

The Release of a Spirit.

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EXPERIENCES OF THE SPIRIT OF AN ENGLISH CLERGYMAN'S DAUGHTER IN HER TRANSITION FROM THIS TO THE SPIRIT-REALM—AN INTERESTING REVELATION.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

The story which will be told you this night is the personal experience of one who passed away from earth but a few years ago, and both the human state and the spirit state described is a distinct and truthful account of what was experienced by the one from whom it is given. The usual control of the one standing before you assists in presenting this statement, but in all respects it is according to the wish of the one whose story is given.

You will bear in mind when this is given, that, perhaps, it is not so different from many human lives, and the object in presenting it is that each may know that there is something within the individual to overcome, and not to altogether visit one's blame, or reproach, or judgment, upon others.

It is related in the first person as coming from the lady—for it is the experience of a woman.

I was the daughter of an English clergyman. I was born and reared among what are known as gentle folks of England; neither high enough to feel the pressing weight of any title, nor in that sphere of life that is so humble as to feel that one would like to climb higher. I had the advantage of a good education,

my father being my tutor. I was not sent away to boarding school or to other schools for young girls, but remained in my father's home. My mother passed from earth life while I was very young; but a maiden aunt took the place of my mother.

So far as I can judge, there was nothing unusual in my life or surroundings, but I had a distinctly independent disposition. I liked to read books that girls, perhaps, are not usually fond of. I had the training, and also the approval of my father in perusing those books, but it led to the thought of my being strong-minded, but not in the usual sense of the word as seeking some public career or contributing to the literature of the country; I had no such aspirations. After spending very much of my companionable girlhood with my father I had an independence of action not usually accredited to young girls.

I married the man of my choice. It was thought by every one who knew me that I had entered upon a life of happiness.

The man of my choice was not a titled man; he was not in any profession, as the law, medicine or clerical profession open to the sons of gentlemen, but he pursued the only kind of business that gentlemen in England were expected to pursue, for after the three professions everything else was considered as belonging among the trades-people; he was a member of the Royal Stock Exchange of London. He was a good business man, and therefore we entered upon our married life with every prospect of material success. We had a pleasant home with very beautiful and luxuriant surroundings. So far as I remember there were few wishes or desires that I did not have granted. I do not think my tastes were extravagant, but they were rather fastidious.

Our lives went on smoothly; I suppose we were happy. Then there came a sudden change in what I considered the waywardness of my companion.

Mine was a very independent nature, as I have told you, and I distinctly took a stand. I believed that my happiness had been wrecked, that my past had been blasted and my life had been clouded utterly by him. Though under the laws of England I still must bear his name, still must live beneath the same roof for support, I went no more with him in public places, no more to be seen as his wife. In every way possible I tried to do my duty. To all other people I felt kind, and in every direction that I could I extended my acts of kindness.

I was always true to my individual convictions in religion. Very early in the cause of Spiritualism I came into a knowledge

of its facts and of spirit communion. But in my home there was always this barrier. I was sympathized with by my friends as far as I would allow them to sympathize with me. Everyone I knew supposed that I was the injured party; they believed that I had everything to forgive, and that nothing on my part had been wrong. I went on and on in that thought, my heart and mind erecting added barriers, and more and more the alienation continued.

I tell you this, not because it is a pleasant story, but for that which will follow.

Years were passed in this way. Much of that time I was in a large dwelling (I cannot call it a home) alone. I had servants and carriages at my command. I had a private bank account, which was always maintained for me, from which I drew whatever was needed for the necessities and luxuries of existence. But this shadow never lifted, never lifted, there never came one moment of relenting or reconciliation.

At last when, weary of wandering, he came home, we two subsisted in the same dwelling, in the same house, utter strangers. Two sets of servants attended us, and so far as we were concerned we were strangers. Sometimes, perhaps, the stiffest courtesy, such as might pass between casual acquaintances, passed between us. I now firmly believe, in fact I know, that for years each of us was waiting to see which would outlive the other.

I do not think I had murder in my heart; I know I did not, for I shrank at the sight of pain or the doing to any one the slightest wrong, but I often caught myself wishing that he might go, for I thought, from my standpoint, that my human life was better than his and I could do some good with what was left.

What he thought he alone must tell; but I sincerely supposed that he wished me out of the way. Perhaps he did many times.

There was always a consciousness on my part of having done no wrong. There was always a consciousness of being sustained by the few friends that I still held converse and association with. Of course I had withdrawn from all society. In that large abode in the center of the largest metropolis in the world I was just as much in prison as if I had been behind the bars. So was he. It is true that I had outdoor air; it is true that I could come and go when I chose, yet the one great barrier of shadow between us made of this a prison wall, made this a prison house, and it continually augmented, because the more I dwelt upon the enormity of his

offenses, the more did they increase, until they became absolutely insurmountable.

