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THEOSOPHICAL MANUALS Nº VI.

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THE DEVACHANIC PLANE

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THE DEVACHANIC PLANE

THEOSOPHICAL MANUALS. No. 6

THE DEVACHANIC PLANE

OR

THE HEAVEN WORLD

ITS CHARACTERISTICS AND INHABITANTS

BY

C. W. LEADBEATER

SECOND EDITION
REVISED AND ENLARGED

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PREFACE.

Few words are needed in sending this little book out into the world. It is the sixth of a series of Manuals designed to meet the public demand for a simple exposition of Theosophical teachings. Some have complained that our literature is at once too abstruse, too technical, and too expensive for the ordinary reader, and it is our hope that the present series may succeed in supplying what is a very real want. Theosophy is not only for the learned; it is for all. Perhaps among those who in these little books catch their first glimpse of its teachings, there may be a few who will be led by them to penetrate more deeply into its philosophy, its science and its religion, facing its abstruser problems with the student's zeal and the neophyte's ardour. But these Manuals are not written only for the eager student, whom no initial difficulties can daunt; they are written for the busy men and women of the work-a-day world, and seek to make plain some of the great truths that render life easier to bear and death easier to face. Written by servants of the Masters who are the Elder Brothers of our race, they can have no other object than to serve our fellow-men.

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

Since further enquiry has shown that the word "Devachan" is etymologically inaccurate and misleading, the author would prefer to omit it altogether, and to issue this manual under the simpler and more descriptive title of "The Mental Plane." The publishers inform him, however, that this alteration of title would cause difficulties in the matter of copyright, and produce confusion in various ways, so he defers to their wishes.

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THE DEVACHANIC PLANE.

INTRODUCTION.

In the previous manual an attempt was made to describe to some extent the astral plane—the lower part of the vast unseen world in the midst of which we live and move unheeding. In this little book must be undertaken the still harder task of trying to give some idea of the stage next above that—the mental plane or the heaven-world, often spoken of in our Theosophical literature as that of Devachan or Sukhâvatî.

Although, in calling this plane the heaven-world, we distinctly intend to imply that it contains the reality which underlies all the best and most spiritual ideas of heaven which have been propounded in various religions, yet it must by no means be considered from that point of view only. It is a realm of nature which is of exceeding importance to us—a vast and splendid world of vivid life in which we are living now as well as in the periods intervening between physical incarnations. It is only our lack of development, only the limitation imposed upon us by this robe of flesh, that prevents us from fully realizing that all the glory of the highest heaven is about us here and now,

and that influences flowing from that world are ever playing upon us if we will only understand and receive them. Impossible as this may seem to the man of the world, it is the plainest of realities to the occultist; and to those who have not yet grasped this fundamental truth we can but repeat the advice given by the Buddhist teacher:—"Do not complain and cry and pray, but open your eyes and see. The light is all about you, if you would only cast the bandage from your eyes and look. It is so wonderful, so beautiful, so far beyond what any man has dreamt of or prayed for, and it is for ever and for ever." (*The Soul of a People*, p. 163.)

It is absolutely necessary for the student of Theosophy to realize this great truth, that there exist in nature various planes or divisions, each with its own matter of an appropriate degree of density, which in each case interpenetrates the matter of the plane next below it. It should also be clearly understood that the use of the words "higher" and "lower" with reference to these planes does not refer in any way to their position (since they all occupy the same space), but only to the degree of rarity of the matter of which they are respectively composed, or (in other words) the extent to which their matter is subdivided—for all matter of which we know anything is essentially the same, and differs only in the extent of its subdivision and the rapidity of its vibration.

It follows, therefore, that to speak of a man as passing from one of these planes to another does not in the least signify any kind of movement in space, but simply a change of consciousness. For every man has within himself matter belonging to every one of these planes, a vehicle corresponding to each, in which he can function upon it when he learns how this may be done. So that to pass from one plane to another is to change the focus of the consciousness form one of the vehicles to another, to use for the time the

astral or the mental body instead of the physical. For naturally each of these bodies responds only to the vibrations of its own plane; and so while the man's consciousness is focussed in his astral body, he will perceive the astral world only, just as while our consciousness is using only the physical senses we perceive nothing but this physical world —though both these worlds (and many others) are in existence and full activity all round us all the while. Indeed, all these planes together constitute in reality one mighty living whole, though as yet our feeble powers are capable of observing only a very small part of this at a time.

When considering this question of locality and interpenetration we must be on our guard against possible misconceptions. It should be understood that none of the three lower planes of the solar system is co-extensive with it except as regards a particular condition of the highest or atomic subdivision of each. Each physical globe has its physical plane (including its atmosphere), its astral plane, and its mental plane, all interpenetrating one another, and therefore occupying the same position in space, but all quite apart from and not communicating with the corresponding planes of any other globe. It is only when we rise to the lofty levels of the buddhic plane that we find a condition common to, at any rate, all the planets of our chain.

Notwithstanding this, there is, as stated above, a condition of the atomic matter of each of these planes which is cosmic in its extent; so that the seven atomic sub-planes of our system, taken apart from the rest, may be said to constitute one cosmic plane—the lowest, sometimes called the cosmic-prâkritic. The interplanetary ether, for example, which appears to extend through the whole of space—indeed must do so, at least to the farthest visible star, otherwise our physical eyes could not perceive that star—is composed of physical ultimate atoms in their normal and uncompressed

condition. But all the lower and more complex forms of ether exist only (so far as is at present known) in connection with the various heavenly bodies, aggregated round them just as their atmosphere is, though probably extending considerably further from their surface.

Precisely the same is true of the astral and mental planes. The astral plane of our own earth interpenetrates it and its atmosphere, but also extends for some distance beyond the atmosphere. It may be remembered that this plane was called by the Greeks the sublunar world. The mental plane in its turn interpenetrates the astral, but also extends further into space than does the latter.

Only the atomic matter of each of these planes, and even that only in an entirely free condition, is co-extensive with the interplanetary ether, and consequently a person can no more pass from planet to planet even of our own chain in his astral body or his mind-body, than he can in his physical body. In the causal body, when very highly developed, this achievement is possible, though even then by no means with the ease and rapidity with which it can be done upon the buddhic plane by those who have succeeded in raising their consciousness to that level.

A clear comprehension of these facts will prevent the confusion that has sometimes been made by students between the mental plane of our earth and those other globes of our chain which exist on the mental plane. It must be understood that the seven globes of our chain are real globes, occupying definite and separate positions in space, notwithstanding the fact that some of them are not upon the physical plane. Globes A, B, F, and G are separate from us and from one another just in the same way as are Mars and the earth; the only difference is that whereas the latter have physical, astral and mental planes of their own, globes B and F have nothing below the astral plane, and A

and G nothing below the mental. The astral plane dealt with in Manual V and the mental plane which we are about to consider are those of this earth only, and have nothing to do with these other planets at all.

The mental plane upon which the heaven-life takes place, is the third of the five great planes with which humanity is at present concerned, having below it the astral and the physical, and above it the buddhic and the nirvânic. It is the plane upon which man, unless at an exceedingly early stage of his progress, spends by far the greater part of his time during the process of evolution; for, except in the case of the entirely undeveloped, the proportion of the physical life to the celestial is rarely much greater than one in twenty, and in the case of fairly good people it would sometimes fall as low as one in thirty. It is, in fact, the true and permanent home of the reincarnating ego or soul of man, each descent into incarnation being merely a short though important episode in his career. It is therefore well worth our while to devote to its study such time and care as may be necessary to acquire as thorough a comprehension of it as is possible for us while encased in the physical body.

Unfortunately there are practically insuperable difficulties in the way of any attempt to put the facts of this third plane of nature into language—and not unnaturally, for we often find words insufficient to express our ideas and feelings even on this lowest plane. Readers of *The Astral Plane* will remember what was there stated as to the impossibility of conveying any adequate conception of the marvels of that region to those whose experience had not as yet transcended the physical world; one can but say that every observation there made to that effect applies with tenfold force to the effort which is before us in this sequel to that treatise. Not only is the matter which we must endeavour to describe much further removed than is astral

matter from that to which we are accustomed, but the consciousness of that plane is so immensely wider than anything we can imagine down here, and its very conditions so entirely different, that when called upon to translate it all into mere ordinary words the explorer feels himself utterly at a loss, and can only trust that the intuition of his readers will supplement the inevitable imperfections of his description.

To take one only out of many possible examples of our difficulties, it would seem as though on this mental plane space and time were non-existent, for events which down here take place in succession and at widely-separated places, appear there to be occurring simultaneously and at the same point. That at least is the effect produced on the consciousness of the ego, though there are circumstances which favour the supposition that absolute simultaneity is the attribute of a still higher plane, and that the sensation of it in the heaven-world is simply the result of a succession so rapid that the infinitesimally minute spaces of time are indistinguishable, just as in the well-known optical experiment of whirling round a stick the end of which is red-hot, the eye receives the impression of a continuous ring of fire if the stick be whirled more than ten times a second; not because a continuous ring really exists, but because the average human eye is incapable of distinguishing as separate any similar impressions which follow one another at intervals of less than the tenth part of a second.

However that may be, the reader will readily comprehend that in the endeavour to describe a condition of existence so totally unlike that of physical life as is the one which we have to consider, it will be impossible to avoid saying many things that will be partly unintelligible and may even seem wholly incredible to those who have not personally experienced that higher life. That this should be so is, as I

have said, inevitable, so readers who find themselves unable to accept the report of our investigators must simply wait for a more satisfactory account of the heaven-world until they are able to examine it for themselves: I can only repeat the assurance previously given in *The Astral Plane* that all reasonable precautions have been taken to ensure accuracy. In this case as in that, we may say that "no fact, old or new, has been admitted to this treatise unless it has been confirmed by the testimony of at least two independent trained investigators among ourselves, and has also been passed as correct by older students whose knowledge on these points is necessarily much greater than ours. It is hoped, therefore, that this account, though it cannot be considered as complete, may yet be found reliable as far as it goes."

The general arrangement of the previous manual will as far as possible be followed in this one also, so that those who wish to do so will be able to compare the two planes stage by stage. The heading "Scenery" would, however, be inappropriate to the mental plane, as will be seen later; we will therefore substitute for it the title which follows.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

Perhaps the least unsatisfactory method of approaching this exceedingly difficult subject will be to plunge *in medias res* and make the attempt (foredoomed to failure though it be) to depict what a pupil or trained student sees when first the heaven-world opens before him. I use the word pupil advisedly, for unless a man stand in that relation to one of the Masters of Wisdom, there is but little likelihood of his being able to pass in full consciousness into that glorious land of bliss, and return to earth with clear remembrance of that which he has seen there. Thence no accommodating "spirit" ever comes to utter cheap platitudes through the mouth of the professional medium; thither no ordinary clairvoyant ever rises, though sometimes the best and purest have entered it when in deepest trance they slipped from the control of their mesmerizers—yet even then they have rarely brought back more than a faint recollection of an intense but indescribable bliss, generally deeply coloured by their personal religious convictions.

When once the departed soul, withdrawing into himself after what we call death, has reached that plane, neither the yearning thoughts of his sorrowing friends nor the allurements of the spiritualistic circle can ever draw him back into communion with the physical earth until all the spiritual forces which he has set in motion in his recent life have worked themselves out to the full, and he once more stands ready to take upon himself new robes of flesh. Nor, even if he could so return, would his account of his experiences give any true idea of the plane, for, as will pre-

sently be seen, it is only those who can enter it in full waking consciousness who are able to move about freely and drink in all the wondrous glory and beauty which the heaven-world has to show. But all this will be more fully explained later, when we come to deal with the inhabitants of this celestial realm.

A Beautiful Description.

In an early letter from an eminent occultist the following beautiful passage was given as a quotation from memory. I have never been able to discover whence it was taken, though what seems to be another version of it, considerably expanded, appears in Beal's *Catena of Buddhist Scriptures*, p. 378.

"Our Lord Buddha says: Many thousand myriads of systems of worlds beyond this is a region of bliss called Sukhâvatî. This region is encircled within seven rows of railings, seven rows of vast curtains, seven rows of waving trees. This holy abode of the Arhats is governed by the Tathâgatas and is possessed by the Bodhisattvas. It has seven precious lakes, in the midst of which flow crystalline waters having seven and yet one distinctive properties and qualities. This, O Sâriputra, is the Devachan. Its divine udambara flower casts a root in the shadow of every earth, and blossoms for all those who reach it. Those born in this blessed region—who have crossed the golden bridge and reached the seven golden mountains—they are truly felicitous; there is no more grief or sorrow in that cycle for them."

Veiled though they be under the gorgeous imagery of the Orient, we may easily trace in this passage some of the leading characteristics which have appeared most prominently in the accounts of our own modern investigators. The "seven golden mountains" can be but the seven subdivisions of the mental plane, separated from

one another by barriers impalpable, yet real and effective there as "seven rows of railings, seven rows of vast curtains, seven rows of waving trees" might be here: the seven kinds of crystalline water, having each its distinctive properties and qualities, represent the different powers and conditions of mind belonging to them respectively, while the one quality which they all have in common is that of ensuring to those residing upon them the utmost intensity of bliss which they are capable of experiencing. Its flower indeed "casts a root in the shadow of every earth," for from every world man enters the corresponding heaven, and happiness such as no tongue may tell is the blossom which burgeons forth for all who so live as to fit themselves to attain it. For they have "crossed the golden bridge" over the stream which divides this realm from the world of desire; for them the struggle between the higher and the lower is over, and for them, therefore, is "no more grief or sorrow in that cycle," until once more the man puts himself forth into incarnation, and the celestial world is again left for a time behind.

The Bliss of the Heaven-World.

This intensity of bliss is the first great idea which must form a background to all our conceptions of the heaven-life. It is not only that we are dealing with a world in which, by its very constitution, evil and sorrow are impossible; it is not only a world in which every creature is happy; the facts of the case go far beyond all that. It is a world in which every being must, from the very fact of his presence there, be enjoying the highest spiritual bliss of which he is capable—a world whose power of response to his aspirations is limited only by his capacity to aspire.

Here for the first time we begin to grasp something of the true nature of the great Source of Life; here for the first time we catch a far-away glimpse of what the Logos must be, and of what He means us to be. And when the stupendous reality of it all bursts upon our astonished vision, we cannot but feel that, with this knowledge of the truth, life can never again look to us as it did before. We cannot but marvel at the hopeless inadequacy of all the worldly man's ideas of happiness; indeed, we cannot avoid seeing that most of them are absurdly inverted and impossible of realization, and that for the most part he has actually turned his back upon the very goal which he is seeking. But here at last is truth and beauty, far transcending all that ever poet dreamed; and in the light of its surpassing glory all other joy seems dim and faint, unreal and unsatisfying.

Some detail of all this we must endeavour to make clear later on; the point to be emphasized for the moment is that this radiant sense, not only of the welcome absence of all evil and discord, but of the insistent, overwhelming presence of universal joy, is the first and most striking sensation experienced by him who enters upon the heaven-world. And it never leaves him so long as he remains there; whatever work he may be doing, whatever still higher possibilities of spiritual exaltation may arise before him as he learns more of the capabilities of this new world in which he finds himself, the strange indescribable feeling of inexpressible delight in mere existence in such a realm underlies all else—this enjoyment of the abounding joy of others is ever present with him. Nothing on earth is like it, nothing can image it; if one could suppose the bounding life of childhood carried up into our spiritual experience and then intensified many thousandfold, perhaps some faint shadow of an idea of it might be suggested;

yet even such a simile falls miserably short of that which lies beyond all words—the tremendous spiritual vitality of this celestial world.

One way in which this intense vitality manifests itself is the extreme rapidity of vibration of all particles and atoms of this mental matter. As a theoretical proposition we are all aware that even here on the physical plane no particle of matter, though forming part of the densest of solid bodies, is ever for a moment at rest; nevertheless when by the opening of astral vision this becomes for us no longer a mere theory of the scientists, but an actual and ever-present fact, we realize the universality of life in a manner and to an extent that was quite impossible before; our mental horizon widens out, and we begin even already to have glimpses of possibilities in nature which to those who cannot yet see must appear the wildest of dreams.

If this be the effect of acquiring the mere astral vision, and applying it to dense physical matter, try to imagine the result produced on the mind of the observer when, having left this physical plane behind and thoroughly studied the far more vivid life and infinitely more rapid vibrations of the astral, he finds a new and transcendent sense opening within him, which unfolds to his enraptured gaze yet another and a higher world, whose vibrations are as much quicker than those of our physical plane as vibrations of light are than those of sound—a world where the omnipresent life which pulsates ceaselessly around and within him is of a different order altogether, is as it were raised to an enormously higher power.

A New Method of Cognition.

