

THE GAY GNANI  
OF GINGALEE

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or Discords of Devolution A Tragical Entanglement of Modern  
Mysticism and Modern Science

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THE GAY GNANI OF GINGALEE

**THE GAY GNANI OF GINGALEE**  
**OR**  
**DISCORDS OF DEVOLUTION**

**A TRAGICAL ENTANGLEMENT OF**  
**MODERN MYSTICISM AND**  
**MODERN SCIENCE**

**BY**  
**FLORENCE HUNTLEY,**  
Author of  
"Harmonics of Evolution" and "The Dream Child"

**HARMONIC FICTION SERIES**  
**VOL. II**

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**1908**

**Copyright 1908**  
**By**  
**FLORENCE HUNTLEY**

**Published 1908**

**DEDICATED  
to  
Those who are wise enough  
to be foolish—at intervals**

## PRELUDE.

Mother Nature contributes the elements and qualities and "temperament" of the individual; and no matter what the education, occupation, position or experience, those native tendencies persist.

One who is born with the disposition for mental frivolling and a keen sense of nonsense discovers that these tendencies persist with far greater tenacity than any impulses of anger or fear or other destructive elements. The writer of this little book has found them subordinate only to the thirst for knowledge and the love of truth.

When the author of this "romance" finally renounced the small gods of her personal ambitions, and surrendered the diverting occupation of newspaper work for serious instruction in the School of Natural Science, she merely restrained but never eliminated that Sense of Nonsense. The native tendency toward intellectual badinage and literary travesty persisted—and even to the present time it furnishes relaxation from the absorbing duties in connection with The Great Work.

Science, if it be Science, must take into account all of the facts of Human Nature; and Philosophy, if it be Philosophy, must include and assign to place every intellectual, native and normal tendency of the Soul.

Science and Philosophy that have no room for the incongruities of life and the frivolings of the intelligence are only partial mentors and masters.

The workshop occupies so much of life, thought and energy, that no one should refuse an occasional hour in the play room.

Confidence in the good sense of the readers of the Harmonic Series forbids the thought that this little satire should be mistaken for a reflection upon the Verities of the School of Natural Science, or that it could be so misinterpreted as to discredit the Harmonic Philosophy.

In so far as it is a travesty it deals, not with the facts of Science and the Truths of Philosophy, but with the people and the things which discredit both.

"The Dream Child" and the first sketch of "Discords of Devolution" were written at the same time and place, but at different desks.

This was done in Washington City, at the time of my separation from newspaper life.

The one stands for that earliest concept and ideal of the Great Law, while the other represents the undertone of nonsense which instruction, experience and self-denials have subdued but never eliminated.

The manuscript of this little volume has been read, from time to time, by friends who have urged its publication. This, however, was never seriously intended until the "Interlude" (Chapter XII.), was contributed by the TK, which interlude gives to the whole a definite meaning and purpose but vaguely suggested by my own work.

Except for this masterly arraignment of The Gay Gnani of Gingalee the author of this tale would have lacked the courage to publish it.

With this addition, however, the writer reconsidered, reread and retouched the Ms., and consented to an Experiment.

With this explanation, excuse and apology for the writing of the romance in the first place, and now for its publication, the author commits it to criticism—with a certain conviction that it has a mission of its own to perform.

FLORENCE HUNTLEY.

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"For what shall it profit a man if he gain a whole Drug Store and jar his Higher Self?"

—Aphorism of the One Hi----.

## CHAPTER I.

*"Philosophers Deride, Fools Investigate."*

### PROPHET AND PROFIT.

"But my profession," pleaded the slim and pallid youth who stood wistfully eyeing the Soda Fountain. "You forget, my friend, that the vows of a Guru forbid such diffusion of force and waste of magnetism as occur in meeting those not of The Path."

"Tommy-rot!" bawled young Mr. Vanderhook as he continued to polish the already glittering faucet. "You've not seen her, and you hear me, there is only one in the box and what's more she can give cards and spades to any old band of mystical misfits on the top side the Earth."

"But my *profession*, William, the obligations of One—Who—Aspires—To—Know are—are—simply immense, and in my profession—"

"O, hang your profession—a couple of minutes anyway," interrupted the man at the fountain, "and come along. You're not going to shake Kankakee till you've seen my Very Best—the finest Chicago brand, the highest flyer this side your celestial belt. What d'ye say, and what'll you have?" and Bill Vanderhook looked anxiously into the other's face while his hand sought the "sweet cream" spigot.

"And if I consent," finally murmured the Occultist, now toying mechanically with the long handled spoon, "If I consent," he repeated in a weird monotone—his eyes following the process of a Lowball—"and look upon WOMAN—should I look upon her you would call your own, remember, Bill, that *you* assume *my* responsibility, and that upon *your* head will rest the consequences of *my mad act*. Upon *you* must descend the penalties of my violation of the First Degree."

"I'll go you," recklessly responded the young druggist, as he shoved the frothing fluid across the marble slab—"only let's get a move."

Alonzo Leffingwell's right hand closed vaguely but firmly upon the handle of the drinking-cup. With an air of utter indifference he poured the questionable compound into his system. Then his left hand sought his vest pocket—tentatively.

The Vanderhook drug store once more stood the treat.

Since infancy these two young men had been inseparable chums. The law of opposites had been satisfied. It had attracted and welded the affections of the stout, stocky, rosy and roystering Bill Vanderhook and the pale, pensive and passive Alonzo Leffingwell.

Bill's voice in babyhood was loud, resonant and cheerful, while Lonnie's was low, limpid and languid. In youth Bill's eyes, big, bold and black, had seemed continually searching for the hidden and forbidden things of fruit closet and melon patch. Contrawise, Lonnie's orbs, mild, misty and luminous, seemed forever scanning the unsatisfying deeps of space.

While nature seemed to have constructed Bill Vanderhook for a short-stop or a half-back, it had reserved Alonzo Leffingwell for the higher arts of mystical mysteries.

On attaining his majority Bill consulted with his father and accepted a partnership in the paternal pharmacy. Alonzo consulted with himself, determined upon mysticism and cut loose from parental guidance. Upon this he resigned, as humorist of the *Daily Clarion*, and set out upon the path of wisdom.

About the same time that Bill turned from bats to bottles and gave up the kicking of balls for the rolling of pills, Alonzo laid down his pen, took up his crystal and immured himself in his bedroom.

Naturally, the exactions of these widely differing occupations tended more and more to separate the two young men.

To Bill Vanderhook it meant an active daily life and a perpetual hustle in holding his father's trade and reaching out for the increase. It meant for him a frequent dip in the social swim, and great popularity among those who attended "functions" and presided at Chafing Dishes.

To Alonzo, his decision to become a "Wise Man" cut him out of pretty nearly everything in the town. It meant renunciation of all social and sentimental diversions of Kankakee. While upon the Druggist were fixed the obligations of citizenship which rooted him in his ancestral home, to the Mystic it meant only obscurity and retirement.

While Bill was now joyously "taking stock" and setting up new show cases, Mr. Leffingwell, in obedience to his "Higher Self," was packing his grip for India.

For he who aspires to the state of Gnanum must seek a more adequate asylum than that of Kankakee.

Alonzo was now well up in Yogum.

He approached Gnanum.

He apprehended the ALL.

Against all this Bill had violently protested. "Cut out this foolishness, and get the bats out of your belfry. Come," he implored, "and clerk for me. This is the Leader in Kankakee, and when you learn the business I'll make you my Pardner. Now what's the matter with THAT?"

