

## THEODOTA

By Carl Price Reade

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Of all the spirits in heaven Theodota was the most restless. Theodota was not her name; it means simply "God-given," and names are useless in heaven, where the souls recognize each other by thought transmission; but that was the name by which she was subsequently to become known.

She wandered to and fro, taking no more pleasure in the quiet contemplation of joys so unutterably divine that the most pure and ardent imagination upon earth fails to begin to comprehend them. She wandered to and fro restlessly, seeking counsel of wiser spirits, and presently one stopped her.

"It was thus at some time with all of us," she said gently. "We are not pure enough to enjoy contemplation of the divine forever. It is the taste of earthly joys that is necessary as a corrective—joys and suffering. The time has come for thee to be born on earth, Theodota."

"Was I not once on earth before?" Theodota asked.

"Some say that the soul visits earth more than once, Theodota," answered her guide. "But few of us know, and those who know will not tell. Thy time has come to say good-by to heaven for a brief space of time, incalculably brief, as we know time, but a lifetime as it is known to mortals."

Theodota wept, but the impulse toward earth was too strong in her to be restrained. Presently she found herself far from the divine joys and entering a dark cloud which men call passions, though to Theodota it seemed only a dismal and gloomy place. Envy seemed to her like lightning, and hate like thunder, and anger like a hailstorm; but on the other hand there was love, a soft zephyr, and self-sacrifice, which seemed like

balmy sunshine. So she flew on, passing from one to another, tired and bewildered, yet driven onward without volition by the force of the earth impulse toward incarnation.

Souls are not conscious of earthly things when they have come down from heaven. If they were, would not each of us choose to be born a king or queen or a millionaire, or with an endowment of every talent! Souls see only the hearts of their fu-



"Take Your Old Ring, Then."

ture mothers, not their material circumstances, or those of the men who are to win them. So presently Theodota found herself before a young girl who was seated alone in a handsome room, looking at a diamond ring upon her finger. And it seemed to Theodota, in her love for the girl, that she would like nothing better than to become her daughter.

The door opened and a young man came in. The girl rose and ran into