

## CHAPTER VI

## SPIRIT-LIFE

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## Wandering Spirits

*223. Is the soul reincarnated immediately after its separation from the body?*

"Sometimes immediately, but more often after intervals of longer or shorter duration. In the higher worlds, reincarnation is almost always immediate. Corporeal matter in those worlds being less gross than in the worlds of lower advancement, a spirit, while incarnated in them, retains the use of nearly all his spirit-faculties, his normal condition being that of your somnambulists in their lucid state."

*224. What becomes of the soul in the intervals between successive incarnations?*

"It becomes an errant or wandering spirit, aspiring after a new destiny. Its state is one of waiting and expectancy."

*- How long may these intervals last?*

"From a few hours to thousands of ages. Strictly speaking, there are no fixed limits to the period of erraticity or wandering, which may be prolonged for a very considerable time, but which, however, is never perpetual. A spirit is always enabled, sooner or later, to commence a new existence which serves to effect the purification of its preceding existences."

*-Does the duration of the state of erraticity depend on the will of the spirit, or may it be imposed as an expiation?*

"It is a consequence of the spirit's free-will. Spirits act with full discernment; but, in some cases, the prolongation of this state

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is a punishment inflicted by God, while in others, it has been granted to them at their own request, to enable them to pursue studies which they can prosecute more effectually in the disincarnate state."

*225. Is erraticity necessarily a sign of inferiority on the part of spirits.'*

"No, for there are errant spirits of every degree. Incarnation is a transitional state, as we have already told you. In their normal state, spirits are disengaged from matter."

*226. Would it be correct to say that all spirits who are not incarnated are errant?*

"Yes, as regards those who are to be reincarnated; but the pure spirits who have attained to perfection are not errant; their state is definitive."

**In virtue of their special qualities, spirits are of different orders or degrees of advancement, through which they pass successively as they become purified. As regards their state, they may be-1. Incarnated, that is to say, united to a material body; 2. Errant or wandering, that is to say disengaged from the material body and awaiting a new incarnation for purposes of Improvement; 3. Pure 'pints, that is to say, perfected, and having no further need of incarnation.**

*227. In what way do wandering spirits obtain instruction? It can hardly be in the same way as men.*

"They study their past, and seek out the means of raising them-selves to a higher degree. Possessed of vision, they observe all that is going on in the regions through which they pass. They listen to the discourse of enlightened men, and to the counsels of spirits more advanced than themselves, and they thus acquire new ideas."

*228. Do spirits retain any human passion?*

"Elevated spirits, on quitting their bodily envelope, leave behind them the evil passions of humanity, and retain only the love of goodness. But inferior spirits retain their earthly imperfections. Were it not for this retention, they would be of the highest order."

*229. How is it that spirits, on quitting the earth, do not leave behind them all their evil passions, since they are then able to perceive the disastrous consequences of those passions?*

"You have among you persons who are, for instance, excessively jealous; do you imagine that they lose this defect at once on quitting your world ? There remains with spirits, after their departure from the earthly life, and especially with those who have had

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strongly marked passions, a sort of atmosphere by which they are enveloped, and which keeps up all their former evil qualities; for spirits are not entirely freed from the influence of materiality. It is only occasionally that they obtain glimpses of the truth, showing them, as it were, the true path which they ought to follow."

*230. Do spirits progress in the state of erraticity?*

"They may make a great advance in that state, in proportion to their efforts and desires after improvement, but it is in the corporeal life that they put in practice the new ideas they have thus acquired."

*231. Are wandering spirits happy or unhappy?*

"More or less so according to their deserts. They suffer from the passions of which they have retained the principle, or they are happy in proportion as they are more or less dematerialised. In the state of erraticity, a spirit perceives what he needs in order to become happier, and he is thus stimulated to seek out the means of attaining what he lacks. But he is not always permitted to reincarnate himself when he desires to do so, and the prolongation of erraticity then becomes a punishment."

*232. Can spirits in the state of erraticity enter all the other worlds?*

"That depends on their degree of advancement. When a spirit has quitted the body, he is not necessarily disengaged entirely from matter, and he still belongs to the world in which he has lived, or to a world of the same degree, unless he has raised himself during his earthly life to a world of higher degree; and this progressive elevation should be the constant aim of every spirit, for without it he would never attain to perfection. A spirit, however, may enter worlds of higher degree; but, in that case, he finds himself to be a stranger in them. He can only obtain, as it were, a glimpse of them; but such glimpses often serve to quicken his desire to improve and to advance, that he may become worthy of the felicity which is enjoyed in them, and may thus be enabled to inhabit them in course of time."

*233. Do spirits who are already purified ever come into worlds of lower degree?*

"They come into them very frequently in order to help them forward. Unless they did so, those worlds would be left to themselves, without guides to direct them."

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### Transitional Worlds

*234. Are there, as has been stated, worlds which serve as stations and resting-places for errant spirits?*

"Yes; there are worlds which are specially adapted for the reception of wandering beings, worlds which they may temporally inhabit; a sort of camping-ground in which they may bivouac for a time, and repose after a too lengthened erraticity-a state which is always somewhat wearisome. Those worlds constitute intermediary stations between the worlds of other orders, and are graduated according to the nature of the spirits who are to come into them, and who will find in them the conditions of a rest more or less enjoyable."

*- Can the spirits who occupy these worlds quit them at pleasure?*

"Yes, they can leave them for any other region to which they may have to go. They are like birds of passage alighting on an island in order to rest and recover strength for reaching their destination."

*235. Do spirits progress during their sojourns in the transitional worlds?*

"Certainly; those who thus come together do so with a view to their instruction, and in order more readily to obtain permission to enter a higher region, and thus to advance their progress towards the perfection which is their aim."

*236. Are the transitional worlds of a special nature, and destined to be for ever the sojourn of wandering spirits.'*

"No; their position in the hierarchy of worlds is only temporary."

*- Are they, at the same time, inhabited by corporeal beings?*

"No; their surface is sterile. Those who inhabit them have no corporeal wants."

*- Is this sterility permanent, and does it result from anything special in their nature ?*

"No; their sterility is only transitional."

*- Such worlds are, then, void of everything like the beauties of nature?*

"The inexhaustible richness of creation is manifested by beauties of immensity that are no less admirable than the terrestrial harmonies which you call the beauties of nature."

*- Since the state of those 'worlds is only transitory, will the state of our earth, at some future time, be of that character?*

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"Such has already been its state."

- *At what epoch?*

"During its formation."

Nothing in nature is useless everything has its purpose, its destination There is no void every portion of immensity is inhabited. Life is everywhere. Thus, during the long series of ages which preceded man's appearance upon the earth, during the vast periods of transition attested by the superposition of the geologic strata, before even the curliest formation of organised beings, upon that formless mass, in that arid chaos in which the elements existed in a state of fusion, there was no absence of life. Beings who had neither human wants nor human sensations found therein a welcome refuge. The will of God had ordained that the earth, even in that embryonic state, should be useful. Who, then, would Venture to say that, of the innumerable orbs which circulate in immensity, one only, and one of the smallest of them all, lost in the crowd, has the exclusive privilege of being inhabited? What, in that case, would be the use of the others? Would God have created them merely to regale our eyes? Such a supposition, of which the absurdity is incompatible with the wisdom that appears in all His works. becomes still more evidently inadmissible when we reflect on the myriads of heavenly bodies which we are unable to perceive. On the other hand, no one can deny the grandeur and sublimity of the idea that worlds in course of formation, and which are still unfitted for the habitation of material life, are, nevertheless, peopled with living beings appropriate to its condition-an idea which may possibly contain the solution of more than one problem as yet obscure.

