

A Cry from Afar

To Students of "Light on the Path."

By Mabel Collins

The opening sentences of "Light on the Path" are the far cry from beyond the incarnations to those who are struggling in them. While man is embodied he is incapable of apprehending the state which is indicated by these sentences, for he is actually passing through the vale of tears, he is subject to pain, he is unable to live without causing pain, and it is by the power of his living heart that he attains complete experience, and unites himself consciously with the whole.

The keynote to the mystery, the stupendous promise of the far future, which makes the pilgrimage endurable, is given in these first sentences. They stand at the beginning of the path, the ray of light that comes from the very end of it, where full light is; the ray of light which illumines its whole course and guides the pilgrim and cheers him on the bitter way.

No human eyes can be incapable of tears, even those of the Master in life, the adept or the teacher. From the time that illusion and ignorance begin to pass away from the soul, and enlightenment takes the place of darkness, the disciple dwells in present sorrow, for he sees ignorance and consequent suffering on all sides. Tears are as the dew on the dried ground; his being would wither in the dryness of the material world, if there did not arise from himself that tenderness which is tears, and which dissolves, from within, the iron bondage of separateness. Let no man look for the time when his eyes shall be incapable of tears; if that state should come upon him while he is still that which we now call man he would have become a partner in the dark company which is fighting for the ruin of the race. Infinite pity, the capacity for profound sorrow and compassion, characterize the enlightened man, are an intrinsic part of the nature of the Saviours of the race, and are only to be laid down at the far gate of eternal life when these saviours and shepherds have guided all their flocks safely to it and though it. But it is right and necessary for the disciple to know that there is in the future an Hour when all tears shall have been wiped away never to well up again; when all sources of sorrow shall be at an end, the whole enslaved nature of man having been freed and having escaped for ever from the pangs of desire. It will then no longer be human nature, and in the condition into which it will be born that which is known now to us as sorrow will be inconceivable. None can pass that gate till all can pass it; for the purified and perfected soul which is ready to go through and enter the new life is unable to do so because of the bond of sympathy between him and all those others who are to him much dearer than himself; because of the deep yearnings of compassion, and the welling up of the tears which are a mark of humanity, and one of its chief glories. The ethereal being within man's physical body sheds many tears of too subtle and fine a nature to be shed by the physical eyes; and the spirit weeps when it stands upon the threshold of matter and is drawn into its darkness by the laws of life and love and the bonds of kinship and association. Thus the whole being is softened and suffused with the dew of its own tenderness. All men must be thus softened and suffused ere they are fitted to enter upon that state in which they are incapable of tears. Then the eyes of the pure spirit will see that which has for us now neither shape nor colour because it is invisible, and can only be apprehended by faith. The capacity for faith is the first essential quality for the disciple who has heard the far cry and would enter upon the path which shall eventually bring him to that state in which he will be able to see.

That which is called the hearing of the ear of the emancipated and redeemed being is a complete consciousness of all that is, without any difficulty in separating one sound from another, or any necessity to do so. The whole makes itself known, in its living activity, to the ceaseless apprehension of the one who is able to hear. This hearing is only possible when the senses have not only been subdued but entirely laid aside, with the vestures to which they belong. The apprehension through the medium of the senses must have ceased altogether before the released and purified spirit can obtain consciousness of the whole by means of attention.

The intensity of sensitiveness must be increased with every successive incarnation in order that the spirit shall acquire knowledge and experience, and so progress and ripen and make the required advance towards that condition in which direct consciousness is possible. No sound, no smallest cry, no trumpet call can be ignored or avoided with impunity; because that of which the spirit prefers to remain ignorant it will have to learn in later and more severe lessons. All teaching and experience increase in severity with the progress of the soul and the advancement of the race as we see these take place in time; only so can the race be ushered into the eternal state and induced to cross the threshold of birth into complete being.

The far cry from the Master to the disciple conveys an even greater command in respect to the power of speech than in respect to sight and hearing. Speech is the creative power and the spoken word can be uttered only by the perfected being which has taken on the attributes of the divine power. By the spoken word were the heavens and the earth made, for the development and the education of the soul of man, and by the spoken word will innumerable heavens and earths be made yet, for the races which need the experience of dwelling within them.

