

LOVE'S CHAPLET

By the Author of

"LIGHT ON THE PATH"

and

"THE IDYLL OF THE WHITE LOTUS"

"Who at last,
A youth, stands somewhere crowned, with silent face."
The Vase of Life.—DANTE ROSSETTI.

LONDON
THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING SOCIETY
161 NEW BOND STREET, W.
1905

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. THE MYSTERY OF THE ACTION OF LOVE	7
2. LOVE'S MARTYRDOM	17
3. THE FIRST VESTURE	19
4. THE SECOND VESTURE	35
5. THE THIRD VESTURE	49
6. THE FULFILMENT	55
7. THE VISION	61

LOVE'S CHAPLET

I

THE MYSTERY OF THE ACTION OF LOVE

LOVE'S Chaplet is the crown of the immortal spirit when it has become entirely purified and deathless, and has cast off all those parts of itself which are vestures. The laying down of these vestures constitutes the change known as death, and while the spirit is liable to such changes it is uncrowned. But during the period in which the process of change is taking place the chaplet

is being formed and prepared ; for the spirit cannot enter among the company of the immortals uncrowned, nor pass into the deathless state until the flowers have grown and bloomed that are to form the crown. These flowers are each the developed shape of a perfected and completed friendship. The perfecting involves purification, and extreme suffering is often a part of the process. From that which men call love, and which is the seed from which the flower springs, thousands of seedlings spring in the course of the incarnations. From among these seedlings the force called fate selects some which are strong enough to rise triumphantly above the rest and to continue to grow after these others have long since succumbed

and withered away. But they do not attain to fulfilment until the spirit has become deathless; which means that it is no longer subject to space or time or embodiment in flesh, but is encased in its own spiritual sheath and shape which is to serve it for an eternity of energy and power. This is the wedding garment; for the two have become one. The two only become one when all is accomplished, when all is finished, that necessitates pilgrimage in the dusty, weary ways of earth. Flowers spring by the way and birds sing overhead, and flutter from tree to tree; rivulets burst forth from the rock, and lakes appear in the dry land. These things make the pilgrimage endurable, and very often are so delightful that the joy in them blots out the

pain of the incessant movement ; but nothing alters the character of the movement—it is that of pilgrimage. There is no standing still, and even to pause is dangerous, for then it is possible to slip back ,unconsciously. The soul is seeking itself, seeking the permanent contact which constitutes real life ; and if that were attainable during the incarnations, then the progress of the race from the abyss in which it was born to the daylight of infinite consciousness would be arrested. Therefore it is that even the most advanced souls only encounter those other souls which are the counterpart of themselves for a brief space during an incarnation—for just long enough to awaken them to the fact that a great future depends upon continual effort, and progress without pause.

MYSTERY OF ACTION OF LOVE II

As soon as the awakening comes the parting comes. Foreknowing this, fear falls upon great souls with the advent of great love, for the pain which is God's sword-thrust must follow. That which is God's sword can work nothing but good; and men's lives and souls cannot be tampered with by any less power than by the God of the æon who guides men to the Gateway. Therefore it is that men who are wise welcome sorrow as well as joy, knowing it to be a touch of the guider, pointing out the way. Each soul that has suffered and attained to the deathless state brings to the marriage feast its flowers for the crown and its own material for the wedding garment. Wherefore it is that the perfect friend of friends and the sublime love born of

meeting with that friend, stand apart in every life. That friendship does not grow into a flower for the chaplet. The perfected and deathless being who is crowned and clothed in the wedding garment, becomes one of a far more glorious and stupendous circlet, drawn into shape by sublime sympathy as the stars in space are drawn into their places by attraction. Thus it is that eventually all the immortals arrive upon the scene where they are to enact the great drama which is the goal and object of the pilgrimage, and each one takes his appointed position. Love has drawn them hither, and nothing else can do it. It is the highest power with which the highest part of man has contact. That there are higher powers we know, because love itself is ruled and directed,

although to man in his normal state it appears as though it were the ruler and director. Man has not the power to guide or order it; he is to it as the wire to the electric current, and if it enters into him he becomes imbued with it, and overwhelmed by it. Those who have attained psychic sight know that there are beings who have the power to direct the current and to use the wire. It means a new birth to the man so used, and the end is thus partly accomplished, and partly also by the awakening of that other towards whom the current of his being sets.

