

The Fenwicks Go To Heaven

A tale of family ties in the life hereafter.

This fictional but true-to-death story, excerpted from the book, Beyond Human Personality, was told by the spirit of F.W.H. Myers via the automatic writing of the medium Geraldine Cummins in the early 1930s. It illustrates the possible paths our souls might follow after the demise of our physical bodies. The tale concerns a hypothetical family consisting of Professor John Fenwick and his wife Ann, their three sons, Martin, Walter, and Michael, and their daughter, Mary. Martin becomes engaged to Margaret, who, after his death marries Richard Harvey. This is, of course, only one soul's view of things; but Myers was exceptionally intelligent and well educated, and a key figure in the Society for Psychological Research.

It is necessary to illustrate the future by taking as an example the story of a united family — a fairly rare phenomenon, but still to be met with occasionally.

Professor John Fenwick holds the Chair of Physics at the University of B____. He is greatly attached to his wife, Anne Fenwick. She, too, loves her studious husband and is absorbed in his life and in her children.

Their eldest son, Martin, is a student of philosophy and intends to become a fellow of B____ University.

Their daughter, Mary, dies at the age of ten. This is the first personal loss in that united family and both parents are, for a time, grief-stricken and oppressed by the strange cruelty of death which has so ruthlessly snatched from them this lovely child.

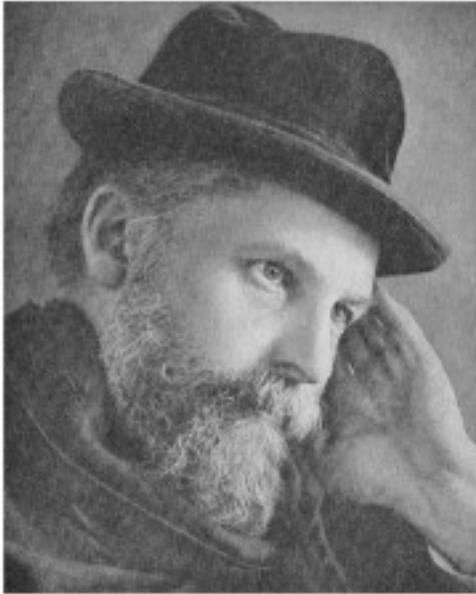
With the passage of years, memory becomes dimmed and their sorrow passes away; the image of the child fading from their consciousness. But the problem of a life that has not been lived is not solved for the Professor, who sometimes thinks of his small daughter and ponders on the unfinished character of her experience.

Actually, when Mary before birth, chose to be born again on earth, she was in a state or condition of psychic evolution, that did not necessitate a long

sojourn in the world of Matter. The girl's soul had, in an earlier incarnation, lived to be a very old human being, and so another complete life was not necessary to her development. She was, therefore, spared the experiences of adult existence and she returned to those of her Group who were living in the world of Illusion. Slowly she absorbed the memory of her earlier life, and so her soul entered into its prime and was able to imagine, and therefore create, in time, the body of an adult — the figure of a woman at its most beautiful period. When she met her parents in sleep she assumed the form that was hers on earth. She imaged it in her mind and so was able to appear in a familiar likeness.

There was between her and Professor and Mrs. Fenwick a strong and permanent bond. They had, in a previous life, some intimate relationship; the mere fact of death, though it might temporarily dim recollection, could not break this tie. So, during sleep, the parents and the daughter met on a level of consciousness which might be described by the term "inner chamber of imagination." Within this place, upon this level, conscious memory does not function. The double or sleep-body is connected, however, with the record of this experience in the case of the parents. In the case of the daughter the experience is registered on her deeper memory. She cannot, as a rule, bring back to her own world awareness of that meeting of

three souls. But, in this manner, the parents keep in touch with the daughter and come into their inheritance of subjective memory which implies knowledge of these experiences of sleep when they, too, belong to the Great Majority.