The disciple who has conquered self and yielded his being to the whole, has obtained within himself the germ of each of the necessary powers of the purified and perfected being. He has that confidence which comes of the surrender of the personal desire and the consciousness of the whole; he has that hearing which brings to him the sound of many voices whether of suffering or joy; he has that sight, which shows him other men's lives, other men's woes and hopes, and enables him to penetrate into the heart of those with whom he associates; he has obtained such knowledge of men that his presence among them develops and attracts the creative force and develops the power of love. The disciple who has so far attained, who has beheld the wonder of his own living soul, is able to read the future of man. He knows the meaning of the "far cry" which he has heard, the voice that has come to him in the silence, from the pioneers of the race who stand at the gate of eternal life and call to him. He can enter the Hall of Learning and see written there the words which contain within them the fate and future of the race. The lessons which man has to learn are there set forth, and it is those lessons which shape the future. It is only the slowness of the individual man to enter into the life of the whole and to surrender his personal desires, which hinders the progress of the whole race. The steps are set plainly before all men and each man, and have to be taken in their due course. The pioneers who have climbed to the highest must linger there for the laggards, and even descend to help them up; for the spirit of humanity is an indivisible whole.

Faith, hope and love are the three first qualities essential to all who move towards the light. Faith, which is the perfect trust in that which though known, cannot be expressed; that entire confidence in the evolution of the whole which enables the disciple to stand calm amid all conflicts, and to fight unflinchingly against the heaviest odds; and that love which embraces all and forgives all.

The invisible, for the recognition of which faith is essential, surrounds us and presses upon us at all points, and the man who does not recognise it dwells in a cage formed of his own personality. There is ethereal and spiritual continuity, a linking of all parts, which passes through man's physical being in the same way that light passes through a transparent substance. It passes through it and is not arrested by it. Thought passes through other men's minds, emotion passes through men's hearts, in such a manner as to be almost visible in their action. Faith is scarcely needed for the apprehension of the fact that thought and feeling pass through men in waves; occasions of great and universal interest have made this plain. But it is only recognised in connection with events of unusual importance such as simultaneous discoveries, and religious revivals, outbreaks of rebellion or war-like demonstrations. That which is evident at these times of excitement is true at all times. Much that is supposed to be due to what is called instinct, and to be inborn, is due to the tides of thought and feeling which ceaselessly pass through the human race. Thought power is known in the present century and to a certain extent understood; but even those who consciously use it are frequently under the misapprehension that the thoughts by which they influence others originate in their own minds. This is an impossibility, as thought is a flowing tide, set in motion on the threshold of the material world and inspired by powers beyond and outside this limited condition. As the waves of light pass through all things, and each thing receives and reflects such rays as it is capable of receiving and reflecting, so with the waves of thought. They pass through all men's souls, and each soul apprehends that which it is capable of apprehending, and gives that to the world. They are the inspiring tide of man's life, and they become in him that which is called good or bad, in accordance with his own capacity. The disciple who has faith opens his soul to the fulness of the tide, and his soul becomes white as do the white flowers which reflect all the rays of light instead of selecting among them. He knows that in this tide that exists which is brotherhood. Men do not need to aim at unity of thought, or to set thought forces in motion. They need to be able to apprehend the full tide of thought that sweeps ceaselessly through the collective mind of the race, and those who are capable of this have attained to that condition which places them inalienably among the White Brotherhood. Then they know the power of the Brotherhood, and each leans upon the other equally, without need of speech or contact. The iron bar of separateness is for them pushed back, and the golden gate is set ajar. The disciple who has pushed this iron bar back knows that the criminal and evil-doer errs because of limitation, and because of inability to apprehend. He knows that there is no punishment for sin save forgiveness, because the love which gave the great opportunity that is contained in the pilgrimage through matter, desires only that every man shall so grow and develop that he shall be able to accomplish this pilgrimage, and so help to release and redeem the race and free it for ever from material conditions. The emotions of the heart appear, to the man who dwells within his separate personality, to be his own, born within himself. They are his, and they are not his, in the same sense that the air he breathes, and the winds which stir that air, are, and are not, the possession of his physical body. They pass through him, and he shares them with all others who come within their range of action. In studying his own heart the disciple obtains illumination and perceives aright the hearts of other men, because his discipleship makes him aware of the flow of emotion which passes through him and them, and enables him to understand that it is necessary to have experienced all feeling, to have responded to every wave of emotion possible to man, before it is given to him to enter the condition in which sensitiveness can be laid aside. The criminal and evil-doer are misguided by being only able to feel in a portion of their being; sensitiveness is awakened only in the lowest and most possessive part of the nature and all the divine part is numb and without sensation. Thus they are not merely separated from the brotherhood of love, but separated from the race to which they physically belong. But the sensitiveness increases, following the law of growth under