I thought that in the next state of existence we would never meet; that two lives so utterly at variance, whose tastes had proven to be so utterly opposite, whose moral perceptions were so different (I considered mine superior of course) could never meet. Such ministration as I could receive in my feeble condition of life was given me. I had the highest instruction, which I accepted, so far as I knew, in their purity and perfection, but always colored by my own condition. Even the words of general ministration would seem to me to apply to my own case.

I felt that it would be a happy time when one or the other of us was released, and the time came after great physical and mental suffering when I felt it would be a great relief for me to go. I prayed to go.

Under the same roof he also was ill. At last my illness took such a violent form I knew quite well that I should soon go. I did not know then of his condition. Those who attended upon him said nothing. But it actually transpired that after years of this kind of life we passed away from earth within a few days of each other. Neither knew that the other was at the point of death, and I, who survived him by a few days, did not know in my earthly consciousness when he passed away.

I entered spirit life perfectly conscious that I was going; perfectly aware, I supposed, of the state into which I would enter. I never dreamed but what my instructors, my guardian spirits, would be the first to welcome; that my dear mother, who had passed away many years before when I was a child, and my father, who had been my tutor, would be there the very first to welcome me.

You can imagine my surprise; you can imagine what overtook me when I tell you, that he from whom I had been separated, to all intent and purpose for years, to whom I had scarcely spoken though we had lived beneath the same roof, was the first to receive me. He, apparently, was in a happier condition than I was. For with the passing away of my physical body, which had become wasted by disease, I found the most inscrutable change. I seemed to myself constantly to be accompanied by some wrong. I seemed to stand before a retrospect that made my life not seem to me as perfect in its toleration, in its pride, in its conscious purity. I stood before a bar of judgment which made my life seem selfish to me; that made me feel as if I had been sitting in judgment upon

a human being without knowing all of the circumstances, and that I had arrived at a conclusion hastily, and that I had adhered to that conclusion with the strongest tenacity of will. It seemed to me then, as this spiritual consciousness flooded my brain, that I had been supremely selfish. I recollected that I had selfish desires and feelings that partook of the nature of arrogant judgment concerning this one human being. I recollected that my feelings were often vindictive; that I regarded my life as having been wasted and despoiled, and my happiness ruined. I recollected that I had sought in every possible way to magnify to myself the offenses that had been committed against me. I had never tried to overlook any fault in him. I had never tried to find out the cause of his constant failings or peculiarity of temper. I had never tried to remember that my very austerity at times might have been repellant. So with a face that was like the one that tinged my early life and won my love; with a countenance that did not seem to me to bear the stamp of all that I had attributed to that life, this spirit came to me and said:

"I must, at the very threshold of this spirit life, ask your forgiveness for what I have made you suffer. I, too, suffered; what I suffered you do not know. It was not caused by you, but by my own shortcomings. I am not here to torment you. I will go my way, but first I ask your forgiveness."

It then seemed to me that I had been the selfish one. I looked back over the years of our life together, and I saw many instances where I had repelled instead of encouraged, and it then seemed to me that my fault was the one to be condoned; yet some pride, or whatever it was that had existed in my earthly life, prevented me from making this known to him.

That he might have seen it if he had been spiritually discerning is true. But he never gave a word nor sign that he saw my contrition.

From that time, I assure you, friends, until a very short period ago, I have been busy with my own retrospect; busy becoming reconciled to myself, and busy becoming reconciled to him, who, through his own more pliable nature, found the reaction and the repentance before he left the earthly form, and who, had I not been cold, full of pride and full of self-praise, would have told me all that he acknowledged at the gateway of my spirit existence.

Did I not see my spirit mother? you will ask. Did I not have immediate conversation with my father?

Instead of going exultingly and joyfully into their presence; instead of thinking they would be the first to welcome me, I said to whatever powers there are in the spirit world: "Do not let them come to me now. Do not let them see me in this overwhelming condition in which I find myself of humility and self-examination." Some voice of guiding spirit or friend said: "No spirits will come to you until you wish them to; no one will force one's self upon your presence. This life, pointing to the one who had been my companion on earth, must come to you because of that between you which must be reconciled first. Overcoming his selfishness he has endeavored to condone for it, and that is what you have to do."

You know, friends, if you have ever striven to conquer pride; if you have ever thought yourself in the right and at the same time knowing in your deepest conscience that you were measurably wrong; if you have felt this struggle between that individual pride of self-righteousness and the wish and desire to forgive; if you have known what it is to stand assailed at the bar of your own conscience and awake to the knowledge that, although technically and in every human sense you were in the right; still in the deeper sense, you were profoundly wrong—wrong in self-praise, in self-righteousness, in condemning others without understanding their natures; then you know what happened to me on my very entrance into spirit state.