The very sense itself, by which he is enabled to cognize all this, is not the least of the marvels of this celestial

world; no longer does he hear and see and feel by separate and limited organs, as he does down here, nor has he even the immensely extended capacity of sight and hearing which he possessed on the astral plane; instead of these he feels within him a strange new power which is not any of them, and yet includes them all and much more—a power which enables him the moment any person or thing comes before him not only to see it and feel it and hear it, but to know all about it instantly inside and out—its causes, its effects, and its possibilities, so far at least as that plane and all below it are concerned. He finds that for him to think is to realize; there is never any doubt, hesitation, or delay about this direct action of the higher sense. If he thinks of a place, he is there; if of a friend, that friend is before him. No longer can misunderstandings arise, no longer can he be deceived or misled by any outward appearances, for every thought and feeling of his friend lies open as a book before him on that plane.

And if he is fortunate enough to have among his friends another whose higher sense is opened, their intercourse is perfect beyond all earthly conception. For them distance and separation do not exist; their feelings are no longer hidden or at best but half expressed by clumsy words; question and answer are unnecessary, for the thought-pictures are read as they are formed, and the interchange of ideas is as rapid as is their flashing into existence in the mind.

All knowledge is theirs for the searching—all, that is, which does not transcend even this lofty plane; the past of the world is as open to them as the present; the indelible records of the memory of nature are ever at their disposal, and history, whether ancient or modern, unfolds itself before their eyes at their will. No longer are they at the mercy of the historian, who may be ill-informed, and must be more or less partial; they can

study for themselves any incident in which they are interested, with the absolute certainty of seeing "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." If they are able to stand upon the higher levels of the plane, the long line of their past lives unrolls itself before them like a scroll; they see the kârmic causes which have made them what they are; they see what karma still lies in front to be worked out before "the long sad count is closed," and thus they realize with unerring certainty their exact place in evolution.

If it be asked whether they can see the future clearly as the past, the answer must be in the negative, for that faculty belongs to a still higher plane, and though in this mental plane prevision is to a great extent possible to them, yet it is not perfect, because wherever in the web of destiny the hand of the developed man comes in, his powerful will may introduce new threads, and change the pattern of the life to come. The course of the ordinary undeveloped man, who has practically no will of his own worth speaking of, may often be foreseen clearly enough, but when the ego boldly takes his future into his own hands, exact prevision becomes impossible.

Surroundings.

The first impressions, then, of the pupil who enters this mental plane in full consciousness will probably be those of intense bliss, indescribable vitality, enormously increased power, and the perfect confidence which flows from these; and when he makes use of his new sense to examine his surroundings, what does he see? He finds himself in the midst of what seems to him a whole universe of ever-changing light and colour and sound, such as it has never entered into his loftiest dreams to imagine. Verily it is true that down here "eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard, neither

hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive" the glories of the heaven-world: and the man who has once experienced them in full consciousness will regard the world with widely different eyes for ever after. Yet this experience is so utterly unlike anything we know on the physical plane that in trying to put it into words one is troubled by a curious sense of helplessness—of absolute incapacity, not only to do it justice, for of *that* one resigns all hope from the very outset, but even to give any idea at all of it to those who have not themselves seen it.

Let a man imagine himself, with the feelings of intense bliss and enormously increased power already described, floating in a sea of living light, surrounded by every conceivable variety of loveliness in colour and form—the whole changing with every wave of thought that he sends out from his mind, and being indeed, as he presently discovers, only the expression of his thought in the matter of the plane and in its elemental essence. For that matter is of the very same order as that of which the mind-body is itself composed, and therefore when that vibration of the particles of the mind-body which we call a thought occurs, it immediately extends itself to this surrounding mental matter, and sets up corresponding vibrations in it, while in the elemental essence it images itself with absolute exactitude. Concrete thought naturally takes the shape of its objects, while abstract ideas usually represent themselves by all kinds of perfect and most beautiful geometrical forms; though in this connection it should be remembered that many thoughts which are little more than the merest abstractions to us down here become concrete facts on this loftier plane.

It will thus be seen that in this higher world anyone who wishes to devote himself for a time to quiet thought, and to abstract himself from his surroundings, may actually live in a world of his own without possibility of interruption, and

with the additional advantage of seeing all his ideas (and their consequences, fully worked out) passing in a sort of panorama before his eyes. If, however, he wishes instead to observe the plane upon which he finds himself, it will be necessary for him very carefully to suspend his thought for the time, so that its creations may not influence the readily impressible matter around him, and thus alter the entire conditions so far as he is concerned.

This holding of the mind in suspense must not be confounded with the blankness of mind towards the attainment of which so many of the Hatha Yoga practices are directed: in the latter case the mind is dulled down into absolute passivity in order that it may not by any thought of its own offer resistance to the entry of any external influence that may happen to approach it—a condition closely approximating to mediumship; while in the former the mind is as keenly alert and positive as it can be, holding its thought in suspense for the moment merely to prevent the intrusion of a personal equation into the observation which it wishes to make.

When the visitor to the mental plane succeeds in putting himself in this position he finds that although he is no longer himself a centre of radiation of all that marvellous wealth of light and colour, form and sound, which I have so vainly endeavoured to picture, it has not therefore ceased to exist; on the contrary, its harmonies and its coruscations are but grander and fuller than ever. Casting about for an explanation of this phenomenon, he begins to realize that all this magnificence is not a mere idle or fortuitous display—a kind of devachanic aurora borealis; he finds that it all has a meaning—a meaning which he himself can understand; and presently he grasps the fact that what he is watching with such ecstasy of delight is simply the glorious colour-language of the Devas—the expression of the thought or the

conversation of beings far higher than himself in the scale of evolution. By experiment and practice he discovers that he also can use this new and beautiful mode of expression, and by this very discovery he enters into possession of another great tract of his heritage in this celestial realm —the power to hold converse with, and to learn from, its loftier non-human inhabitants, with whom we shall deal more fully when we come to treat of that part of our subject.

By this time it will have become apparent why it was impossible to devote a section of this paper to the scenery of the mental plane, as was done in the case of the astral; for in point of fact the mental world has *no* scenery except such as each individual chooses to make for himself by his thought—unless indeed we take into account the fact that the vast numbers of entities who are continually passing before him are themselves objects in many cases of the most transcendent beauty. Yet so difficult is it to express in words the conditions of this higher life that it would be a still better statement of the facts to say that all possible scenery exists there—that there is nothing conceivable of loveliness in earth or sky or sea which is not there with a fulness and intensity beyond all power of imagination; but that out of all this splendour of living reality each man sees only that which he has within himself the power to see—that to which his development during the earth-life and the astral-life enables him to respond.

The Great Waves.

If the visitor wishes to carry his analysis of the plane still further, and discover what it would be when entirely undisturbed by the thought or conversation of any of its inhabitants, he can do so by forming round himself a huge shell through which none of these influences can penetrate, and

then (of course holding his own mind perfectly still as before) examining the conditions which exist inside his shell.

If he performs this experiment with sufficient care, he will find that the sea of light has become—not still, for its particles continue their intense and rapid vibrations, but—as it were homogeneous; that those wonderful coruscations of colour and constant changes of form are no longer taking place, but that he is now able to perceive another and entirely different series of regular pulsations which the other more artificial phenomena had previously obscured. These are evidently universal, and no shell which human power can make will check them or turn them aside. They cause no change of colour, no assumption of form, but flow with resistless regularity through all the matter of the plane, outwards and in again, like the exhalations and inhalations of some great breath beyond our ken.

There are several sets of these, clearly distinguishable from one another by volume, by period of vibration, and by the tone of the harmony which they bring, and grander than them all sweeps one great wave which seems the very heartbeat of the system—a wave which, welling up from unknown centres on far higher planes, pours out its life through all our world, and then draws back in its tremendous tide to That from which it came. In one long undulating curve it comes, and the sound of it is like the murmur of the sea; and yet in it and through it all the while there echoes a mighty ringing chant of triumph—the very music of the spheres. The man who once has heard that glorious song of nature never quite loses it again; even here on this dreary physical plane of illusion he hears it always as a kind of undertone, keeping ever before his mind the strength and light and splendour of the real life above.

If the visitor be pure in heart and mind, and has reached a certain degree of spiritual development, it is possible for

him to identify his consciousness with the sweep of that wondrous wave—to merge his spirit in it, as it were, and let it bear him upward to its source. It is possible, I say; but it is not wise—unless, indeed, his Master stands beside him to draw him back at the right moment from its mighty embrace; for otherwise its irresistible force will carry him away onward and upward into still higher planes, whose far greater glories his ego is as yet unable to sustain; he will lose consciousness, and with no certainty as to when and where and how he will regain it. It is true that the ultimate object of man's evolution is the attainment of unity, but he must reach that final goal in full and perfect consciousness as a victorious king entering triumphantly upon his heritage, not drift into absorption in a state of blank unconsciousness but little removed from annihilation.

The Lower and the Higher Heaven-Worlds.

All that we have hitherto attempted to indicate in this description may be taken as applying to the lowest subdivision of the mental plane; for this realm of nature, exactly like the astral, or the physical, has its seven subdivisions. Of these the four lower are called in the books the rûpa or form planes, and these constitute the Lower Heaven-World, in which the average man spends his long life of bliss between one incarnation and the next. The other three are spoken of as arûpa or formless, and they constitute the Higher Heaven-World, where functions the reincarnating ego—the true home of the soul of man. These Sanskrit names have been given because on the rûpa planes every thought takes to itself a certain definite form, while on the arûpa subdivisons it expresses itself in an entirely different manner, as will presently be explained. The distinction between these two great divisions of the plane—

the rûpa and the arûpa—is very marked; indeed, it even extends so far as to necessitate the use of different vehicles of consciousness.

The vehicle appropriate to the lower heaven-world is the mind-body, while that of the higher heaven-world is the causal body—the vehicle of the reincarnating ego, in which he passes from life to life throughout the whole evolutionary period. Another enormous distinction is that on those four lower subdivisions some degree of illusion is still possible—not indeed for the entity who stands upon them in full consciousness during life, but for the undeveloped person who passes there after the change which men call death. The higher thoughts and aspirations which he has poured forth during earth-life then cluster round him, and make a sort of shell about him—a kind of subjective world of his own; and in that he lives his heaven-life, perceiving but very faintly or not at all the real glories of the plane which lie outside, and, indeed, usually supposing that what he sees is all there is to see.

Yet we should be wrong in thinking of that thought-cloud as a limitation. Its function is to enable the man to respond to certain vibrations—not to shut him off from the others. The truth is, that these thoughts which surround the man are the powers by which he draws upon the wealth of the heaven-world. This mental plane itself is a reflection of the Divine Mind—a storehouse of infinite extent from which the person enjoying heaven is able to draw just according to the power of his own thoughts and aspirations generated during the physical and astral life.

But in the higher heaven-world this limitation no longer exists; it is true that even there many egos are only slightly and dreamily conscious of their surroundings, but in so far as they see, they see truly, for thought no longer assumes the same limited forms which it took upon itself lower down.

The Action of Thought.

The exact condition of mind of the human inhabitants of these various sub-planes will naturally be much more fully dealt with under its own appropriate heading; but a comprehension of the manner in which thought acts in the lower and higher levels respectively, is so necessary to an accurate understanding of these great divisions that it will perhaps be worth while to recount in detail some of the experiments made by our explorers in the endeavour to throw light upon this subject.

At an early period of the investigation it became evident that on the mental as on the astral plane there was present an elemental essence quite distinct from the mere matter of the plane, and that it was, if possible, even more instantaneously sensitive to the action of thought here than it had been in that lower world. But here in the heaven-world *all* was thought-substance, and therefore not only the elemental essence, but the very matter of the plane was directly affected by the action of the mind; and hence it became necessary to make an attempt to discriminate between these two effects.

After various less conclusive experiments a method was adopted which gave a fairly clear idea of the different results produced, one investigator remaining on the lowest subdivision to send out the thought-forms, while others rose to the next higher level, so as to be able to observe what took place from above, and thus avoid many possibilities of confusion. Under these circumstances the experiment was tried of sending an affectionate and helpful thought to an absent friend in a far-distant country.

The result was very remarkable: a sort of vibrating shell, formed in the matter of the plane, issued in all directions

round the operator, corresponding exactly to the circle which spreads out in still water from the spot where a stone has been thrown into it, except that this was a sphere of vibration extending itself in many dimensions instead of merely over a flat surface. These vibrations, like those on the physical plane, though very much more gradually, lost in intensity as they passed further away from their source, till at last at an enormous distance they seemed to be exhausted, or at least became so faint as to be imperceptible.

Thus every one on the mental plane is a centre of radiant thought, and yet all the rays thrown out cross in all directions without interfering with one another in the slightest degree, just as rays of light do down here. This expanding sphere of vibrations was many coloured and opalescent, but its colours also grew gradually fainter and fainter as it spread away.

The effect on the elemental essence of the plane was, however, entirely different. In this the thought immediately called into existence a distinct form resembling the human, of one colour only, though exhibiting many shades of that colour. This form flashed instantaneously across the ocean to the friend to whom the good wish had been directed, and there took to itself elemental essence of the astral plane, and thus became an ordinary artificial elemental of that plane, waiting, as explained in Manual No. V, for an opportunity to pour out upon him its store of helpful influence. In taking on that astral form the mental elemental lost much of its brilliancy, though its glowing rose-colour was still plainly visible inside the shell of lower matter which it had assumed, showing that just as the original thought ensouled the elemental essence of its own plane, so that same thought, plus its form as a mental elemental, acted as soul to the astral elemental—thus following closely the method in which the ultimate

spirit itself takes on sheath after sheath in its descent through the various planes and sub-planes of matter.

Further experiments along similar lines revealed the fact that the colour of the projected elemental varied with the character of the thought. As above stated, the thought of strong affection produced a creature of glowing rose-colour; an intense wish of healing, projected towards a sick friend, called into existence a most lovely silvery-white elemental; while an earnest mental effort to steady and strengthen the mind of a depressed and despairing person resulted in the production of a beautiful flashing golden-yellow messenger.

In all these cases it will be perceived that, besides the effect of radiating colours and vibrations produced in the matter of the plane, a definite force in the shape of an elemental was sent forth towards the person to whom the thought was directed; and this invariably happened, with one notable exception. One of the operators, while on the lower division of the plane, directed a thought of intense love and devotion towards the Adept who is his spiritual teacher, and it was at once noticed by the observers above that the result was in some sense a reversal of what had happened in the previous cases.

It should be premised that a pupil of any one of the great Adepts is always connected with his Master by a constant current of thought and influence, which expresses itself on the mental plane as a great ray or stream of dazzling light of all colours—violet and gold and blue; and it might perhaps have been expected that the pupil's earnest, loving thought would send a special vibration along this line. Instead of this, however, the result was a sudden intensification of the colours of this bar of light, and a very distinct flow of spiritual influence, *towards the pupil*; so that it is evident that when a student turns his thought to his Master, what he

really does is to vivify his connection with that Master, and thus to open a way for an additional outpouring of strength and help to himself from higher planes. It would seem that the Adept is, as it were, so highly charged with the influences which sustain and strengthen, that any thought which brings into increased activity a channel of communication with him sends no current towards him, as it ordinarily would, but simply gives a wider opening through which the great ocean of his love finds vent.

On the arûpa levels the difference in the effect of thought is very marked, especially as regards the elemental essence. The disturbance set up in the mere matter of the plane is similar, though greatly intensified in this much more refined form of matter; but in the essence no form at all is now created, and the method of action is entirely changed. In all the experiments on lower planes it was found that the elemental hovered about the person thought of, and awaited a favourable opportunity of expending his energy either upon his mind-body, his astral, or even his physical body; here the result is a kind of lightning-flash of the essence from the causal body of the thinker direct to the causal body of the object of his thought; so that while the thought on those lower divisions is always directed to the mere personality, here we influence the reincarnating ego, the real man himself, and if our message has any reference to the personality it will reach it only from above, through the instrumentality of his causal vehicle.

Thought-Forms.

Naturally the thoughts to be seen on this plane are not all definitely directed at some other person; many are simply thrown off to float vaguely about, and the diversity of form and colour shown among these is practically infinite,

so that the study of them is a science in itself, and a very fascinating one. Anything like a detailed description even of the main classes among them would occupy far more space than we have to spare; but an idea of the principles upon which such classes might be formed may be gained from the following extract from a most illuminative paper on the subject written by Mrs. Besant in *Lucifer* (the earlier form of *The Theosophical Review*) for September 1896. She there enunciates the three great principles underlying the production of the thought-forms which are thrown off by the action of the mind—that (*a*) the quality of a thought determines its colour, (*b*) the nature of a thought determines its form, (*c*) the definiteness of a thought determines the clearness of its outline. Giving instances of the way in which the colour is affected, she continues:

"If the astral and mental bodies are vibrating under the influence of devotion, the aura will be suffused with blue, more or less intense, beautiful and pure according to the depth, elevation, and purity of the feeling. In a church such thought-forms may be seen rising, for the most part not very definitely outlined, but rolling masses of blue clouds. Too often the colour is dulled by the intermixture of selfish feelings, when the blue is mixed with browns and thus loses its pure brilliancy. But the devotional thought of an unselfish heart is very lovely in colour, like the deep blue of a summer sky. Through such clouds of blue will often shine out golden stars of great brilliancy, starting upwards like a shower of sparks.