The mystery of the action of love is to a certain extent explained by this fact. It is only occasionally called into being by the loveableness of the object; that is only one

cause among many, and it is one that only exists where the object belongs to a higher sphere than the one who loves. By such a love as this the lover is drawn upward, and so guided on his path. In most cases the cause and the reason are quite independent of the character of the one loved, except that the lack of virtue and strength, or the positive evil in that character, may make human love absolutely essential for its progress and advantage; and then the powers which guide and lead mankind direct the current upon him, as a gardener would give sunshine to a sickly plant. Love is the electricity which not merely gives growth but gives life; and to the barren soil of a darkened heart it comes as the sun comes upon moist earth; seedlings appear at once.

MYSTERY OF ACTION OF LOVE 15

The spiritual life of man corresponds with his physical life while he is embodied, and moisture is needed by the seedling in his nature, as well as by the seedling in the earth on which he stands. This moisture is a greater and more marvellous gift than the sun-ray or the current of love, because it arises from the complex nature of the being of man and his atmosphere, as it arises from the complex nature of the substance of the earth and its atmosphere. It is from the well-spring of man's own heart that the necessary moisture comes for his growth, and it is by pain, and grief, and loss, and deprivation, and jealousy, and disappointment, that the heart is made to yield the moisture, and the being of man is softened and made plastic and

capable of growth. The flower of friendship is a vital part of this growth, and demands the moisture.

II

LOVE'S MARTYRDOM

THE martyrdom is a literal one, not the result of unsatisfied or unrequited love, but the burning out and destruction of the material shape of the love. From its funeral ashes rises the spiritual shape which is able to become a part of the chaplet. The struggle and stress of mortal life is a continual burning, a constant fire, in which the soul and its parts are purified. Its loves are consumed utterly away in this crucible if they are not of a spiritual nature. The weariness of exhausted longing, of satiety, are

an essential part of the martyrdom. Vain loves in which the spiritual essence is lacking disappear altogether under the test of experience. They vanish like dew under the noonday sun, and the soil is left dry and barren, unwatered by the tears of the soul, for such loss causes no deep grief.

Disillusionment and a sense of fatigue is all they leave behind, and in time, even in the course of the same incarnation, they may be, and often are, utterly forgotten. But the birth of a great love is the birth of an immortal thing, which, though springing from a fresh seed in each life, comes from that past which is as mysterious as the future.

III

THE FIRST VESTURE

WE begin to die as soon as we are born. That is why what we call birth and death on this plane of life are practically the same thing ; they are the beginning and end of the same event. This event is only one step in the pilgrimage. The pilgrim is that which is making itself a purified and crowned immortal, fit to rank with the gods evolved by the creative fire in the immensity of the past, who rule the elemental forces of this present age and guard the pilgrim from the dangers of his path. It is

while he is hampered by the first vesture, which makes him human, that man is unable to see his way, or to hear the voices around him, or to feel the divine touches. Veiled and fettered by the human shape, he moves with difficulty along the narrow path which is his way, and if he yields to the guidance of the gods who watch him he will keep upon that path, though it may be with bitter pain, and so advance towards freedom. If he rebels against the power that presses him on he will fall hither and thither into the abysses which yawn upon each side, and then it is the task of the gods to draw him back, and drag him upward, no matter how keen the suffering his salvation may cause him. The creative fire which has formed these powers in the past has used pain as its chief

tool in the chiselling of their sublime character, and they are aware of its great value and use it unhesitatingly when need arises. It is always close to man, a force to be set in motion instantaneously ; and his first vesture is so made as to be sensitive to it in every direction and in every degree. When the vesture with which the spirit commences to clothe itself upon entering earth life is laid aside, pain is laid aside with it. The force is there still, as strong as ever, but it is without effect upon the disembodied spirit. The laying aside of this first vesture does not take place until the spirit has prepared its crown of glory and is ready to pass beyond the incarnations. The intervals between the incarnations have therefore that within them which gives them a similarity to the dream-consciousness ; threads

from the past are weaving the pattern of the future in the awful loom of fate, and the sensitiveness of the worn-out bodies is creating the sensitiveness of the bodies yet to be put on. Therefore, though the soul is disembodied between the incarnations, and revels in its freedom from limitation and pain, it holds within its kernel the connecting threads from the past to the future, and knows that which lies behind, and gazes on at that which is yet to come. This being so, it is not a truly disembodied being as it is when the end of the pilgrimage is reached and the vesture is finally and fully laid aside for ever. There is then no longer any link with earth or with any material state; that which is now called man is far below and behind that place where his spirit shall stand, completed in itself and

splendidly adorned by the chaplet which it has drawn from out of material experiences as flowers are drawn by the sun from the soil.