### Perceptions, Sensations, and Suffering of Spirits

*237. Does the soul, when it has returned into the world of spirits, still possess the perceptions it possessed in the earthly life?*

"Yes; and others which it did not possess in that life, because its body acted as a veil which obscured them. Intelligence is an attribute of spirit; but it is manifested more freely when not hindered by the trammels of flesh."

*238. Are the perceptions and knowledge of In a word, do they know everything?*

"The nearer they approach to perfection, the more they know Spirits of the higher orders possess a wide range of knowledge; those of the lower orders are more or less ignorant in regard to everything."

*239. Do spirits comprehend tile first principle of things?*

"That depends on their degree of elevation and of purity inferior spirits know no more than men."

*240. Do spirits perceive duration as we do?*

"No; and this is why you do not always understand us when you seek to fix dates and epochs."

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**The life of spirits is exterior to the idea of time as perceived by us. The idea of duration may be said to be annihilated for them ages, which seem so long to us, appear to them only as so many instants lapsing into eternity, just as the inequalities of the earth's surface are effaced and disappear beneath the gaze of the aeronaut as he mounts into space.**

*241. Do spirits take a truer and more precise view of present than we do?*

"Their view, In comparison with yours, is pretty much what eyesight is in comparison with blindness. They see what you do not see; they judge, therefore, otherwise than you do. But we must remind you that this depends on their degree of elevation."

*242. How do spirits acquire the knowledge of the past, and is this knowledge without limits for them?*

"The past, when we turn our attention to it, is perceived by us as though it were present, exactly as is the case with you, when you call to mind something which may have struck you in the course of your present exile; with this difference, however, that, as our view is no longer obscured by the material veil which covers your intelligence, we remember things that are at present effaced from your memory. But spirits do not know everything; for example, their creation."

*243. Do spirits foresee the future?*

"That, again, depends on their degree of 'advancement. Very often, they foresee it only partially; but, even when they foresee it more clearly, they are not always Permitted to reveal it. When they foresee it, it appears to them to be present. A spirit sees the future more clearly in proportion as he approaches God. After death, the soul sees and embraces at a glance all its past emigrations, but it cannot see what God has in store for it. This foreknowledge is only possessed by the soul that has attained to entire union with God, after a long succession of existences."

*- Do spirits, arrived at absolute perfection, possess the complete knowledge of the future?*

"Complete is not the word; for God alone is the sovereign master, and none can attain to equality with Him."

*244. Do spirits see God?*

"Only spirits of the highest order see and understand Him: spirits of lower order feel and divine Him."

*- When a spirit of lower degree says that such and such a thing is permitted to him or forbidden by God, how does he know that such ordering is really by Him?*

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"He does not see God, but he feels His sovereignty; and when anything is not to be done or said, he feels a sort of intuition, an invisible warning, which commands him to abstain. Are not you yourselves sometimes conscious of a secret impression, enjoining on you to do or not to do, as the case may be? It is the same thing with us, but in a higher degree; for you can easily understand that, the essence of spirits being more supple than yours, they are better able to receive the divine monitions."

*- Are the divine commands transmitted to each spirit directly by God, or through the intermediary of other spirits?*

"Those commands do not come direct from God; in order to communicate directly with God, a spirit must have made himself worthy of such communication. God transmits His orders through spirits of higher degrees of wisdom and purity."

*245. Is spirit-sight circumscribed, as is the sight of corporeal beings?*

"No ; it resides in them."

*246. Do spirits require light in order to see?*

"They see of themselves. and have no need of any exterior light. There is, for them, no other darkness than that in which they may be made to find themselves as expiation."

*247. Do spirits need to travel in order to see two different points? Can they, for instance, see the two hemispheres of the globe at the same time?*

"As spirits transport themselves from point to point with the rapidity of thought, they may be said to see everywhere at the same time. A spirit's thought may radiate at the same moment on many different points; but this faculty depends on his purity. The more impure the spirit, the narrower is his range of sight. It is only the higher spirits who can take in a whole at a single glance."

**The faculty of vision. among spirits, is a property inherent in their nature, and which resides in their whole being, as light resides in every part of a luminous body. It is a sort of universal lucidity, which extend. to everything. which embraces at once time, space, and things. and in relation to which, darkness or material obstacles have no existence. And a moment's reflection shows us that this must necessarily be the case. In the human being. sight being produced by the play of an organ acted upon by light, It follows that, without light. man finds himself in darkness but the faculty of vision being an attribute of the spirit himself, independently of any exterior agent, spirit-sight is independent of light. (Vide Ubiquity, N° 92, p. 91.)**

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248. *Do spirits see things as distinctly as we do?*

"More distinctly, for their sight penetrates what yours cannot penetrate: nothing obscures it."

249. *Do spirits perceive sounds?*

"Yes; they perceive sounds that your obtuse senses can not perceive"

- *Does the faculty of hearing reside in tile whole of a spirit's being, like the faculty of sight.?*

"All the perceptive faculties of a spirit are attributes of his nature, and form part of his being. When he is clothed with a material body, his perceptions reach him only through the channel of his bodily organs; but the perceptions of a spirit, when restored to the state of freedom, are no longer localised."

250. *The perceptive faculties being attributes of a spirit's nature, is it possible for him to withdraw himself from their action ?*

"A spirit only sees and hears what he chooses to see and hear. This statement, however, is to be taken in a general sense, and mainly as regards spirits of the higher orders; for imperfect spirits are compelled to see and hear, and often against their will, what-ever may be useful for their amelioration."

251. *Are spirits affected by music?*

"Do you mean the music of your earth ? What is it in comparison with the music of the celestial spheres, of that harmony of which nothing in your earth can give you any idea ? The one is to the other as is the howl of the savage to the most lovely melody. Spirits of low degree, however, may take pleasure in hearing your music, because they are not yet able to appreciate anything more sublime. Music has inexhaustible charms for spirits, owing to the great development of their sensitive qualities; I mean, celestial music, than which the spiritual imagination can conceive of nothing more exquisitely sweet and beautiful."

252. *Are spirits sensible of the beauties of nature?*

"The beauties of nature are so different in the different globes, that spirits are far from knowing them all. They are sensible of them in proportion to their aptitude for appreciating and comprehending them; but, for spirits of a high degree of advancement, there are beauties of general harmony in which beauties of detail are, so to say, lost sight of."



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*253. Do spirits experience our physical needs and sufferings?*

"They know them, because they have undergone them; but they do not, like you, experience them materially: they are spirits."

*254. Do spirits experience fatigue and the need of rest?*

"They cannot feel fatigue as you understand it, and consequently they have no need of your corporeal rest, because they have no organs whose strength requires to be restored. But a spirit may be said to take rest, inasmuch as he is not constantly in a state of activity. He does not act materially; his action is altogether intellectual, and his resting is altogether moral; that is to say, that there are moments when his thought becomes less active, and is no longer directed to any special object, and this constitutes for him a state which is really one of repose, but a kind of repose which cannot be likened to that of the body. The sort of fatigue which may be felt by spirits is proportionate to their inferiority; for, the higher their degree of elevation, the less is their need of rest."

*255. When a spirit says that he suffers, what is the nature of the suffering he feels?*

"Mental anguish, which causes him tortures far more painful than any physical sufferings."

*256. How is it, then, that spirits sometimes complain of suffering from cold or heat?*

"Such sensations on their part are caused by the remembrance of sufferings endured by them in the earthly life, and are sometimes as painful as though they were real; but complaints of that nature are often only figures by which, for lack of any better means of description, they endeavour to express the situation in which they find themselves. When they remember their earthly body, they experience the same sort of impression which makes you feel for a few moments, when you have taken off a cloak, as though you had it still upon your shoulders."