"Anger gives rise to red, of all shades from brick-red to brilliant scarlet; brutal anger will show as flashes of lurid dull red from dark brown clouds, while the anger of 'noble indignation' is a vivid scarlet, by no means unbeautiful to look at, though it gives an unpleasant thrill.

"Affection sends out clouds of rosy hue, varying from

dull crimson, where the love is animal in its nature, rose-red mingled with brown when selfish, or with dull green when jealous, to the most exquisite shades of delicate rose like the early flushes of the dawning, as the love becomes purified from all selfish elements, and flows out in wider and wider circles of generous impersonal tenderness and compassion to all who are in need.

"Intellect produces yellow thought-forms, the pure reason directed to spiritual ends giving rise to a very delicate, beautiful yellow, while used for more selfish ends or mingled with ambition it yields deeper shades of orange, clear and intense." (*Lucifer*, vol. xix. p. 71.)

It must of course be borne in mind that astral as well as mental thought-forms are described in the above quotation, some of the feelings mentioned needing matter of the lower plane as well as of the higher before they can find expression. Some examples are then given of the beautiful flower-like and shell-like forms sometimes taken by our nobler thoughts; and especial reference is made to the not infrequent case in which the thought, taking human form, is liable to be confounded with an apparition:

"A thought-form may assume the shape of its projector; if a person wills strongly to be present at a particular place, to visit a particular person, and be seen, such a thought-form may take his own shape, and a clairvoyant present at the desired spot would see what he would probably mistake for his friend in the astral body. Such a thought-form might convey a message, if that formed part of its content, setting up in the astral body of the person reached vibrations like its own, and these being passed on by that astral body to the brain, where they would be translated into a thought or a sentence. Such a thought-form, again, might convey to its projector, by the magnetic relation between them, vibrations impressed on itself." (p. 73.)

The whole of the article from which these extracts are taken should be very carefully studied by those who wish to grasp this very complex branch of our subject, for, with the aid of the beautifully-executed coloured illustrations which accompany it, it enables those who cannot yet see for themselves to approach much more nearly to a realization of what thought-forms actually are than anything previously written.

The Sub-Planes.

If it be asked what is the real difference between the matter of the various sub-planes of the mental plane, it is not easy to answer in other than very general terms, for the unfortunate scribe bankrupts himself of adjectives in an unsuccessful endeavour to describe the lowest plane, and then has nothing left to say about the others. What, indeed, can be said, except that ever as we ascend the material becomes finer, the harmonies fuller, the light more living and transparent? There are more overtones in the sound, more delicate intershades in the colours as we rise, more and more new colours appear—hues entirely unknown to the physical sight; and it has been poetically yet truly said that the light of the lower plane is darkness on the one above it. Perhaps this idea is simpler if we start in thought from the top instead of the bottom, and try to realize that on that highest sub-plane we shall find its appropriate matter ensouled and vivified by an energy which still flows down like light from above—from a plane which lies away beyond the mental altogether. Then if we descend to the second subdivision we shall find that the matter of our first sub-plane has become the energy of this—or, to put the thing more accurately, that the original energy, plus the garment of matter of the first sub-plane with which it has endued itself, is still the energy ensouling the matter of this

second sub-plane. In the same way, in the third division we shall find that the original energy has twice veiled itself in the matter of these first and second sub-planes through which it has passed; so that by the time we get to our seventh sub-division we shall have our original energy six times enclosed or veiled, and therefore by so much the weaker and less active. This process is exactly analogous to the veiling of Âtmâ, the primordial Spirit, in its descent as monadic essence in order to energize the matter of the planes of the cosmos, and as it is one which frequently takes place in nature, it will save the student much trouble if he will try to familiarize himself with the idea (see Mrs. Besant's *Ancient Wisdom*, p. 54, and footnote).

The Records of the Past.

In speaking of the general characteristics of the plane we must not omit to mention the ever-present background formed by the records of the past—the memory of nature, the only really reliable history of the world. While what we have on this plane is not yet the absolute record itself, but merely a reflection of something higher still, it is at any rate clear, accurate, and continuous, differing therein from the disconnected and spasmodic manifestation which is all that represents it in the astral world. It is, therefore, only when a clairvoyant possesses the vision of this mental plane that his pictures of the past can be relied upon; and even then, unless he has the power of passing in full consciousness from that plane to the physical, we have to allow for the possibility of errors in bringing back the recollection of what he has seen.

But the student who has succeeded in developing the powers latent within himself so far as to enable him to use the sense belonging to this mental plane while he is still in

the physical body, has before him a field of historical research of most entrancing interest. Not only can he review at his leisure all history with which we are acquainted, correcting as he examines it the many errors and misconceptions which have crept into the accounts handed down to us; he can also range at will over the whole story of the world from its very beginning, watching the slow development of intellect in man, the descent of the Lords of the Flame, and the growth of the mighty civilizations which they founded.

Nor is his study confined to the progress of humanity alone; he has before him, as in a museum, all the strange animal and vegetable forms which occupied the stage in days when the world was young; he can follow all the wonderful geological changes which have taken place, and watch the course of the great cataclysms which have altered the whole face of the earth again and again.

Many and varied are the possibilities opened up by access to these records—so many and so varied indeed that even if this were the only advantage of the mental plane it would still transcend in interest all the lower worlds. But when to this we add the remarkable increase in the opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge given by its new and wider faculty—the privilege of direct untrammelled intercourse not only with the great Deva kingdom, but with the very Masters of Wisdom themselves—the rest and relief from the weary strain of physical life that is brought by the enjoyment of its deep unchanging bliss, and above all, the enormously enhanced capability of the developed student for the service of his fellow-men—then we shall begin to have some faint conception of what a pupil gains when he wins the right to enter at will and in perfect consciousness upon his heritage in this bright realm of the heaven-world.

INHABITANTS.

In our endeavour to describe the inhabitants of the mental plane it will perhaps be well for us to divide them into the same three great classes chosen in the manual on the astral plane—the human, the non-human, and the artificial—though the sub-divisions will naturally be less numerous in this case than in that, since the products of man's evil passions, which bulked so largely there, can find no place here.

I. HUMAN.

Exactly as was the case when dealing with the lower world, it will be desirable to subdivide the human inhabitants of the mental plane into two classes—those who are still attached to a physical body, and those who are not—the living and the dead, as they are commonly but most erroneously called. Very little experience of these higher planes is needed to alter fundamentally the student's conception of the change which takes place at death; he realizes immediately on the opening of his consciousness even in the astral, and still more in this mental world, that the fulness of true life is something which can never be known down here, and that when we leave this physical earth we are passing *into* that true life, not out of it. We have not at present in the English language any convenient and at the same time accurate words to express these conditions; perhaps to call them respectively embodied and disembodied will be, on the whole, the least misleading of

the various possible phrases. Let us therefore proceed to consider those inhabitants of the mental plane who come under the head of

The Embodied.

Those human beings who, while still attached to a physical body, are found moving in full consciousness and activity upon this plane, are invariably either Adepts or their initiated pupils, for until a student has been taught by his Master how to use his mental body he will be unable to move with freedom upon even its lower levels. To function consciously during physical life upon the higher levels denotes still greater advancement, for it means the unification of the man, so that down here he is no longer a mere personality, more or less influenced by the individuality above, but is himself that individuality—trammelled and confined by a body, certainly, but nevertheless having within him the power and knowledge of a highly developed ego.

Very magnificent objects are these Adepts and initiates to the vision which has learnt to see them—splendid globes of light and colour, driving away all evil influence wherever they go, acting upon all who come near them as the sunshine acts upon the flowers, and shedding around them a feeling of restfulness and happiness of which even those who do not see them are often conscious. It is in this celestial world that much of their most important work is done—more especially upon its higher levels, where the individuality can be acted upon directly. It is from this plane that they shower the grandest spiritual influences upon the world of thought; from it also they impel great and beneficent movements of all kinds. Here much of the spiritual force poured out by the glorious self-sacrifice of

the Nirmânâkayas is distributed; here also direct teaching is given to those pupils who are sufficiently advanced to receive it in this way, since it can be imparted far more readily and completely here than on the astral plane. In addition to all these activities they have a great field of work in connection with those whom we call the dead, but this will be more fitly explained under a later heading.

It is a pleasure to find that a class of inhabitants which obtruded itself painfully on our notice on the astral plane is almost entirely absent here. In a world whose characteristics are unselfishness and spirituality the black magician and his pupils can obviously find no place, since selfishness is of the essence of all the proceedings of the darker schools, and their study of occult forces is entirely for personal ends. Not but that in many of them the intellect is very highly developed, and consequently the matter of the mind-body extremely active and sensitive along certain lines; but in every case those lines are connected with personal desire of some sort, and they can therefore find expression only through that lower part of the mind-body which has become almost inextricably entangled with astral matter. As a necessary consequence of this limitation it follows that their activities are practically confined to the astral and physical planes. A man, the trend of whose whole life is evil and selfish, may indeed have periods of purely abstract thought during which he may utilize the mind-body if he has learnt how to do so; but the moment that the personal element comes in, and the effort to produce some evil result is made, the thought is no longer abstract, and the man finds himself working in connection with the familiar astral matter once more. One might almost say that a black magician could function on the mental plane only while he forgot that he was a black magician.

But even while he forgot it he could be visible on the

mental plane only to men functioning consciously on that plane—never by any possibility to those who are enjoying the heavenly rest in this region after death, since each of them is so entirely secluded within the world of his own thought that nothing outside of that can affect him, and he is consequently absolutely safe. Thus is justified the grand old description of the heaven-world as the place "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

In Sleep or Trance.

In thinking of the embodied inhabitants of the mental plane, the question naturally suggests itself whether either ordinary people during sleep, or psychically developed persons in a trance condition, can ever penetrate to this plane. In both cases the answer must be that the occurrence is possible, though extremely rare. Purity of life and purpose would be an absolute pre-requisite, and even when the plane was reached there would be nothing that could be called real consciousness, but simply a capacity for receiving certain impressions.

As exemplifying the possibility of entering the mental plane during sleep, an incident may be mentioned which occurred in connection with the experiments made by the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society on dream consciousness, an account of some of which was given in my little book on *Dreams*. It may be remembered by those who have read that treatise that a thought-picture of a lovely tropical landscape was presented to the minds of various classes of sleepers, with a view of testing the extent to which it was afterwards recollected on awaking. One case which was not referred to in the account previously published, as it had no special connection with the phenomena of dreams, will serve as a useful illustration here.

It was that of a person of pure mind and considerable though untrained psychic capacity; and the effect of the presentation of the thought-picture to her mind was of a somewhat startling character. So intense was the feeling of reverent joy, so lofty and so spiritual were the thoughts evoked by the contemplation of this glorious scene, that the consciousness of the sleeper passed entirely into the mind-body—or, to put the same idea into other words, rose on to the mental plane. It must not, however, be supposed from this that she became cognizant of her surroundings upon that plane or of its real conditions; she was simply in the state of the ordinary person who has reached that level after death, floating in the sea of light and colour indeed, but nevertheless entirely absorbed in her own thought, and conscious of nothing beyond it—resting in ecstatic contemplation of the landscape and of all that it had suggested to her—yet contemplating it, be it understood, with the keener insight, the more perfect appreciation, and the enhanced vigour of thought peculiar to the mental plane, and enjoying all the while the intensity of bliss which has so often been spoken of before. The sleeper remained in that condition for several hours, though apparently entirely unconscious of the passage of time, and at last awoke with a sense of deep peace and inward joy for which, since she had brought back no recollection of what had happened, she was quite unable to account. There is no doubt, however, that such an experience as this, whether remembered in the physical body or not, would act as a distinct impulse to the spiritual evolution of the ego concerned.

Though in the absence of a sufficient number of experiments one hesitates to speak too positively, it seems almost certain that such a result as this just described would be possible only in the case of a person having already some amount of psychic development: and the same condition

is even more definitely necessary in order that a mesmerized subject should touch the mental plane in trance. So decidedly is this the case, that probably not one in a thousand among ordinary clairvoyants ever reaches it at all; but on the rare occasions when it is so attained the clairvoyant, as before remarked, must be not only of exceptional development, but of perfect purity of life and purpose; and even when all these unusual characteristics are present there still remains the difficulty which an untrained psychic always finds in translating a vision accurately from the higher plane to the lower. All these considerations, of course, only emphasize what has been so often insisted upon before—the necessity of the careful training of all psychics under a qualified instructor before it is possible to attach much weight to their reports of what they see.

The Disembodied.

Before considering in detail the condition of the disembodied entities on the various subdivisions of the mental plane, we must have very clearly in our minds the broad distinction between the rûpa and arûpa levels, of which mention has already been made. On the former the man lives entirely in the world of his own thoughts, still fully identifying himself with his personality in the life which he has recently quitted; on the latter he is simply the reincarnating ego or soul, who (if he has developed sufficient consciousness on that level to know anything clearly at all) understands, at least to some extent, the evolution upon which he is engaged, and the work that he has to do.

It should be remembered that every man passes through both these stages between death and birth, though the undeveloped majority have so little consciousness in either of

them as yet that they might more truly be said to dream through them. Nevertheless, whether consciously or unconsciously, every human being must touch the higher levels of the mental plane before reincarnation can take place; and as his evolution proceeds this touch becomes more and more definite and real to him. Not only is he more conscious there as he progresses, but the period he passes in that world of reality becomes longer; for the fact is that his consciousness is slowly but steadily rising through the different planes of the system.

Primitive man, for example, has comparatively little consciousness on any plane but the physical during life, and the lower astral after death; and indeed the same may be said of the quite undeveloped man even in our own day. A person a little more advanced begins to have a short period of heaven-life (on the lower levels, of course), but still spends by far the greater part of his time, between incarnations, on the astral plane. As he progresses the astral life grows shorter and the heaven-life longer, until when he becomes an intellectual and spiritually-minded person he passes through the astral plane with hardly any delay at all, and enjoys a long and happy sojourn on the more refined of the lower mental levels. By this time, however, the consciousness in the true ego on its higher level is awakened to a very considerable extent, and thus his conscious life on the mental plane divides itself into two parts—the later and shorter portion being spent on the higher sub-planes in the causal body.

The process previously described then repeats itself, the life on the lower levels gradually shortening, while the higher life becomes steadily longer and fuller, till at last the time comes when the consciousness is unified—when the higher and lower selves are indissolubly united, and the man is no longer capable of wrapping himself up in his own

cloud of thought, and mistaking the little that he can see through that for the whole of the great heaven-world around him—when he realizes the true possibilities of his life, and so for the first time truly begins to live. But by the time that he attains these heights he will already have entered upon the Path, and taken his future progress definitely into his own hands.

The Qualities necessary for the Heaven-Life.

The greater reality of the heaven-life as compared with that on earth shines forth clearly when we consider what conditions are requisite for the attainment of this higher state of existence. For the very qualities which a man must develope during life, if he is to have any existence in the heaven-world after death, are just those which all the best and noblest of our race have agreed in considering as really and permanently desirable. In order that an aspiration or a thought-force should result in existence on that plane, its dominant characteristic must be unselfishness.

Affection for family or friends takes many a man into the heaven-life, and so also does religious devotion; yet it would be a mistake to suppose that *all* affection or all devotion must therefore necessarily find its *post-mortem* expression there, for of each of these qualities there are obviously two varieties, the selfish and the unselfish—though it might perhaps reasonably be argued that it is only the latter kind in each case which is really worthy of the name.

There is the love which pours itself out upon its object, seeking for nothing in return—never even thinking of itself, but only of what it can do for the loved one; and such a feeling as this generates a spiritual force which cannot work

itself out except upon the mental plane. But there is also another emotion which is sometimes called love—an exacting, selfish kind of passion which desires mainly to *be* loved—which is thinking all the time of what it receives rather than of what it gives, and is quite likely to degenerate into the horrible vice of jealousy upon (or even without) the smallest provocation. Such affection as this has in it no seed of the mental development; the forces which it sets in motion will never rise above the astral plane.

The same is true of the feeling of a certain very large class of religious devotees, whose one thought is, not the glory of their deity, but how they may save their own miserable souls—a position which forcibly suggests that they have not yet developed anything that really deserves the name of a soul at all.

On the other hand there is the real religious devotion, which thinks never of self, but only of love and gratitude towards the deity or leader, and is filled with ardent desire to do something for him or in his name; and such a feeling often leads to a prolonged heaven-life of a comparatively exalted type.