In the first putting on of this first vesture, at the beginning of the incarnations, the spirit did not place itself in conditions of pain. Pleasure ruled, and frequently dominated whole lives and successive lives. This was done by the advice of the gods, who knew that unless the spirit entered willingly upon the path it would never be trodden to the end. For this reason pain only lightly touches the spirit until pleasure has begun to be fulfilled and to cease to satisfy. At its first coming it appears to be a thing which can be warded off—pushed back—avoided. But as the incarnations advance and the spirit evolves itself, it makes its vesture finer and

more susceptible to sensation ; pleasure becomes ecstasy, so intense is it when it is experienced ; pain is never absent.

It never can be absent, because growth and evolution make the spirit conscious of its limitations and fetters ; the power and life of a young body, which seemed like freedom to the spirit which has newly put on such a vesture, is recognised, as the incarnations progress, to be a manacled state. That the manacles are new, and press upon new places which have not begun to be painful, does not deceive or reassure the conscious and developed spirit which is born into a fresh body. Perfectly aware that it is imprisoned, it cheerfully enters upon the task of accomplishing a step towards freedom during the incarnation, and this cheerful-

ness in effort wears the appearance of pleasure and deceives all superficial observers. Masses of men are inexorably placed in a condition of suffering, and suffer together from hunger, pestilence, or the horrors of war, because their souls have attained to the conditions when suffering is essential. In the later days of the life of the earth the souls which are a part of her begin to suffer in greater numbers, and more keenly in individual cases. With her development the souls which belong to her develop, and crowds of them are hurried on over steps of growth which are repugnant to them, by stress of physical and mental pain. On the finer souls which lead the race falls the greatest Cross of all, that of beholding the birth throes of the beings around them, and perceiving the anguish by

which immortality is attained. But though they long for deliverance as no condemned prisoner longs for escape from his cell, they go slowly and with profound attention over every step of the way, and are in no haste to cast the first vesture off. They know that no iota of experience can be ignored or treated lightly, and that perfect fulfilment can be accomplished only by a perfect growth. The first vesture expresses the form of the spirit that produces it when the incarnation is commenced; but it, in turn, becomes a formative power, in consequence of having obtained the capacity for action. That physical nature which has been called into being by an incarnating soul obtains a power over the following incarnations which is sometimes overwhelmingly cumulative, and the

gods are unable to arrest the soul in its descent into matter. The physical nature of man then occupies a similar position to that filled by a machine which has been constructed by a man who, when he comes to use it, finds himself unable to control or guide it. This possibility is the first danger incurred in assuming the vesture which is man's coat of skin, made of similar material to that of which the earth itself is composed. If the spirit succumbs to the earth principle in which it has made a temporary abode, it is in the position of a rider whose horse is the master and who dashes with him to destruction. The mystery of the character of that destruction is as great and as unintelligible to the human mind as the mystery of the crowned immortality which rewards those who con-

quer. It is the quality of the vesture in which the spirit has clothed itself for the sake of experience that makes these mysteries so inexplicable to it while it is human—it is like one who goes blindfolded purposely in order to win a prize. The prize won or lost, the bandage is removed, as there is no longer any reason to wear it. The lost soul sees in the final moment of its complete surrender to matter, what the prize is; and the knowledge thus acquired, converts destruction into re-birth. Those who are thrown into the outer darkness become aware that it is worth while to begin again at the very commencement of the pilgrimage. In many cases the power of physical and material pleasure is so great, that the spirit fails again and again when making its first attempt to find the

way through the experience of the physical. That there are other ways we know; the angels and archangels reach the places of peace and power at the hearth of the creative fire by many other paths. That of the human consciousness, with an opposing force to use and hold in leash like a wild beast, is the way devised for those who are not able to tread other and purer paths, to whom evolution is a matter of difficulty. The separation of the ways took place at a point in our spiritual history too far back for human consciousness to be aware of it, and the cause of the separation is too profound and spiritual for the mind of man to be able to grasp it if it were shown to him. At the moment of putting on the first vesture all possibility of understanding it is veiled from him,

until the end of his path is reached and he has cast aside all his vestures and recovered all his knowledge.