F.W.H. Myers

Professor Fenwick and his wife pass into the next world some thirty or thirty-five years after Mary's death. In spite of this gap of more than a quarter of a century they experience no strangeness on the occasion of their meeting with their daughter. As they are soul-comrades, as they belong to the same Group, they have been able to keep in touch with each other during the life of sleep. Sleep — if you but knew it — contains its own vivid, constructive existence. It is merely the physical body, the surface awareness, the lower levels of consciousness that rest during the hours of slumber.

Some children who die before they have reached adolescence do not meet their parents in the world between. They had only a fleeting, physical connection with them; they were strangers to each other's souls; they were not bound to each

other through the comradeship of the Group. This being so, desire fades rapidly and, after death, such parents are not united to the children who went before them at an earlier time.

Within the Group there are what might be termed — for want of a better word — "psychic atoms." These consist perhaps of four or five souls; the number varies, as the number in the atom varies.¹ Anyway, these beings are little groups within the Group and may, as with the Fenwick family, have their own intimate life which, during all the earlier stages of evolution, they do not share with others.

When the Great War² was declared in 1914, Martin was deeply disturbed by the news. He had just become engaged to Margaret Ellerton and an interesting career was opening out before him. In a little while the call came which few young men of his age and disposition cared to disobey. He became a soldier though he hated military life. Within two years of his being gazetted to an infantry regiment, he was sent to France and, in company with other young men, was suddenly and ruthlessly massacred in one of the big battles.

In the After-life, during his sojourn in Hades,³ his young sister, Mary, came to him. She was drawn to this brother through a very tender love that had been theirs, and which remained to them in spite of the years of separation. The two journey together into the world of Illusion or Terrene Imagination. Their imaginations have greater play now that they inhabit the finer etheric body and they create the old surroundings of the university town in company with others, who have previously inhabited it, are in outlook akin to them and who shared their earthly pursuits.

Martin resumes his philosophic studies, pursuing them with the scholastic zeal which he inherited from his father. He is happy in being able to satisfy this desire, and the companionship of his sister Mary makes up to him in some measure for

¹ See Newton's "clusters."

² Prior to World War II, WW I was referred to as the "Great War."

³ "Hades" is the term Myers uses to denote the transitional stage that souls pass through immediately after their physical death.

the loss of Margaret, the girl he would have married if his life had not been so suddenly cut short.



Geraldine Cummins

As time went on, his brother Walter and his other brother, Michael, went out into the world, took up professions, and more or less drifted out of their parents' lives, but they were still bound to them by strong ties of affection.

Margaret, however, completely broke away from the Fenwicks. She married, and when a middle-aged woman, in company with her husband was killed in an accident while travelling abroad. She would seem, therefore, to be faced with a difficult problem in the world beyond the grave. Her husband, Richard Harvey, had died at the same time as herself and accompanied her in the journey through Hades. During that period her soul was in a state of drowsy reflection when pictures of her past life drifted before her inner sight.

The review of that phase in time solved the apparent enigma of the future for the young soul. Margaret realized then that Martin, her first love,

alone mattered to her because they were already psychically akin. Whereas her husband held her affections only through the physical tie which vanished with death. So, through the psychic law of gravitation, she was drawn into the life of the soldier who had been killed twenty years previously in the Great War.

In the world of Terrene Imagination she experienced the unfulfilled dreams that nested in her imagination, the love-life that she should have enjoyed with Martin Fenwick if he had not been so ruthlessly snatched from her in the days of their earthly youth. Her husband, Richard Harvey, loved her and was faced with the fact of her loss. In what manner did the Illusion-world⁴ furnish him with the compensations which are characteristic of that fanciful effortless sphere?

He was greatly attached to his mother. The old affection revived as he surveyed his past when in Hades. He found her, wise and maternal, with all the protective quality which is characteristic of that form of affection. He turned to her, entered her life and, having been absorbed in sport and in the pursuits of a land-owner, sought again, in her company, those familiar pleasures which now might be so easily created out of the stuff by imagination.

Professor Fenwick and his wife are typical representatives of University life. They possess a certain thinness of imagination, they are too entirely reasonable to experience, for any length of time, an existence other than the one they find in the world of Finite Reality — which is another term for the state of Illusion. But at least they possess warmth of affection for each other and regard the rest of the world with beneficent, if somewhat selfish detachment.