### Theoretic Explanation of the Nature of Sensation in Spirits

*257. The body is the instrument of pain, of which, if not the primary cause, it is, at least, the immediate cause. The soul possesses the faculty of perceiving the pain thus caused; the perception of pain is, therefore, the effect of this action of the soul. The remembrance of pain retained by a spirit may be very painful,*

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but cannot exercise any physical action. The tissues of the soul cannot be disorganised either by cold or heat; the soul can neither freeze nor burn. But do we not constantly see that the remembrance or the apprehension of physical pain may produce all the effect of reality, and may even occasion death? We know that recently-amputated patients often complain of feeling pain in the limb they have lost: yet it is evident that the amputated limb cannot really be the seat, nor even the point of departure, of the pain felt, which is due solely to the action of the brain, that has retained and reproduces the impression of the pain formerly experienced by them. It may therefore be inferred that the suffering felt by spirits after death is of a similar nature. A careful study of the perispirit, which plays so important a part in all spirit-phenomena, the indications afforded by apparitions, whether vaporous or tangible, the state of the spirit at the moment of death, the striking pictures presented by the victims of suicide and of capital punishment, by the spirits of those who have been absorbed in carnal enjoyments, and a great variety of other facts, have thrown new light on this question, and have given rise to the explanations of which we offer the following summary

The perispirit is the link which unites the spirit with the material body. It is drawn from the surrounding atmosphere, from the universal fluid; it participates at once in the nature of electricity of the magnetic fluid, and of inert matter. It may be said to be the quintessence of matter; it is the principle of organic life, but it is not that of intellectual life, the principle of which is in the spirit. It is also the agent of all the sensations of the outer life. Those sensations are localised in the earthly body by the organs which serve as their channels. When the body is destroyed, those sensations become general. This explains why a spirit never says that he suffers in his head or in his feet. But we must take care not to confound the sensations of the perispirit, rendered independent by the death of the body, with the sensations experienced through the body; for the latter can only be understood as offering a means of comparison with the former, but not as being analogous to them. When freed from the body, a spirit may suffer, but this suffering is not the suffering of the body. And yet it is not a suffering exclusively moral, like remorse, for example, for he complains of feeling cold or hot, although he suffers no more in summer than in winter, and we have seen spirits pass through flames without feeling any painful effect therefrom, temperature

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making no impression upon them. The pain which they feel is therefore not a physical pain in the proper sense of that term; it is a vague feeling perceived in himself by a spirit, and which he himself is not always able to account for, precisely because his pain is not localised, and is not produced by any exterior agents: it is a remembrance rather than a reality, but a remembrance as painful as though it were a reality. Nevertheless, spirit-suffering is sometimes more than a remembrance, as we shall see.

Observation has shown us that the perispirit, at death, disengages itself more or less slowly from the body. During the first few moments which follow dissolution, a spirit does not clearly understand his own situation. He does not think himself dead, for he feels himself living. He sees his body beside him, he knows that it is his, and he does not understand that he is separated from it; and this state of indecision continues as long as there remains the slightest connection between the body and the perispirit. One who had committed suicide said to us, "No, I am not dead," and added, "and yet I feel the worms that are devouring my body." Now, most assuredly, the worms were not devouring his perispirit, still less could they be devouring the spirit himself. But, as the separation between the body and the perispirit was not complete, a sort of moral repercussion transmitted to the latter the sensation of what was taking place in the former. Repercussion is perhaps hardly the word to be employed in this case, as it may seem to imply an effect too nearly akin to materiality; it was rather the sight of what was going on in the decaying body, to which he was still attached by his perispirit. that produced in him an illusion which he mistook for reality. Thus, in his case, it was not a remembrance, for he had not, during his earthly life, been devoured by worms. It was the feeling of something which was actually taking place. We see, by the examination of the case here alluded to, the deductions that may be drawn from an attentive observation of facts. During life, the body receives external impressions and transmits them to the spirit through the intermediary of the perispirit, which constitutes, probably, what is called the nervous fluid. The body, when dead, no longer feels anything, because there is in it no longer either spirit or perispirit. The perispirit, when disengaged from the body, still experiences sensation; but, as sensation no longer reaches it through a limited channel, its sensation is general. Now, as the perispirit is, in reality, only an agent for the transmission of sensations to the spirit, by whom alone they are perceived, it follows

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that the perispirit, if it could exist without a spirit, would no more be able to feel any sensation than is the body when it is dead; and it also follows that the spirit, if it had no perispirit, would be inaccessible to any painful sensation, as is the case with spirits who are completely purified. We know that, in proportion as the spirit progresses, the essence of its perispirit becomes more and more etherealised; whence it follows that the influence of matter diminishes in proportion to the advancement of the spirit, that is to say, in proportion as his perispirit becomes less and less gross.

But, it may be urged, it is through the perispirit that agreeable sensations are transmitted to the spirit, as well as disagreeable ones; therefore, if the purified spirit be inaccessible to the latter, he must also be to the former. Yes, undoubtedly so, as far as regards those which proceed solely from the influence of the matter which is known to us. The sound of our instruments, the perfume of our flowers, produce no impression upon spirits of the highest orders; and yet they experience sensations of the most vivid character, of a charm indescribable for us, and of which it is impossible for us to form any idea, because we are, in regard to that order of sensations, in the same position as that in which men, born blind, are in regard to light. We know that they exist; but our knowledge is inadequate to explain their nature or the mode in which they are produced. We know that spirits possess perception, sensation, hearing, sight, and that these faculties are attributes of their whole being, and not, as in men, of a part of their being.

But we seek in vain to understand by what intermediary these faculties act; of this we know nothing. Spirits themselves can give us no explanation of the matter, because our language can no more be made to express ideas which are beyond the range of our comprehension than the language of savages can be made to furnish terms for expressing our arts, our sciences, or our philosophic doctrines.

In saying that spirits are inaccessible to the impressions of earthly matter, we must be understood as speaking of spirits of very high order, to whose etherealised envelope there is nothing analogous in our lower sphere. It is different with spirits whose perispirit is of denser quality, for they perceive our sounds and our odours, though no longer through special parts of their personality, as they did during life. The molecular vibrations may be said to be felt by them throughout their whole being, reaching thus their common sensorium, which is the spirit himself, although

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in a different manner, and causing, perhaps, a different impression, which may produce a modification of the resulting perception. They hear the sound of our voice, and yet are able to understand us, without the help of speech, by the mere transmission of thought; and this penetration is the more easy for them in proportion as they are more dematerialised. Their sight is independent of our light. The faculty of vision is an essential attribute of the soul, for whom darkness has no existence; but it is more extended, more penetrating, in those whose purification is more advanced. The soul or spirit, therefore, possesses in itself the faculty of all perceptions; during our corporeal life these are deadened by the grossness of our physical organs, but, in the extra-corporeal life, they become more and more vivid as our semi-material envelope becomes more and more etherealised.

This envelope is drawn from the atmosphere in which the spirit finds himself for the time being, and varies according to the nature of the different worlds. In passing from one world to another, spirits change their envelope as we change a garment when we pass from summer to winter, or from the pole to the equator. The most elevated spirits, when they come to visit us, assume a terrestrial perispirit, which they retain during their stay among us, and their perceptions are therefore produced, while they are thus clothed upon, in the same way as those of the lower spirits, of whom this grosser order of perispirit is the appropriate envelope; but all spirits, whether high or low, only hear and feel what they choose to hear and to feel.<sup>1</sup> Without possessing organs of sensation, spirits are able to render their perceptions active, or to prevent their action: there is but one thing which they are compelled to hear, and that is the counsels of their guides. The sight of spirits is always active, but they are able, nevertheless, to render themselves invisible to one another, according to the rank they occupy; those of a higher rank having the power of hiding themselves from those who are below them, although a spirit of lower rank cannot hide himself from those who are above him. In the first moments after death, the sight of a spirit is always dim and confused; it becomes cleared as he becomes freed from the body, acquiring not only the same clearness which it possessed during life, but also the power of penetrating bodies which are opaque for us. As for the extension of a spirit's vision through space,

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<sup>1</sup> **Vide**, for the exception to this general law, the cases mentioned in No. 250.