The first vesture is the outward physical form, with its passions and tendencies and its animal life. The putting on of this is like entering into a shaped vessel devised by an artificer, which is given to you as a garment, and which you may slowly change from within after you have entered it. The potter has devised the vessel and created it according to his divine intention ; into this an immortal being enters, one for whom it is a fit instrument for experience, and it becomes to him as his coat in which he must learn to live and work in such a manner that he can eventually conquer it and lay it aside. He must attain to such power that he can himself strip it off. This is a

feat not to be executed without much repetition of the attempt, and therefore the spirit of man is endowed with the capacity for frequent change of state, entering upon a bodiless condition at recognised intervals. The new body it enters into on reincarnating is to all intents and purposes the same as the old one; although it is a fresh and reconstructed vessel, it has the dreadful similarity that comes of a common origin; it is one of the innumerable shapes formed from the original model made by the artificer, with hands and feet and heart and lungs and brain and senses and all the passionate individual life which is inherent in these things, and which confuses and tempts and baffles the spirit. While the pilgrim is still only at the beginning of the way it seems to him that he has put on only this

one most external garment, and that he has the one task to accomplish, of conquering that. But when he has begun to conquer it, and is able to control it instead of being controlled by it, he discovers that it is only the first vesture, and that he has to become lord of himself on other planes than the physical. The artificer worked in many substances, some of them much more permanent than physical matter ; and that which is a man is a being formed of many shapes that live and move one within another, animated by the immortal creature, which is veiled by them and hidden within them. This creature has to learn to control the outer shapes in which it dwells, in the manner in which a charioteer controls his steeds ; its power contending for the mastery with the power inherent in each outer

shape. When it has been drawn hither and thither over the plane of physical life by its physical body, has revelled and rejoiced in the sensations to be thus experienced, and has learned the simple lesson that all such sensations are temporary, then it will stretch forth the power within itself as the hand of the charioteer is stretched forth, and will reign in the physical body and compel it to go in the direction of sensations which are permanent and of value. The physical body will resent this control to the very end, because it is incapable of apprehending the purpose it is compelled to serve. The glazing eye of the disintegrating body does not perceive the splendour of the world into which man passes at death ; it is the eye of his inner body which perceives that, and it is the

flash of that inner eye which is sometimes seen with awe and wonder for a fraction of an instant of time by those who stand beside the dying at the actual moment of death. The first vesture is laid aside for a time; the spirit is temporarily freed from its first vesture and enters upon a phase of great activity and delight in the second vesture, before that in its turn is laid aside.

IV

THE SECOND VESTURE

WHEN a battlefield is covered with the bodies of the slain, it is also covered by a crowd of beings standing above the shapes that have fallen from them. They are absorbed in the enjoyment of their new condition, and delighted by the ease with which they can move in their second vesture, now that they are no longer fettered by the first. By degrees they depart each to his own place, guided by the immortal creature within. Deep in the recesses of the being, this eternal part knows the places where its outer

shapes are to be, according to the laws of evolution and development. It controls the second vesture with comparative ease, because it has been using it as its means of communication with the first vesture during the incarnation. The hand of the spirit is clothed with the hand of this vesture before it is clothed with the hand of flesh and blood ; so that during the incarnation, if the spirit has mastered the flesh it has mastered the soul. But as the soul realises its new freedom, it in its turn enters upon the struggle for power ; and the first part of the interval between the incarnations is frequently taken up by this struggle. Should the soul conquer, the disaster is far greater than if the physical body conquers ; the abysses into which it is able to drag the spirit are much deeper than any

upon the physical plane. Ambition is the besetting sin of the soul of man ; and legions of souls will pass from a battlefield so filled with longing for personal distinction and conquest that incarnation after incarnation of successful warfare or enterprise fail to satisfy them ; love, the only true power belonging to the spirit of man, is forgotten by them ; and, blinded, they rush downwards, defying all the efforts of the charioteer.