which man exists; and in the course of the incarnations the whole heart becomes capable of responding to the whole tide of human emotion, and that part of it which made the sinner to sin drops into its place as a part of a whole which in its completeness makes man divine. And only when this is accomplished to the uttermost can sensitiveness be laid aside, and the soul stand in the blood of its human heart, made to flow by the thrust of its own sword. For each purified spirit, when the whole race is freed and redeemed, will destroy within itself that germ which has caused it to be aware of pleasure, and God will then wipe away all his tears, and he will become incapable of shedding any more. Then will he be able to see, and be able to stand. Then will the "far cry" have been heard and answered.

II.

The ambition which hurls the souls of men into the abysses, is not the simple form of desire for success which is called by that name in ordinary life. Until old age is reached this is a necessary spur without which a deadly apathy would fall upon the race. For this reason the disciple is told to work as those work who are ambitious, for it is necessary for him to stand side by side with the toilers and the strugglers, so long as he is in the activity of the world. He must fight in their ranks if he is to be among them. And while he is still human it is essential that he share in the desire for success which is the natural stimulant to effort. The rewards which ordinary men accept as the proof of success are of no value to him; the ordinary man looks for them because he desires possessions for himself and is willing to win them from the others by his work. The disciple is in no danger of desiring such rewards, and if the loom of fate weaves them into his career, he estimates them at their true value as temporary burdens and responsibilities. The emulation in effort must be his as much as it is any other man's; effort surpassing that which is possible to other men is expected of him whenever it is required for the advancement of the race. He works better than the ordinary man who is ambitious, just as the willing horse works better than the horse that needs the spur.

It is not on the planes of mental or physical activities that the disciple has to kill out ambition. The great danger to him, throughout his pilgrimage, is lest a seed of spiritual pride shall germinate within him and stifle his higher nature before he is aware of its growth. For it grows as weeds do in rich soil. Some unexpected incident will reveal the man to himself in a new light; instead of being the humble disciple he believed himself to be, he finds himself filled with pride in his own capacities and gifts, and unable to ask for help from the divine forces that pass through him because he has permitted himself to believe that he has power within himself by right of his spiritual personality. Then ambition may seize upon him and he will endeavour to scale the heights of power and to assume prerogatives which can be given safely only by the hand of a Master to a tried and tested disciple. The attainment of power is one of the first aims of the disciple; it is aimed at continuously throughout his whole path of progress, and it is still his aim when he reaches the end of the pilgrimage and is ready to pass the threshold. The power he endeavours to obtain gives him no personal dignity or glory or position; he cannot influence men in order to secure any personal ends. That possibility is taken from him at his very first step on the true path, and is never again put into his hands. The ambition which is born of spiritual pride, and which assails him when he is well advanced upon the way, does not bring personal power to him; he has surrendered that desire of man when he became a disciple; and when the lust for it returns with sevenfold force upon a much higher plane of being the sole result is that he is hurled into the abysses, from which he will have to be saved by great efforts of his own and of the Saviours of the world. But the true power, the power of the brotherhood of love, born of the brooding spirit of the Divine in man, this is to be desired most ardently from the first moment of discipleship, and that desire

