town where her home was. He figured that on account of the slowness of the postal service from France, she had probably reached this country some time ahead of her letter, and the chances were that she was even now at home. The thought set him tingling, and he made up his mind that he simply must get a week's furlough and follow the matter to the end.

But furloughs are not easy to get in time of war. He knew it would take at least a day to reach her home and a day to get back, and he wanted a day there. If connections were bad, it might well take longer, so he decided to ask for a week.

That night as he fell asleep he determined to sound a call for Marjorie, and sure enough, when he awoke in the now familiar conditions of the Desire World, he became conscious that Marjorie was coming. So he was not surprised at all when the young lady herself, laughing and evidently in the best of spirits, stood before him.

Jimmie at once began to tell the story of his woes in the hope that Marjorie would sympathize with him and offer to help him, but he had reckoned without his hostess for all she did was to laugh at him. If those of us who regard the other world as a place of funereal gloom and despair and hopelessness could have looked on at that little scene, how much of the dread of death would we have lost.

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Marjorie was dead. This girl had been torn from her family by that ruthless King of Terrors, and according to all the generally accepted beliefs she should have been anything but what she really was—happy, joyous with the pure joy of living—happy because of the conditions in which she lived, freed from all the cramping necessities of physical life, pain, weariness, the ten thousand little things which never rise above the threshold of consciousness but which in their aggregate amount to a continuous discomfort; and above all, happy because not separated from her family, although they were separated from her.

This apparently anomalous condition arose from the fact that every night she could meet them on the desire plane, talk to them, and "visit" with them; although they were unable to carry back the memory of these meetings, she was under so such limitation. So it was really true that all the separation was on their side, not on hers. Hence there is nothing to be wondered at in her happiness, for why should she not be happy?

But Jimmie thought she was entirely too happy. He, himself, was miserable or thought he was, and he needed sympathy. Also, though he had not admitted it to himself, he hoped that Marjorie would tell him something about Louise and why she had acted so. He felt that Marjorie must know. It would not be right to ask, but perhaps she would volunteer a few words of comfort. This thought of Jimmie's did not escape Marjorie for a moment, and it was what she was laughing at. Jimmie had come to have an idea that he was of considerable importance, and there was a lesson the subject due him.

Chapter XI

Light Again

Jimmie was looking for sympathy. He was really feeling that he had been rather badly used, and he had sounded a call for Marjorie with a hazy idea that perhaps she could tell him why Louise had acted in such an extraordinary manner. In the finer realms, knowledge does not always have to be acquired in the same way that we obtain it in the physical world, but the advanced soul can very often know things by merely turning his attention to them.

Jimmie was well aware of this fact, but was doubly barred from making use of it, for in the first place he was not far enough

advanced to gain much information in this way, and also in this particular instance it would have been unfair to attempt to learn why Louise had done as she had except by the method of calling on her in person.

But there remained a slight possibility that Marjorie knew something about the matter and might be willing to give him a few hints, and also he thought that she would sympathize with him and thus encourage him even if she did not give him any real information.

But Marjorie, though she had come at his call for help, had not come in the way he had expected. He knew that Marjorie could sense from the vibrations that surrounded him that he was in deep trouble and he had expected that she would come up all sympathy and interest and ready to proffer her help, so it was no wonder that he should have been somewhat shocked to find her so full of life and happiness and the sheer, pure joy of living. Sympathy was apparently far from her mind just at the time.

"Oh, Jimmie, I'm so glad you called me. I was wondering whether you would come over soon. I have so much to tell you; just the most 'be-you-tiful' things that you ever dreamed of!"

Jimmie looked at her, contemplatively, but was silent.

"They've given me a promotion, Jimmie, isn't that fine? Now I can do more work and be of some real use. They've given me a little class to teach, some of the little children who have just passed over, and they're such dear little things! They were so frightened and bewildered, but I've been showing them that there's nothing to fear and nothing around them but love, and it's so beautiful to see them come out of their shells of terror and just

blossom out as the little flowers do when the sun shines on them. I'm so happy I can't stay still."

What an object lesson it would have been to some of the sorrowing of earth life could they have seen that radiant girl with the love and happiness of that plane on which she was living, and transfigured with the joy of the realm into which she was leading those poor little mites who had been driven out of their bodies by the harshness of conditions on the physical plane. Could the relatives of those children have seen her, they would have given their sorrow and sympathy, not to the ones who had "died," but to those who had been left to face the long struggle and hard experiences of earth.

Jimmie tried to meet her mood and succeeded in congratulating her on the congenial work which had been assigned to her, but the dominant thought in his mind would not be banished so easily and he blurted out:

"I'm in trouble, Marjorie."

Instantly Marjorie's face grew grave and Jimmie continued:

"Have you seen Louise lately?"

"No, Jimmie, I have not. I've been so very busy, and then you know I don't go down to the earth plane. The only time I see any of my earth friends is when they come over here in sleep, and they often fail to come. I'm sure there's nothing serious troubling you. You know that you and Louise are both on the earth plane, and you can go and see her if you want to. It's fortunate you asked me the question because I will just forget it; but suppose you had asked the Elder Brother a question of mere curiosity, what would he have thought!"

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Her face had cleared and she was now laughing at him again, but she had given him quite a shock.

"Marjorie, I envy those little children. Sometime I want to come over and see your little class if I may. Now I am going back and I will take your advice, for you have helped me more than you know, perhaps, and more than I expected. You are a dear, true friend, Marjorie."

Back in his physical body Jimmie thought over her words and realized more and more how he had let his selfishness mislead him. "Curiosity!" A "question of mere curiosity," it certainly was. The very thing he had known well he must not do, he had done. And she had not rebuked him nor found fault with him, but had just led him so gently and so kindly to see his error. He made up his mind that never again would he make such a mistake and never again would he forget the great watchword of "Service."