But on the battlefield, as in all places of death, many souls when they shake off the fetters of the first vesture, forget all else but the one pure love and friendship which has beautified the incarnation through which they have just passed. Only the love which is spiritual and immortal has power to affect the freed soul of man. The loves of the

physical nature are laid aside with that vesture, as are hunger and thirst, and consciousness of cold and heat. Now is the period in which the purified loves so ripen and fulfil themselves that they can press inwards upon the life of the spirit itself. The soul of man lives in love, if it possesses love to live in, when the physical vesture is laid down. The gods desire that it should so live, because this is its best condition, and its best means of growth. If the man has entered upon the state in which love can guide him, during the past incarnation, and that current has been directed upon him, its power will be immensely increased from the moment he is released from the body. Those who have directed the current are now able to intensify it. The seed which was sown during the life upon earth, shoots up

full of vigour and strength. When lovers are parted upon earth, when the lives of lovers are cut short, when love is unfulfilled, none should grieve. Those who do so are as ignorant as those who regard death as a misfortune. Only the seed of love can be sown while the spirit is fettered by the first vesture; it cannot spring into life upon the physical plane. The fruition and the flowering of love and friendship take place in the ethereal world, where the spirit lives in its second vesture, and has powers and capacities which are latent while the first vesture is worn. The lover and friend who steps out into the ethereal world seeks the loved one, and wheresoever that loved one may be, has power to come near to him. If the soul has lived in love for many incarnations, and has

gathered many flowers of love, all the loved ones are sought on the release from the body, and together they enter upon a period of intense and glorious activity, building up the palace of love that belongs to the whole human race, forging links of love that cannot be broken, making beautiful the world of the composite soul of man, and helping the gods in their work. The second vesture, the ethereal shape, is possessed of godlike gifts and powers, and the association of those who love upon the ethereal plane helps on the evolution of man as nothing else can. The spiritualisation of an earthly love by suffering and separation is a great work, undertaken by those who guide men's lives, with the object of developing a love which will spring into such activity as this in the ethereal world. When the

separation is caused by the death of one while the other lives on, it is that the seed in the heart of the one that remains in the physical body may be spiritualised and enabled to come to life in the ethereal world. The soul which is already there holds fast the one that remains behind, and by the power of the link of love draws it up from the physical plane. By this means lovers and friends attain equality, and are made capable of association upon the ethereal plane, and of activity together in the ethereal world. The widowed heart that pines in loneliness in the physical life is only the husk in which the beautiful seed is hidden; in the dream-consciousness the soul knows that there is no separation possible between spiritual lovers. The love has to be purified, the husk of it has to disinte-

grate ; and then the love appears in its glorious reality, a great power, a sublime fact, a deathless flower of life.

It is because the powers and faculties of the second vesture so far exceed those of the first that no picture of that life can be given which can be understood by the physical brain, and the reassurance only comes to the soul that is still imprisoned during the temporary freedom of the dream-consciousness.

When the man has become a spiritual lover, capable of responding to the current of love when it is directed upon him and of sowing such a seed of friendship in his earthly experience as will grow into a flower in the ethereal world, he has approached the state of the gods. There are words used by even the most advanced and devoted members

of the human race in physical life which no longer have any meaning for him. Sacrifice is one of these. He is following in the path of the Buddha and the Christ, who descend among men to save them, and who leave it to those they save to speak of the sacrifice they have made. The man who loves prepares himself in the ethereal world, in association with those whom he loves, to live a life of love upon earth. He returns toward earth from the ethereal spaces, where he has been learning to build places of peace, to construct societies of souls, and to guide the character of the society of men into which he shall be born ; he returns full of ardour to help, and desire to save, equipped for the struggle against the opposing force, and full of love for his fellow-men. He knows that those who are his

friends, who are the flowers that are clustering about him to form his chaplet when the incarnations are at an end, will, if they do not meet him in the physical life, stretch out their hands to him from whatever place they may be in, and support him on his path. Each leans to each, each unflinchingly upholding the other, during the pilgrimage. So, in the great future, each that draws his fellows to him to form his crown and chaplet, himself blooms in the crown and chaplet of those others that bloom for him. So the immortals who step forth at the close of this pilgrimage will form a perfect building, stone laid close upon stone, and each stone held firmly in place by that on each side of it.