must never cease. This desire is what makes the disciple at once a partner in the great task of redeeming the race. His sphere of action steadily increases with his growth, until the man who has by the purity of his desire to help a single friend been enabled to do so is entrusted with the guidance of a whole nation of beings or a whole school of thought. The principle of development on this pilgrimage in which we are engaged, involves associations of men; the first form of this is the family life which is a natural condition of the natural man. Out of this arise innumerable orders, more or less selfish or unselfish according to the character of the men who belong to them. One of the tasks of the disciple is to lead and guide the associations of men into paths of effort for the good of the race. He is led to take his part in the movements which are initiated by the masters and guides, and his business is to use the power of the brotherhood to which he belongs for the purification of the motives and actions of the associations of men in which he takes part. The infinite resources of the power behind him, upon which he draws ceaselessly so long as his soul is set in its true course, soon make themselves apparent, and a great impetus is given to the movement with which he has associated himself. But this does not alter his condition of personal obscurity; it will probably increase it. If he is drawn from that obscurity and attention is attracted to his personality, the effect will be to make him loved of a few but hated of many. This hatred arises from the opposition to the brotherhood of love and to the efforts of the Saviours of the world, which is an inherent part of the nature of the animal and personal man. It is, therefore, far better for the work in which he is taking part that the man himself should remain in the greatest obscurity possible. The quality of discipleship arouses the evil passions of other men, and the work is helped on more effectively if this quality is kept in abeyance on the physical plane and its power exercised in its fulness only upon the mental and ethereal natures of the men by whom a disciple is surrounded in the world. The animal nature of man will fight more fiercely now for ascendancy than in the past, for the advance and progress of the whole makes its power more insecure. It is, therefore, more necessary than in past ages that the presence of disciples among associations of men should be felt only in the general uplifting of those associations, not in the leadership of the disciples themselves. This disarms and baffles the animal part of the men who find themselves impelled to unusual actions, and guided by higher motives than habitually enter into their consciousness. The task set the disciple in thus guiding the movement in which he is taking part is much more severe than if he were permitted to lead by personal influence and external guidance, as he has to affect the natures of the men amongst whom he is working, as well as their actions. The ordinary man, one who has not yet entered upon the path or even become aware of it, must experience a change in himself after being associated with a disciple in any public work or mutual effort. He is not conscious of it at the time, because the action of the invisible power is subtle; but when he looks back over his life he will perceive a time when his motives became elevated and he will recognise that this was due to a certain association; though even then he may not guess which man among those he worked with was the medium for the divine influences.

When the disciple first begins to find he has this power of affecting the men amongst whom he works, without the use of physical speech, spiritual ambition (that deepest and most deadly enemy) assails him for the first time. The ordinary man, who has not yet set foot upon the path, cannot even imagine the force of this temptation. It is so strong that it intoxicates the soul; it is so insidious that it deludes the mind. Bewildered by the possibilities of his own being the disciple stands amazed and dazzled. He has desired power for good, and it has come to him; he has asked to be as the gods, and one of their qualities is his. It seems to him that now surely he may act like a god, and order the fates of men. He forgets that this power which has come to him is only one of the qualities of the gods; that in their long development by means of a suffering and pain as well as joy and splendour, a whole circlet of powers and

gifts have become theirs, each tempering the others, and blending with them. The four rules which appear in the opening sentences of *Light on the Path* indicate four qualities which must be attained by the purified spirit before it can be released, and these must be attained equally. The power of helping others (or the power of speech) is only one of them, and by itself exposes the spirit to the greatest danger.

III.