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and into the future and the past, that depends entirely on his degree of purity and of consequent elevation.

"This theory," it will be said, "is anything but encouraging. We had thought that, once freed from our gross bodily envelope, the instrument of all our sufferings, we should suffer no more; and now you tell us that we shall still suffer in the other life, although not in the same way as we do here. But suffering is none the less painful, whatever its nature; and this prospect is by no means an agreeable one." Alas, yes! We may still have to suffer, -to suffer much, and for a long time; but we may also have no more to suffer, even from the very moment of quitting the corporeal life.

The sufferings of our present existence are sometimes independent of ourselves; but they are often the consequences of our own volition. If we trace our sufferings back to their source, we see that the greater number of them are due to causes which we might have avoided. How many ills, how many infirmities, does man owe to his excesses, his ambition-in a word, to the indulgence of his various passions! He who should live soberly in all respects, who should never run into excesses of any kind, who should be always simple in his tastes, modest in his desires, would escape a large proportion of the tribulations of human life. It is the same with regard to spirit-life, the sufferings of which are always the consequence of the manner in which a spirit has lived upon the earth. In that life undoubtedly he will no longer suffer from gout or rheumatism; but his wrong-doing down here will cause him to experience other sufferings no less painful. We have seen that those sufferings are the result of the links which exist between a spirit and matter; that the more completely he is freed from the influence of matter-in other words, the more dematerialised he is-the fewer are the painful sensations experienced by him. It depends, therefore, on each of us to free ourselves from the influence of matter by our action in this present life. Man possesses free-will, and, consequently, the power of electing to do or not to do. Let him conquer his animal passions; let him rid himself of hatred, envy, jealousy, pride; let him throw off the yoke of selfishness; let him purify his soul by cultivating noble sentiments; let him do good; let him attach to the things of this world only the degree of importance which they deserve,-and he will, even under his present corporeal envelope, have effected his purification, and achieved his deliverance from

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the influence of matter, which will cease for him on his quitting that envelope. For such a one the remembrance of physical sufferings endured by him in the life he has quitted has nothing painful, and produces no disagreeable impression, because they affected his body only, and left no trace in his soul. He is happy to be relieved from them; and the calmness of a good conscience exempts him from all moral suffering.

We have questioned many thousands of spirits having belonged to every class of society; we have studied them at every period of their spirit-life, from the instant of their quitting the body. We have followed them step by step in that life beyond the grave, with a view to ascertaining the changes that should take place in their ideas and sensations; and this examination-in which it has not always been the most commonplace spirits that have furnished us the least valuable subjects of study-has invariably shown us, on the one hand, that the sufferings of spirits are the direct result of the misconduct of which they have to undergo the consequences, and, on the other hand, that their new existence is the source of ineffable happiness for those who have followed the right road. From which it follows that those who suffer do so because they have so willed it, and have only themselves to thank for their suffering, in the other world, as in this one.

### Choice of Trials

*258. In the state of erraticity, and before taking on a new corporeal existence, does a spirit foresee the things which will happen to him in that new existence?*

"He chooses for himself the kind of trials which he will undergo, and it is in this freedom of choice that his freewill consists."

*- It is not God, then, who imposes upon him the tribulations of life as a chastisement?*

"Nothing comes to pass without the permission of God, for it is He who has established all the laws that rule the universe. You would have to inquire why He has made such and such a law, instead of taking some other way. In giving to a spirit the liberty of choice, He leaves to him the entire responsibility of his acts and of their consequences. There is nothing to bar his future; the right road is open to him as freely as the wrong road. But if he succumbs, there still remains to him the consoling fact that all is not over with him, and that God in His goodness allows him to

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recommence the task which he has done badly. You must, moreover, always distinguish between what is the work of God's will and what is the work of man's will. If a danger threatens you, it is not you who have created this danger, but God; but you have voluntarily elected to expose yourself to this danger, because you have seen in so doing a means of advancement, and God has permitted you to do so."

*259. If the spirit has the choice of the kind of trials which he will undergo, does it follow that all the tribulations we experience in the earthly life have been foreseen and chosen by us?*

"It would not be correct to say that such has been the case with all of them; for you cannot be said to have chosen and foreseen all the things which happen to you in this life, and all their details. You have chosen the kind of trial to which you are subjected; the details of this trial are a consequence of the general situation which you have chosen, and are often the result of your own actions.

"If, for instance, a spirit has chosen to be born among male-factors, he knew to what kind of temptations he was exposing himself, but not each one of the actions which he would accomplish; those actions are the effect of his volition, of his free-will. A spirit knows that, in choosing such and such a road, he will have such and such a kind of struggle to undergo; he knows, therefore, the nature of the vicissitudes which he will encounter, but he does not know whether these will present themselves under one form or under another. The details of events spring from circumstances and the force of things. It is only the leading events of his new life, those which will exercise a determining effect on his destiny, that are foreseen by him. If you enter upon a road full of ruts, you know that you must walk very warily, because you run a risk of stumbling; but you do not know the exact place where you will stumble, and it may be that, if you are sufficiently on your guard, you will not stumble at all. If, when you are passing along a street, a tile falls upon your head, you must not suppose that 'it was written,' as the common saying is."

*260. How can a spirit choose to be born among those who are leading a bad life?*

"It is necessary for him to be sent into the conditions which will furnish the elements of the trial he has demanded. To this end, there must be a correspondence between the imperfection of which he desires to free himself, and the social surroundings into which



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he is born. For example, if he have to struggle against the instinct of brigandage, it is necessary for him to be thrown among brigands."

*- If, then, there were no evil livers upon the earth, spirits could not find in it the conditions necessary to certain kinds of trial?*

"Would there be any reason for complaining, if such were the case ? The case you suppose is that of the worlds of higher order, to which evil has no access, and which are therefore inhabited only by good spirits. Try to bring about such a state of things as soon as possible in your earth."

*261. Is it necessary for the spirit, in the course of the trials to which he has to submit in order to arrive at perfection, to undergo every sort of temptation? Must he encounter all the circumstances that can excite in him pride, jealousy, avarice, sensuality, etc. ?*

"Certainly not, since there are, as you know, many spirits who take from the beginning a road which spares them the necessity of undergoing many of those trials; but he who suffers himself to be drawn into the wrong road, exposes himself to all the dangers of that road. A spirit, for instance, may ask for riches, and his demand may be granted; and, in that case, he will become, according to his character, avaricious or prodigal, selfish or generous, and will make a noble use of his wealth, or waste it on vanity or sensuality; but this does not imply that he will be compelled to run the gauntlet of all the evil tendencies that may be fostered by the possession of riches."

*262. As a spirit, at its origin, is simple, ignorant, and without experience, how can he make an intelligent choice of an existence, and how can he be responsible for such a choice?*

"God supplies what is lacking through his inexperience, by tracing out for him the road which he has to follow, as you do for the infant in its cradle; but he allows him, little by little, to become the master of his choice, in proportion as his free-will becomes developed; and it is then that he often loses his way and takes the wrong road, if he do not listen to the advice of the good spirits, who endeavour to instruct him; it is this which may be called the fall of man."