As the close of the life of the planet on which the special experi-

ence of mankind takes place draws near, the sufferings of the mass of men will intensify and become intolerable. This is inevitable. The lovers who are now gathering their chaplet together in the intervals between the incarnations are becoming fit tools for the gods to use for the hastening of the development of the race. None can be left behind; when the end comes near, the elder brothers, who will have learned to form associations filled with the power of love, will add their hands to draw the backward from the abysses into which they fall. They must be drawn thence and placed again upon the path, and this can only be done by pain and the uttermost bitterness of experience. The souls united by love, for whom hatred and evil are henceforward powerless, who have passed periods of

great joy and accomplishment in that world which was the home of the race before the fall into matter, return to the physical plane prepared to put their backward brethren through any torture that will lead to their salvation. As they approach the earth and commence to clothe themselves in that lining of the physical body called by some schools the astral body, they recover the power to influence mankind. They gather about the portals of physical life, forcing the reincarnating souls into bodies of pain, and compelling them to enter upon lives of hardship and suffering. They thrust back the suicides who would escape from the ordeal, into the bodies they attempt to leave, or into the bodies of infants. These elder brothers are even less merciful than the gods, because they have

shame for the race of which they are a part as well as the desire to help it. To this hour are there souls upon this earth who have never yet conquered the physical body, who are still dragged hither and thither by it over the fields of physical experience, and who have continued to be mastered by it throughout the centuries since this world began. The souls of love, whose chaplet is prepared, know what an awful risk to the whole race is incurred by these reckless ones; and although their name is legion, schools of special suffering are organised for them in which they must raise themselves from that lowest class in which they linger. It is the glorious soul of love, filled with unutterable joy, who leaves his marvellous home in the distance of the soul world, to lay upon his

brothers deep affliction, and unflinchingly guide them over the stones and thorny places. And when the man in his agony at last looks up from the physical plane on which he blindly persists in living—in spite of the fact that it is itself passing away into nothingness beneath his lingering feet—when he looks up, forced by pain, to find some other resting-place—he finds these souls of love upholding him, comforting him, pressing him close to hearts of love, leading him on up steps that he could never mount alone.

Such are the tasks of those who have begun to gather the flowers for their chaplets, but who still return to put on both the first and second vesture, and to enter into the common effort of the race.

V

THE THIRD VESTURE

THE apparition of fire and light, entirely unearthly in its character and nature, which men call pure spirit, the *numa* of St Paul, is still a vesture, an instrument, a glove upon the hand, and has the double constitution, as of the coat and its lining, in common with the first and second vestures. So long as the immortal creature within, the breath of life, is yet veiled by this brilliant and almost transparent robe, it is still a part of humanity, and it is still uncrowned. As the highly developed

being passes on through its later incarnations it passes longer portions of the intervals between them in the condition of pure spirit, exercising the powers and functions of the third vesture, and dwelling in a world where power is always beneficent, where love is the atmosphere of life, the only air that can be breathed. Those who return from that far place to share again the struggle of the race come only to heal, and soothe, and comfort. They are incapable of causing pain. Their touch is only perceptible to the purified souls who have a consciousness of the spiritual state.

To these spirits the bond of love which holds the chaplet together is an accomplished thing ; the crown is there, but it is not assumed, because the immortal creature is not yet free

and unveiled. It is not yet born into the condition of absolute purification and deathlessness which gives the right to live in love for ever. A vesture veils it still, though it be but a flame of light; the last sheath remains, and the divine butterfly is not yet released. The bond with the earth life still exists, and it draws the spirit back again within the circle of pain, towards incarnation. These spiritual members of the race seldom put on the first vesture; when they do incarnate, they take the place of the great teachers who come from time to time to raise the standard of thought and knowledge in the world. At the expiration of the interval spent in their far homes they return to the threshold of the physical world and act upon it by methods known only to themselves. They frequently

put on the second vesture and work in the ethereal world, and these, whose friendships have bloomed, form stupendous associations outside the physical world, which guide and lead and guard it. They cannot touch or appeal to the physical man direct, because he cannot apprehend their existence; but they are the spiritual leaders and guides of those whose power of love has come into being on the ethereal plane, and who have incarnated again in the first vesture. When freed from it in sleep or ecstasy, these have the entrance to the schools of love, and the laboratories for discovery, and the workshops for construction, which the spiritual members of the race who do not put on the first vesture, take charge of in the ethereal world during their periods of service to the earth. The

shepherding of the sheep and the feeding of the lambs is their task, and is done amid the glory and beauty of the ethereal world. The souls of the multitude that lie sleeping during the hours of physical darkness are the lambs they seek ; and only they can know how many of these come to their call and enter their flocks.