"Pouf! Piff! PELF!"—and Alonzo had shuddered as he thus expressed in a musical crescendo his repulsion for trade. At the mere mention of the Drug Store, or the Stock, this Prophet's apprentice might have been seen to curl his mustache with disdain.

He was strangely indifferent to the possible profits of the show-case and the soda fountain.

Once he had asked, with something akin to vitality in his tone, "How can you, Bill, consent to spend the whole of your earthly life in the weighing, measuring and compounding of cold, inert forms of matter?"

"And how can you," Bill had retorted in immeasurable disgust, "how can you consent to spend your life in heathendom, roosting on top of a post for forty years, till your fingers grow through your fists? And more," he continued loudly, "I'll have you remember that these same cold, inert forms of matter stand for big, warm and lively DOLLARS. D'ye hear me, Mr. Dyanzy Chooanzy? While you're munchin' raw fodder and meditating in mouldy caves on the manifold mysteries of mankind, I'll be livin' up to the Queen's taste in Kankakee—swell front—mansard roof—stunning wife—bank stock—and—who knows—but the legislature or Congress or even"—and Bill paused modestly before nominating himself to the Presidency.

Alonzo vouchsafed no reply.

He only gazed at his companion with the wide, meaningless smile of one who Knows—he—Knows.

Then, shaking his head with vast, prophetic solemnity, he waved adieu and passed out—in impenetrable silence.

This devotee had learned, as do all those who delight in the name "Mystic," that nothing is more effective than this vague, superior silence, when confronted with the crude practicalities of the "Unilluminated."

Then a truce prevailed between these erstwhile comrades until—the ever to be expected—the Unexpected—happened.

## CHAPTER II.

### MISS SHEETS IS SHE.

She was radiantly, 'wilderingly beautiful.

She was tall and lissom, leopard-jointed and swift.

She was one of those dulcet-toned, tawny peroxides, an houri, for whom the synonym is "havoc."

Chicago spoke in her every tone and gesture. Her movements were meteoric. Her eyes were X-rays. Her smile was sheet-lightning. She was alert, trim and tailor-made. Her very presence breathed the richness and aroma of her stock-yards training. The Spirit of Chicago, "I WILL," pulsed through her veins. "Push and Pull" was her motto. "Get there" was her creed.

Whoever is familiar with the fatal fascinations of a Chicago Typewriter can gauge the gait of the Kankakee pulse when Miss Imogene Silesia Sheets, late of the great packing house of Harmor & Co., was precipitated into the midst of that suburban society.

The advent of this loveliest of her Type was brought about through the courteous solicitations and higher salary offered by Slaughter & Steers, a rival firm of the great hog magnate of Chicago.

From the very multiplicity of her attractions and accomplishments, Miss Sheets was indescribable.

Life in Chicago is of itself an education, and our heroine was rich in the accumulation of her experiences. Her years of service in the greatest pork mart of the world had developed a keen discrimination as to the relative coincidences and differences among hogs and men. She was never deceived as to either. She valued each after his kind, in his own place and for his own proper purposes, as becomes a broadminded woman.

Miss Sheets' accomplishments ranged from office to drawing room. She pounded the typewriter and the piano with equal facility, and it was said that she rendered her stenographic notes in rag-time rhythm.

Within a week of her arrival, Mrs. Astor's boarding house became a social center, and Mrs. Astor appreciated a guest who at the same time became a social feature and paid in advance.

Before a month had elapsed this artless girl had completely won her hostess' heart, and as they nibbled nuts and nougats at Imogene's expense, that unsuspecting lady had disclosed to Miss Sheets about all she knew of the "Eligible List" of Kankakee.

From this time forward, as if by intuition, the lovely Typewriter seemed to know that she preferred Bill Vanderhook's attentions.

As for Bill, he had been victimized from the start. Three times a day he walked an extra mile to pass her boarding house or place of business. He trod the air. He jollied every customer, and set up the soda water recklessly. He beamed on the very bottles behind the counter. He racked his brain and rifled his Father's show-cases to do her homage.

"Be mine, Sweet Thing," he implored, the third Sunday after their introduction. This he said as they sat in his new, red automobile, four miles from town, while they waited for a gasoline man.

But the maiden demurred. "Oh, Mr. You've got sand in your gear box," she said shyly; then she smiled alluringly and purred softly. The brim of her cartwheel hat grated along his Derby, and they drew as close as fashion permitted.

Still her rosy lips withheld the answer. "Not," she murmured to her inmost self, "until I know whether there's an electric cart and a trip to Europe coming along with the big diamond and the sealskins."

But Bill, stupid after the manner of men, was sorely tried by her evasiveness. He was not a Mind Reader. He just made plain Love, without the modern conveniences.

Then came the gasoline man, and it was dark before they started. As both were very hungry, nothing more was said.

Bill Vanderhook looked like a blue print, when he handed her out to Mrs. Astor.

He felt he had lost his opportunity. He feared he had lost the girl.

It was at this critical stage of Cupid's campaign that our story opens. It was during this momentous interlude that the over-anxious Bill had dragged the reluctant Alonzo, the unwilling Mystic, from his professional seclusion and led him, unprepared, into temptation.

Unconfessed to himself, Bill had a considerable faith in Alonzo's occult powers. He meant to induce the Guru to aid his suit with the tantalizing Typewriter.

Having finally decided to break his vow, Mr. Leffingwell went out of the drug store, sustained by the lowball and a shadowy hope that he would not be found out. He realized his departure from the fifty-seven Paths, but he did not dream that as yet he had come up to his Karmic Destiny. He did not suspect that he and Bill were strolling down Asylum Avenue, arm in arm, for the last time.

A little later Alonzo is seated with Bill in Mrs. Astor's parlor, on the very davenport where Bill had first seen HER. Silently they awaited the appearance of the maiden of whom Bill talked all day, whom he visited every evening, and of whom he dreamed all night.

The face of the Mystic was set and stern. His body was erect and rigid. His gaze was abstracted, cold and indifferent.

To his innermost Inner he was steeled against Woman.

Presently there was a swish and a swirl of nearby silk and heatherbloom, a faint but intoxicating odor of patchouli, and then—and then—a face, a bewildering flash of the rose and the lily, a sunburst of radiant loveliness.

The up-to-date maiden and the up-to-date Mystic stood face to face.

On that instant the tragic entanglement of Mysticism and Materialism, which had been recorded in the stars, now took on its initial expression.

The effect upon the Occultist was instantaneous and overpowering. On the instant his face, form and expression lost their hauteur, rigidity and disdain. Rising, but unheeding the formal introduction by his proud and awkward chum, Alonzo Leffingwell paled, trembled and swayed. For one unutterable moment he gazed upon that dazzling vision with rapt ecstasy, and then raising his delicate white hand and pointing at random in the air, he shrieked in a loud voice, "Aha!—Ah-ha! 'tis SHE! 'tis SHE!—MISS SHEETS IS SHE!" and fell in convulsions at the feet of the lovely stranger.

Then Miss Sheets shrieked like it was a mouse, and Bill growled his astonishment.

"Well! wouldn't that jar you?" cried the girl.

But collecting himself, Bill rather enjoyed the impression his Imogene had made.

"You've paralyzed him sure," he said, contempt for Alonzo and admiration for the Lady struggling for expression.

"Don't you think it," she said gaily, giving her pompadour a twist—"but what are we going to do?"

"Why, I'll telephone for the auto and rush him around to the drug store. No, not a doctor—I know how to fix him. A good stiff Hi-lowball"—and Bill winked—"will start his vibrations again."

Then the lovers, momentarily distracted from themselves, resumed where they had left off, and so successfully did Mr. Vanderhook Jr. press his claims that before the auto came smelling around the corner—and while the unconscious Alonzo lay cold and mute—Imogene had received the huge solitaire she had admired so prettily the last time she and Bill passed the Jeweler's together.