This would of course be the case whoever the deity or leader might be, and followers of Buddha, Krishna, Ormuzd, Allah, and Christ would all equally attain their meed of celestial bliss—its length and quality depending upon the intensity and purity of the feeling, and not in the least upon its object, though this latter consideration would undoubtedly affect the possibility of receiving instruction during that higher life.

Most human devotion, however, like most human love, is neither wholly pure nor wholly selfish. That love must be low indeed into which no unselfish thought or impulse has entered; and on the other hand an affection which is

usually and chiefly quite pure and noble may yet sometimes be clouded by a spasm of jealous feeling or a passing thought of self. In both these cases, as in all, the law of eternal justice discriminates unerringly; and just as the momentary flash of nobler feeling in the less developed heart will surely receive its meed in the heaven-world, even though there be naught else in the life to raise the soul above the astral plane, so the baser thought which erstwhile dimmed the holy radiance of a real love will work out its force in the astral world, interfering not at all with the magnificent celestial life which flows infallibly from years of deep affection here below.

How a Man first gains the Heaven-Life.

It will be seen, therefore, that in the earlier stages of their evolution many of the backward egos never consciously attain the heaven-world at all, whilst a still larger number obtain only a comparatively slight touch of some of its lower planes. Every soul must of course withdraw into its true self upon the higher levels before reincarnation; but it does not at all follow that in that condition it will experience anything that we should call consciousness. This subject will be dealt with more fully when we come to treat of the arûpa planes; it seems better to begin with the lowest of the rûpa levels, and work steadily upwards, so we may for the moment leave on one side that portion of humanity whose conscious existence after death is practically confined to the astral plane, and proceed to consider the case of an entity who has just risen out of that position—who for the first time has a slight and fleeting consciousness in the lowest subdivision of the heaven-world.

There are evidently various methods by w

portant step in the early development of the soul may be brought about, but it will be sufficient for our present purpose if we take as an illustration of one of them a somewhat pathetic little story from real life which came under the observation of our students when they were investigating this question. In this case the agent of the great evolutionary forces was a poor seamstress, living in one of the dreariest and most squalid of our terrible London slums—a fetid court in the East End into which light and air could scarcely struggle.

Naturally she was not highly educated, for her life had been one long round of the hardest work under the least favourable of conditions; but nevertheless she was a good-hearted, benevolent creature, overflowing with love and kindness towards all with whom she came into contact. Her rooms were as poor, perhaps, as any in the court, but at least they were cleaner and neater than the others. She had no money to give when sickness brought need even more dire than usual to some of her neighbours, yet on such an occasion she was always at hand as often as she could snatch a few moments from her work, offering with ready sympathy such service as was within her power.

Indeed, she was quite a providence to the rough, ignorant factory girls about her, and they gradually came to look upon her as a kind of angel of help and mercy, always at hand in time of trouble or illness. Often, after toiling all
with scarcely a moment's intermission, she sat up half
t, taking her turn at nursing some of the many
ɔ are always to be found in surroundings so fatal
happiness as those of a London slum; and in
ıe gratitude and affection which her unremitting
ɹsed in them were absolutely the only higher
hey had during the whole of their rough and

The conditions of existence in that court being such as they were, there is little wonder that some of her patients died, and then it became clear that she had done for them much more than she knew; she had given them not only a little kindly assistance in their temporal trouble, but a very important impulse on the course of spiritual evolution. For these were undeveloped souls—entities of a very backward class--who had never yet in any of their births set in motion the spiritual forces which alone could give them conscious existence on the mental plane; but now for the first time not only had an ideal towards which they could strive been put before them, but also really unselfish love had been evoked in them by her action, and the very fact of having so strong a feeling as this had raised them and given them more individuality, and so after their stay in the astral plane was ended they gained their first experience of the lowest subdivision of the heaven-world. A short experience, probably, and of by no means an advanced type, but still of far greater importance than appears at first sight; for when once the great spiritual energy of unselfishness has been awakened, the very working-out of its results in the heaven-world gives it the tendency to repeat itself, and small in amount though this first outpouring may be, it yet builds into the soul a faint tinge of a quality which will certainly express itself again in the next life.

So the gentle benevolence of a poor seamstress has given to several less developed souls their introduction to a conscious spiritual life which incarnation after incarnation will grow steadily stronger, and react more and more upon the earth-lives of the future. This little incident perhaps suggests an explanation of the fact that in the various religions so much importance is attached to the personal element in charity—the direct association between donor and recipient.

Seventh Sub-Plane; the Lowest Heaven.

This lowest subdivision of the heaven-world, to which the action of our poor seamstress raised the objects of her kindly care, has for its principal characteristic that of affection for family or friends—unselfish, of course, but usually somewhat narrow. Here, however, we must guard ourselves against the possibility of misconception. When it is said that family affection takes a man to the seventh celestial sub-plane, and religious devotion to the sixth, people sometimes very naturally imagine that a person having both these characteristics strongly developed in him would divide his period in the heaven-world between these two subdivisions, first spending a long period of happiness in the midst of his family, and then passing upward to the next level, there to exhaust the spiritual forces engendered by his devotional aspirations.

This, however, is not what happens, for in such a case as we have supposed the man would awaken to consciousness in the sixth subdivision, where he would find himself engaged, together with those whom he had loved so much in the highest form of devotion which he was able to realize. And when we think of it this is reasonable enough, for the man who is capable of religious devotion as well as mere family affection is naturally likely to be endowed with a higher and broader development of the latter virtue than one whose mind is susceptible to influence in one direction only. The same rule holds good all the way up; the higher plane may always include the qualities of the lower as well as those peculiar to itself, and when it does so its inhabitants almost invariably have these qualities in fuller measure than the souls on a lower plane.

When it is said that family affection is the characteristic

of the seventh sub-plane, it must not therefore be supposed for a moment that love is confined to this plane, but rather that the man who will find himself here after death is one in whose character this affection was the highest quality—the only one, in fact, which entitled him to the heaven-life at all. But love of a far nobler and grander type than anything to be seen on this level may of course be found upon the higher sub-planes.

One of the first entities encountered by the investigators upon this sub-plane forms a very fair typical example of its inhabitants. The man during life had been a small grocer—not a person of intellectual development or of any particular religious feeling, but simply the ordinary honest and respectable small tradesman. No doubt he had gone to church regularly every Sunday, because it was the customary and proper thing to do; but religion had been to him a sort of dim cloud which he did not really understand, which had no connection with the business of everyday life, and was never taken into account in deciding its problems. He had therefore none of the depth of devotion which might have lifted him to the next sub-plane; but he had for his wife and family a warm affection in which there was a large element of unselfishness. They were constantly in his mind, and it was for them far more than for himself that he worked from morning to night in his tiny little shop; and so when, after a period of existence on the astral plane, he had at last shaken himself free from the disintegrating desire-body, he found himself in this lowest subdivision of the heaven-world with all his loved ones gathered round him.

He was no more an intellectual or highly spiritual man than he had been on earth, for death brings with it no sudden development of that kind; the surroundings in which he found himself with his family were not of a very refined

type, for they represented only his own highest ideals of non-physical enjoyment during life; but nevertheless he was as intensely happy as he was capable of being, and since he was all the time thinking of his family rather than of himself he was undoubtedly developing unselfish characteristics, which would be built into his soul as permanent qualities, and so would reappear in all his future lives on earth.

Another typical case was that of a man who had died while his only daughter was still young; here in the heaven-world he had her always with him and always at her best, and he was continually occupying himself in weaving all sorts of beautiful pictures of her future. Yet another was that of a young girl who was always absorbed in contemplating the manifold perfections of her father, and planning little surprises and fresh pleasures for him. Another was a Greek woman who was spending a marvellously happy time with her three children—one of them a beautiful boy, whom she delighted in imagining as the victor in the Olympic games.

A striking characteristic of this sub-plane for the last few centuries has been the very large number of Romans, Carthaginians, and Englishmen to be found there—this being due to the fact that among men of these nations the principal unselfish activity found its outlet through family affection, while comparatively few Hindus and Buddhists are here, since in their case real religious feeling usually enters more ediately into their daily lives, and consequently takes a higher level.

was, of course, an almost infinite variety among the erved, their different degrees of advancement being hable by varying degrees of luminosity, while s of colour indicated respectively the qualities persons in question had developed. Some were o had died in the full strength of their affection,

and so were always occupied with the one person they loved to the entire exclusion of all others ; others there were who had been almost savages, one example being a Malay, a very undeveloped man (at the stage which we should technically describe as that of a low third-class pitri) who obtained a slight experience of the heaven-life in connection with a daughter whom he had loved.

In all these cases it was the touch of unselfish affection which gave them their heaven ; indeed, apart from that, there was nothing in the activity of their personal lives which could have expressed itself on that plane. In most instances observed on this level the images of the loved ones are very far from perfect, and consequently the true egos or souls of the friends who are loved can express themselves but poorly through them ; though even at the worst that expression is much fuller and more satisfying than it ever was in physical life. In earth-life we see our friends so partially ; we know only those parts of them which are congenial to us, and the other sides of their characters are practically non-existent for us. Our communion with them and our knowledge of them down here mean very much to us, and are often to us among the greatest things in life ; yet in reality this communion and this knowledge must always be exceedingly defective, for even in the very rare cases where we can think that we know a man thoroughly and all through, body and soul, it is still only the part of him which is in manifestation on these lower planes while in incarnation that we can know, and there is far more behind in the real ego which we cannot reach at all. Indeed, if it were possible for us, with the direct and perfect vision of the mental plane, to see for the first time the *whole* of our friend when we met him after death, the probability is that he would be quite unrecognizable ; certainly he would not be at all the dear one whom we thought we had known before.

It must be understood that the keen affection which alone brings one man into the heaven-life of another is a very powerful force upon these higher planes—a force which reaches up to the soul of the man who is loved, and evokes a response from it. Naturally the vividness of that response, the amount of life and energy in it, depends on the development of the soul of the loved one, but there is no case in which the response is not a perfectly real one as far as it goes.

Of course the soul or ego can be *fully* reached only upon his own level—one of the arûpa subdivisions of this mental plane—but at least we are very much nearer to that in any stage of the heaven-world than we are here, and therefore under favourable conditions we could there know enormously more of our friend than would ever be possible here, while even under the most unfavourable of conditions we are at any rate far closer to the reality there than we have ever been before.

Two factors have to be taken into account in our consideration of this subject—the degree of development of each of the persons concerned. If the man in the heaven-life has strong affection and some development in spirituality he will form a clear and fairly perfect thought-image of his friend as he knew him—an image through which at that level the soul of the friend could express himself to a very considerable extent. But in order to take full advantage of that opportunity it is necessary that that soul should himself be very fairly advanced in evolution.

We see, therefore, that there are two reasons for which manifestation may be imperfect. The image made by dead man may be so vague and inefficient that the ego, even though well-evolved, may be able to make very little use of it; and on the other hand, even when a good image is made, there may not be sufficient development

on the friend's part to enable him to take due advantage of it.

But in any and every case the soul of the friend is reached by the feeling of affection, and whatever may be its stage of development it at once responds by pouring itself forth into the image which has been made. The extent to which the true man can express himself through it depends on the two factors above-mentioned—the kind of image which is made in the first place, and how much soul there is to express in the second; but even the feeblest image that can be made is at any rate on the mental plane, and, therefore, far easier for the ego to reach than is a physical body two whole planes lower down.

If the friend who is loved is still alive he will of course be entirely unaware down here on the physical plane that his true self is enjoying this additional manifestation, but this in no way affects the fact that that manifestation is a more real one and contains a nearer approximation to his true self than this lower one, which is all that most of us can as yet see.

An interesting point is that since a man may well enter into the heaven-life of several of his departed friends at once, he may thus be simultaneously manifesting himself in all these various forms, as well as, perhaps, managing a physical body down here. That conception, however, presents no difficulty to anyone who understands the relation of the different planes to one another; it is just as easy for him to manifest himself in several of these celestial images at once, as it is for us to be simultaneously conscious of the pressure of several different articles against different parts of our body. The relation of one plane to another is like that of one dimension to another; no number of units of the lower dimension can ever equal one of the higher, and in just the same way no number of these manifestations could exhaust

the power of response in the ego above. On the contrary, such manifestations afford him an appreciable additional opportunity for development on the mental plane — an opportunity which is the direct result and reward under the operation of the law of divine justice of the actions or qualities which evoked such an outpouring of affection.

It is clear from all this that as the man evolves, his opportunities in all directions become greater. Not only is he more likely as he advances to attract the love and reverence of many, and so to have many strong thought-images at his disposal on the mental plane; but also his power of manifestation through each of these and his receptivity in it rapidly increase with his progress.

This was very well illustrated by a simple case which recently came under the notice of our investigators. It was that of a mother who had died perhaps twenty years ago, leaving behind her two boys to whom she was deeply attached. Naturally they were the most prominent figures in her heaven, and quite naturally, too, she thought of them as she had left them, as boys of fifteen or sixteen years of age. The love which she thus ceaselessly poured out upon these mental images was really acting as a beneficent force showered down upon the grown-up men in this physical world, but it did not affect them both to the same extent— not that her love was stronger for one than the other, but because there was a great difference in the vitality of the images themselves. Not a difference, be it understood, that the mother could see; to her both appeared equally with her and equally all that she could possibly desire: yet to the eyes of the investigators it was very evident that one of these images was very much more instinct with living force than the other. On tracing this very interesting phenomenon to its source, it was found that in one case the son had grown

up into an ordinary man of business—not specially evil in any way, but by no means spiritually-minded—while the other had become a man of high unselfish aspiration, and of considerable refinement and culture. His life had been such as to develope a much greater amount of consciousness in the soul than his brother's, and consequently this higher self was able to vitalize much more fully that image of his youthful days which his mother had formed in her heaven-life. There was more soul to put in, and so the image was vivid and living.

Further research revealed numbers of similar instances, and it was very clearly seen that the more highly a soul is evolved in spirituality, the more fully he can express himself in such manifestations as his friends' love has provided for him. And by such fuller expression he is also enabled to derive more and more benefit from the living force of that love as it pours itself upon him through these thought-images. As the soul grows these images become fuller expressions of him, till when he gains the level of a Master he consciously employs them as a means of helping and instructing his pupils.

Along these lines only is conscious communication possible between those still imprisoned in the physical body and those who have passed into this celestial realm. As has been said, a soul may be shining out gloriously through his image in a friend's heaven-life, and yet in his manifestation through the physical body on this plane that soul may be entirely unconscious of all this, and so may suppose himself unable to communicate with his departed friend. But if that soul has evolved his consciousness to the point of unification, and can therefore use his full powers while still in the physical body, he can then realize, even during this dull earthly life, that he still stands face to face with his friend as of yore—that death has not removed the man he

loved, but has only opened his eyes to the grander, wider life which ever lies around us all.

In appearance the friend would seem much as he did in earth-life, yet somehow strangely glorified. In the mind-body as in the astral body there is a reproduction of the physical form within the outer ovoid whose shape is determined by that of the causal body, so that it has somewhat the appearance of a form of denser mist surrounded by a lighter mist. All through the heaven-life the personality of the last physical life is distinctly preserved, and it is only when the consciousness is finally withdrawn into the causal body that this feeling of personality is merged in the individuality, and the man for the first time since this descent into incarnation realizes himself as the true and comparatively permanent ego.

Men sometimes ask whether on this mental plane there is any consciousness of time—any alternation of night and day, of sleeping and waking. The only waking in the heaven-world is the slow dawning of its wonderful bliss upon the mind-sense as the man enters upon his life on that plane, and the only sleeping is the equally gradual sinking into happy unconsciousness when the long term of that life at length comes to an end. It was once described to us in the beginning as a sort of prolongation of all the happiest hours in a man's life magnified a hundredfold in bliss; and though that definition leaves much to be desired (as indeed all physical-plane definitions must), it still comes far nearer the truth than this idea of day and night. There is, indeed, what seems an infinity of variety in the happiness of the heaven-world; but the changes of sleeping and waking form no part of its plan.

On the final separation of the mind-body from the astral a period of blank unconsciousness usually supervenes—varying in length between very wide limits—analogous

to that which usually follows physical death. The awakening from this into active mental consciousness closely resembles what often occurs in waking from a night's sleep. Just as on first awakening in the morning one sometimes passes through a period of intensely delightful repose during which one is conscious of the sense of enjoyment, though the mind is as yet inactive and the body hardly under control, so the entity awakening into the heaven-world first passes through a more or less prolonged period of intense and gradually increasing bliss before his full activity of consciousness on that plane is reached. When first this sense of wondrous joy dawns on him it fills the entire field of his consciousness, but gradually as he awakens he finds himself surrounded by a world peopled by his own ideals, and presenting the features appropriate to the sub-plane to which he has been drawn.