Desire of life is that which prevents the spirit from giving that sword thrust which will make the blood of the human heart pour forth. It is not the narrow craving to continue one personal career, one incarnation, because of the fear that there is nothing to replace it, a craving experienced by atheists and materialists when old age comes upon them, and which brings its own punishment with it. The certainty that by no manner of means can this desire be gratified converts it into a torture from the very first. It is no petty passion which grows in a diseased or dwarfed mind, that is referred to in the phrase "Kill out desire of life." It is the great dominant emotion in the souls of men, which has made them into human beings, which has given them the capacity to endure incarnation after incarnation of experience in the bewildering and exhausting conditions of time and space, pleasure and pain. Animated by this overwhelming emotion the souls of men throng the threshold of the material world, eagerly looking for places of incarnation, and for bodies in which to incarnate and enter upon what man calls life -- that is, human life. The angels who have perfected being, and dwell in equilibrium, freed from the vicissitudes of physical and mental sensation, gaze in awe and that is referred to in the phrase "Kill out desire of life." It is the great dominant emotion in the souls of men, which has made them into human beings, which has given them the capacity to endure incarnation after incarnation of experience in the bewildering and exhausting conditions of time and space, pleasure and pain. Animated by this overwhelming emotion the souls of men throng the threshold of the material world, eagerly looking for places of incarnation, and for bodies in which to incarnate and enter upon what man calls life -- that is, human life. The angels who have perfected being, and dwell in equilibrium, freed from the vicissitudes of physical and mental sensation, gaze in awe and wonder upon the souls that press in upon this terrible experience of human life, blinded by the passion for it which possesses them. That awe and wonder is felt in respect to the divine power which is able to impart an emotion of so stupendous a nature that it can impel a whole race of beings to enter upon a bitter and terrible path full of danger and vicissitude. The longing for physical life comes upon the souls in a wave so overpowering that all other hopes and aims are lost sight of, and in great crowds they come towards the material universe and press upon it from all sides, eager to enter, willing to take any mode of entrance rather than brook delay.

This wave of emotion began to take effect as soon as the material universe was created, in order that scholars should willingly enter the school; and it has persisted from then till now, and will persist until the race approaches its release. It is that which brings souls back again and again to the threshold of material life, when again and again they have found that pain recurs and pleasure perishes. No matter how deeply they have learned this lesson they still crave with an overwhelming longing for the experience. It is only the disciples who are far advanced on the path who are able to regard this emotion as a thing outside themselves, as a man regards the sea when he swims in it. They know that it is this longing for physical life which brings them into the world where the path of the pilgrimage has been laid; they know that this path must be trodden, and they submit to be brought hither again and again, yielding to the longing for sense experience, knowing that in time they will be freed from it. And while they thus yield and labour with ardour in all the fields of effort open to men they seek

in their own higher nature to destroy the personal element which makes man the slave of the desire of life. Like all other passions it must be subject to the higher self, and be steadily, if slowly, eliminated from the nature. The disciple who has heard the far cry will one day be able to kill out all desire for physical experience and, without any personal craving whatsoever, will enter into physical life, or act upon it from the ethereal plane, a free spirit. These free spirits, untouched by selfishness, entering into material life solely to help others, drawn hither by links of love and pity and sympathy, are the splendour and glory of the human race, and are a source from which it obtains power. They are the links between the masses of men and the Masters who send forth the Far Cry, which is intended to draw all souls out of the darkness. It is only the disciple who hears the Far Cry; but he is given the means by which to pass it on as a message adapted to the apprehension of those with whom he comes in contact. This is his duty, more now than ever before.

The whole race is more capable of attention than it has been in the past this is perceived by those who regard it from the ethereal world. That is a step taken; and the utmost has to be made of every step, for the time is waning. With the passing away of Time -- the opportunity given in this especial pilgrimage will be gone. Every member of the race has to be taken through the gate at last; and all will wait at the Portal for the last laggard, who will be drawn upwards by innumerable hands of love stretched out towards him. But the manner in which this opportunity is used by man as a whole affects the status of the spirit of the race in the great future. This is a mystery, too vast for the comprehension of the disciple; but the masters and pioneers know it, and therefore the Far Cry goes forth unceasingly to those who have ears to hear. Work and strive, and live and love more intensely and persistently than other men; but in your higher nature kill out those germs of spiritual desire which make the souls of men long for activity and pre-eminence in the narrow limits of time and space, under the dominion of pleasure and pain. The stupendous effort is more possible than it seems at first sight, for the forces, visible and invisible, which surround man and hold him in his place, are all directed towards his assistance. They are his allies, given to him by the same beneficent power that gives him opportunity. In whatever direction a man's nature leads him he finds these forces ready to give him aid. If his tendency is evil he is assisted by the very elements, which readily adapt themselves to his plan and plot. It is necessary for him that this should be so. Alone, without these helpers, he could not work either good or ill in this bewildering state of human life. So soon as he sets his feet in the path that leads to freedom, these same forces, which have helped him to garner the experience of the evildoer, or the apathetic dweller in sloth, or the seeker after pure pleasure, collect around him with renewed and redoubled power to aid and hasten him on his way. As man he must stand alone, and give help; as spirit he is bound up with the whole brotherhood of love and held by up the impelling force of the spiritual life of the universe. The universe exists only that he shall obtain freedom; and the physical and material part of the world he dwells in is pledged to its Creator to assist him to that end. For this was it created in material shape. We perceive that man is surrounded by innumerable creatures and substances, all of which have their appointed place in the universe and are pursuing their appointed path, to all appearance quite independent of man. The connection between the whole material universe is a subtle one, not to be perceived by human intelligence. The dweller in the ethereal spaces is aware of it and is able to utilize his knowledge of it for the assistance of embodied man. The immense number of conscious beings who are united in the material universe, and surround man, are held together in this condition by a deep bond which has its source in the Divine Breath. Escape from this condition is very easy for them, because their bondage here is not the bondage of pilgrimage but of willing association. Not only the beings whom we recognise as conscious, but also the beings which unite to hold together the bodies in which other beings dwell, the beings which