Late that night, when Bill slipped noiselessly out of Mrs. Astor's parlor, a golden hair was curiously entangled in the coils of his cameo shirt-stud.

And the Recluse, what of him?

What of him who had violated the First Degree?

After regaining his equilibrium he withdrew to his father's house and, locking himself in his apartments, he there remained for one month, during which time he tasted neither food nor drink.

## CHAPTER III.

### IN PRIMORDIAL BIOGEN.

His penance done, the Mystic of Kankakee presented himself once more at the soda fountain. He was paler, slimmer and altogether more effective than before. He was faultlessly groomed in pearl gray. His head was held high—by an immaculate collar. He was shod in patent leathers, and white spats peeped chastely below his upturned trousers. His gloved hand grasped the middle of a large cane for support.

“Do you, William K. Vanderhook, hope or expect to marry Imogene Silesia Sheets?”

Young Mr. Vanderhook, who was replenishing the soda fountain, startled for the moment, dropped a large chunk of ice, thereby overturning several bottles of syrup.

“If—So—You—Must—Re—lin—quish—Her.”

“Now, what are you givin’ me?” growled Bill, as he turned upon his chum, and as he did so snapped the cover of the soda fountain with unnecessary violence.

“Merely this,” said Alonzo Leffingwell, slightly raising his monotone,—“You persuaded me to break my vow. You inveigled me into looking upon woman. I had warned you, pleaded with you to let me out of this. You heeded not. I hinted at penalties. You sneered. You did not believe me. You insisted. I yielded. But you have assumed the consequences. You have defied Destiny. But my unsophisticated friend, you have bound yourself to accept the results. You played with Fate. The law is relentless. Rash boy, you have invoked dire karmic consequences.”

“Well, what in the name of—the higher foolology—are you driving at?” snapped Bill, quite out of patience.

“This, my once friend, this”—and Lonnie now well started, talked straight on. “Through my higher comprehension of primordial principles, and by my occult manipulations of certain astral forces (quite unknown to such as you), I erstwhile learned the most profound fact in nature. I was, as we say in our cult, able to visionize my Soul Mate. The doors of the future, as it were, lifted from their hinges, and—Aha! you start. You tremble. You sense my secret. You perceive the mystical meaning of my metaphysical meanderings.”

Alonzo Leffingwell paused, gazing fixedly at Bill, who was now nervously rinsing the glasses.

“You have guessed,” and the Mystic’s voice fell to a sharp whisper. “Miss Sheets is SHE,—she whom I cognized in the astral. She is *not* your affinity, but *mine*. Did you not perceive that we needed no introduction? Our higher selves responded to the law; hence my agitation, and your—your—KARMA.”

Bill Vanderhook stopped short, straightened himself. He quit tinkering with the stock.

Continued Lonnie remorselessly,—

“Knowing, as I do, that our union is inevitable in the course of evolutionary processes, I thought best so to inform you, and as it were, take her off your hands. You are, I trust, too wise to attempt any interference with the immutable.”

Bill Vanderhook stared at his chum for a minute, and then broke into a big, loud laugh. “Well, at least you’re candid,” he said—“more so than most fellows who find their affinities,”—and he carelessly mopped off the marble slab. “At the same time,”—and his voice roughened—“you’ll excuse me for saying that you’re off your base, and that I hold the age over your astral informant, whatever his degree of asininity.”

“And you mean to say that you will not relinquish her? That you will defy the decrees of nature? That you will violate the principles of primordial biogen? That you will ignore the ‘Harmonics of Evolution?’” And Alonzo’s eyes again rested on the labels of the soda fountain.

“To the first,—Nit. To the secondly, thirdly and fourthly,—Yep. Now, you get it?”—and Bill looked very tired.

“O, earthy and unilluminated!” murmured the pale, young enthusiast,—“would that I could but for a moment open up to your clouded understanding the mystical and unintelligible explications of one whom I, even I, acknowledge to be a deeper, more profound and more mysterious Mystic than MYSELF.

“What you need, O, dense, chaotic soul, is—EX-PLI-CA-TION, Explication that will Explain. Hear me, poor groveler amid the rudimentary manifestations of matter. Harken to me ere it be too late. Hear me, O, my boyhood’s chum. Hear the words of misty meaning which have flowed in boundless streams from this modern Mystic, that Far-Off-One in Manhattan Isle. These are the words of one upon whose wisdom I feed, the words of one who KNOWS, and—and—I whisper to you in secret, one who admits that he is—a—Mystic.

“Hear him, William—you who trifle with solemn things—you who deny these primordial, protoplasmic affinities. Hide your head in confusion. Hear him whose utterances no man can interpret. Hear him whose explications are as explicit, as limpid, as lucid, as crystalline, as clear, as the broad light of day at midnight’s holy hour.

“Turn with me to our most luminous and incomprehensible text book. You will find at page numbered 288, commencing, I think, near the middle of the page, the following inspired words, viz,—

[1]“The spiritual espousal, wherein humanity is united with the Lord, is not only catholic, including all the elements in a human word, but, whatever may be its heavenly consummation, is, in its earthly expression and as a visible manifestation, a limited estate, involving conditions such as attend all other espousals: on the Bride’s part a destination separating her from the Bridegroom, and in many ways seeming a contradiction of her inmost desire for Him, so that she becomes a poor starveling, a distraught and desolate Psyche, bereft of Love; and on the part of the Bridegroom a running after her, as if in answer to some great need and hunger developed in her desolation, as if He had indulged her aversion that He might follow her into her darkest hiding, standing at her door and knocking while His locks are wet with the cold dews of her night—He also having veiled His essential might and brightness lest she should be dismayed at His coming, yet retaining enough of his original majesty that she may see Him as the one altogether lovely, the wonderful.”

[1] “A Study of Death,” by Henry Mills Alden; late editor Harper’s Magazine.

“Here in this one simple sentence of only one hundred and eighty-four short, brief, curt, compact, concise, terse, pithy, diffuse, verbose, prolix, copious, flowing, digressive, excursive, discursive, pleonastic and periphrastic words, with at least nine out of every ten of which you should be familiar, there are enough possibilities of meaning, and lack of meaning, to keep your benighted intellect busy guessing for the balance of your natural life.

“But dark as is your intellectual vision, you can not fail to note the frequent occurrence of such significant words as ‘Bride,’ ‘Bridegroom,’ ‘espousal,’ ‘united,’ ‘heavenly consummation,’ ‘destination,’ ‘desolate Psyche,’ ‘Love,’ ‘indulged,’ ‘original majesty,’ ‘altogether lovely,’ and ‘wonderful.’

"You can not fail to note that in this wonderful revelation of the possibilities of a single sentence, the personal pronouns 'He' and 'Him' always begin with a capital 'H.' Can you further doubt that this refers to ME? Can you further protest that this union of ME and MINE is not an essential part of the great plan and purpose of the Cosmic Intelligence to whom alone I acknowledge equality?

"But if, perchance, there yet remains a lingering doubt, then listen once more to this inspired Mystic; for at page 197 he says,—

"In the ascent of life, desire seems to compel its cosmic partner, as hunger its victim, suspending that operation of physical and chemical forces proper to them outside of this dominion of vitality; in its descent these forces more and more tend to resume their proper action, until finally they bring into their own domain the structure they have served; their hardening of the walls of life's outward temple, begun for protection, has gone on to the extreme of fragility and destruction—an office as kindly as any they have performed.'