Sixth Sub-Plane; the Second Heaven.

The dominant characteristic of this subdivision may be said to be anthropomorphic religious devotion. The distinction between such devotion and the religious feeling which finds its expression on the second sub-plane of the astral lies in the fact that the former is purely unselfish (the man who feels it being totally unconcerned as to what the result of his devotion may be as regards himself), while the latter is always aroused by the hope and desire of gaining some advantage through it; so that on the second astral sub-plane such religious feeling as is there active invariably contains an element of selfish bargaining, while the devotion which raises a man to this sixth sub-plane of the heaven-world is entirely free from any such taint.

On the other hand, this phase of devotion, which consists essentially in the perpetual adoration of a person

deity, must be carefully distinguished from those still higher forms which find their expression in performing some definite work for the deity's sake. A few examples of the cases observed on this sub-plane will perhaps show these distinctions more clearly than any mere description can do.

A fairly large number of entities whose mental activities work themselves out on this level are drawn from the oriental religions; but only those are included who have the characteristic of pure but comparatively unreasoning and unintelligent devotion. Worshippers of Vishnu, both in his avatâr of Krishna and otherwise, as well as a few followers of Shiva, are to be found here, each wrapped up in the self-woven cocoon of his own thoughts, alone with his own god, and oblivious of the rest of mankind, except in so far as his affections may associate with him in his adoration those whom he loved on earth. A Vaishnavite, for example, was noticed wholly absorbed in the ecstatic worship of the very same image of Vishnu to which he had made offerings during life.

Some of the most characteristic examples of this plane are to be found among women, who indeed form a very large majority of its inhabitants. Among others there was a Hindu woman who had glorified her husband into a divine being, and also thought of the child Krishna as playing with her own children, but while these latter were thoroughly human and real, the child Krishna was obviously nothing but the semblance of a blue wooden image galvanized into life. Krishna also appeared in her heaven under another form—that of an effeminate young man playing on a flute; but she was not in the least confused or troubled by this double manifestation. Another woman, who was a worshipper of Shiva, had confounded the god with her husband, looking upon the latter as a manifestation of the

former, so that the one seemed to be constantly changing into the other. Some Buddhists also are found upon this subdivision, but apparently exclusively those less instructed ones who regard the Buddha rather as an object of adoration than as a great teacher.

The Christian religion also contributes many of the inhabitants of this plane. The unintellectual devotion which is exemplified on the one hand by the illiterate Roman Catholic peasant, and on the other by the earnest and sincere "soldier" of the Salvation Army, seems to produce results very similar to those already described, for these people also are found wrapped up in contemplation of their ideas of Christ or his mother respectively. For instance, an Irish peasant was seen absorbed in the deepest adoration of the Virgin Mary, whom he imaged as standing on the moon after the fashion of Titian's "Assumption," but holding out her hands and speaking to him. A mediæval monk was found in ecstatic contemplation of Christ crucified, and the intensity of his yearning love and pity was such that as he watched the blood dropping from the wounds of the figure of his Christ the stigmata reproduced themselves upon his own mind-body.

Another man seemed to have forgotten the sad story of the crucifixion, and thought of his Christ only as glorified on his throne, with the crystal sea before him, and all around a vast multitude of worshippers, among whom he himself stood with his wife and family. His affection for these relatives was very deep, yet his thoughts were more occupied in adoration of the Christ, though his conception of his deity was so material that he imaged him as constantly changing kaleidoscopically backwards and forwards between the form of a man and that of the lamb bearing the flag which we often see represented in church windows.

A more interesting case was that of a Spanish nun who

had died at about the age of nineteen or twenty. In her heaven she carried herself back to the date of Christ's life upon earth, and imagined herself as accompanying him through the chain of events recounted in the gospels, and after his crucifixion taking care of his mother the Virgin Mary. Not unnaturally, perhaps, her pictures of the scenery and costumes of Palestine were entirely inaccurate, for the Saviour and his disciples wore the dress of Spanish peasants, while the hills round Jerusalem were mighty mountains clothed with vineyards, and the olive trees were hung with grey Spanish moss. She thought of herself as eventually martyred for her faith, and ascending into heaven, but yet only to live over and over again this life in which she so delighted.

A quaint and pretty little example of the heaven-life of a child may conclude our list of instances from this sub-plane. He had died at the age of seven, and was occupied in re-enacting in the heaven-world the religious stories which his Irish nurse had told him down here; and best of all he loved to think of himself as playing with the infant Jesus, and helping him to make those clay sparrows which the power of the Christ-child is fabled to have brought to life and caused to fly.

It will be seen that the blind unreasoning devotion of which we have been speaking does not at any time raise its votaries to any great spiritual heights; but it must be remembered that in all cases they are entirely happy and most fully satisfied, for what they receive is always the highest which they are capable of appreciating. Nor is it without a very good effect on their future career; for although no amount of mere devotion such as this will ever 'evelope intellect, yet it does produce an increased capacity · higher form of devotion, and in most cases it leads also *ty of life*. A person, therefore, who lives such a life

and enjoys such a heaven as we have been describing, though he is not likely to make rapid progress on the path of spiritual development, is at least guarded from many dangers, for it is very improbable that in his next birth he should fall into any of the grosser sins, or be drawn away from his devotional aspirations into a mere worldly life of avarice, ambition, or dissipation. Nevertheless, a survey of this sub-plane distinctly emphasizes the necessity of following St. Peter's advice, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue *knowledge*."

Since such strange results seem to follow from crude forms of faith, one looks with interest to see what effect is produced by the still cruder materialism which not long ago was so painfully common in Europe. Madame Blavatsky has stated in *The Key to Theosophy* that in some cases a materialist has no conscious life in the heaven-world, since he did not while on earth believe in such a *post-mortem* condition. It seems probable, however, that our great founder was employing the word "materialist" in a much more restricted sense than that in which it is generally used, since in the same volume she also asserts that for them no conscious life after death is possible at all, whereas it is a matter of common knowledge among those whose nightly work lies upon the astral plane that many of those whom we usually call materialists are to be met with there, and are certainly not unconscious.

For example, a prominent materalist intimately known to one of our members was not long ago discovered by his friend upon the highest sub-plane of the astral, where he had surrounded himself with his books, and was continuing his studies almost as he might have done on earth. On being questioned by his friend he readily admitted that the theories which he had held while upon earth were confuted by the irresistible logic of

facts; but his own agnostic tendencies were still strong enough to make him unwilling to accept what his friend told him as to the existence of the still higher mental plane. Yet there was certainly much in this man's character which could find its full fruition only upon that mental plane, and since his entire disbelief in any life after death has not prevented his astral experiences, there seems no reason to suppose that it can check the due working out of the higher forces in him in the heaven-world hereafter.

Assuredly he has lost much by his disbelief. No doubt, had he been able to understand the beauty of the religious ideal, it would have called forth in him a mighty energy of devotion, the effect of which he would have been reaping now. All that, which might have been his, is missing. But his deep unselfish family affection, his earnest and tireless philanthropic effort—these also were great outpourings of energy, which must produce their result, and can produce it nowhere but upon the mental plane. The absence of one kind of force cannot prevent the action of the others.

Another instance still more recently observed was that of a materialist who on awakening upon the astral plane after death supposed himself to be still alive, and merely experiencing an unpleasant dream. Fortunately for him there was among the band of those able to function upon the astral plane a son of an old friend of his, who was commissioned to search for him and endeavour to render him some assistance. Naturally enough, he at first supposed the young man to be merely a figure his dream; but upon receipt of a message from his friend referring to matters which had occurred before birth of the messenger, he was convinced of the ' of the plane upon which he found himself, and

became at once exceedingly eager to acquire all possible information about it. The instruction which is being given to him under these conditions will undoubtedly have a very great effect upon him, and will largely modify not only the heaven-life which lies before him but also his next incarnation upon earth.

What is shown to us by these two and by many other examples need not after all surprise us, for it is only what we might expect from our experience upon the physical plane. We constantly find down here that nature makes no allowance for our ignorance of her laws; if, under an impression that fire does not burn, a man puts his hand into a flame, he is speedily convinced of his mistake. In the same way a man's disbelief in a future existence does not affect the facts of nature; and in some cases at least he simply finds out after death that he was mistaken.

The kind of materialism referred to by Madame Blavatsky in the remarks above mentioned was therefore probably something much coarser and more aggressive than ordinary agnosticism—something which would render it exceedingly unlikely that a man who held it would have any qualities requiring a life on the mental plane in which to work themselves out.

Fifth Sub-Plane; the Third Heaven.

The chief characteristic of this subdivision may be defined as devotion expressing itself in active work. The Christian on this plane, for example, instead of merely adoring his Saviour, would think of himself as going out into the world to work for him. It is especially the plane for the working out of great schemes and designs unrealized on earth—of great organizations inspired

by religious devotion, and usually having for their object some philanthropic purpose. It must be borne in mind, however, that ever as we rise higher greater complexity and variety is introduced, so that though we may still be able to give a definite characteristic as on the whole dominating the plane, we shall yet be more and more liable to find variations and exceptions that do not so readily range themselves under the general heading.

A typical case, although somewhat above the average, was that of a man who was found carrying out a grand scheme for the amelioration of the condition of the lower classes. While a deeply religious man himself, he had felt that the first step necessary in dealing with the poor was to improve their physical condition; and the plan which he was now working out in his heaven-life with triumphant success and loving attention to every detail was one which had often crossed his mind while on earth, though he had been quite unable there to take any steps towards its realization.

His idea had been that, if possessed of enormous wealth, he would buy up and get into his own hands the whole of one of the smaller trades—one in which perhaps three or four large firms only were now engaged; and he thought that by so doing he could effect very large savings by doing away with competitive advertising and other wasteful forms of trade rivalry, and thus be able, while supplying goods to the public at the same price as now, to pay much better wages to his workmen. It was part of his scheme to buy a plot of land and erect upon it cottages for his workmen, each surrounded by its little garden; after a certain number of years' service, each workman should acquire a share in the profits of the business which would be sufficient to provide for him in his old age. Carrying out this system our philanthropist had hoped

to show to the world that there was an eminently practical side to Christianity, and also to win the souls of his men to his own faith out of gratitude for the material benefits they had received.

Another not dissimilar case was that of an Indian prince whose ideal on earth had been the divine hero-king, Râma, on whose example he had tried to model his life and methods of government. Naturally down here all sorts of untoward accidents had occurred, and many of his schemes had consequently failed, but in the heaven-life everything went well, and the greatest possible result followed every one of his well-meant efforts—Râma of course personally advising and directing his work, and receiving perpetual adoration from all his devoted subjects.

A curious and rather touching instance of personal religious work was that of a woman who had been a nun, belonging to one not of the contemplative but of the working orders. She had evidently based her life upon the text, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," and now in the heaven-world she was still carrying out to the fullest extent the injunctions of her Lord, and was constantly occupied in healing the sick, in feeding the hungry, and clothing and helping the poor—the peculiarity of the case being that each of those to whom she had ministered at once changed into the appearance of the Christ, whom she then worshipped with fervent devotion.

An instructive case was that of two sisters, both of whom had been intensely religious; one of them had been a crippled invalid, and the other had spent a long life in tending her. On earth they had often discussed and planned what religious and philanthropic work they would carry out if they were able, and now each is the most pro-

minent figure in the heaven of the other, the cripple being well and strong, while each thinks of the other as joining her in carrying out the unrealized wishes of her earth-life. This was a very fine example of the calm continuity of life in the case of people of unselfish aims; for the only difference that death had made was to eliminate disease and suffering, and to render easy the work which had heretofore been impossible.

On this plane also the higher type of sincere and devoted missionary activity finds expression. Of course the ordinary ignorant fanatic never reaches this level, but a few of the noblest cases, such as Livingstone, might be found here engaged in the congenial occupation of converting multitudes of people to the particular religion which they happened to advocate. One of the most striking of such cases which came under notice was that of a Mohammedan, who imagined himself as working most zealously at the conversion of the world, and its government according to the most approved principles of the faith of Islam.

It appears that under certain conditions artistic capacity may also bring its votaries to this sub-plane. But here a careful distinction must be drawn. The artist or musician whose only object is the selfish one of personal fame, or who habitually allows himself to be influenced by feelings of professional jealousy, naturally generates no forces which will bring him to the mental plane at all. On the other that grandest type of art whose disciples regard it as a wer entrusted to them for the spiritual elevation ws, will express itself in even higher regions than etween these two extremes those devotees of art for its own sake or regard it as an offering to never thinking of its effect on their fellows, ases find their appropriate heaven on this sub-

As an example of this may be mentioned a musician of very religious temperament who regarded all his labour of love simply as an offering to the Christ, and knew nothing of the magnificent arrangement of sound and colour which his soul-inspiring compositions were producing in the matter of the mental plane. Nor would all his enthusiasm be wasted and fruitless, for without his knowledge it was bringing joy and help to many, and its results would certainly be to give him increased devotion and increased musical capacity in his next birth: but without the still wider aspiration to help humanity this kind of heaven-life might repeat itself almost indefinitely. Indeed, glancing back at the three planes with which we have just been dealing, we may notice that they are in all cases concerned with the working out of devotion to personalities—either to one's family and friends or to a personal deity—rather than the wider devotion to humanity for its own sake which finds its expression on the next sub-plane.

Fourth Sub-Plane; the Fourth Heaven.

So varied are the activities of this, the highest of the rûpa levels, that it is difficult to group them under a single characteristic. Perhaps they might best be arranged into four main divisions—unselfish pursuit of spiritual knowledge, high philosophic or scientific thought, literary or artistic ability exercised for unselfish purposes, and service for the sake of service. The exact definition of each of these classes will be more readily comprehended when some examples of each have been given.

Naturally it is from those religions in which the necessity of obtaining spiritual knowledge is recognized that most of the population of this sub-plane is drawn. It will be remembered that on the sixth sub-plane we found many

Buddhists whose religion had chiefly taken the form of devotion to their great leader as a person; here, on the contrary, we have these more intelligent followers whose supreme aspiration was to sit at his feet and learn—who looked upon him in the light of a teacher rather than as a being to be adored.

Now in their heaven-life this highest wish is fulfilled; they find themselves in very truth learning from the Buddha, and the image which they have thus made of him is no empty form, but most assuredly through it shines out the wonderful wisdom, power, and love of that mightiest of earth's teachers. They are therefore acquiring fresh knowledge and wider views; and the effect upon their next life cannot but be of the most marked character. They will not perhaps remember any individual facts that they may have learnt (though when such facts are presented to their minds in a subsequent life they will grasp them with avidity and intuitively recognize their truth), but the result of the teaching will be to build into the ego a strong tendency to take broader and more philosophical views on all such subjects.

It will at once be seen how very definitely and unmistakably such a heaven-life as this hastens the evolution of the ego; and once more our attention is drawn to the enormous advantage gained by those who have accepted the guidance of real, living and powerful teachers.

A less developed type of this form of instruction is found in cases in which some really great and spiritual writer has become to a student a living personality, and has taken on the aspect of a friend, forming part of the student's mental life—an ideal figure in his musings. Such an one may enter into the pupil's heaven-life and by virtue of his own highly evolved soul may vivify the mental image of himself, and under these happier circumstances further illuminate

the teachings in his own books, bringing out of them the more hidden meanings.

Many of the followers of the path of wisdom among the Hindus find their heaven upon this plane—that is, if their teachers have been men possessing any real knowledge. A few of the more advanced among the Sûfîs and Parsîs are also here, and we still find some of the early Gnostics whose spiritual development was such as to earn for them a prolonged stay in this celestial region. But except for this comparatively small number of Sûfîs and Gnostics, neither Mohammedanism nor Christianity seems to raise its followers to this level, though some who nominally belong to these religions may be carried on to this sub-plane by the presence in their character of qualities which do not depend upon the teachings peculiar to their religion.

In this region we also find earnest and devoted students of Occultism who are not yet so far advanced as to have earned the right and the power to forego their heaven-life for the good of the world. Among these was one who in life had been personally known to some of the investigators —a Buddhist monk who had been an earnest student of Theosophy, and had long cherished the hope of being one day privileged to receive instruction directly from its Adept teachers. In his heaven-life the Buddha was the dominant figure, while the two Masters who have been most closely concerned with the Theosophical Society appeared also as his lieutenants, expounding and illustrating his teaching. All three of these images were very full of the power and wisdom of the great beings whom they represented, and the monk was therefore definitely receiving real teaching upon occult subjects, the effect of which would almost certainly be to bring him actually on to the Path of Initiation in his next birth.