*- When a spirit is in possession of his free-will, does the choice of his corporeal existence always depend solely on his own*

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*volition, or is this existence sometimes imposed on him by God as an expiation?*

"God can afford to wait; He never hurries the work of expiation. Nevertheless, God does sometimes impose an existence upon a spirit, when the latter, through his ignorance or his obstinacy, is incapable of perceiving what would be to his advantage, and when He sees that this existence may subserve his purification and advancement, while furnishing him also with the conditions of expiation."

*263. Do spirits make their choice immediately after death?*

"No; many of them believe their sufferings to be eternal: you have already been told that this is a chastisement."

*264. What is it that decides a spirit's choice of the trials which he determines to undergo?*

"He chooses those which may serve to expiate faults, and at the same time help him to advance more quickly. In view of these ends, some may impose upon themselves a life of poverty privations, in order to exercise themselves in bearing them with courage; others may wish to test their powers of resistance by the temptations of fortune and of power, much more dangerous, because of the bad use that may be made of them, and the evil passions that may be developed by them; others, again, may desire to strengthen their good resolutions by having to struggle against the influence of vicious surroundings."

*265. If some spirits elect to expose themselves to the contact of vice as a trial of their virtue, may it not be that others make a similar choice from a desire to live amidst surroundings in unison with their depraved tastes, and in which they may give free course to their sensual tendencies?*

"Such instances undoubtedly occur; but only among those whose moral sense is still but imperfectly developed. In such cases, the needed trial occurs spontaneously, and they are subjected to it for a longer time. Sooner or later, they will understand that indulgence of the animal instincts leads to disastrous consequences, which they will undergo during a period so long that it will seem to them to be eternal; and God sometimes leaves them in this state until they have comprehended the gravity of their fault, and demand, of their own accord, to be allowed to repair it by undergoing trials of a profitable nature."

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*266. Does it not seem natural to make choice of such trials as are least painful?*

"From your point of view, it would seem to be so, but not from that of the spirit; when he is freed from materiality, his illusions cease, and he thinks differently".

Man, while upon the earth, and subjected to the influence of carnal ideas, sees only the painful aspect of the trials he is called upon to undergo and it therefore appears to him to be natural to choose the trials that are allied to material enjoyments. But when he has returned to spirit-life, he compares those gross and fugitive enjoyments with the unchangeable felicity of which he obtains occasional glimpses, and judges that such felicity will be cheaply purchased by a little temporary suffering. A spirit may therefore, make choice of the hardest trial, and consequently of the most painful existence, in the hope of thereby attaining more rapidly to a happier state, just as a sick man often chooses the most unpalatable medicine in the hope of obtaining a more rapid cure. He who aspires to immortalise his name by the discovery of an unknown country does not seek a flowery road. He takes the road which will bring him most surely to the aim he has in view, and he is not deterred from following it even by the dangers it may offer. On the contrary, he braves those dangers for the sake of the glory he will win if he succeeds.

The doctrine of our freedom in the choice of our successive existences and of the trials which we have to undergo ceases to appear strange when we consider that spirits, being freed from matter, judge of things differently from men. They perceive the ends which these trials are intended to work out—ends far more important for them than the fugitive enjoyments of earth. After each existence, they see the steps they have already accomplished, and comprehend what they still lack for the attainment of the purity which alone enable them to reach the goal and they willingly submit to the vicissitudes of corporeal life, demanding of their own accord to be allowed to undergo those which will aid them to advance most rapidly. There is, therefore, nothing surprising in a spirit making choice of a hard or painful life. He knows that he cannot, in his present state of imperfection, enjoy the perfect happiness to which he aspires but he obtains glimpses of that happiness, and he seeks to effect his own Improvement, as the sole means to its attainment.

Do we not, every day, witness examples of a similar choice? what is the action of the man who labours, without cessation or repose, to amass the property which will enable him eventually to live in comfort, but the discharge of a task which he has voluntarily assumed as the means of insuring for himself a more prosperous future? The soldier who offers himself for the accomplishment of a perilous mission, the traveller who braves dangers no less formidable in the interest of science or of his own fortune, are examples of the voluntary incurring of hardships for the sake of the honour or profit that will result from their successful endurance. What will not men undergo for gain or for glory? Is not every sort of competitive examination a trial to which men voluntarily submit in the hope of obtaining advancement in the career they have chosen? He who would gain a high position in science, art, industry, is obliged to pass through all the lower degrees which lead up to it, and which constitute so many trials. Human life is thus seen to be modelled on spirit-life, presenting the same vicissitudes on a smaller scale. And as in the earthly life we often make choice of the hardest conditions as means to the attainment of the highest ends, why should not a disincarnate spirit, who sees farther than he saw when incarnated in an earthly body, and for whom the bodily life is only a fugitive incident, make choice of a laborious or painful existence, if it may lead him or towards an eternal felicity? Those who say that, since spirits have the power choosing their existences, they will demand to be princes and millionaires, are like the purblind, who only see what they touch, or like greedy children, who, when asked what occupation they would prefer to follow, reply that they would like to be pastry-cooks or confectioners.

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It is with a spirit as with a traveller, who, in the depths of a valley obscured by fog, sees neither the length nor the extremities of his road. When he has reached the top of the hill, and the fog has cleared away, his view takes in both the road along which he has come and that by which he has still to go. He sees the point which he has to reach, and the obstacles he has to overcome in reaching it, and he is thus able to take his measures for successfully accomplishing his journey. A spirit, while incarnated, is like the traveller at the foot of the hill when freed from terrestrial trammels, he is like the traveller who has reached the top of the hill. The aim of the traveller is to obtain rest after fatigue the aim of the spirit is to attain to perfect happiness after tribulations and trials.

Spirits say that, in the state of erraticity, they seek, study, observe, in order to make their choice wisely. Have we not examples of analogous action in corporeal life? Do we not often spend years in deciding on the career upon which, at length, we freely fix our choice, because we consider it to be the one in which we are most likely to succeed? If, after all, we fail in the one we have chosen, we seek out another and each career thus embraced by us constitutes a phase, a period, of our life. Is not each day employed by us in deciding what we shall do on the morrow? And what, for a spirit, are his different corporeal existences, but so many phases, periods, days, in comparison with his spirit life, which, as we know, is his normal life, the corporeal life being only a transitional passage?

*267. Can a spirit make his choice while in the corporeal state?*

"His desire may exercise a certain amount of influence, according to the quality of his intention; but, when he returns to spirit-life, he often judges things very differently. It is only as a spirit that he makes his choice; but he may, nevertheless, make it during the material life, for a spirit, even while incarnated, has occasional moments in which he is independent of the matter he inhabits."

-Many persons desire earthly greatness and riches, but not assuredly, either as expiation or as trial.

"Undoubtedly; in such cases it is their material instinct which desires greatness in order to enjoy its satisfactions. The spirit could only desire it in order to understand its vicissitudes."

*268. Until a spirit has reached the state of perfect purity, has he constantly to undergo trials?*

"Yes; but not such as you understand by that term. By the term trials, you understand only material tribulations. But when a spirit has reached a certain degree of purification, although he is not yet perfect, he has no more tribulations of that kind to undergo. He has, nevertheless, to perform creating duties which advance his own improvement, but there is nothing painful in these, as, for example, the duty of aiding others to work out their own improvement."

*269. Is it possible for a spirit to make a mistake as to the efficacy of the trial he chooses.'*

"He may choose one which exceeds his strength, and, in that case, he will succumb; or he may choose one from which he will

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reap no profit whatever, as, for instance, if he seeks to lead an idle and useless life. But, in such cases, he perceives, on returning to the spirit-world, that he has gained nothing, and he then demands to make up for lost time."