"And once more, O, my benighted friend, at page 185 he again says,—

"In this complex hierarchy of Nature discrete accords are sustained, so that they fall not into indifference and confusion; degrees of excellence are marked—of truth, beauty and goodness; individual sequestration and tranquillity are secured, and for each life a way—its own that no other can take, and yet open to accordant intimacies and correspondences; and in the psychical involvement life acquires a feeling of itself and a conscious control, the liberty of its dwelling.'

"And yet again at page 108,—

"As these organic capacities are deepened inwardly, representing in their sphering and involution and convolution the synthetic action of cosmic envelopment from the beginning, the desire which has thus shaped itself by intussusception, expressing its postulation, is outwardly a flame of increase, ascending also while it is crescent until it reaches the culminant point of its physiological term, where it—"

"Hold up there. Close that valve a minute. Put on the lid," roared Bill, "and tell me in the name of all specialized idiocy what you're at. If you can't untangle yourself with four thousand languages dead and alive, then you better go chase yourself into cosmic nebulousity.

"If this is your Ex—pli—ca—tion—, and if this is your only excuse for involuting yourself into an introconvertible, double-back-action dictionary, then, says I, t'mud with your mysticism. And now hereafter, when you want to 'explicate' you go out to the harmless ward where they've got whole bunches of just such as your old Manhattan misfit mutt.

"You go out there and talk to your own brand of mystics. Don't you talk shop here. I'm in the drug business and I know a little bit about medicine, but I'll be everlastingly lost in a cosmological fog if I'd know how to prescribe for symptoms like yours. The kind of microbes that manifest through the gray matter of a mystic are not identified in these mundane dispensaries.

"Now, you hear me a minute, Mr. Alonzo Leffingwell—INEXPLICABLE mystic and all around D—P—of every old degree, you want to get right out of Kankakee and lose no time. The state of Illinois makes our city the center of only *ordinary* aberrations; it does not provide wards for such illuminated inanities as you at this minute have been explicating.

"I say, my friend, you go get some bars and lock yourself up. Go sink yourself in a tank of formaline and then will the tank to the scientific department of the institution. This, I say, would never be misunderstood by anybody who knew you. It would be a contribution to science, an aid to education, and an example to the young. And this would be the only good excuse you could ever give to society for having been on the top side of the earth."

"Unhappy trifler, you will regret your selfishness," murmured the occultist, less in anger than sorrow. "But I have done. I leave you to your destiny. I leave you to your own conscience. This will cost you cycles of expiation. You have forfeited your possibilities. Had you resigned her in accordance with the law, all had been well. But your persistence shall react upon your own head,—and now farewell. I leave you, to return no more,—at least not this afternoon. I shall seek the lady. It rests with her. If possible I shall save her from the sad error of marrying you. I shall save her from herself. I shall lift her up to ME, and in this wise I may perhaps save her from other and very disagreeable reincarnations."

Bill Vanderhook picked his hat off the peg, carefully selected a big cigar, lighted it, took a whiff and then replied sardonically,— "Well, Mr. Dianzy Chooanzy, and suppose she won't affin, what then?"

"Then, O, then,"—lisped Lonnie as he leaned upon the show-case as if for support,— "I shall be compelled to wait through several cycles, perhaps, until she has worked out the necessary karma and attained to ME."

"But see here," persisted Bill. "I thought that you gurus and gnanis and you astral fellows generally took the bachelor's degree the very first inning. I thought you were clean off the market. I've always heard that matrimony was quite outside the mystic foul lines."

"Right,"—answered Lonnie,— "that is, as you understand mysticism, marriage is forbidden, except a gentleman discovers his very own. And even then,"—and his voice quavered,— "he must not even get engaged until she who is his in primordial biogen shall attain to an equal illumination. This frequently postpones the happy day for ages."

"Well, now, that's a horse of another color,"—and Bill heaved a sigh of relief. "This is most likely one of those postponed cases. Anyway, I was solid up to last night, but if you don't mind waiting a couple of thousand years I haven't any objections,"—and the generous young druggist let fizz a glass of mineral water.

"Thanks, awfully,"—murmured Lonnie, but whether for the permission or the apollinaris was not quite clear. He sipped the sparkling water with suggestive mournfulness.

"Being chained to the material," he added, "it is very possible she may even prefer you to ME. The fleshy veil which yet so thickly clothes her higher principles, may obscure ME to her inner consciousness; in which case I must temporarily resign her. I may not claim her for several brief earth lives yet. For all this I am fully prepared. And should she not cognize ME for what I AM, I shall hence to India, and there, by contemplation in the sacred cave I shall astralize. I shall return again, and keep watch over her."

"Well, well, well,—that's quite an idea, isn't it!"—responded Bill. "No,"—as Lonnie felt in his vest pocket—tentatively,— "it's my treat. The plan you mention isn't more'n half bad—kind o' lets us all out without any hard feelings. I know it will suit Imogene to a T. Come back from India any time—in the astral. You'll find the latch-string out."

"You forget," returned the Mystic mildly, even sadly, "that ONE—WHO—KNOWS requires neither latch-string nor pass key.

"Such an one, as I AM—TO—BECOME, neither asks admission nor visits by invitation. These are they who

function in the Universal and whose atomic particles respond to the WILL. These are they whose levitations are uncircumscribed, who moveth by Desire and where they listeth. If I go shall I return again? And if so, from whence and for why? And who shall let me in? Aha! Ah-ha!"

Saying which the wise man of Kankakee turned, went softly out the door and gliding down Asylum Avenue sought the abode of the fascinating Typewriter.

A Maiden so fair and a Guru so slight  
Conversed as they sat on the green:  
Alonzo the Seer was the name of the wight,  
And the maid was the Fair Imogene.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MANSARD ROOF.

Again, for the second time, the student of the occult gazed upon his affinity; and again the lovely Typewriter, versed in the higher criticism of Chicago social life, sized up her caller with cosmopolitan grace.

The meeting was relieved of embarrassment by the spontaneous interrogation of the city-bred business woman.

"And what can we do for you today, Mr. Leffingwell?"—sweetly.

"I have come, Miss Sheets,"—murmured Mr. Leffingwell, and he looked directly through the maiden at the wall paper,—“I have come to invite you, to implore you, to go with me to—to—to—stroll with me. Walls—walls—that is, some of them, have ears. I would be alone with you. There is much of moment to impart to you—to you alone. There is a secret—”

"That catches me,"—broke in the beauty, and she rose, donning her picture hat hastily, and grabbing her long-handled umbrella and many-buttoned kids.

"Well, come along, Mr. Leffingwell; I'm ready"—and the dear girl's hand was on the hall door-knob.

And the man and the maiden passed on down Asylum Avenue.

The Mystic appeared actually to know where he wanted to go. After conducting her to the outskirts he led her upward to the summit of a bluff overlooking the City, the Asylum and the Vanderhook drug store.

Then he became strangely silent. Indeed, he had spoken but once in their long walk, and then only when his companion halted suddenly, dropping a few paces behind him.

"What is it, dear Miss Sheets, art weary?"—he had murmured softly, and he anxiously contemplated her listless expression.

"It's nothing," the lady replied, and then she smiled bravely.

But it was something, very unpleasant and very painful. Miss Sheets was breaking in a new pair of boots—an immense feat, as any Chicago girl knows.

It made her very tired.

Finally they reached and paused upon the summit. It was the hour when the sun is apparently sinking. Kankakee lay bathed in that rosy afterglow.

"Is not this inspiring—uplifting? Is not this Realization? Let us VIBRATE."

His large, round, blue eyes were fixed steadfastly upon nothing. He wore an expression of ineffable self-satisfaction.