have subjected themselves to the laws which order the composition of what we call material atoms, all alike are united in the maintenance of a physical life which is the school for the souls of men. The dominion given to man over them is of a very different character from what he supposes it to be. He makes mistakes continually in his conduct in relation to them, and these errors have all to be corrected before his lesson is complete. He drives from him the forces which are pledged to aid and uphold him, and increases the dreariness of his position and the sense of its insecurity, by so doing.

That great passion, desire of life, brings the souls of men into intimate relationship with the beings who form the universe which enables him to gratify it. He is blind to the fact that he is indebted to them for this gratification. He fancies the elements and the substances exist without effort.

Not so. There is a continuous and beneficent effort made on his behalf, and it is necessary for him to learn to acknowledge this and to repay it by right conduct. The perfected man conducts himself rightly towards all things; whether his perception enables him to perceive them as animate or not. That which he imagines to be inanimate because its consciousness is so far removed from his own, is the most necessary to him of all his surroundings, and as his development advances he becomes aware of this, and recognises his debt. He knows then that in destroying within himself the desire of life he is releasing legions of beings from a task undertaken by them for his benefit.

IV.

When the flower has bloomed, and the silence that is peace has followed the storm, the disciple has entered that high grade which makes him an adept in life, one of the pioneers of the race. The storm of personal life is at -- end for him for ever; never again will he strive for the small ends to which men devote themselves, never again will his spirit rebel against its creator because of personal deprivations or losses. For him there is peace. And in that calm comes the new commands. The disciple may not remain in the stillness of the peace he has obtained at so high a price. He must take the peace with him and go forth; it is the reward he reaps for the surrender of the self. He must now go to sow the seeds of knowledge in the souls of other men. Encompassed by the peace which he has obtained he can return to the battlefield of life and fight for the great issues which hitherto he has scarcely been able to recognise, blinded as he has been by his own personality. He will thus fight as no mere man can fight, and yet stand aside in the battle. The warrior is the divine part in himself which is entirely impersonal, entirely devoted to the Supreme, entirely at the service of the whole brotherhood. The coming battle is no battle for conquest of the self; that is over and past, unless the disciple lose his footing and fall from his place. The battlefield Oil which he now takes his place is not that on which the souls of men struggle with the animal part that would control them, nor that on which the spirits of men fight with their own ambitious natures. It is the arena in which the spirit of the race, the indivisible spirit of Humanity, fights for the final conquest that shall raise it to the high estate for which it is destined. Sooner or later this battle must be won; the warrior is incapable of defeat. But it is the task of the adepts in life to shorten the bitterness of the way and hasten the great day of victory.

The song of life is heard only when the adept is able to enter upon this great impersonal effort. Then the 'mystic' beauty and harmony of the whole is made plain to him, and the discords which have oppressed him while he was still only in possession of the apprehension of man disappear. The pain and darkness and confusion of mortal life arise entirely from the

limited capacity and partial apprehension of mortal man; as he grows into the immortal conditions and recognises more and more of that which surrounds him, he becomes capable of perceiving hitherto invisible forms and colours, and of hearing hitherto inaudible sounds, which make all discord into harmony, all darkness into light, all incompleteness into perfection.