So, when the Professor and his wife pass down the long gallery they do not re-act violently,

that its features are especially subject to the whims of one's thoughts. Other observers consider that all worlds are essentially mental creations and thus see the differences between them only as a matter of degree.

⁴ "Plane of Illusion" is Myers' term for the third plane of consciousness (the physical being the first and Hades the second). This is the heaven most spirits describe in communicating with us. Spiritualists often refer to it as "Summerland." Myers describes it variously as dreamlike, fanciful, effortless, and such, indicating

nor are they led into the dark places of creative fancy. Their lives were not stained with cruelty or any pronounced vices. They were gentle and affable though egotistical, and lacking in sympathy with mankind.

In the world of Finite Reality they experience joy at meeting their son, Martin, and their daughter, Mary, and they live happily for a time in the old surroundings of the B_____ University. However, Mary, Martin and Margaret, his wife, have deeper, richer natures, and soon pass on to a higher level. In this world they evolve in the spiritual, creative sense, and weary, therefore, of the monotony of an existence within earthly memories.

So they set out on the higher adventure. They bid farewell to their parents and leave behind them the old grey colleges, the Gothic church and the quiet, cloistered surroundings which seemed, at one time, to satisfy all their needs. The cause for this change is to be found in the creative impulse which stirs anew in them; which seeks a higher and a greater awareness, a new enterprise, and surroundings that are no longer shaped out of earth memories, but in appearance, construction and being, are beyond any conceptions they had formed of reality when they inhabited their physical bodies.

These three are, indeed, on the level of the Soul-man⁵ and so, though they experience grief at parting with their friends and relations and the old university town — now imaginatively conceived — yet they do not hesitate, for they have received the summons to the next state of being, to the world of Eidos. Their ardent and more spiritually active natures compel them to take this upward step, to make a leap in evolution and, because their perceptions have become finer, enter into the enjoyment of a loftier world, magnificent, exquisite, full of strange beauties and forms that may still be, in some respects, reminiscent of earth. These are, however, infinite in variety. They are composed of colors and lights unknown to man. There, on this

level, will be found a perfection in outward form, in surface appearances; a perfection only occasionally realized in the creations of the greatest of earthly artists.

There are certain disadvantages attached to membership of a united family. Such unity may lead to selfishness, to lack of regard or thought for other human beings. Mrs. Fenwick was too possessive a mother and a wife, and was principally responsible for the tying of the family knot. Her husband and her two sons, Walter and Michael, all became so closely bound to each other, largely through these qualities of hers, that they failed on earth to make any sure contact with men and women outside the family circle. Walter married but he was an unsatisfactory husband because the mother's love was still wound about the adult man like swaddling clothes. Bitterness arose, husband and wife quarreled frequently, and eventually parted. Then Walter devoted himself to making money and remained attached to his mother and his home.

Michael did not marry; his mother's love and his father's pride in him having led to his developing an inordinate affection for himself, so that he had no love left for any other living creature. He too, however, revered his father, and always preserved a selfish affection for his mother. He was a man-about-town and towards the end of his days spent most of his time at his club.

It was somewhat startling for Michael to wake up from his egoistic dreams. But he discovered in his gallery the pleasant pictures of his days of childhood and youth, and always in them figured the adoring mother, the proud father. So, when his term in Hades was completed he found himself with Professor and Mrs. Fenwick in the illusory, imaginatively conceived university town of B_____.

Walter followed his brother very swiftly from earth; and now all desires would seem to be satisfied. The parents and their two sons might

⁵ Myers' name for those who have reached the fourth level of conscious that he calls Eidos.

continue to live and delight in their memory-world. On earth they were a united family, and now they were united once more, while the knot, which had been loosened through death and separation, was pulled tighter than ever.

Clearly all four had reached heaven: they might continue old pursuits, seek out old pleasures and admire each other as in past days. Actually, however, they were — as spiritual beings — extremely undeveloped and had not, therefore, the capacity to create either a heaven or a hell for themselves. Their souls had shriveled, as it were, through their entire disregard of all save their immediate selves.