But the lady was silent. She seemed not to hear. She was busy with some burrs on her gown. Her gaze lingered fondly upon her new sparkling diamond.

"Still silent," he murmured, "still wrapped in your own thoughts. Why that disturbed expression, why no response? You frown; alas, what does this portend?" and Alonzo, the Guru, momentarily diverted from contemplation of Himself, clasped his hands, cast his eyes upward and bent as if he might kneel.

"It isn't anything," indifferently.

"Alas, and alas!" ejaculated her escort. "Not anything you say; yet we who walk the Path are taught that everything Objective is the outcome of something which is Subjective, and therefore nothing is something and 'not anything' is everything to me, when it disharmonizes YOU. Tell me, fair one, what and why?"

"O, well, if you must know," and Miss Sheets sniffed, "I was just wondering if I could ever tie up to these dreadful, grassy smells of the country. One gets so used to City odors, you know. And Chicago has more of 'em, especially about the Yards, and better mixed than in any city in the world. When you're in Chicago you know what's a-coming"—and the city-bred girl held up her dainty "mouchoir" to ward off the scent of new mown hay.

A wave of perplexity, of doubt over-swept the solemn countenance of the Mystic.

"Then you would tell me—"

"Yes, that I don't like the odors, and I don't like this dead-and-alive stillness. Why, anybody who comes from the Yards, and is used to the roar and crash and squealing, gets nervous prostration in a cemetery like this."

Alonzo contemplated her, wonderingly; then, as if dismissing the whole thing, he said in a tone that hinted of impetuosity, "Let us not talk of Chicago, nor the Yards. Let us forget the smelly things and the dead ones. Let us only think of each other, Miss Sheets," and he drew closer to her. "Miss Sheets, Imogene, my own, my very own, tell me, tell me now that you feel a subtle something drawing you to ME!"

The sharp, bright eyes of the Typewriter opened with astonishment. It was the lady's turn to look bewildered. She gazed blankly at the smitten Seer who had already dropped on one knee. She gazed upon him in wonderment. It was the look of mingled awe and admiration a child bestows upon a circus Poster.

"I—I—don't catch on," she said simply. The rapt lover smiled. It was a pale, luminous ripple of compassion. He lifted himself to the perpendicular—drawing still closer. He gazed upon her. He seemed almost ready to take her hand.

"Most perfect of mortals," he began. "Let me explain:

"As you may have heard, I am under orders for Gnaniship. To accomplish this I must soon go from the sophomore grade of Illinois to the senior course in far off Hindustan. In the line of my profession I come to know pretty much everything. I am as familiar with the IS, as with the APPARENT. The NOTHINGNESS of the IS NOT I have demonstrated several times. The oneness of UNITY and the ISNESS of BEING I have already mastered. And by a patient pursuit of the WHITHER and WHENCE, I have anticipated my contemporaries by thousands of years. I have distanced posterity by many a lap."

The Mystic paused to note the impression he was making. Then he went on;—"Through the esoteric fundamentals of nature and through certain occult experiments in primordial polarity, I was enabled to apprehend, to comprehend, to cognize the great law of affinity. I discovered that somewhere there was a ONE, a particular ONE, a dear, sweet, beautiful SHE to whom I was bound in protoplasmic energies and biological consequences.

"And there came a time when she whom I sought was visioned in the astral light. I saw her—SHE—that one, essential, correlated SHE,—SHE that was my other half—that satisfying SHE—that only SHE—was none other than your own sweet self, Miss Sheets.

"Nay, do not interrupt me. It was not until you realized in material substance this ethereal vision that I had, as it were, solved the problem. I had proved the law. Though as yet far beneath MYSELF in physical refinement, mental acquisitions and spiritual illumination, I am yet resolved to accept you as my own and wait until you *do attain*. I am patient. I can and will wait until you have been instructed in the Path of Yog, and attain to ME. And now, my own, speak to me. Express your joy. Speak, ah, speak!"

Mr. Leffingwell paused. There was something almost akin to human desire in his voice, but there was no reply. Miss Sheets was silent. She seemed to be only half listening. In her eyes was now that far-offness, so habitual to mystics, gnanis and gurus. It was now the lady who was abstracted. Her glance traveled down and backward along the avenue. She was looking in the direction of the drug store.

"Hear me again, fair one"—whispered the occultist. "I am yours only. You are mine only. I co-ordinate with you, not as Bill does on the earth plane. Mine is a love not desecrated by thoughts of diamond rings, sealskin saccues, oyster suppers, pink candies and frozen mushes. Mine is the primordial passion that vibrates in the etheric spaces of the universe. It is a passion which scorns material bribes. Mine is a devotion that looks only to soul communion, and the solemn absorption of OURSELF back into Nirvanic nothingness. The hour is come and now is. Imogene, my onliest, sweet bird of paradise, it is your mate who calls. Come, O come, this day, this hour, and we will fly-by-night to Hindustan."

Miss Sheets started—but not to Hindustan. She was roused from her reverie of drugs, drug stores and druggists. She had but mistily sensed the monologue of the Mystic. But the last proposition penetrated her inner consciousness. His reference to birds had recalled her to herself, for she was a member of the Audubon Society and quite up on birds. She now realized that she had been indifferent and almost rude to one whom Kankakee regarded as harmless.

Her Chicago good nature asserted itself. "Well, you do just talk to beat the band"—politely—"as we girls say at the Yards. Now what was that you were just saying about birds and flies?"

"I was trying to say this"—gasped the Mystic huskily, as he reached out, touching the border of her belt ribbon to hold her attention. "I was saying that you must be mine. Listen,—this secret shall not be mine alone, but ours henceforth. Together in aeons past you and I, sweet creature, proceeded from primordial One-Substance. From the remote to the now, from the now to the ultimate we have been and shall be one. As we hereinbefore evolved ourselves from the potentialities of the duplex soul, so shall we together involve ourselves hereinafter in the blessedness of nothing. Though you have not reached my own karmic height, you may *Aspire*. Though you do not cognize the immutable from my own lofty perch of perfect attainment, I will wait, calmly wait, until you by long self-unfoldment shall rise to the state of being of ME."

"O, come off!"—ejaculated the fair girl, at last losing patience. "You make me tired. I say, let's get a move"—and emphasizing her speech with a yawn, she gathered up a handful of back draperies and turned away.

"Alas, and alas,"—mournfully murmured the mystic. "It is as I was warned by the Director of our division. You have not as yet cognized your higher self, hence have not perceived ME. You have not as yet sensed this fair fleshly veil as but the vehicle of your higher principles and quite separate from your ultimate ego. All the same, you're mine. I will not repudiate you. You are the feminine principle co-ordinating with myself, and though you may ignore this only opportunity, yet I will bide your awakening and your renunciation of error. Though you may defeat your own illumination by renouncing ME, yet will I continue to walk the fifty-seven Paths-of-Self and wait. It rests with you, girl, to fix the happy day now, or to postpone it through tedious incarnations. It is for you to say now whether you will fly with me to India and share with me in the coming centuries in the ecstatic contemplation of the One-Horned-Hair of the Sacred-Rabbit. Are you ready to aspire for aeons? Are you prepared to meditate for cycles upon the oneness of substance and the Be-Ness of Being; attaining thereby to the ultimate exaltation of Nirvanic vacuity? Speak, bright one, sweet spirit of Chicago, say,—I WILL. Delay not. Your consent I implore. Miss Sheets, Imogene, what is your answer?"

"R—a—a—t—," but the maiden checked herself with a little scream, for unheard and unperceived came Nemesis.

Bill Vanderhook stood face to face with the importunate Mystic and the ruffled Typewriter.

