

# Welcome Home

*An extract from "The Highlands of Heaven"*

Zabdiel describes a scene he witnessed.

On a hill-side green and golden, and with the perfume of many flowers hovering about like music kissed by colour, there is an old gabled house with many turrets and windows like those which first in England were filled with glass. Trees and lawns and, down in the hollow, a large lake where birds of many colours, and very beautiful, sport themselves. This is not a scene of your sphere, but one on this side of the Veil. It were of little profit that I argue to show the reasonableness of such things being here. It is so, and that men should doubt that all that is good and beautiful in earth is here with beauty enhanced, and loveliness made more lovely is, on our part a matter of wonder quite as great.

On one of the towers there stands a woman. She is clad in the colour of her order, and that colour is not one you know on earth; so I cannot give it a name. But I would describe it as golden-purple; and that will, I fear, convey little to you. She looks out towards the horizon far away across the lake, where low-lying hills are touched by the light beyond. She is fair to look upon. Her figure is more perfect and beautiful than that of any woman on earth, and her face more lovely. Her eyes shine out a radiance of lovely violet hue, and on her brow a silver star shines and sparkles as it answers to her thoughts within. This is the jewel of her order. And if beauty were wanted to make her beauty more complete, it is there in just a tinge of wistfulness, which but adds to the peace and joy of her countenance. This is the Lady of the House where live a large number of maidens who are in her charge to do her will and go forth on what mission she desires from time to time. For the House is very spacious.

Now, if you study her face you will see at once that she is there expectant; and presently a light springs up and flashes from her eyes those beautiful violet rays; and from her lips a message goes; and you know that by reason of the flash of light of blue and pink and crimson which darts from beneath her lips and seems to take wing far too quickly for you to follow it across the lake.

Then a boat is seen coming quickly from the right between the trees which grow on its borders, and the oars flash and sparkle, and the spray around the gilded prow is like small spheres of golden glass mingled with emeralds and rubies as it falls behind. The boat comes to the landing-place, and a brilliantly robed throng leap on to the marble steps which lead them up to the green lawn above. One is not so quick, however. His face is suffused with joy, but he seems also full of wonder, and his eyes are not quite used to the quality of the light which bathes all things in a soft shimmering radiance.

Then from the great entrance, and down towards the party, comes the Lady of the House, and pauses a short distance from the party. The new-comer looks on her as she stands there, and utter perplexity is in his gaze, rapt and intent. Then, at last, she

addresses him, and in homely words this shining saint of God welcomes her husband, "Well, James, now you have come to me - at last, dear, at last."

But he hesitates. The voice is hers, but different. Moreover, she died an old woman with grey hair, and an invalid. And now she stands before him a lovely woman, not young nor old, but of perfect grace and beauty of eternal youth.

"And I have watched you, dear, and been so near you all the time. And that is past and over now, and your loneliness is gone for ever, dear. For now we are together once again, and this is God's Summerland where you and I will never grow old again, and where our boys and Nellie will come when they have finished what is theirs to do in the earth life."

Thus she talked, that he might get his bearings; and this he did at last. And suddenly he burst into tears of joy, for it came to him that this indeed was his wife and sweetheart; and love overcame his awe. He came forward with his left hand over his eyes, just glancing up now and then, and when he was near she came quickly and took him into her arms and kissed him, and then throwing one arm about his neck, she took his hand in hers and led him up the steps, with slow and gentle dignity, into the House she had prepared for him.

Yes, that House was the heavenly counterpart of their home in Dorset, where they had lived all their married life until she passed hence, and where he had remained to mourn her absence.

This I have set down by way of pointing, with homely incident, the fact that the treasures of heaven are not mere words of sentiment, but solid and real and, if you will not press the word, material. Houses and friends and pastures, and all things dear and beautiful you have on earth, are here. Only here they are of a more sublime beauty, even as the people of these realms are of a beauty not of earth.

Those two had lived a good life as country squire and wife, both simple and God-fearing, and kindly to the poor and rich alike. These have their reward here; and that reward is often unexpected in its nature as it was to him.

This meeting I myself witnessed, for I was one of those who brought him on his way to the House, being then of that sphere where this took place.

*"The Highlands of Heaven" is the second volume in the series "The Life Beyond The Veil" written down by The Rev. G. Vale Owen. This extract, dictated by Zabdiel, was received by Vale Owen on the 27th of November, 1913.*

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