On earth, Walter's favorite pursuit was the making of money. It gave him importance in the eyes of his family and it did not interfere with his love for his mother. So he obtained considerable pleasure from a fortune honestly gained but carefully hoarded, for he was mean and gave nothing to charity. Here in the other world where, at first, memory rules existence he sought for the old game of barter and exchange, for the sport of buying and selling stocks and shares. He found others of his kind who were prepared to play with him but the adventure of gathering money soon lost its charm. He discovered that, in the world of Terrene Imagination, money was no longer the criterion of worth. The majority of people no longer desired it because their minds and the greater spirits behind those minds provided them with all they desired. The man who had beautiful and vivid memories of life and of faithful love was the rich man, and for him memory yielded up its abundant treasures.

But Walter however, possessed only a mentality impoverished by his pursuit of money, by the absence from his soul of any love for living, for people or for things. It is true that he had a certain affection for his mother; and in his boredom at the failure of the game of stocks and shares, he turned to her and tried to find happiness in the antecedent relationship of mother and darling son.

As he found money-getting in company with his fellow stock-brokers to be a sham, a game in

which however great the fortunes gathered they were valueless, so at last he realized that his mother's love was injudicious and foolish. Her feelings for him sprang from her gratification in possession, she admired him because he was her child. At the same time his father's pride in Walter was being undermined by this gradual appreciation of the fact that he now lived in a world where financial success was estimated at its true worth. Here men who were money-makers and nothing else were accounted as beggars; ruled by minds that knew but one passion and were deficient in imagination they were incapable of laying up for themselves the treasure which is eternal and which is necessary for the life of the soul.

Walter soon began to suffer acutely. He could obtain no pleasure from existence on this level of consciousness. The values were of a different order from those that had engrossed him on earth. In his leisure hours his mother's demands wearied and finally enraged him. His father humiliated him with criticism of his failure as a member of that world of Illusion. He longed, therefore, with all his heart for the earth life, for those hours of excitement when he bought and sold on the Exchange, for the satisfaction of being courted and flattered because he was a moneyed man. He began, indeed, to dream back, and so there came what is called the earth pull, the birth pull. He returned to the intermediate world, and rested there for a while in the chrysalis state; in that condition he perceived himself and his past as in a mirror. Then, when all that made up his being had floated in procession across that glassy surface, the spirit as judge summed up the vision for him and bade him choose.

It is hardly necessary to declare the nature of that choice. Inevitably the soul of this primitive man looked back towards the earth and clamored for entry again into world-time, clamored for a physical body and the conditions in which for Walter it alone seemed possible to exist. In the life beyond death he had been like a fish on dry land, unable to breathe that rarer atmosphere. So he deliberately chose to be reborn; but this time he came

back with a certain amount of knowledge of the poverty of his soul, and was in a condition to learn and to develop, readier to throw himself outward and to live no longer for the sake of one selfish person, one tie.

During the time of this preparation before rebirth, the spirit, or Light from Above, sought for Walter the earthly conditions which would be best fitted to develop his nascent desire for improvement, and which would also help to enlarge his outlook and enrich his nature. It was decided therefore, that his soul should now inhabit a female form, that he should be born into poverty and meet with insuperable difficulties at nearly every step of his road. Still more importantly, because he had despised and rejected Love he must now be refused it and in loneliness learn the lessons which only adversity can teach. Thus by going back he made a step forward, and in this new incarnation was able to harvest far richer potentialities for existence on a higher level of consciousness. Through trouble he carved and reshaped himself, increasing his capacity for living in a finer world beyond the grave.

After Walter deserted his family and returned to earth his mother directed her somewhat possessive attention upon her husband. But the Professor was not satisfactorily responsive. He would not tear himself away from his studies of the construction and nature of the Illusory-world. His scholarly but unimaginative mind still followed the old cart ruts of thought. He was as he had been in the days of his occupation of his Chair at the University. He had not moved on but remained an extremely reasonable materialist, the same beneficent academic figure. Only now he believed that when he had completely exhausted his subject, his ego would disintegrate, give up the ghost, fading out from sheer weariness. This idea satisfied and he found a shallow happiness in meeting other academically minded friends and in ruminating upon, and rummaging in, the chambers of learning. Mrs. Fenwick could not rouse him, or draw him out of his rut. So she turned to

Michael, her bachelor son, seeking her happiness in him.