"Mother! I can see it! O Mother, Mother! I can see it!"

"Can you! Oh, darling, are you sure? Don't strain your eyes. Remember what the doctor said. Better let me put the bandage back."

"No, no. I can't bear that awful bandage any more. I can see, I tell you. I saw that lone pine over on the ridge almost as well as I ever saw it. Don't put the bandage back. I'll keep my eyes shut and that will do as well. I promise I will. Really and truly I will. And I'm going out for a little walk all by myself. I promise you I won't look much and I'll keep my eyes almost closed."

"You willful girl! Don't go and spoil everything now. Better let me put the bandage back and lie down for a while.

"Remember I'm a nurse, Mother, and I know a lot. I won't strain my eyes even the least little bit, but I must get out for a little walk or I think I'll die. Please, Mother! I know the way blindfolded even, so I won't need to look but just a little."

"Where do you want to go?"

"Just over to the old pine on the ridge and then I'll come right back. I know the way in the dark, and I think if I just walk over there all by myself and touch the old tree, it will almost make me well again."

"Well, all right, but don't be gone long or I'll come after you, and don't try to open your eyes. They're too weak yet."

The sun was shining almost directly down upon a little cottage where this conversation took place, filling the gently rolling country side with its summer glory, flecking the ground between the trees with quivering splotches of gold, and bringing into sharp relief the houses of the village beyond and the ridges of the woods nearby, and showing in its lonely grandeur the great tree which reared its head far above its fellows on a low elevation some few hundred yards behind the house.

It was towards this tree that a girl soon took her way, emerging from the back door of the house, and wearing on her head an old-fashioned sun bonnet which effectually shaded her face from the brilliant light around her. She walked slowly as though a little uncertain of the path and with one hand partly outstretched in the manner of one who walks by night.

There was a distinct path towards the big tree for it was the short cut to the village and always used by those who preferred to walk through the cool of the woods instead of by the slightly longer wagon road.

The girl walked along it as though it were familiar to her, as indeed it should be, for she had been born and brought up in that little cottage where her mother had just gone back to the homely task of washing dishes after sundry long and anxious looks at the retreating figure.

There was no danger to the venturesome traveler, she knew, for there in the great State of New York there were no invading armies and no murderous artillery or bombs. No danger threatened that slender figure on the path, either from man or beast, and yet the mother sought the doorway every now and then to cast another loving look at the sunbonnet bobbing its leisurely way towards the goal of the great tree on the ridge. No, there was no danger, for war was far from this peaceful land.

Now the sunbonnet was near the tree and soon it would be starting on its return journey. But stop! The mother took off her glasses and polished them on her apron. Some one else was on the path. Some one else wearing a uniform and looking like a soldier. Surely it could not be. Soldiers sometimes passed through the village but not often, and the village boys who could go had all gone to the war. Strangers never came along this path. Well! The soldier man had stopped the sunbonnet and was talking to it, asking the way, doubtless. How long it took to ask the way! Sunbonnet, Sunbonnet! what is the matter? Don't you know better than to stop and talk to strange soldier men? The soldier man has caught Sunbonnet in his arms and is embracing her! Oh, this is awful! The mother hastened out of the back door and along the

path. Her suspense did not last long for she soon met Sunbonnet walking back, and with her, his arm about her, walked a tall officer who was calling her "Louise" and other things, just as though Sunbonnet had known him well.

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That afternoon as they all sat on the porch, everything was made clear. Jimmie had started to ride to the house after being directed as to the way, but something had changed his mind and he had walked.

"And do you know, I was about to take the long way by the road when a little friend of mine whom I know as 'Buster' called to me from the woods and showed me the path."

"Buster, Buster," said Louise thoughtfully, "I don't remember any boy around here who is called that."

"No. That's another story which I'll tell you some day, but Buster thought he owed me a good turn and right well he paid his debt."

Louise too had her story to tell. There had been a great need, and she had been sent to a station up near the front where a temporary hospital was located and where the nurses and surgeons were working to the limit of endurance. One night an enemy plane had dropped a number of bombs on the spot, and one of them had fallen near Louise as she was trying to help her wounded charge. A great flash and roar, a violent blow on the head, and she had known nothing more until she awakened in a hospital in Paris to find her eyes tightly bandaged and their sight very nearly gone.

Her first thought was for Jimmie, and she determined that never would she burden him with a sightless and disfigured wife—hence the letter which in the despair of her heart she had had written in defiance of the rules, and which another nurse had posted for her.

The disfigurement had yielded to skillful treatment, but the eyesight grew worse, and she was sent home, a woebegone little piece of flotsam cast by the great storm of war upon a peaceful shore.

But in the last day or two she had been able to discern a little light, and that morning, having quietly removed the bandage, she had found that, though blurred and distorted, her sight was coming back.

"And, Oh! God is good to me, Jimmie. He has given me back my sight, and He has given me something worth so much more even than that."

"What?"

"How much would you like to know?"

Well, well! This is not a story of love but a story of the Land of the Living Dead. And yet how can they be separated? For all love is of God whose name is Love, and to those who do His will there is naught in all the universe, either in this world or the next, but Love. There are sacrifice and service, but they are just the evidences of Love, showing itself in action. In the Land of the Living Dead there is Love too, and no account of that Land can be true which does not tell of the Love which throbs and pulsates through all its beautiful worlds. Even down in those dark realms of which I have not spoken there is a dim light which filters through, and the very pain which is felt there is but the preparation for the

Love which one day will fill all the universe, when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

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