Another instance from our ranks which was encountered

on this level illustrates the terrible effect of harbouring unfounded and uncharitable suspicions. It was the case of a devoted and self-sacrificing student who towards the end of her life had unfortunately fallen into an attitude of quite unworthy and unjustifiable distrust of the motives of her old friend and teacher Madame Blavatsky; and it was sad to notice how this feeling had shut out to a considerable extent the higher influence and teaching which she might have enjoyed in her heaven-life. It was not that the influence and teaching were in any way withheld from her, for that can never be; but that her own mental attitude rendered her to some extent unreceptive of them. She was of course quite unconscious of this, and seemed to herself to be enjoying the fullest and most perfect communion with the Masters, yet it was obvious to the investigators that but for this unfortunate self-limitation she would have reaped far greater advantage from her stay on this level. A wealth of love and strength and knowledge almost infinite lay there at her hand, but her own ingratitude had sadly crippled her power to accept it.

It will be understood that since there are other Masters of wisdom besides those connected with our own movement, and other schools of occultism working along the same general lines as that to which we belong, students attached to some of these are also frequently met with upon this subplane.

Passing now to the next class, that of high philosophic and scientific thought, we find here many of those nobler and more unselfish thinkers who seek insight and knowledge only for the purpose of enlightening and helping their fellows. We are not including as students of philosophy those men, either in the East or the West, who waste their time in mere verbal argument and hair-splitting—for that is a form of discussion which has its roots in selfishness and

conceit, and can therefore never help towards a real understanding of the facts of the universe: for naturally such foolish superficiality as this produces no results that can work themselves out on the mental plane.

As an instance of a true student noticed on this sub-plane we may mention one of the later followers of the neo-platonic system, whose name has fortunately been preserved to us in the surviving records of that period. He had striven all through his earth-life really to master the teachings of that school, and now his heaven-life was occupied in unravelling its mysteries and in endeavouring to understand its bearing upon human life and development.

Another case was that of an astronomer, who seemed to have begun life as orthodox, but had gradually under the influence of his studies widened out into Pantheism; in his heaven-life he was still pursuing these studies with a mind full of reverence, and was undoubtedly gaining real knowledge from those great orders of the Devas, through whom on this plane the majestic cyclic movement of the mighty stellar influences seems to express itself in ever-changing coruscations of all-penetrating living light He was lost in contemplation of a vast panorama of whirling nebulæ and gradually-forming systems and worlds, and he appeared to be groping after some dim idea as to the shape of the universe, which he imagined as some vast animal. His thoughts surrounded him as elemental forms shaped as stars, and one especial source of joy to him consisted in listening to the stately rhythm of the music that pealed out in mighty chorales from the moving orbs.

The third type of activity on this plane is that highest kind of artistic and literary effort which is chiefly inspired by a desire to elevate and spiritualize the race. Here we find all our greatest musicians; on this sub-plane Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Wagner and others are still flooding the

heaven-world with harmony far more glorious even than the grandest which they were able to produce when on earth. It seems as if a great stream of divine music poured into them from higher regions, and was, as it were, specialized by them and made their own, to be then sent forth through all the plane in a great tide of melody which adds to the bliss of all around. Those who are functioning in full consciousness on the mental plane will clearly hear and thoroughly appreciate this magnificent outpouring, but even the disembodied entities of this level, each of whom is wrapped up in his own thought-cloud, are also deeply affected by the elevating and ennobling influence of its resonant melody.

The painter and the sculptor also, if they have followed their respective arts always with a grand, unselfish aim, are here constantly making and sending forth all kinds of lovely forms for the delight and encouragement of their fellow-men —the forms being simply artificial elementals created by their thought. And not only may these beautiful conceptions give deepest pleasure to those living entirely on the mental plane; they may also in many cases be grasped by the minds of artists still in the flesh—may act as inspirations to them, and so be reproduced down here for the elevating and ennobling of that portion of humanity which is struggling amid the turmoil of physical life.

One touching and beautiful figure seen upon this plane was that of a boy who had been a chorister, and had died at the age of fourteen. His whole soul was full of music and of boyish devotion to his art, deeply coloured with the thought that by it he was expressing the religious longings of the multitude who crowded a vast cathedral, and yet was at the same time pouring out to them celestial encouragement and inspiration. He had known little enough save for this one great gift of song, but he had used that gift

worthily, trying to be the voice of the people to heaven and of heaven to the people, and ever longing to know more music and render it more worthily for the Church's sake. And so in this celestial life his wish was bearing fruit, and over him was bending the quaint angular figure of a mediæval St. Cecilia, formed by his loving thought from the picture of her in a stained glass window. But though the outer garb was thus a scarcely-artistic representation of a doubtful ecclesiastical legend, the reality which lay behind it was living and glorious; for the childish thought-form was vivified by one of the mighty archangels of the celestial hierarchy of song, and through it he taught the chorister a grander strain of music than ever earth has known.

Here also was one of earth's failures—for the tragedy of the earth-life leaves strange marks sometimes even in the heavenly places. In the world where all thoughts of loved ones smile upon man as friends, he was thinking and writing in solitude. On earth he had striven to write a great book, and for the sake of it had refused to use his literary power in making mere sustenance from paltry hack-work; but none would look at his book, and he walked the streets despairing, till sorrow and starvation closed his eyes to earth. He had been lonely all his life—in his youth friendless and shut out from family ties, and in his manhood able to work only in his own way, pushing aside hands that would have led him to a wider view of life's possibilities than the earthly paradise which he longed to make for all.

Now, as he thought and wrote, though there were none whom he had loved as personal or ideal helpers who could make part of this his mental life, he saw stretching before him the Utopia of which he had dreamed, for which he had tried to live, and the vast thronging impersonal multitudes whom he had longed to serve; and the joy of their

surged back on him and made his solitude a heaven. When he is born again on earth he will surely return with power to achieve as well as to plan, and this celestial vision will be partially bodied forth in happier terrene lives.

Many were found on this plane who during their earth-stay had devoted themselves to helping men because they felt the tie of brotherhood—who rendered service for the sake of service rather than because they desired to please any particular deity. They were engaged in working out with full knowledge and calm wisdom vast schemes of beneficence, magnificent plans of world improvement, and at the same time they were maturing powers with which to carry them out hereafter on the lower plane of physical life.

The Reality of the Heaven-Life.

Critics who have very imperfectly apprehended the Theosophical teaching on the subject of the hereafter, have sometimes urged that the life of the ordinary person in the lower heaven-world is nothing but a dream and an illusion —that when he imagines himself happy amidst his family and friends, or carrying out his plans with such fulness of joy and success, he is really only the victim of a cruel delusion: and this is sometimes unfavourably contrasted with what is called the "solid objectivity" of the heaven promised by orthodoxy. The reply to such an objection is twofold: first, that when we are studying the problems of the future life we are not concerned to know which of two hypotheses put before us would be the pleasanter (that being, after all, a matter of opinion), but rather which of them is the true one; and secondly, that when we enquire more fully into the facts of the case we shall see that those who maintain the illusion theory are looking at the matter from

quite a wrong point of view, and have utterly misunderstood the facts.

As to the first point, the actual state of affairs is quite easily discoverable by those who have developed the power to pass consciously on to the mental plane during life; and when so investigated it is found to agree perfectly with the account given to us by the Masters of Wisdom through our great founder and teacher Madame Blavatsky. This at once disposes of the "solid objectivity" theory mentioned above, and transfers the onus of proof to the shoulders of our orthodox friends. As to the second point, if the contention be that on the lower levels of the heaven-world truth in its fulness is not yet known to man, and that consequently illusion still exists there, we must frankly admit that that is so. But that is not what is usually meant by those who bring forward this objection; they are generally oppressed by a feeling that the heaven-life will be more illusory and useless than the physical—an idea than which nothing could be more entirely opposed to the fact.

Is it contended that on that plane we make our own surroundings, and for that reason see only a very small part of the plane? Surely down here also the world of which a person is sensible is never the *whole* of the outer world, but only so much of it as his senses, his intellect, his education, enable him to take in. It is obvious that during earth-life the average person's conception of everything around him is really quite a wrong one—empty, imperfect, inaccurate in a dozen ways; for what does he know of the great forces—etheric, astral, mental—which lie behind everything he sees, and in fact form by far the most important part of it? What does he know, as a rule, even of the more recondite physical facts which surround him and meet him at every step that he takes? The truth is that here, as in his heaven-life, he lives in a world which is very largely of his own

creation. He does not realize it, either there or here, but that is only because of his own ignorance—because he knows no better.

Is it said that in the heaven-world a man takes his thoughts for real things? He is quite right; they *are* real things, and on this, the thought-plane, nothing but thought *can* be real. There we recognize that great fact—here we do not; on which plane, then, is the delusion greater? Those thoughts of his are indeed realities, and are capable of producing the most striking results upon living men—results which can never be otherwise than beneficial, because upon that high plane there can be none but loving thought. Thus it will be seen that the theory that the heaven-life is an illusion is merely the result of a misconception, and shows imperfect acquaintance with its conditions and possibilities; the truth is that the higher we rise the nearer we draw to the one reality.

It will perhaps assist the beginner to comprehend how real and how entirely *natural* is the higher portion of a man's life if he regards it simply as the result of the earlier portion spent upon the two lower planes. We all know well that our highest ideals are never realized, that our highest aspirations never bear full fruit down here. So that it would seem as though in this way some efforts were fruitless, some force was lost. But we know that cannot be, for the law of the conservation of energy holds good on the higher planes just as on the lower. Much of that higher spiritual energy which man pours forth cannot react upon him while in earth-life, for until his higher principles are freed from the incubus of the flesh, they are unable to respond to these far finer and more subtle vibrations. But in the heaven-life for the first time all this hindrance is removed, and the accumulated energy immediately pours itself forth in the inevitable reaction which the law of

eternal justice demands. As Browning has grandly phrased it—

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs: in the heaven a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not in its semblance, but itself: no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once; we shall hear it by-and-by.

Another point worth bearing in mind is that this system upon which nature has arranged the life after death is the only imaginable one which could fulfil its object of making every one happy to the fullest extent of his capacity for happiness. If the joy of heaven were of one particular type only, as it is according to the orthodox theory, there must always be some who would weary of it, some who would be incapable of participating in it, either from want of taste in that particular direction, or from lack of the necessary education—to say nothing of that other obvious fact, that if this condition of affairs were eternal, the grossest injustice

must be perpetrated by giving practically the same reward to all who enter, no matter what their respective deserts might be.

Again, what other arrangement with regard to relatives and friends could possibly be equally satisfactory? If the departed were able to follow the fluctuating fortunes of their friends on earth, happiness would be impossible for them; if, without knowing what was happening to them, they had to wait until the death of those friends before meeting them, there would be a painful period of suspense, often extending over many years, while the friend would in many cases arrive so much changed as to be no longer sympathetic.

On the system so wisely provided for us by nature every one of these difficulties is avoided; a man decides for himself both the length and the character of his heaven-life by the causes which he himself generates during his earth-life; therefore he cannot but have exactly the amount which he has deserved, and exactly that quality of joy which is best suited to his idiosyncrasies. Those whom he loves most he has ever with him, and always at their noblest and best; while no shadow of discord or change can ever come between them, since he receives from them all the time exactly what he wishes. In point of fact, the arrangement really made is infinitely superior to anything which the imagination of man has been able to offer us in its place; as indeed we might have expected, for all those speculations were man's idea of what is best; but the truth is God's idea.

The Renunciation of Heaven.

It has long been understood among students of occultism that among the possibilities of more rapid progress which come to a man as he advances is that of "renouncing the reward of Devachan," as it has been called

—that is, of giving up the life of bliss in the heaven-world between two incarnations in order to return more rapidly to carry on work on the physical plane. The phrase quoted is not a very good one, for we shall be much more likely to arrive at a correct understanding of the heaven-life if we look upon it as the necessary *result* of the earth-life, rather than as its reward. In the course of his physical existence a man sets in motion by his higher thoughts and aspirations what may be described as a certain amount of spiritual force, which will react upon him when he reaches the mental plane. If there be but little of this force, it will be comparatively soon exhausted, and the heaven-life will be a short one; if, on the contrary, a great deal has been generated, a corresponding space of time will be needed for its full working, and the heaven will be very greatly prolonged.

As a man developes in spirituality, therefore, his lives in the heaven-world will become longer, but it must not be supposed that his progress is thereby delayed or his opportunities of usefulness lessened. For all but very highly advanced persons the heaven-life is absolutely necessary, as it is only under its conditions that their aspirations can be developed into faculty, their experiences into wisdom; and the progress which is thus made by the soul is far greater than would be possible if by some miracle he was enabled to remain in physical incarnation for the entire period. If it were otherwise, obviously the whole law of nature would stultify itself, for the nearer it came to the attainment of its great object, the more determined and formidable would be its efforts to defeat itself—hardly a reasonable view to take of a law which we know to be an expression of the most exalted wisdom!

The possibility of the renunciation of this heaven-life is by no means within the reach of every one. The Great Law

permits no man to renounce blindly that of which he is ignorant, nor to depart from the ordinary course of evolution unless and until it is certain that such departure will be for his ultimate benefit.

The general rule is that no one is in a position to renounce the bliss of heaven until he has experienced it during earth-life—until he is sufficiently developed to be able to raise his consciousness to that plane, and bring back with him a clear and full memory of that glory which so far transcends terrestrial conception.

A little thought will make obvious the reason and the justice of this. It might be said that since it is the progress of the soul which is really in question, it would be sufficient for him to understand on his own plane the desirability of making the sacrifice of celestial bliss, and then to compel his lower self to act in accordance with his decision. Yet that would hardly be strict justice, for the enjoyment of heavenly bliss on the rûpa levels, though it belongs to the ego, belongs to him only as manifested through his personality; it is the life of that personality, with all its familiar personal surroundings, that is carried on in the lower heaven-world. And so before the renunciation of all this can take place, that personality must realize clearly what it is that is being given up; the lower mind must be in accord with the higher on this subject.

Now such realization obviously involves the possession during earth-life of a consciousness on the mental plane equivalent to that which the person in question would have after death. But it must be remembered that the evolution of consciousness takes place from below upward, as it were, and that the comparatively undeveloped majority of mankind are effectively conscious as yet only in the physical body. Their astral bodies are for the most part still shapeless and unorganized—bridges of communication indeed

between the ego and its physical vesture, and even vehicles for the reception of sensation, but in no sense as yet instruments in the hand of the real man or adequate expressions of his future powers on that plane.

In the more advanced races of mankind we find the astral body much more developed, and the consciousness in it in many cases fairly complete potentially, though even then in most cases the man is entirely self-centred—conscious of his own thoughts mainly, and but little of his actual surroundings. To advance still further, some few of those who have taken up the study of occultism have been regularly awakened on that plane, and have therefore entered upon the full use of their astral faculties, and are deriving in many ways great benefit therefrom.

It does not, however, necessarily follow that such men should at first, or even for some considerable time, remember upon the physical plane the activities and experiences of their astral life. As a general rule they would do so partially and intermittently, but there are cases in which for various reasons practically nothing worth calling a memory of that higher existence finds its way through into the physical brain.

Any kind of definite consciousness on the mental plane would, of course, indicate still further advancement, and in the case of a man who was developing quite normally and regularly we should expect to find such consciousness dawning only as the connection between the astral and the physical became fairly well established. But in this one-sided and artificial condition which we call modern civilization, people do not always develope quite regularly and normally, and so there are cases to be found in which a considerable amount of consciousness on the mental plane has been acquired and duly linked on to the astral life, and yet no knowledge of all this higher existence ever gets through into the physical brain at all.

Such cases are very rare, but they certainly do exist, and in them we see at once the possibility of an exception to our rule. A personality of this type might be sufficiently developed to taste the indescribable bliss of heaven and so acquire the right to renounce it, while he was able to bring the memory of it no farther down than into his astral life. But since by the hypothesis that astral life would be one of full and perfect consciousness for the personality, such recollection would be amply sufficient to fulfil the requirements of justice, even though no shadow of all this ever came through into the physical waking consciousness. The great point to bear in mind is that since it is the personality that must resign, it is also the personality that must experience, and it must bring back the recollection to some plane on which it functions normally and in full consciousness; but that plane need not be the physical if these conditions are fulfilled upon the astral. Such a case would be unlikely to occur except among those who were already at least probationary pupils of one of the Masters of Wisdom.

The man who wishes to perform this great feat must therefore work with the most intense earnestness to make himself a worthy instrument in the hands of those who help the world—must throw himself with the most devoted fervour into labour for the spiritual good of others, not arrogantly assuming that he is already fit for so great an honour, but rather humbly hoping that perhaps after a life or two of strenuous effort his Master may tell him that the time has come when to him also this may be a possibility.

THE HIGHER HEAVEN-WORLD.