I have met this pride which was an obstacle; this unrelenting and unforgiving nature which was a barrier; this that was my disappointed self-love, and I have had, step by step, to overcome it. I brought my intelligence to bear. That would not suffice; intelligence alone will not do this. I thought I could overcome it by the same logic, by the same rules of mind with which I endeavored to meet all sorrows when they came to me. But I find that does not suffice, even that is not sufficient. I was really immured within the walls and barriers of my own creation; walls and barriers that were not offenses against the world; were not offenses against any human being in the world, but walls and barriers of self-love, self-pride, of praising myself for not being as others were. All the time I found I had been contrasting my own life with the life of the one who, I supposed, had wronged me.

If you have ever been in a dimly lighted prison, empty of all things except the consciousness of being in prison, with only a faint glimmer of light above you, and put out your hand as if to touch the shadowy dimness around you, and have felt that this was

your only habitation, you may know how I felt; for it seemed to me as though this could never be forgiven. I had actually made this condition, having greater opportunity and greater intelligence than many others, and I had known that the spirit states were the exact production of our inner lives; yet I had lulled myself into the conviction that what my mind accepted as true, would be my spiritual condition, never thinking that the real state of my heart, life and soul would constitute my spiritual state. I did not dream that this one great barrier, this one great sorrow had become the corrosive selfishness that had sapped the foundation of my real spiritual life. I did not dream while thinking in mind, which was perfectly clear, of all the beauties of spirit existence that I had admitted none of them into the dark subterranean passages of my sorrow. I held on to this; I retained this skeleton of life. I had said: "I am the victim of a great wrong," and I had kept so close to that, excepting when my mind received this knowledge and in mind pictured the spiritual state, that I had not lived in the spiritual knowledge.

So I entered into my inheritance, to the inheritance of a corrosive sorrow; to the inheritance of the selfishness that was proud of that sorrow; to the inheritance that had made that sorrow (because being unforgiving) the inheritance of unforgiveness; and if there is any offense that the spirit feels more than another on awakening, it is the sense of having been hardened toward another who was erring or unfortunate, or had had different conditions or surroundings in childhood. This, as I said before, had grown to such magnitude that it was a prison house in which I found myself.

But why still a prison house? Because I still found myself unrelenting. The countenance that met me received no smile in response; the words that met me received no recognition; there was no feeling at that instant of forgiveness. I felt defrauded. I thought that I had been robbed. I even felt that I had been robbed of my mortal life because of this sorrow when I might have gone on doing others good.

Alas! how little good one does who is pre-occupied with a great sorrow, and only extending the hand of kindness here and there because one must. How little good one can do when one's entire life is wrong; when conscience, conviction and all that belongs to the nature and disposition are wedded to an error that is the error of a magnified selfishness. I do assure you, dear friends, and I speak this from a different standpoint than that

which I had when in earth life, that the wrong and error of feeling that one has been aggrieved, and of bearing that forward through a whole life-time and entering spirit existence with that upon one's heart and life, and the pride that will not bend, and the nature that will not give way, is in and of itself a greater barrier than almost any number of impulsive actions; for impulses may be only superficial, but they also lead one back more readily. Such natures rebound more readily. That was why this smiling face came out of spirit existence to meet me whom he had wronged. I was neither smiling nor happy, nor willing to forgive.

Oh, such coldness! It must come when every-day-life helps to build up barriers of spiritual condition, when we have forged our own chains, thinking all the while that we are better, wiser, truer and more exalted than others. I would not have told a lie had I lost my life by not doing it. I would not have committed any of the acts which I thought he had committed, and yet there was that in my disposition and nature that refused, when he came asking forgiveness, to bestow it on entering spirit life.

Could I then see my mother, my father, my spiritual teachers and friends? How could I be aware that their countenances were beaming upon me, and that they could read my very heart, and life, and soul?

So I resisted; so I turned to the human shadow, and ever and anon this same proffer would come to me and ever it was spurned, until at last I was compelled by the retrospect from within and by the voice and admonition from above, I was compelled to see my own state, and the words of the Great Teacher, which I had heard my father speak so often in his pulpit, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," came ringing through my consciousness.

I had not been religious in the sense of my father's religion. I thought I had a conviction of right and duty. Before Spiritualism came I was agnostic as far as a woman can be, or could be in England at that time. But I now discovered the singular meaning of this prayer. If we are not in a state to forgive, how can we even be in a state to forgive ourselves, to forgive our own offenses, to understand our own spiritual natures? And it swept in and through my consciousness that I must be in a state of unforgiveness because of my own offense against my better and higher nature; because I was rebellious, and so hardened, so selfish and so proud, even in that isolation and purity, which I flattered myself was mine.