*270. What is the cause of the vocations of some persons, and their spontaneous desire to follow one career rather than another?*

"It seems to me that you yourselves might answer this question. Is not the existence of such vocations a necessary consequence of what we have told you concerning the choice of trials, and of the progress accomplished in a preceding existence?"

*271. As a spirit in the wandering state studies the various conditions of corporeal life that will aid him to progress, how can he suppose that he will do so by being born, for example, among cannibals?*

"Those who are born among cannibals are not advanced spirit, but spirits who are still at the cannibal degree, or, it may be, who are even lower than cannibals."

**We know that our anthropophagi are not at the lowest degree of the scale, and that there are worlds in which are found degrees of brutishness and ferocity that have no analogues in our earth. The spirits of those worlds are, therefore, lower than the lowest of our world, and to come among our savages is, for them, a step in advance, as it would be for our cannibals to exercise, in a civilised community, some profession obliging them to shed blood. If they take no higher aim, it is because their moral backwardness does not allow of their comprehending any higher degree of progress. A spirit can only advance gradually he cannot clear at a single bound the distance which separates barbarism from civilisation. And in this impossibility we see one of the causes that necessitate reincarnation, which is thus seen to be really a consequence of the justice of God for what would become of the millions of human beings who die every day in the lowest depths of degradation, if they had no means of arriving at higher states? And why should God have refused to them the favours granted to other men?**

*272. Can spirits, coming from a world of lower degree than the earth, or from the lowest of our human races, such as our cannibals for instance, be born among our civilised peoples?*

"Yes, such spirits sometimes come into your world, through trying to reach a degree too far above them; but they are out of their proper place among you, because they bring with them instincts and habits that clash with the convictions and habits of the society into which they have strayed."

**Such beings present us with the melancholy spectacle of ferocity in the midst of civilisation. For them, to return among cannibals is not a going down, but only a resuming of their proper place and they may even gain by so doing.**

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*273. Might a man belonging to a civilised race be reincarnated, as an expiation, in a savage race?*

"Yes; but that would depend on the kind of expiation he had incurred. A master who had been cruel to his slaves might become a slave in his turn, and undergo the torments he had inflicted on others. He who has wielded authority may, in a new existence, be obliged to obey those who formerly bent to his will. Such an existence may be imposed upon him as an expiation if he have abused his power. But a good spirit may also choose an influential existence among the people of some lower race, in order to hasten their advancement; in that case, such a reincarnation is a mission."

### **Relationships Beyond the Grave**

*274. Do the different degrees which exist in the advancement of spirits establish among the latter a hierarchy of powers? Are there, among spirits, subordination and authority?*

"Yes; the authority of spirits over one another, in virtue of their relative superiority, is very great, and gives to the higher ones a moral ascendancy over the lower ones which is absolutely irresistible."

*- Can spirits of lower degree withdraw themselves from the authority of those who are higher than themselves?*

"I have said that the authority which comes of superiority is irresistible."

*275. Do the power and consideration which a man may have enjoyed in the earthly life give him supremacy in the spirit-world?*

"No; for in that World the humble are exalted and the proud abased. Read the Psalms."

*- In what sense should we understand exalting and abasing?*

"Do you not know that spirits are of different orders, according to their degree of merit? Therefore, he who has held the highest rank upon the earth may find himself in the lowest rank in the world of spirits, while his servitor may be in the highest. Is not this clear to you? Has not Jesus said that 'Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted?'"

*276. When one who has been great upon the earth finds himself occupying an inferior place in the spirit-world, does he feel humiliated by this change of position?*

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"Often exceedingly so; especially if he have been haughty and jealous."

*277. When a soldier, after a battle, meets his general in the spirit-world, does he still acknowledge him as his superior.'*

"Titles are nothing; intrinsic superiority is everything."

*278. Do spirits of different orders mix together in the other*

"Yes, and no; that is to say, they see each other, but they are none the less removed. They shun or approach one another according to the antipathies or sympathies of their sentiments, just as is the case among yourselves. The spirit-life is a whole world of varied conditions and relationships, of which the earthly life is only the obscured reflex. Those of the same rank are drawn together by a sort of affinity, and form groups or families of spirits united by sympathy and a common aim—the good, by the desire to do what is good, and the bad, by the desire to do evil, by the shame of their wrong-doing, and by the wish to find them-selves among those whom they resemble."

**The spirit-world is like a great city, in which men of all ranks and conditions see and meet one another without mixing together in which various social circles are formed by similarity of tastes in which vice and virtue elbow each other without speaking to one another.**

*279. Are all spirits reciprocally accessible to one another?*

"The good go everywhere, as it is necessary that they should do, in order to bring their influence to bear upon the evil-minded. But the regions inhabited by them are inaccessible to inferior spirits, so that the latter cannot trouble those happy abodes by the introduction of evil passions."

*280. What is the nature of the relations between good and bad spirits?*

"The good ones endeavour to combat the evil tendencies of the others, in order to aid them to raise themselves to a higher degree; this intercourse, is, for the former, a mission."

*281. Why do inferior spirits take pleasure in inducing us to do wrong?*

"From jealousy. Not having earned a place among the good, their desire is to prevent, as far as in them lies, other spirits, as yet inexperienced, from attaining to the happiness from which they are excluded. They desire to make others suffer what they

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suffer themselves. Do you not see the working of the same desire among yourselves?"

*282. How do spirits hold communication with one another?*

"They see and comprehend one another. Speech is material; it is a reflex of spirit. The universal fluid establishes a constant communication between them; it is the vehicle by which thought is transmitted, as the air, in your world, is the vehicle of sound. This fluid constitutes a sort of universal telegraph, which unites all worlds, and enables spirits to correspond from one world to another."

*283. Can spirits hide their thoughts from each other? Can they hide themselves from one another?*

"No; with them everything is open, and especially so with those who have attained to perfection. They may withdraw from one another, but they are always visible to each other. This, however, is not an absolute rule, for the higher spirits are perfectly able to render themselves invisible to the lower ones, when they consider it to be useful to do so."

*284. How can spirits, who have no longer a body, establish their individuality, and cause it to be distinguishable from that of the other spiritual beings by whom they are surrounded?*

"Their individuality is established by their perispirit, which makes of each spirit a separate personality, distinct from all others, as the body does among men."

*285. Do spirits recognise one another as having lived together upon the earth? Does the son recognise his father, the friend, his friend?*

"Yes; and from generation to generation."

*- How do those who have known each other on the earth recognise one another in the world of spirits?*

"We see our past life, and read therein as in a book; on seeing the past of our friends and our enemies, we see their passage from life to death."

*286. Does the soul see, immediately on quitting its mortal remains, the relations and friends who have returned before it into the world of spirits?*

"Immediately is not always the right word; for, as we have said, the soul requires some time to resume its self-consciousness, and to shake off the veil of materiality."



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*287. How is the soul received on its return to the spirit-word?*

"That of the righteous, as a dearly-beloved brother, whose return has been long waited for; that of the wicked, with contempt."

*288. What sentiment is experienced by impure spirits at the sight of another bad spirit, on his arrival among them?*

"Such spirits are gratified at seeing others who resemble them, and who, like them, are deprived of the highest happiness; just as a band of scoundrels, upon the earth, are gratified at meeting with another scoundrel like themselves."

*289. Do our relatives and friends sometimes come to meet us when we are leaving the earth?*

"Yes, they come to meet the soul of those they love; they felicitate it as one who has returned from a journey if it have escaped the dangers of the road, and they aid it in freeing itself from the bonds of the flesh. To be met thus by those they have loved is a favour granted to the souls of the upright; while the soul of the wicked is punished by being left alone, or is only surrounded by spirits like itself."