And the druggist, fresh, rosy and sleek, from the best of barbers and haberdashers, loomed up handsomely by contrast with the now weary, wilted and woebegone Lonnie.

"Imogene Sheets"—and the words cut the air like a whip cracker,—"and I also say that the day and the hour is now. There's to be no more fooling. Business is business. Here's where we change the score. Here's where we decide who's captain of this game. I'm up to all sorts of games, and I'm going to know now which of us rooters is IT. I'm a kicker and a catcher and a shortstop and a batter all in one."

Miss Sheets turned deadly pale as Bill continued: "Now, which is it, the Yogy cave with him in India, or the two-story—basement—brown stone—swell front—modern conveniences and mansard roof with Bill Vanderhook in Kankakee? Speak, girl."

"The—the—man—sar-r-d roof." The words came faintly from the trembling lips of the agitated girl. But the rivals caught the import. Had they been inaudible the rejected lover would have sensed the thought and perceived her answer.

But he made no protest. Philosophers never do. He did not speak. He did not even cast upon her a reproachful look, nor one of anger upon his rival. He only made one little moan with a faint far-offness in the vibration, and then for the second time the unhappy Mystic lay as one dead at the feet of his affinity.

"Well, isn't that fierce?" and Imogene looked on with sweet womanly sympathy while Bill, the now triumphant lover, lifted Lonnie like he was a pigskin and hoisted him into the auto. "Sure thing," said Bill, joyously. "He got it in the neck that time. Come, Petsy, we've got to honk some. We must revive him on the Q. T.

"I'll take him home with me and give him about four fingers with ginger on the side. That'll fetch him."

Imogene looked her admiration of Bill's generosity, and then, gathering her draperies and snuggling down by her future Chauffeur, she sighed a little as she looked upon the inert gentleman on the back seat—saying more to herself than to Bill, "Isn't it a pity he has fits?"

Oh, wild and wooly Wizard of the West;  
Worthy, winsome worker of the Test;  
Wakeful, watchful, wise one, whiskerless;  
Weird and woozy wight, all unexpressed.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE.

Five long and fateful years had rolled up the self-inflicted sacrifices of the man from Kankakee.

In the remote glades of Gingalee lonely Alonzo Leffingwell has finally completed the curriculum of the fifty-seven Paths in accordance with schools of Hindustan.

The Western Votary of "Meditation" had attained to the Highest Degree of "the first Discipline."

He is now descended from the inaccessible mountain upon which he received his education in the Lesser Attainments.

He is now released from the "Cave of the Happy Musings of Misery."

His pilgrimages, penances and prostrations are suspended.

He is temporarily absolved from the Wheel of Chance. He has, as it were, cut out the "Circle of Transmigration." He is taking a vacation.

And just here (as Alonzo afterward explained in Kankakee) should be made some explanation of the wide difference and distinction between the mystico-theosophic-scholastic courses of Illinois and India.

In the Eastern branch TIME is the essential.

In the Western school Hustle is the key.

In the East forty to fifty years are consumed in mere preparation in initiatory contemplation, abstraction, introspection and absorption. Oriental methods call for time without dates, and a hundred years in the achievement of Gnanum is considered excellent work.

The practice of doubling or "ponying," which obtains not merely in Illinois, but which distinguished Western scholarship generally, is unknown in India.

These methods are, however, invaluable when the American seeks wisdom in the Indian schools. By thus doubling or doing extra time Alonzo Leffingwell broke the record.

At first the deprivation of soap, towels and other civilized accessories appeared important. At times he yearned for a fine-tooth comb and a safety razor. However, when he had sat for six months without a change of position, and after he had held up his hands for several weeks at a stretch, he ceased to feel the need of these things.

Thus he conquered the Material and attained to the first stages of Nothingness in five brief years.

These years of Mounting the Spiral were, however, very trying to the Occidental Man, who had been used to the Spirit of Chicago and the Push of Illinois. His Oriental education wholly lacked the stimuli of association and competition.

For months he would have no other company than his own image in the Sacred Lake by day, and his own reflection in the night time.

For weeks together he heard no sounds nor had any news of outside life except the growl of a tiger or the laugh of some hyena in the mountain fastnesses.

This was especially depressing to one who had been reared on the Morning and Evening editions and to whom yellow journalism was food and drink.

Anything like a "Scoop" is not likely to occur in Mystic Circles in a thousand years.

For a long time the life in Gingalee seemed unutterably slow. He found himself where advertising as an art had not opened up. There was nothing to "exploit" and nobody to exploit it.

He found that men of his chosen profession were not expected to talk about themselves nor boast of their successes. At first this was so oppressive to the Seer from the States that he almost regretted leaving Kankakee. For, to boast of the length of one's nails growing through the Palms would be voted exceedingly bad taste; and to exhibit satisfaction in the length of time one could meditate upon the "inspired breath" would be set down as a weakness unworthy of a Wise Man.

Alonzo Leffingwell, therefore, practiced his Western methods and took his Eastern Degrees without announcing it in Headlines. He did not even send out a circular, nor display a poster.

By close application, however, he accomplished in five years what would have required

fifty years for the native Hindustanee.

He was now, physically speaking, quite another man. He was quite another being than was he who had fallen at the feet of Imogene Silesia Sheets that June night in Kankakee. His Physical Vehicle was now but an underlying skeleton with an overlaid sun-baked skin.

For days together he sat folded up like a jack-knife, or knotted like a piece of string. He was impervious alike to heat and cold, sunshine and storm, or mosquitoes and antimires. And as for this whole physical world, though still in it, he was not of it. He was now, as far as the appetites and desires of the flesh are concerned, of no possible pleasure to himself nor to anyone else. Physically, or exoterically speaking, Alonzo Leffingwell was no more.

All this, however, was but the external, physical, material view. Esoterically, or astrally speaking, our hero had achieved the supreme object of Yog, and in reality the young man had never been so much alive, so joyously youthful, so entirely free, or so recklessly gay.

For it was now Alonzo Leffingwell, the astral man, who at will walked in and out of the crumpled up physical shell and levitated gaily through tangled jungle and dreary desert.

It was not the body but the spirit, the ethereal man, which clove the atmosphere and hied itself away through space, quite independent of all our clumsy means of locomotion, of our ships and railways, and our foolish bikes and autos. In this superior state he became a very active member of the great body politic. He was continually on the go. He went everywhere and saw everything.

Questions of salary and transportation were done. He had no baggage to check. He had no hotel bills, no tips to pay. He could no longer be snowbound nor floodtied. He traveled on schedule time.

He was now equipped for any old state of matter. He was impervious to dust, dirt, noise, odors and confusion. He was now equal to Chicago.

Liberated, self-supporting and self-propelling, this gay Gnani betook himself from the gloomy glades of Gingalee. He hied himself joyously over jungle and desert. He blithely skimmed the sea. He poised himself above the breakers on his native shore. His eyes were on the setting sun, his heart in Kankakee.

Nothing asked he now of any man. The exactions of custom houses and the extortions of cabmen were no more. He had forever escaped the abbreviated bunk of the Pullman sleeper, and the elongated solicitude of the Pullman porter.

The annual pass, once so prized by the Kankakee journalist, was now as nothing. For He-Who-Knows is a perpetual deadhead. He has solved the annoyances of travel. Steamships and steam cars have no value to him. Transfers and trolleys trouble him no more.

HE-WHO-KNOWS has indeed solved the question of income and transportation. He has unlimited credit. He is rapid transit itself.

Alonzo Leffingwell, Freshman Gnani of Gingalee, is master of the lower levels of space. He is distinctly in it.

His later critics were only reverting to facts when they said that he was "In the air."