When the humility comes, when the disposition comes to allow one to be willing to learn that there may be vagabonds on the streets or outcasts that we turn from our doors who have better spiritual states than that state of unrelenting hardness, and when one is aware that the faults of these erring ones are of a more physical than spiritual nature and can be outgrown quicker than the fault of pride, of self-consciousness, then one learns that in the realm of spirit life one meets one's shadows face to face, and what one has been and has lived must first be met and first overcome. So there was nothing to do but to forgive first and last the great shadow of one's life. To speak frankly and freely declare: "I have been in the wrong in my judgment. I have been proud. I have been arrogant. I have been selfish. I have been isolated, and I ask your forgiveness."

From those depths that every human life experiences; from that which every heart must turn to, these words and thoughts came at last with absolute truthfulness.

Need I say that we met in kindness, and that from that time he disappeared and came not into my spirit life again until I asked for him. He withdrew, and there was no more the prison: there was now no sadness. I could go as I pleased into all states and spheres, but he was not there.

It was not the inconsistency of the earthly woman, but it was the one great reaction of the spiritual life, that when it seemed that he was not to return, I did ask for and sought that presence to which I had been reconciled, before I asked for father or mother, or spirit friends.

Then there swept into my life the beautiful presence of my mother, dreamed of in all my childhood days; my father, my spirit guides and friends. They have known it all; they have seen this entire struggle; they have been able to penetrate my shadow while I begged to be spared the knowledge of their presence, and they understood, having each had their own experience; for I am told by those who are very wise and very good, and those to whom I do not dare to look, knowing my own state, I am told that never a human being passes from the earth who has not some shadow, and that never a sinner or criminal, or one despised of men who has not some ray of light and of hope.

Our opportunities count against us. If we do not know; if we have not been told; if we do not understand even with the head, we are not so responsible as if we have been told and know, yet refuse to have it enter our hearts. I who had arrayed all my

intellect; I who had arrayed all my opportunities and advantages against this one whom I thought had injured me, was more responsible for my pride, for my unforgiveness than one who had no such opportunity. Therefore I had to work it out alone.

I do not mean to say that the spirit world deserted me while I sorrowed. I do not mean to say that there could not have been at any time companions and friends; but you understand what I mean when I tell you, dear friends, that we work out these problems alone; they are with our own consciences—not with the consciences of others; they are our own shortcomings—not those of others. We must have the struggle. We must gain the victory if it is gained at all, and it is in the silence of our own souls that we do this. We do not go and bend before any shrine or any magnificent altar in the presence of any judge or angels to do this.

I was in the dimness of my own shadowed state. I had fashioned my prison house of my own condition, and I must work myself out of that state by conquering it. That this has come to me at last; that I stand here to-night to declare it to you, permitted by the guides and teachers of this medium; that I do this without any thought, excepting to declare to you that which came to me and, by analogy, that which may come to all, and that I being in the average state of human beings, but being surrounded by better conditions than many people, still have this to do, and that I found those in deeper earthly shadows, who were less spiritually enthralled, is the lesson that I must bring.

Now together we solve those problems of life that we refused to solve together here. Together we may minister to those whom we refused to minister to on earth; and together, when necessary and best, we receive the messages of inspiration from those who are above and beyond us. While I am admitted into the presence of my mother, and my wise, kindly and truly Christian father has received me into his presence and counsel, yet, dear friends, I feel that it is presumptuous for me to thus address you. I feel that it is presumptuous for me to offer my experience as of any value, excepting that it is of value to say to each individual life: That one may be proud, one may be what the world calls honorable, and one may live what one thinks to be a true life, and yet be so far from the spiritual kingdom by the very barriers of self-love and self-praise.

Into that prison house I cannot pass again, for now do I know that neither deed, nor word, nor thought of mine was of any value until I could learn the lesson of self-humiliation and of forgive-

ness for a supposed wrong. For how can one continue to bear against another a hardened thought or wish and ever perceive the light, and beauty, and strength, and hope of spiritual existence?

If you have an enemy, forgive him before you sleep this night, lest ere the morning comes your spirit may be wafted from the human body and you find yourself in prison, since you abide in the prison house here on earth but do not know you are in the shadows. If any one has wronged you unintentionally, of course there can be no offense. If that one intended to wrong you, forgive him, lest you add to that offense by an offense of your own.

Thus shall human life become more and more perfect, and more easily solve the problems of daily existence, and thus shall selfishness cease to be the everlasting barrier between the human life and the higher life of the soul itself. I thank you.