*290. Are relatives and friends always reunited after death?*

"That depends on their elevation, and on the road they have to follow for their advancement. If one of them is further advanced, and progresses more rapidly than the other, they cannot remain together: they may see one another occasionally, but they can only be definitively reunited when he who was behind is able to keep pace with him who was before, or when both of them shall have reached the state of perfection. Moreover, the privation of the sight of relatives and friends is sometimes inflicted on a spirit as a punishment."

### Sympathies and Antipathies of Spirits - Eternal Halves

*291. Have spirits special personal affections among themselves, besides the general sympathy resulting from similarity?*

"Yes, just as among men; but the link between spirits is stronger when the body is absent, because it is no longer exposed to the vicissitudes of the passions."

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292. *Do spirits experience hatreds among themselves?*

"Hatreds only exist among impure spirits. It is they who sow hatreds and dissensions among men."

293. *Do those who have been enemies on earth always retain their resentment against one another in the spirit-world?*

"No; for they often see that their hatred was stupid, and perceive the puerility of the object by which it was excited. It is only imperfect spirits who retain the animosities of the earthly life 7 of which they rid themselves in proportion as they become purified. Spirits whose anger, as men, has been caused by some merely material interest, forget their dissension as soon as they are dematerialised. The cause of their dissension no longer existing, they may, if there be no antipathy between them, see each other again with pleasure."

**Just as two schoolboys, when they have reached the age of reason, perceive the folly of their boyish quarrels, and no longer keep up a grudge against each other on account of them.**

294. *Is the remembrance of wrongs they may have done one another, as men, an obstacle to sympathy between two spirits?*

"Yes, it tends to keep them apart."

295. *What is the sentiment, after death, of those whom we have wronged?*

"If they are good, they forgive you as soon as you repent; if they are bad, they may retain resentment against you, and may even pursue you with their anger in another existence. This may be permitted by God as a chastisement."

296. *Are the individual affections of spirits susceptible of change?*

No; for they cannot be mistaken in one another. The mask under which hypocrites hide themselves on earth has no existence in the world of spirits, and their affections, when they are pure, are therefore unchangeable. The love which unites them is a source of supreme felicity."

297. *Does the affection which two spirits have felt for each other upon the earth always continue in the spirit-world?*

"Yes, undoubtedly, if that affection were founded on sympathy; but, if physical causes have had more share in it than sympathy, it ceases with those causes. Affections are more solid and lasting among spirits than among men, because they are not subordinated to the caprices of material interests and self-love."

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298. *Is it true that the souls of those who will eventually be united in affection are predestined to this union from their beginning, and that each of us has thus, in some part of the universe, his other half, to whom he will some day be necessarily reunited?*

"No, there is no such thing as any special and fated union between any two souls. Union exists between all spirits, but in different degrees, according to the rank they occupy,-that is to say, according to the degree of perfection they have acquired; and the greater their perfection, the more united they are. It is discord that produces all the ills of human life. The complete and perfect happiness at which all spirits eventually arrive is the result of concord."

299. *In what way should we understand the term other half, sometimes employed by spirits to designate other spirits for whom they have special sympathy?*

"The expression is incorrect. If one spirit were the half of another spirit, he would, if separated from that other, be incomplete."

300. *When two perfectly sympathetic spirits are reunited in the other world, are they thus reunited for all eternity, or can they separate from each other and unite themselves with other spirits?*

"All spirits are united among themselves. I speak of those who have reached the state of perfection. In the spheres below that state, when a spirit passes from a lower sphere to a higher one, he does not always feel the same sympathy for those whom he has quitted."

301. *When two spirits are completely sympathetic, are they. the complement of each other, or is that sympathy the result of their perfect identity of character?*

"The sympathy which attracts one spirit to another is the result of the perfect concordance of their tendencies and instincts. If one of them were necessary to complete the other, he would lose his individuality."

302. *Does similarity of thoughts and of sentiments suffice to constitute the kind of identity which is necessary to the production of perfect sympathy, or is uniformity of acquired knowledge also required for its production?*

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"Perfect sympathy between two spirits results from equality in the degree of their elevation."

*303. May spirits, who are not now sympathetic, become so in the future?*

Yes, all will be sympathetic in course of time. Thus, of two spirits who were once together, one may have advanced more rapidly than the other; but the other, though now in a lower sphere, will by and by have advanced sufficiently to be able to enter the higher sphere in which the former is now residing. And their reunion will take place all the sooner if the one who was most advanced should fail in the trials he has still to undergo, and so should remain for a time just where he now is, without making any further progress."

*- May two spirits, who are now sympathetic, cease to be so?*

"Certainly, if one of them is wanting in energy, and lags behind, while the other is advancing."

**The hypothesis of twin-souls is merely a figurative representation of the union of two sympathetic spirits, and must not be understood literally. The spirits who have made use of this expression are certainly not of high order; and, therefore, as their range of thought is necessarily narrow, they have sought to convey their meaning by using the terms they were accustomed to employ in their earthly life. The idea that two souls were created for each other, and that, after having been separated for a longer or shorter period, they will necessarily be eventually reunited for all eternity, is, therefore, to be entirely rejected.**

### Remembrance of Corporeal Existence

*304. Does spirit remember his corporeal existence?*

"Yes; having lived many times as a human being, he remembers what he has been, and often smiles pityingly at the follies of his past."

As a man, who has reached the age of reason, smiles at the follies of his youth and the silliness of his childhood.

*305. Does the remembrance of his corporeal existence present itself to a spirit, complete, and spontaneously, immediately after his death?*

"No; it comes back to him little by little, in proportion as he fixes his attention upon it, as objects gradually become visible out of a fog."

*306. Does a spirit remember the details of all the events of his life? Does he take in the whole of his life at a single retrospective glance?*

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"He remembers the things of his life more or less distinctly and in detail, according to the influence they have exercised on his state as a spirit; but you can easily understand that there are many things in his life to which he attaches no importance, and which he does not even seek to remember."

- *Could he remember them if he wished to do so?*

"He has the power of recalling the most minute details of every incident of his life, and even of his thoughts; but when no useful purpose would be served by exerting this power, he does not exert it."

*307. In what way does his past life present itself to a spirit's memory? Is it through an effort of his imagination, or is it like a picture displayed before his eyes?*

"It comes back to him in both ways. All the actions which he has an interest in remembering appear to him as though they were present; the others are seen by him more or less vaguely in his thought, or are entirely forgotten. The more dematerialised he is, the less importance does he attach to material things. It has often happened to you, on evoking some wandering spirit who has just left the earth, to find that he remembers neither the names of persons whom he liked, nor details which to you appear to be important. He cares but little about them, and they have faded from his memory. But you always find that he perfectly remembers the main facts of his life which have conduced to his intellectual and moral progress."

*308. Does a spirit remember all the existences which have preceded the one he has just quitted?*

"His entire past is spread out before him like the stages already accomplished by a traveller, but, as we have told you, he does not remember all his past actions with absolute precision; he remembers them more or less clearly in proportion to the influence they have had upon his present state. As to his earliest existences, those which may be regarded as constituting the period of spirit-infancy, they are lost in vagueness, and disappear in the night of oblivion."

*309. How does a spirit regard the body he has just quitted?*

"As an uncomfortable garment that hampered him, and that he is delighted to be rid of."

- *What feeling is produced in him by seeing the decomposition of his body?*

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"Almost always that of indifference; as something about which he no longer cares."

*310. After a time, does a spirit recognise the mortal remains, or other objects, that once belonged to him?*

"Sometimes he does so; but this depends on the more or less elevated point of view from which he regards terrestrial things."