A Yearning Yankee Yoga,  
In youthful yellow Toga,  
    Yodling sweetly all the livelong year;  
Yielding to the yoke of Karma,  
Yet so meek he would not harm a  
    'Squito, sitting, singing on his ear.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE GAY GNANI OF GINGALEE.

These same five years had rolled over the Mansard Roof. The State Asylum still extended its hospitalities to the irresponsible and extra-illuminated. The Vanderhook Drug Store remained as the LEADER, with additions and enlargements of stock.

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. K. Vanderhook, Jr., continued as ornaments to society, whose goings and comings were recorded, not only in the local Clarion, but in the big Chicago pink and green Sporting Extras whenever they attended the Horse Show or came in to root for the Cubs—or entered a fancy cat or dog for the annual "Show."

To Mr. and Mrs. Vanderhook these had been years of social advancement and material success. Since his father's death, the drug business had prospered in his son's hands. The young man had also developed interest in politics and acquired a few ambitions in Kankakee. Our old friend "Bill" was now "William." He was more than this. He was known and referred to as the Honorable Wm. K. Vanderhook; for he had enjoyed successive honors as Councilman, Mayor, and was now talked of for the Legislature. It was in view of this that his friends gave him the complimentary prefix.

He was also Captain of the Home Guard, Chairman of the County Committee, Secretary of the Y. M. C. A., and President of the Electric Light Plant.

All this he was, and did, and still umpired at many a ball game, and judged at all the Baby Shows.

And what of his wife, the adorable Typewriter, who had chosen the "Mansard Roof" and given notice to Slaughter & Steers on that sunny June morning five years ago?

She was the same charming and insouciant Imogene, the same dainty and debonnair creature who had so swiftly captured the town and won for herself all modern conveniences and many of the luxuries.

She was a light in the first circle of Kankakee. She gave "functions." Her "At homes" were highly spoken of. Her Pink Teas and Lavender Dinners, and red Touring Car and yellow Toy Dogs were the talk of the town.

With a gentle but firm hand she ruled her husband's house, and purse—and himself—when he was not looking.

Near-silks and close-to-Seals and Rhinestones knew her no more. It was now the Real Thing, and nickle-saving days were past, and the trolley car and the matinee gallery were forgotten.

But she still remembered Alonzo Leffingwell. She occasionally wondered if he had forgotten her.

Tonight is the fifth anniversary of their marriage, and Mr. and Mrs. Vanderhook have entertained a large company.

The best people of Kankakee and some choice friends of Chicago had gathered under the Mansard Roof. It was a long-remembered festivity. Society called it a Swell Affair. Imogene had invited them to a "little informal," but the Honorable William privately declared it to be a Blow-Out.

From whichever point of view it was considered it was the climax of the Vanderhook social successes.

It is long past midnight. Mr. and Mrs. V—— are at last alone. The fifth anniversary has passed into history. The guests are gone. The great house is empty. The doors are closed. The burglar alarm is set.

On departing, each guest had rapturously pronounced the whole thing a success. So did the host and hostess later on—when they had counted and compared the value of the gifts with the cost of the entertainment.

When they discovered that the presents would figure up twice over the cost of the reception, they retired to their sleeping rooms elate with the consciousness of having discharged many social obligations, and their duty to themselves.

"You're a dandy, Genesy, and no mistake," ejaculated the Mayor, with admiration. "You were dead right, but I had no idea it would pan out like this," and her husband playfully tweaked the golden curl that fell so prettily over the lady's brow.

"Gump!" and the lovely Imogene laughed in the same high soprano that belonged to the "Yards." She tossed her head, and made a little snatch at the Mayor.

Then Mr. Vanderhook himself laughed loudly as he dodged the blow, for he was still holding the golden curl in his hand.

"You're an It," and, playfully recapturing her curl and pinning it to the cushion, Imogene went on with the inventory of the gifts and criticisms of their guests.

It was not so much what they said, but it was the fond and familiar tone of their delicate joshing that indicated a still unbroken confidence between husband and wife.

But strange is the play of fate. Strange indeed, that in the supreme moments of human pride and vanity and self-satisfaction the "mills of the gods" begin to get in their work.

Wise the provision of nature which denies us foreknowledge of tomorrow's disasters, penalties and retributions.

Tonight had been the proudest of Bill Vanderhook's life. He had heard himself and his possessions lauded to the skies. He had heard his wife called the handsomest and best dressed woman in Kankakee. He had heard himself praised for his popularity as Mayor, for his ability as Captain of the Guard, for his cleverness as Chairman of the Committee, his efficiency in the Y. M. C. A., his judgment in the Electric Light Company; and besides all this had heard himself referred to as "our next candidate for Congress." He had heard his house, his wine, his wife, commended. He had heard himself toasted as a self-made gentleman. His cup was full.

And now he is sleeping the sleep of the just. Man-like, he had with one jerk divested himself of his habiliments and plunging into bed was fast asleep in the twinkling of an eye.

Not so the fair Imogene. Woman-fashion, she needs must putter about, making many unnecessary preparations for retirement. She had unbuckled, unhooked, unbuttoned, unpinned, untied and unlaced. She had taken off, shaken out, folded, hung up, taken down, picked up, pulled off and straightened out all the things that a woman gets out of and gets into between an evening function and breakfast next morning.

And finally, standing before her mirror white-robed and picturesque, her yellow locks rolled into little wads, her beauty mask in readiness, her night gloves at hand, she leans toward her own reflection smiling softly and begins rubbing some creamy stuff into her complexion.

She was smiling at and enjoying the reflection of the new diamond ear-rings, Bill's anniversary gift. She was enjoying them as only a woman can, in her mirror, when suddenly—she started. She became aware of a Something Unusual. It was a Presence that—was not Bill. She felt very cold all at once. She forgot whether she was massaging in the circular or horizontal. Then she turned hastily and just in time to witness a very remarkable phenomenon.

Directly before her, clothed like a fashion plate, trim and debonnaire, hat in hand, and bowing and smiling, stood the man she had rejected and forgotten years ago.

Imogene Silesia Sheets-Vanderhook stood face to face with the youthful yoga of Kankakee, the now powerful Gnani of Gingalee.

The lady's sense of the proprieties was shocked. Her blood ran hot with anger. Then she remembered for a certainty the fast bolted doors and the burglar alarm, and then her blood ran cold with fear.

The silver box fell from her hand. She screamed in terror. She sprang forward, wildly calling for Bill, when—the gentlemanly intruder, still smiling, still bowing, withdrew as he came—directly through the panels of the bolted door.

"Oh, Bill! Oh, Bill! Oh, Bill!"

But Bill had heard nothing. He had schooled himself to noises. Sunday morning sermons made him drowsy, and he often slept profoundly when Mrs. V. ragtimed on the piano.

He had not heard that scream of terror. He had not sensed the thing which had fallen upon his hitherto happy home. It required a vigorous shaking to arouse him.

But when once awake and listening to his wife's rehearsal of the incident, Bill Vanderhook was stirred. He was no longer drowsy. He was never so wide awake. The Mayor of Kankakee paled and trembled. Memory was rife. He recalled Alonzo Leffingwell's departure and the cause. He remembered his own part in that fatal introduction. He remembered the mystic's claim upon Mrs. V. And worse than all, he could not forget the conditional curse pronounced upon himself.

Bill Vanderhook realized his responsibility. A cold thrill ran spineward and radiated therefrom. It is said that drowning men pass in review a whole lifetime. So Bill Vanderhook in that one moment saw as in a vision his own domestic past. Though the years had but augmented his own devotion to Imogene Silesia, he had sometimes fancied that she, since

coming into the Presidency of the Advanced-Thought-Extension Club, had at times appeared indifferent and distraught. He now recalled with an inward chill the foreboding that she now rarely came into the Drug Store except for a check, and that she no longer entered joyously into the yearly replenishing of the "Stock."