VI

THE FULFILMENT

THE whole race is indissolubly united; its fate is one. The fulfilment cannot come to any one of the spirits of man till the whole birth throe is accomplished. Therefore, to those who are radiant in the third vesture the labour and the stress is harder than for any who are further back in the path. They struggle and suffer for all, and they remain uncrowned and return to the arena of human life in the passionate endeavour to raise the race. Although

physical man cannot apprehend them and is unaware of their touch, they have the power to apprehend him, and they influence his environment. They are with the murderer when he commits the crime that makes him an outcast from his kind, and they strive for him unceasingly, because they know that no man can remain outcast, and that at some period the fulfilment must be his. They bring to him those in whom love has begun to stir and whom they can guide, and they urge them to effect his redemption. From incarnation to incarnation they strive for him. The ambitious souls who are possessed by this passion, the most dangerous to which man is subject, are never deserted by their spiritual brethren. The pioneers of the race, who have already penetrated to the furthest region of the

spiritual kingdom, and have all but torn away the last veil that separates them from the divine condition—these beings of unutterable purity and beauty are bound to the criminal by ties of kinship, and labour continually for him. They surround the man whose ambition has made him a monster, who has been led by it to initiate disastrous wars and to plunge nations into despair. The dreadful results of his deeds serve as the instruments by which suffering is caused to the multitudes of men to whom suffering is necessary; and while the gods and those who help them are busied in using the forces set in motion by his deeds to this end, the spiritual beings who are a part of mankind, seek ceaselessly for an opportunity to enlighten the man himself. Often his nature is found

to be susceptible to the current of love, and if his love brings him suffering, the dangerous growth of ambition will be destroyed in the crucible. The love will be purified and will bloom in its own place in the ethereal world, and the man who has been a great criminal in one incarnation, may thus, with the aid of his spiritual brethren, enter his next incarnation as a lover and in possession of the first flower of his chaplet. And thus all are striven for, and pressed forward, and helped up the steps that seem so steep to them. For the fulfilment cannot be delayed too long; there is a time when the birthday of the race is due, and when the whole of creation as we know it must be released from its present condition.

Mankind will then lay down the

last vesture, and, parting the robe of light which remains as the sole veil between it and the divine, will emerge as a perfected whole. Then each will be the loved one and the lover, united in one being, the two made one and clothed with the wedding garment. Then the flowers of love will attain fulfilment and take on the permanent character of divine things. Each perfected being will be a centre of love, crowned and made glorious by the rays from other hearts of love that glow with unimaginable beauty around him, forming the only crown which is worthy of the brow of man when he has become as the gods; and each will steadily send forth the rays from his heart of love to glow in the chaplets of those others whom he loves.

Then the firmament will pass
away and the earth will be no more ;
and man will need neither light of
lamp nor light of sun.

VII

THE VISION

FROM first to last man can behold the vision if he will. It is the vestures which obscure this sight, because their eyes perceive only that which exists upon the plane of action for which they are specially constructed. But the immortal creature within the innermost veil of all is never deprived of its link with the supreme. It cannot be deprived of it, for it is itself a part of that supreme. It is the divine essence creating temporary forms by which each minutest portion of itself acquires

the individuality that the Godhead demands of it. The change in the nature of the divine essence which this implies is a sacred mystery which cannot be touched by our intelligence. We only know that we cannot be separated from our Father. And at all times, even when the first vesture is of the most primitive type, and entirely crude and unresponsive to outward influences, by looking within, the man can behold the vision of the eternal. And always the still small voice speaks to him when he listens for it; the voice of the God of the whole to the God of the part. The most undeveloped being that has consciousness, the greatest criminal that exists, has at any time the power of contact and communication with the Godhead and all the parts of the whole if he desire to exercise it.

The flowers of Love's chaplet come from eternity as well as pass into it. The seeds that spring into plants capable of flowering in the ethereal plane were sown in the past which is veiled to us. The strangely familiar character common to all great things is the inherent proof of their eternal nature. In all the past we have known them, in all the future we shall know them. This is so with the great truths; it is so with the great loves. They are ours—they are ourself; and when we encounter them we recognise this.

The great upward rush of the race has set in, the end being within the vision of the pioneers. This means a great increase of suffering of every kind. It is the time now to clasp hands firmly and not let go; to form indissoluble bonds; and each up-

holding the other, to spring from the abysses, and to scale the heights, those in advance drawing the laggards with them ; and so to reach that end which is the beginning.

Δ