We now turn from the four lower or rûpa levels of the mental plane, on which man functions in his temporary personality, to the consideration of the three higher or arûpa

levels, his true and relatively permanent home. Here, so far as he sees at all, he sees clearly, for he has risen above the illusions of personality and the refracting medium of the lower self, and though his consciousness may be dim, dreamily unobservant and scarcely awake, yet his vision is at least true, however limited. The conditions of consciousness are so far away from all with which we are familiar down here that all terms known to psychology are useless and misleading. This has been called the realm of the noumenal in contrast with the phenomenal, of the formless in contrast with the formed; but it is still a world of manifestation, however real when opposed to the unrealities of lower states, and it still has forms, however rare in their materials and subtle in their essence.

After the period of what we usually call the heaven-life is over, there is still another phase of existence for the soul before it is re-born on earth, and though in the case of most people this stage is a comparatively short one, we must not ignore it if we wish to have a complete conception of man's superphysical life.

We are perpetually misunderstanding the life of man because we are in the habit of taking a partial view of it, and entirely disregarding its real nature and object. We generally look at it, in fact, from the point of view of the physical body, and not in the least from that of the soul; and we therefore get the whole thing utterly out of proportion. Each movement of the ego towards these lower planes and back is in reality a vast circular sweep; we take a little fragment of the lower arc of this circle and regard it as a straight line, attaching quite undue importance to its beginning and ending, while the real turning-point of the circle naturally entirely escapes us.

Think of the matter for a moment as it must seem to the true man on his own plane, as soon as he begins to be at all

clearly conscious there. In obedience to the desire for manifestation which he finds within him, which is impressed upon him by that law of evolution which is the will of the Logos, he copies the action of that Logos by pouring himself forth into lower planes.

In the course of this process he clothes himself with matter of the various planes into which he passes—mental, astral, and physical in turn, all the while steadily pressing outward. Through the earlier part of that little fragment of existence on the physical plane which we call his life, the outward force is still strong, but at about the middle of it, in ordinary cases, that force becomes exhausted, and the great inward sweep begins.

Not that there is any sudden or violent change, for this is not an angle, but still part of the curve of the same circle—exactly corresponding to the moment of aphelion in a planet's course round its orbit. Yet it is the real turning-point of that little cycle of evolution, though with us it is usually not marked in any way. In the old Indian scheme of life it *was* marked as the end of the *grihastha* or householder period of the man's earthly existence.

From this point there should be nothing but a steady drawing inward of the whole force of the man, and his attention ought to be more and more withdrawn from mere earthly things, and concentrated on those of higher planes —from which we at once see how exceedingly ill-adapted to real progress are the modern conditions of European life.

The point at which the man drops his physical body is not a specially important one in this arc of evolution—by no means so important as the next change, which we might call his death on the astral plane and his birth in the heaven-world, although really it is simply the transfer of the consciousness from astral matter to mental matter in the course

of the same steady withdrawal of which we have already spoken.

The final result of the life is known only when in that process of withdrawal the consciousness is once more centred in the ego in his home in the higher heaven-world; then it is seen what new qualities he has acquired in the course of that particular little cycle of his evolution. At that time also a glimpse of the life as a whole is obtained; the soul has for a moment a flash of clearer consciousness, in which he sees the results of the life just completed, and something of what will follow from it in his next birth.

This glimpse can hardly be said to involve a knowledge of the nature of the next incarnation, except in the vaguest and most general sense; no doubt the main object of the coming life would be seen, but the vision would be chiefly valuable to the soul as a lesson in the kârmic result of his action in the past. It offers him an opportunity, of which he takes more or less advantage according to the stage of development to which he has already attained.

At first he makes little of it, since he is but very dimly conscious and very poorly fitted to apprehend facts and their varied inter-relations; but gradually his power to appreciate what he sees increases, and later the ability comes to remember such flashes at the end of previous lives, and to compare them, and so to estimate the progress which he is making along the road which he has to traverse.

Third Sub-Plane; the Fifth Heaven.

This, the lowest of the arûpa sub-planes, is also by far the most populous of all the regions with which we are acquainted, for here are present almost all the sixty thousand millions of souls who are said to be engaged in the present human evolution—all, in fact, except the comparatively small

number who are capable of functioning on the second and first sub-planes. Each soul is represented by an ovoid form —at first a mere film, colourless and almost invisible, of most tenuous consistency; but, as the ego developes, this body begins to show a shimmering iridescence like a soap-bubble, colours playing over its surface like the changing hues made by sunlight on the spray of a waterfall.

Composed of matter inconceivably fine, delicate and ethereal, intensely alive and pulsating with living fire, it becomes as its evolution proceeds a radiant globe of flashing colours, its high vibrations sending ripples of changing hues over its surface—hues of which earth knows nothing—brilliant, soft and luminous beyond the power of language to describe. Take the colours of an Egyptian sunset and add to them the wonderful softness of an English sky at eventide —raise these as high above themselves in light and translucency and splendour as they are above the colours given by the cakes of a child's paint-box—and even then none who have not seen can image the beauty of these radiant orbs which flash into the field of clairvoyant vision as it is lifted to the level of this supernal world.

All these causal bodies are filled with living fire drawn from a higher plane, with which the globe appears to be connected by a quivering thread of intense light, vividly recalling to the mind the words of the stanzas of Dzyân, "the Spark hangs from the Flame by the finest thread of Fohat"; and as the soul grows and is able to receive more and more from the inexhaustible ocean of the Divine Spirit which pours down through the thread as a channel, the latter expands and gives wider passage to the flood, till on the next sub-plane it might be imaged as a water-spout connecting earth and sky, and higher still as itself a great globe through which rushes the living spring, until the causal body seems to melt into the inpouring light. Once more the

Stanza says it for us: "The thread between the Watcher and his shadow becomes more strong and radiant with every change. The morning sunlight has changed into noon-day glory. This is thy present wheel, said the Flame to the Spark. Thou art myself, my image and my shadow. I have clothed myself in thee, and thou art my vâhan to the day, 'Be-with-us,' when thou shalt re-become myself and others, thyself and me."

The souls who are connected with a physical body are distinguishable from those enjoying the disembodied state by a difference in the types of vibrations set up on the surface of the globes, and it is therefore easy on this plane to see at a glance whether an individual is or is not in incarnation at the time. The immense majority, whether in or out of the body, are but dreamily semi-conscious, though few are now in the condition of mere colourless films; those who are fully awake are marked and brilliant exceptions, standing out amid the less radiant crowds like stars of the first magnitude, and between these and the least-developed are ranged every variety of size and beauty of colour—each thus representing the exact stage of evolution at which he has arrived.

The majority are not yet sufficiently definite, even in such consciousness as they possess, to understand the purpose or the laws of the evolution in which they are engaged; they seek incarnation in obedience to the impulse of the Cosmic Will, and also to *Tanhâ*, the blind thirst for manifested life —a desire to find some region in which they can feel and be conscious of living. For in their earlier stages these undeveloped souls cannot feel the intensely rapid and piercing vibrations of the highly-refined matter of their own plane; the strong and coarse but comparatively slow movements of the heavier matter of the physical plane are the only ones that can evoke any response from them. So it is only upon

the physical plane that they feel themselves to be alive at all, and this explains their strong craving for re-birth into earth-life. Thus for a time their desire agrees exactly with the law of their evolution. They can develope only by means of these impacts from without, to which they are gradually roused to respond, and in this early stage they can receive them only in earth-life. By slow degrees their power of response increases, and is awakened first to the higher and finer of the physical vibrations, and still more slowly to those of the astral plane. Then their astral bodies, which until now have been merely bridges to convey sensations to the soul, gradually become definite vehicles which they can use, and their consciousness begins to be centred rather in their emotions than in mere physical sensations.

At a later stage, but always by the same process of learning to respond to impacts from without, the souls learn to centre their consciousness in the mental body—to live in and according to the mental images which they have formed for themselves, and so to govern their emotions by the mind. Yet further on the long, long road the centre shifts to the causal body, and the souls realize their true life. When that time comes they will be found upon a higher sub-plane than this, and the lower earthly existence will be no longer necessary for them; but for the present we are thinking of the less evolved majority, who still put forth as groping, waving tentacles into the ocean of existence the personalities which are themselves on the lower planes of life, though they are as yet in no sense aware that these personalities are the means whereby they are to be nourished and to grow. They see nothing of their past or their future, not being yet conscious on their own plane. Still, as they are slowly drawing in experience and assimilating it, there grows up a sense that certain things are good to do and others bad, and this expresses itself imperfectly in the connected personality

as the beginning of a conscience, a feeling of right and wrong: and gradually, as they develope, this sense more and more clearly and clearly formulates itself in the lower nature, and becomes a less inefficient guide of conduct.

By means of the opportunities given by the flash of fuller consciousness to which we have previously referred, the most advanced souls of this sub-plane develope to a point at which they are engaged in studying their past, tracing out the causes set going in it, and learning much from the retrospection, so that the impulses sent downwards become clearer and more definite, and translate themselves in the lower consciousness as firm convictions and imperative intuitions.

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to repeat that the thought-images of the rûpa levels are not carried into the higher heaven-world; all illusion now is past, and each soul knows his real kindred, sees them and is seen in his own royal nature, as the true immortal man that passes on from life to life, with all the ties intact that are knit to his real being.

Second Sub-Plane; the Sixth Heaven.

From the densely-thronged region which we have been considering we pass into a more thinly-populated world, as out of a great city into a peaceful country-side; for at the present stage of human evolution only a small minority of individuals have risen to this loftier level where even the least advanced is definitely self-conscious, and also conscious of his surroundings. Able at least to some extent to review the past through which he has come, the soul on this level is aware of the purpose and method of evolution; he knows that he is engaged in a work of self-development, and recognizes the stages of physical and *post-mortem* life through which he passes in his lower vehicles. The personality with

which he is connected is seen by him as part of himself, and he endeavours to guide it, using his knowledge of the past as a store of experience from which he formulates principles of conduct, clear and immutable convictions of right and wrong. These he sends down into his lower mind, superintending and directing its activities. While he continually fails in the earlier part of his life on this sub-plane to make the lower mind understand logically the foundations of the principles he impresses on it, he yet very definitely succeeds in making the impression, and such abstract ideas as truth, justice and honour become unchallenged and ruling conceptions in the lower mental life.

There are rules of conduct enforced by social, national, and religious sanctions, by which a man guides himself in daily life, which may yet be swept away by some rush of temptation, some overmastering surge of passion and desire; but there are some things an evolved man *cannot* do—things which are against his very nature; he cannot lie, or betray, or do a dishonourable action. Into the inmost fibres of his being certain principles are wrought, and to act against them is an impossibility, no matter what may be the strain of circumstance or the torrent of temptation; for these things are of the life of the soul. While, however, he thus succeeds in guiding his lower vehicle, his knowledge of it and its doings is often far from precise and clear. He sees the lower planes but dimly, understanding their principles rather than their details, and part of his evolution on this plane consists of coming more and more consciously into direct touch with the personality which so imperfectly represents him below.

It will be understood from this that only such souls as are deliberately aiming at spiritual growth live on this plane, and they have in consequence become largely receptive of influences from the planes above them. The channel of

communication grows and enlarges, and a fuller flood pours through. The thought under this influence takes on a singularly clear and piercing quality, even in the less developed, and the effect of this in the lower mind shows itself as a tendency to philosophic and abstract thinking. In the more highly evolved the vision is far-reaching: it ranges with clear insight over the past, recognizing the causes set up, their working out, and what remains still unexhausted of their effects.

The souls living on this plane have wide opportunities for growth when freed from the physical body, for here they may receive instructions from more advanced entities, coming into direct touch with their teachers. No longer by thought-pictures, but by a flashing luminousness impossible to describe, the very essence of the idea flies like a star from one soul to the other, its correlations expressing themselves as light waves pouring out from the central star, and needing no separate enunciation. A thought is like a light placed in a room; it shows all things round it, but requires no words to describe them.

First Sub-Plane; the Seventh Heaven.

This, the most glorious level of the mental world, has but few denizens as yet from our humanity, for on its heights dwell none but the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion, and their initiated pupils. Of the beauty of form and colour and sound here no words can speak, for mortal language has no terms in which those radiant splendours may find expression. Enough that they *are*, and that some of our race are wearing them, the earnest of what others shall be, the fruition of which the seed was sown on lowlier planes. These have accomplished the mental evolution, so that in them the higher shines out ever through the

lower; from their eyes the illusion-veil of personality has been lifted, and they know and realize that they are not the lower nature, but only use it as a vehicle of experience. It may still have power in the less evolved of them to shackle and to hamper, but they can never fall into the blunder of confusing the vehicle with the self behind it. From this they are saved by carrying their consciousness through unbroken, not only from day to day but from life to life, so that past lives are not so much looked back upon as always present in the consciousness, the man feeling them as one life rather than as many.

At this height the soul is conscious of the lower heaven-world as well as of his own, and if he has any manifestations there as a thought-form in the heaven life of his friends, he can make the fullest use of them. On the third sub-plane, and even in the lower part of the second, his consciousness of the sub-planes below him was still dim, and his action in the thought-form largely instinctive and automatic. But as soon as he got well into the second sub-plane his vision rapidly became clearer, and he recognized the thought-forms with pleasure as vehicles through which he was able to express more of himself in certain ways than he could through his personality.

Now that he is functioning in the causal body amidst the magnificent light and splendour of the highest heaven, his consciousness is instantaneously and perfectly active at any point in the lower divisions to which he wills to direct it, and he, therefore, can intentionally project additional energy into such a thought-form when he wishes to use it for the purpose of teaching.

From this highest level of the mental world come down most of the influences poured out by the Masters of Wisdom as they work for the evolution of the human race, acting directly on the souls of men, shedding on them the inspiring

energies which stimulate spiritual growth, which enlighten the intellect and purify the emotions. Hence genius receives its illumination; here all upward efforts find their guidance. As the sun-rays fall everywhere from one centre, and each body that receives them uses them after its nature, so from the Elder Brothers of the race fall on all souls the light and life which it is their function to dispense; and each uses as much as it can assimilate, and thereby grows and evolves. Thus, as everywhere else, the highest glory of the heavenly world is found in the glory of service, and they who have accomplished the mental evolution are the fountains from which flows strength for those who still are climbing.

II. NON-HUMAN.

When we attempt to describe the non-human inhabitants of the mental plane, we at once find ourselves face to face with difficulties of the most insuperable character. For in touching the seventh heaven we come into contact for the first time with a plane which is cosmic in its extent—on which, therefore, may be met many an entity which mere human language has no words to portray. For the purposes of our present paper it will probably be best to put aside altogether those vast hosts of beings whose range is cosmic, and confine our remarks strictly to the inhabitants peculiar to the mental plane of our own chain of worlds. It may be remembered that in the manual on *The Astral Plane* the same course was adopted, no attempt being made to describe visitors from other planets and systems; and although such visitors as were there only occasional would here be very much more frequent, it seems best in this case also to adhere to the same rule. A few

words, therefore, upon the elemental essence of the plane and the sections of the great Deva kingdom which are especially connected with it will be as much as it will be useful to give here; and the extreme difficulty of presenting even these comparatively simple ideas will conclusively show how impossible it would be to deal with others which could not but be far more complicated.

The Elemental Essence.

It may be remembered that in one of the earlier letters received from an Adept teacher the remark was made that to comprehend the condition of the first and second of the elemental kingdoms was impossible except to an initiate—an observation which shows how partial must be the success which can attend any effort to describe them down here upon the physical plane. It will be well first of all that we should endeavour to form as clear an idea in our minds as possible of what elemental essence really is, since this is a point upon which much confusion often seems to exist, even amongst those who have made considerable study of Theosophical literature.

What it is.

Elemental essence, then, is merely a name applied during certain early stages of its evolution to the monadic essence, which in its turn may be defined as the outpouring of the Divine Life from the Second Logos into matter. We are all familiar with the fact that before this outpouring arrives at the stage of individualization at which it forms the causal body of a man, it has passed through and ensouled in turn six lower phases of evolution —the animal, vegetable, mineral and three elemental

kingdoms. When energizing through those respective stages it has sometimes been called the animal, vegetable or mineral monad—though this term is distinctly misleading, since long before it arrives at any of these kingdoms it has become not *one* but *many* monads. The name was, however, adopted to convey the idea that, though differentiation in the monadic essence had already long ago set in, it had not yet been carried to the extent of individualization. Now when this monadic essence is energizing through the three great elemental kingdoms which precede the mineral, it is called by the name of "elemental essence."

The Veiling of the Spirit.

Before, however, the nature of the monadic essence and the manner in which it manifests itself on the various planes can be understood, the method in which spirit enfolds itself in its descent into matter must be realized. We are not now dealing with the original formation of the matter of the planes, but simply with the descent of a new wave of evolution into matter already existing.

Before the period of which we are speaking, this wave of life has spent countless ages evolving, in a manner of which we can have very little comprehension, through the successive encasements of atoms, molecules and cells; but we will leave all that earlier part of its stupendous history out of account for the moment, and consider only its descent into the matter of planes somewhat more within the grasp of human intellect, though still far above the merely physical level.