Of all six members of the Fenwick family, Michael might be said to be the lowest in the scale of psychic evolution. When he left the earth he was, in many respects, a mere nonentity, having allowed his mental gifts to atrophy and his interests to become deplorably narrow. He had never really lived. Existence came to him at second hand. It is true that he had no serious vices; he was merely self-absorbed and indolent, unstirred by any creative energy or even, as was his brother Walter, by a perverted love for money. So his mother, who was beginning to wake from the dream of this Illusion-world, could find neither happiness nor any responsive warmth in his society. He offered her merely the conventional respect and regard that he had given to her on earth.

Thrown back upon herself, her passionate, possessive nature caused her to yearn for her favorite son Walter; so she returned to the shadow-gallery where again the choice is made. And her spirit came with the mirror, showing her more than her own life, casting upon the glass images of happenings and misfortunes in the earth life of her son Walter who now was facing the hard upward road of progress in the world of Matter.

His troubles lit up the unselfish quality which is usually buried somewhere in a woman's maternal love. She did not want to return to earth. Behind her lay the effortless existence of fantasy where she might contentedly abide for centuries. But Walter's need conquered; she decided to be reborn, petitioning only, even though it might mean suffering, that she should be permitted in some manner to help him in his new earth life. Her request was granted; and thus was she cured, thus did she make reparation for her shortcomings as a mother and for her injurious influence on her family in her previous earth life.

The Professor and his wife belonged to the same group-soul. So he soon began to feel his loneliness, to desire something more than intellectual

pleasures, than dialectical triumphs over his fellows. His was in many respects a fine mind; now his emotional nature, which had been severely repressed, awakened, he began to feel an urgent need for human love, for special and intimate companionship. The Effortless-world no longer pleased and, though utterly weary of it, the unfortunate scholar discovered that he could not renounce existence, that there seemed no prospect of a convenient disintegration.

A purgatorial period ensued. The Professor yearned in vain for his daughter, for Martin or his wife. The bonds that held the family together had been untied and he was condemned to pay the price of the narrow clannishness which had cut them off from their fellow men during their earth life.

Martin, however, caught the echo of his father's cry of loneliness as it came faintly to him in Eidos. So he journeyed back and though he might not actually show himself to the Professor, the strong bonds of affection that linked them to each other enabled him to act as his guide. Soon with his help Fenwick rectified the mistakes into which he had been led when on earth. He looked beyond the family circle; he visited the dark places in the world beyond death where strange and perverted souls abide. Thus pity and compassion were roused in his rather desiccated academic soul. And as Paul fought with the beasts in Ephesus so the Professor fought with the monsters shaped by the imaginations of those who, passing over from earth, lived in a hell of their own creation.

Gradually, through this labor for others, the Professor evolved, breaking the hard crust that had inhibited and confined his generous nature. In

time so freed was he from the limitations that hindered him he was able to realize the possibilities of the kingdom within himself. He came to know loveliness and began to realize the creative side of his larger self. So his soul flowered and he was permitted to journey to Eidos where he rejoined his son and daughter, where he gained the knowledge of immortality, the knowledge of the stupendous grandeur of the peaks to which a soul may rise if heart and mind, if imagination and passion are directed by creative love and wisdom.

Michael remained for centuries inert on the Third plane, becoming more and more of a negation, sinking lower and lower in the scale of consciousness by reason of his vegetative, selfish existence. Finally, for him also there came an awakening, but like his brother he had to return to earth. There through the educative influence of a crippled physical existence he gradually changed, his better nature awakened and he was able to understand the pictures of his existence when, after another earth journey, he passed once more down the long gallery.

The members of the Fenwick family offended not so much individually, but as a unit. So the unit was broken up, its parts scattered. And though some day all of them will meet again they will with one exception journey along different roads through time and space until they evolve and add to themselves the precious and necessary sense of the group-soul, of its communal character, of its divine sharing of experience, wisdom, life, and love.

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