*311. Is a spirit's attention attracted to the material relics of himself by the respect entertained for those objects by his survivors, and does he see this respect with pleasure?*

"A spirit is always gratified at being held in kindly remembrance by those he has left. The objects thus preserved in remembrance of him serve to recall him to the memory of those by whom they are preserved; but it is the action of their thought which attracts him, and not those objects."

*312. Do spirits retain the remembrance of the sufferings endured by them in their last corporeal existence?*

"They frequently do so; and this remembrance makes them realise all the more vividly the worth of the felicity they enjoy as spirits."

*313. Does he who has been happy down here regret his terrestrial enjoyments on quitting the earth?*

"Only spirits of inferior degree can regret material satisfactions in harmony with impurity of nature, and which are expiated by suffering. For spirits of higher degrees of elevation, the happiness of eternity is immeasurably preferable to the ephemeral pleasures of the earthly life."

**As the adult despises what constituted the delights of his infancy.**

*314. When a man, who has commenced a series of important labours in view of some useful end, has seen these labours interrupted by death, does he, in the other world, feel regret at having had to leave them unfinished?*

"No, because he sees that others are destined to complete them. On the contrary, he endeavours to act upon the minds of other human beings, so as to lead them to carry on what he had begun. His aim while upon the earth was to be useful to the human race: his aim is the same in the spirit-world."

*315. When a man has left behind him works of art or of literature, does he preserve for them in the other life the interest he took in them while living upon the earth?*

## THE SPIRITS' BOOK

"He judges them from another point of view, according to his elevation, and he often blames what he formerly admired."

*316. Does a spirit still take an interest in the labours which are going on upon the earth, in the progress of the arts and sciences?*

"That depends on his degree of elevation, and on the mission he may have to fulfil. What appears magnificent to you often appears a very small matter to spirits; if they take an interest in it, it is only as a man of learning takes an interest in the work of a school-boy. They examine whatever indicates the elevation of incarnated spirits and mark the degree of their progress."

*317. Do spirits, after death, retain any preference for their native country?*

"For spirits of elevated degree, their country is the universe; in regard to the earth, their only preference is for the place in which there is the greatest number of persons with whom they are in sympathy."

The situation of spirits, and their way of looking at things, are infinitely varied, according to their various degrees of moral and intellectual development. Spirits of a high order generally make but short sojourns upon the earth all that goes on here is so paltry in comparison with the grandeurs of infinity, the matters to which men attribute most importance appear to them so puerile, that the things of this earth have very little interest for them, unless they have been sent to it for the purpose of quickening the progress of its people. Spirits of lower degree visit our earth more frequently, but they judge its affairs from a higher point of view than that of their corporeal life. The common ruck of spirits may be said to be sedentary' among us they constitute the great mass of the ambient population of the invisible world. They retain very much the same ideas, tastes, and tendencies which they had while clothed with their corporeal envelope, and mix themselves up with our gatherings, our occupation, our amusements in all of which they take a part more or, less active according to their character. Being no longer able to satisfy their material passions, they take delight in witnessing the excesses of those who abandon themselves to their indulgence, to which they excite them by every means in their power. Among their number are some who are better disposed, and who see and observe in order to acquire knowledge and to advance.

*318. Do spirits modify their ideas in the other life?*

"Very considerably. A spirit's ideas undergo very great modifications in proportion as he becomes dematerialised, He may sometimes retain the same ideas for a long period, but little by little the influence of matter diminishes, and he sees more clearly. It is then that he seeks for the means of advancing."

*319. As spirits had already lived in the other world before being incarnated, why do they feel astonished on re-entering that world?*

## ALLAN KARDEC

"This feeling is only momentary, and results from the confusion that follows their waking; they soon recover their knowledge of themselves, as the memory of the past comes back to them, and the impression of the terrestrial life becomes effaced." (Vide 163 et seq.)

**Commemoration of the Dead - Funerals**

*320. Are spirits affected by the remembrance of those whom they have loved on earth?*

"Very much more so than you are apt to suppose. If they are happy this remembrance adds to their happiness; if they are Unhappy, it affords them consolation."

*321. Are spirits specially attracted towards their friends upon the earth by the return of the day which, in some countries, is consecrated to the 'memory of those who have quitted this life? Do they make it a point to meet those who, on that day, go to pray beside the graves where their mortal remains are interred?*

"Spirits answer to the call of affectionate remembrance on that (lay as they do on any other day."

*- Do they, on that day, go specially to the burial-place of their corporeal body?*

"They go to the cemeteries in greater numbers on that day, because called thither by the thoughts of a greater number of persons, but each spirit goes solely for his own friends, and not for the crowd of those who care nothing about him."

*- In what form do they come to these places, and what would be their appearance if they could render themselves visible to us?*

"The form and appearance by which they were known during their lifetime."

*322. Do the spirits of those who are forgotten, and whose graves no one visits, go to the cemeteries notwithstanding this neglect? Do they feel regret at seeing that no one remembers them?*

"What is the earth to them ? They are only linked to it by the heart. If, upon the earth, no affection is felt for a spirit, there is nothing that can attach him to it; he has the whole universe before him."

*323. Does a visit made to his grave give more pleasure to a spirit than a prayer offered for him by friends in their own home?*



## THE SPIRITS'' BOOK

"A visit made to his grave is a way of showing to a spirit that he is not forgotten; it is a sign. As I have told you, it is the prayer that sanctifies the action of the memory; the place where it is offered is of little importance, if it come from the heart."

*324. When statues or other monuments are erected to persons who have quitted this life, are the spirits of those persons present at their inauguration; and do they witness such ceremonies with pleasure?*

"Spirits often attend on such occasions, when able to do so; but they attach less importance to the honours paid to them than to the remembrance in which they are held."

*325. What makes some persons desire to be buried in one place rather than in another? Do they go thither more willingly offer their death? And is it a sign of inferiority on the part of a spirit that lie should attribute importance to a matter so Purely material?*

"That desire is prompted by a spirit's affection for certain places and is a sign of moral inferiority. To an elevated spirit, what is one spot of earth more than another? Does he not know that his soul will be reunited with those he loves, even though their bones are separated?

*- Is it futile to bring together the mortal remains of all the members of a family in the same burial-place?*

"Such reunion is of little importance to spirits; but it is useful to men, whose remembrance of those who have gone before them is thus strengthened and rendered more serious."

*326. When the soul has returned into spirit-life, is it gratified by the honours paid to its mortal remains?*

"When a spirit has reached a certain degree of advancement, he is purified from terrestrial vanities, for he comprehends their futility. But there are many spirits who, in the early period of their return to the other life, take great pleasure in the honours paid to their memory, or are much disturbed at finding themselves forgotten; for they still retain some of the false ideas they held during their earthly life."

*327. Do spirits ever attend their own funeral?*

"Spirits very often do so; but, in many cases, without understanding what is going on, being still in the state of confusion that usually follows death."

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- *Do they feel flattered by the presence of a large concourse of persons at their funeral?*

"More or less so, according to the sentiment which has brought them together."

*328. Is a spirit ever present at the meetings of his heirs?*

"Almost always. Providence has so ordained it for the spirit's own instruction, and for the chastisement of selfishness. The deceased is thus enabled to judge of the worth of the protestations of affection and devotion addressed to him during his life and his disappointment on witnessing the rapacity of those who dispute the property he has left is often very great. But the punishment of greedy heirs will come in due time."

*329. Is the respect which mankind, in all ages and among all peoples, has always instinctively shown to the dead, to be attributed to an intuitive belief in a future state of existence?*

"The one is the natural consequence of the other; were it not for that belief, such respect would have neither object nor meaning."