Be it understood, then, that when spirit resting on any plane (it matters not which), on its path downward into matter, is driven by the resistless force of its own evolu-

tion to pass onward to the plane next below, it must, in order to manifest itself there, enfold itself in at least the atomic matter of that lower plane—draw round itself as a body a veil of that matter, to which it will act as soul or energizing force. Similarly, when it continues its descent to a third plane, it must draw round itself some of *its* matter, and we shall have then an entity whose body or outer covering consists of the atomic matter of that third plane.

But the force energizing in this entity—its soul, so to speak—will not be spirit in the condition in which it was upon the higher plane on which we first found it; it will be that spirit *plus* the veil of the atomic matter of the second plane through which it has passed. When a still further descent is made to a fourth plane, the entity becomes still more complex, for it will then have a body of the matter of that fourth plane, ensouled by spirit already twice veiled, in the atomic matter of the second and third planes. It will be seen that since this process repeats itself for each plane of the solar system, by the time the original force reaches our physical level it is so thoroughly veiled that it is small wonder that men often fail to recognize it as spirit at all.

For example, let us suppose the ordinary untrained clairvoyant trying to investigate the mineral monad—to examine the life-force behind the mineral kingdom. The sight of such an one would be practically certain to be limited to the astral plane, and would quite probably be exceedingly imperfect even there; so to him that force would appear simply astral. But a trained student, examining it with higher power, would see that what the clairvoyant had taken for astral force was merely astral atomic matter set in motion by a force coming thither from the atomic part of the mental plane. The more advanced student would be able

to see that that atomic mental matter in its turn was only a vehicle in which something from the highest buddhic sub-plane was working, while the Adept would perceive that the buddhic matter was but the vehicle of the nirvânic, and that the force which entered into and worked through all these successive veils came in reality from outside this cosmic-prakritic plane altogether, and was in truth simply one of the manifestations of the Divine Force.

The Elemental Kingdoms.

The elemental essence which we find on the mental plane constitutes the first and second of the great elemental kingdoms. A wave of the Divine Life, having finished in some previous æon its downward evolution through the buddhic plane, pours down into the seventh heaven, and ensouls great masses of the atomic mental matter, thus becoming the elemental essence of the first great kingdom. In this, its simplest condition, it does not combine the atoms into molecules in order to form a body for itself, but simply applies by its attraction an immense compressing force to them. We may imagine the force, on first reaching this plane on its downward swoop, to be entirely unaccustomed to its vibrations, and unable at first to respond to them. During the æon which it spends on this level, its evolution will consist in accustoming itself to vibrate at all rates which are possible there, so that at any moment it can ensoul and use any combination of the matter of that plane. During this long period of evolution it will have taken upon itself all possible combinations of the matter of the three arûpa levels, but at the end of the time it returns to the atomic level—not, of course, as it was before, but bearing latent within it all the powers which it has gained.

In the succeeding æon it pours itself down into the fourth

sub-plane of the mental—that is to say, the highest of the rûpa levels—and draws to itself as a body some of the matter of that subdivision. It is then the elemental essence of the second kingdom in its simplest condition; but as before, in the course of its evolution it takes on garbs many and various, composed of all possible combinations of the matter of the lower sub-planes.

It might naturally be supposed that these elemental kingdoms which exist and function upon the mental plane must certainly, being so much higher, be further advanced in evolution than the third kingdom, which belongs exclusively to the astral plane. This, however, is not so; for it must be remembered that in speaking of this phase of evolution the word "higher" means not, as usual, more advanced, but *less* advanced, since here we are dealing with the monadic essence on the downward sweep of its arc, and progress for the elemental essence therefore means descent into matter instead of, as with us, ascent towards higher planes. Unless the student bears this fact constantly and clearly in mind, he will again and again find himself beset by perplexing anomalies, and his view of this side of evolution will be lacking in grasp and comprehensiveness.

The general characteristics of elemental essence were indicated at considerable length in the manual on *The Astral Plane*, and all that is there said as to the number of subdivisions in the kingdoms and their marvellous impressibility by human thought is equally true of these celestial varieties. A few words should perhaps be said to explain how the seven horizontal subdivisions of each kingdom arrange themselves in connection with the various parts of the mental plane. In the case of the first kingdom, its highest subdivision corresponds with the first sub-plane, while the second and third sub-planes are each divided into three parts, each of which is the habitat of one of the

elemental subdivisions. The second kingdom distributes itself over the lower heaven-world, its highest subdivision corresponding to the fourth sub-plane, while the fifth, sixth and seventh sub-planes are each divided into two to accommodate the remainder.

How the Essence Evolves.

So much was written in the earlier part of this manual as to the effect of thought upon the mental elemental essence that it will be unnecessary to return to that branch of the subject now; but it must be borne in mind that it is, if possible, even more instantaneously sensitive to thought-action here than it is on the astral plane, the wonderful delicacy with which it responds to the faintest action of the mind being constantly and prominently brought before our investigators. We shall grasp this capability the more fully if we realize that it is in such response that its very life consists—that its progress is greatly helped by the use made of it in the process of thought by the more advanced entities whose evolution it shares.

If it could be imagined as entirely free for a moment from the action of thought, it would appear as a formless conglomeration of dancing infinitesimal atoms—instinct indeed with a marvellous intensity of life, yet probably making but little progress on the downward path of its involution into matter. But when thought seizes upon it and stirs it into activity, throwing it on the rûpa levels into all kinds of lovely forms, and on the arûpa levels into flashing streams, it receives a distinct additional impulse which, often repeated, helps it forward on its way. For whenever a thought is directed from those higher levels to the affairs of earth, it naturally sweeps downward and takes upon itself the matter of the lower planes. In doing so it brings into contact with

that matter the elemental essence of which its first veil was formed, and so by degrees habituates that essence to answering to lower vibrations; and this greatly assists its downward evolution into matter.

Very noticeably also is it affected by music—by the splendid floods of glorious sound of which we have previously spoken as poured forth upon these lofty planes by the great masters of melody who are carrying on there in far fuller measure the work which down here on this dull earth they had only commenced.

Another point which should be remembered is the vast difference between the grandeur and power of thought on this plane and the comparative feebleness of the efforts that we dignify with that name down here. Our ordinary thought begins in the mind-body on the lower mental levels and clothes itself as it descends with the appropriate astral elemental essence; but when a man has advanced so far as to have his consciousness active in the true self in the higher heaven-world, his thought commences there and clothes itself first in the elemental essence of the lower levels of the mental plane, and is consequently infinitely finer, more penetrating, and in every way more effective. If the thought be directed exclusively to higher objects, its vibrations may be of too fine a character to find expression on the astral plane at all; but when they do affect this lower matter they will do so with much more far-reaching effect than those which are generated so much nearer to its own level.

Following this idea a stage further we see the thought of the initiate taking its rise upon the buddhic plane, above the mental world altogether, and clothing itself with the elemental essence of the highest heavens for garment, while the thought of the Adept pours down from Nirvâna itself, wielding the tremendous, the wholly incalculable powers of regions beyond the ken of mere ordinary humanity. Thus

ever as our conceptions rise higher we see before us wider and wider fields of usefulness for our enormously increased capacities, and we realize how true is the saying that the work of one day on levels such as these may well surpass in efficiency the toil of a thousand years on the physical plane.

THE ANIMAL KINGDOM.

The animal kingdom is represented on the mental plane by two main divisions. In the lower heaven-world we find the group-souls to which the vast majority of animals are attached, and on the third sub-plane the causal bodies of the comparatively few members of the kingdom who are yet individualized. These latter, however, are not, strictly speaking, animals any longer; they are practically the only examples now to be seen of the quite primitive causal body, undeveloped in size and as yet coloured only very faintly by the first vibrations of newly-born qualities.

After his deaths on the physical and astral planes, the individualized animal has usually a very prolonged, though often somewhat dreamy life in the lower heaven-world. His condition during that time is analogous to that of the human being on the same level, though with far less mental activity. He is surrounded by his own thought-forms, even though he may be but dreamily conscious of them, and these are sure to include the forms of his earth-friends in their very best and most sympathetic moods. And since the love which is strong enough and unselfish enough to form such an image must also be strong enough to reach the soul of the loved one, and draw a response from him, even the pets upon whom our kindness is lavished may do their little trifle in return towards helping on our evolution.

When the individualized animal retires into his causal body to await the turn of the wheel of evolution which shall

give him the opportunity of a primitive human incarnation, he seems to lose almost all consciousness of outer things, and to spend the time in a sort of delightful trance of the deepest peace and contentment. Even then interior development of some sort is surely taking place, though its nature is difficult for us to comprehend. But at least it is certain that for every entity which comes into connection with it, whether he be only just entering upon human evolution or preparing to pass beyond it, the heaven-world means the highest bliss of which that entity is at its level capable.

THE DEVAS, OR ANGELS.

But little can be expressed in human language about these wonderful and exalted beings, and most of what we know of them has already been written in *The Astral Plane*. For the information of those who have not that manual at hand I will repeat here somewhat of the general explanation there given with reference to these entities.

The highest system of evolution specially connected with this earth, so far as we know, is that of the beings whom Hindus call the Devas, and who have elsewhere been spoken of as angels, sons of God, etc. They may, in fact, be regarded as a kingdom lying next above humanity in the same way as humanity in turn lies next above the animal kingdom, but with this important difference, that while for an animal there is no possibility of evolution through any kingdom but the human, man, when he attains the level of the Asekha, or full Adept, finds various paths of advancement opening before him, of which this great Deva evolution is only one (see *Invisible Helpers*, p. 124).

In Oriental literature this word "Deva" is frequently used vaguely to mean almost any kind of non-human entity, so that it would often include the highest of the

spiritual powers on the one hand, and nature-spirits and artificial elementals on the other. Here, however, its use will be restricted to the magnificent evolution which we are now considering.

Though connected with this earth, these angels are by no means confined to it, for the whole of our present chain of seven worlds is as one world to them, their evolution being through a grand system of seven chains. Their hosts have hitherto been recruited chiefly from other humanities in the solar system, some lower and some higher than ours, since but a very small portion of our own has as yet reached the level at which for us it is possible to join them; but it seems certain that some of their very numerous classes have not passed in their upward progress through any humanity at all comparable with ours.

It is not possible for us at present to understand very much about them, but it is clear that what may be described as the aim of their evolution is considerably higher than ours; that is to say, while the object of our human evolution is to raise the successful portion of humanity to the position of the Asekha Adept by the end of the seventh round, the object of the Deva evolution is to raise their foremost rank to a very much higher level in the corresponding period. For them, as for us, a steeper but shorter path to still more sublime heights lies open to earnest endeavour; but what those heights may be in their case we can only conjecture.

Their Divisions.

Their three lower great divisions, beginning from the bottom, are generally called Kâmadevas, Rûpadevas, and Arûpadevas, which may be translated as angels of the astral

world, the lower heaven-world, and the higher heaven-world respectively. Just as our ordinary body here—the lowest body possible for us—is the physical, so the ordinary body of a Kâmadeva is the astral; so that he stands in somewhat the same position as humanity will do when it reaches planet F, and he, living ordinarily in an astral body, would go out of it to higher spheres in a mental body just as we might in an astral body, while to enter the causal body would be to him (when sufficiently developed) no greater effort than to use the mental body might be to us. In the same way the Rûpadeva's ordinary body would be the mental, since his habitat is the four rûpa levels of the mental plane; while the Arûpadeva belongs to the three higher levels of that plane, and owns no denser body than the causal. Above the Arûpadevas there are four other great classes of this kingdom, inhabiting respectively the four higher planes of our solar system; and again, above and beyond the Deva kingdom altogether stand the great hosts of the planetary spirits; but the consideration of such glorified beings would be out of place here.

Each of the two great divisions of this kingdom which have been mentioned as inhabiting the mental plane contains within itself many different classes; but their life is in every way so far removed from our own that it is useless to endeavour to give anything but the most general idea of it. I do not know that I can better indicate the impression produced upon the minds of our investigators on the subject than by reproducing the very words used by one of them at the time of the enquiry: "I get the effect of an intensely exalted consciousness—a consciousness glorious beyond all words; yet so very strange; so different—so entirely different from anything I have ever felt before, so unlike any possible kind of human experience, that it is absolutely hopeless to try to put it into words."

Equally hopeless is it on this physical plane to try to give any idea of the appearance of these mighty beings, for it changes with every line of thought which they follow. Some reference was made earlier in this paper to the magnificence and wonderful power of expression of their colour-language, and it will also have been realized from some passing remarks made in describing the human inhabitants that under certain conditions it is possible for men functioning upon this plane to learn much from them. It may be remembered how one of them had animated the angel figure in the heaven-life of a chorister, and was teaching him music grander far than any ever heard by earthly ears, and how in another case those connected with the wielding of certain planetary influences were helping forward the evolution of a certain astronomer.

Their relation to the nature-spirits (for an account of whom see Manual V) might be described as somewhat resembling, though on a higher scale, that of men to the animal kingdom; for just as the animal can attain individualization only by association with man, so it appears that a permanent reincarnating individuality can normally be acquired by a nature-spirit only by an attachment of somewhat similar character to members of some of the orders of Devas.

Of course nothing that has been, or indeed can be, said of this great angelic evolution does more than brush the fringe of a very mighty subject, the fuller elaboration of which it must be left to each reader to make for himself when he developes the consciousness of these higher planes; yet what has been written, slight and unsatisfactory as it is and must be, may help to give some faint idea of the hosts of helpers with which man's advance in evolution will bring him into touch, and to show how every aspiration which his increased capacities make possible for him as he ascends is

more than satisfied by the beneficent arrangements which nature has made for him.

III. ARTIFICIAL.

Very few words need be said upon this branch of our subject. The mental plane is even more fully peopled than the astral by the artificial elementals called into temporary existence by the thoughts of its inhabitants; and when it is remembered how much grander and more powerful thought is upon this plane, and that its forces are being wielded not only by the human inhabitants, embodied and disembodied, but by the Devas and by visitors from higher planes, it will at once be seen that the importance and influence of such artificial entities can hardly be exaggerated. It is not necessary here to go over again the ground traversed in the previous manual as to the effect of men's thoughts and the necessity of guarding them carefully; and enough was said in describing the difference between the action of thought on the rûpa and arûpa levels to show how the artificial elemental of the mental plane is called into existence, and to give some idea of the infinite variety of temporary entities which are so produced, and the immense importance of the work that is constantly done by their means. Great use is made of them by Adepts and their initiated pupils, and it is needless to say that the artificial elemental formed by such powerful minds as these is a being of infinitely longer existence and proportionately greater power than any of those described in dealing with the astral plane.

CONCLUSION.

In glancing over what has been written, the prominent idea is not unnaturally a humiliating sense of the utter inadequacy of all the attempts at description—of the hopelessness of any effort to put into human words the ineffable glories of the heaven-world. Still, lamentably imperfect as such an essay as this must be, it is yet better than nothing, and it may serve to put into the mind of the reader some faint conception of what awaits him on the other side of the grave; and though when he reaches this bright realm of bliss he will certainly find infinitely more than he has been led to expect, he will not, it is hoped, have to unlearn any of the information that he has here acquired.

Man, as at present constituted, has within him principles belonging to two planes even higher than the mental, for his Buddhi represents him upon what from that very fact we call the buddhic plane, and his Atmâ (the divine spark within him) upon that third plane of the solar system which has usually been spoken of as the nirvânic. In the average man these highest principles are as yet almost entirely undeveloped, and in any case the planes to which they belong are still more beyond the reach of all description than is the mental. It must suffice to say that on the buddhic plane all limitations begin to fall away, and the consciousness of man expands until he realizes, no longer in theory only, but by absolute experience, that the consciousness of his fellows is included within his own, and he feels and knows and experiences with an absolute perfection of sympathy all that is in them, because it is in reality a part

of himself; while on the nirvânic plane he moves a step further, and realizes that his consciousness and theirs are one in a yet higher sense, because they are all in reality facets of the infinitely greater consciousness of the LOGOS, in Whom they all live and move and have their being; so that when "the dewdrop slips into the shining sea" the effect produced is rather as though the process had been reversed and the ocean poured into the drop, which now for the first time realizes that it *is* the ocean—not a part of it, but the whole. Paradoxical, utterly incomprehensible, apparently impossible; yet absolutely true.

But this much at least we may grasp—that the blessed state of Nirvâna is not, as some have ignorantly supposed, a condition of blank nothingness, but of far more intense and beneficent activity; and that ever as we rise higher in the scale of nature our possibilities become greater, our work for others ever grander and more far-reaching, and that infinite wisdom and infinite power means only infinite capacity for service, because they are directed by infinite love.

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