He remembered further, that on one or two occasions she had spoken as if she missed something in him. She had once or twice yawned when he was repeating some very flattering things said about himself in his several capacities and offices.

A spasm of fear shook the gray matter in the druggist's head, swept through the spine and circled round into the Solar Plexus—where masculine emotions seem to center. He felt very weak all in a minute.

"Imogene, Imogene, where is that Flask? Gimme that—I've got a chill; I might as well try it now."

The flask, an elegant silver and cut glass affair, had been among the evening's gifts. It was presented by the old Base Ball Nine. It was full when it took its place in line with other cards, but it was lighter when congratulations were over.

It was empty when the Mayor of Kankakee dropped it on the floor by his bedside.

Still he was cold, very cold, and still the fatal words "REMEMBER, YOU ASSUME MY RESPONSIBILITY" rang through the chambers of his memory.

"Shut that window, Genesy dear, the night air gives me a chill. Shut it tight, no—leave the switch on—I sleep better in the light, and see here, now, my girl, I don't want to hear any more about that mutton-head Leffingwell. You did not see him or any other Spook, and I don't want you to let your imagination run away with you."

Saying which, that gentleman turned his face bravely to the wall and—pretended to sleep.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE BOOK AND THE BAGDAD.

The fears of the druggist were well founded.

That night marked a new era in the Vanderhook home. After five years of profound silence, the discarded lover took advantage of his mysterious powers and became an unsought, uninvited, but permanent guest in his successful rival's house.

From this date forward no day, nor occasion, was free from his presence or the expectation of it. From this day forward an estrangement developed between the hitherto apparently devoted husband and wife. At first, the still charming Imogene was somewhat awed by the unusual methods of entrance and exit practiced by this foreign-mannered Mystic. It did seem so very novel and so very creepy to see a gentleman sliding in through the dado and melting out through the frieze.

Since witnessing the swift and scientific pig killing at the Yards, she had seen nothing at once so rapid in execution and so shocking to the nerves. The first time she observed the back of a chair through her admirer's waistcoat it gave her a genuine chill. Habit, however, dissipated the sense of awe and the lady became amused, then entertained, and finally deeply interested—as a student of Advanced Thought.

And further, Mrs. V. soon discovered many agreeable qualities in this diaphanous and cultivated Gnani, qualities which by contrast intensified the native inelegance of her husband.

Indeed, so swift was the progress of this marvelous romance that it was but a matter of weeks until the lawful master of the Vanderhook mansion saw himself relegated to a position inferior to that of the hired man. He inwardly chafed and outwardly expressed himself in large, round and unusual words. In vain, however, for notwithstanding both inward rage and outward expletives, the Honorable William K. Vanderhook, of Kankakee, was as nothing in the presence of this witty and agreeable shade who pervaded the atmosphere at all times and in all directions.

And what of the wife—she who had deliberately chosen the Mansard Roof—she who for five years had earned her board and clothes with at least every appearance of genuine satisfaction?

She was now as one bewitched. She was deaf to both Bill's appeals and to his imprecations. She was no longer moved by presents. She was a wholly changed woman.

When Bill would protest more savagely than usual, she would say,—“Now, don't be a grouch. I don't see that he can do any harm to anybody. And besides, he is no expense to you, and he's no trouble to me.”

And thus it was that the once happy home became a battlefield of words—words sharp, pointed, prickly and jagged. Bill's temper, usually so sunny, became like a sheet of sand paper. His appetite fell off and his belt hooked in the fourth eyelet. But Imogene, feeding upon a fresh flirtation, bloomed again to girlish gaiety. In the presence of this suave and insinuating astral interloper she resumed all the fascinations and fripperies of the old days at the Yards.

Imogene Silesia Vanderhook had progressed.

Five years ago she had not even heard of “Occultism.” Now, however, since she herself had become an Advanced Thinker, she recognized the advantages of Mysticism.

The Club of which she was President had given a good deal of time to the Ultimate Destiny of Everything. Only recently she had prepared a “Paper” on Reincarnation which had been very highly spoken of. She could now discuss the nature and uses of the Ego with the same intelligence as did other ladies of the Club. She had spent hours together figuring out how she must have been a Princess—long ago. She was now quite up in karma and entirely absorbed in the “Uplift.”

It also came to be that while other ladies of Kankakee Tiddeldy-Winked and Ping-Ponged or wasted time on Diabolo, or clung to Bridge Tables, the members of the New Thought Club lost themselves in PRANAYAMA and KUMBHOKA. Even when their serious work was over they carried their enthusiasm to Five O'Clock Tea, chattering enthusiastically of PERUSA and KAIVALYA, and uttering longings for the state of NIRVIKALPA.

Mrs. Vanderhook yearned to be the first to waken KUNDELINI.

Bill, however, greatly to his wife's chagrin, had steadily declined every effort toward his own illumination. He even on one occasion used some near swear-words when Imogene begged him to contemplate his Higher Self.

It was indeed Bill's own obtuseness that finally helped to turn the tide against him. Had he been less dense and more amenable to the mystical peregrinations of the "Thoughters," perhaps this tragedy had never been.

For here we must pause and explain how our one-time Typewriter was now become an Advanced Thinker.

The tragic love of Alonzo Leffingwell and his disappearance from Kankakee had made an indelible impression on the woman who rejected him.

From this time forward she became curious about "Occultism."

Her marriage afforded the time and means necessary for the development of her Higher Self—about which so many ladies were now talking.

Presently she was as familiar with "Mysticism" as other members of the New Thought Club.

As time went on she enjoyed an ever extending acquaintance with the numerous and high-priced "Professors" and Specialists in Higher Lines of business.

While Bill was busy in the drug store, or looking after his political fences, the charming Imogene was brushing up on her "Subliminal Self" and learning how to "Wake the Plexus."

Gradually Mrs. Vanderhook saturated her daily life with studies of the occult, adorned herself with mystic symbols, and prepared "papers" for the Club, on unintelligible subjects.

The Occidental woman who "aspires" does nothing by halves. Whatever her goal of attainment, she conforms her activities to that end, dedicates her energies to that ambition, and colors every duty with that Aspiration.

In this wise Imogene converted all of her entertainments and indulgences into expressions of the Universal, and made every day in the week a separate exercise for Self-Development.

To the Western Woman has been left the co-ordination of "Everything—I—WANT—TO—DO" with "Everything—I—ASPIRE—TO—BE."

Mondays Mrs. Vanderhook devoted to Rhythmic Vibrations under the name of Physical Culture. Mornings she spent with an Advanced Athlete, rounding up with a contest at the Ladies' Club Gym, and closing her day with a session at the Chicago Bargain Counters. This day of the week she devoted to swinging and swaying and climbing and bending and twisting and kicking and pushing and pulling, that she might develop the "Body Beautiful" in harmony with her "Higher Self."

She never missed a Monday—in the field—for like most practical occultists of the Occident, she tended to overweight, and for this reason took kindly to the suggestion that reduction of the Surplus meant increase of illumination.

Tuesdays were given over to Beauty Culture; or, as her Specialist said, "To the making of a countenance that shall vibrate with the Beautiful Inner." Throughout this day, therefore, she submitted herself to be steamed and buttered and rubbed and vibrated. She endured to be sponged and benzoined and rouged and stenciled and powdered, that she might "affirm with her face" the "Radiance at the Center."

This was but one of the steps, for she also was shampooed and hot-aired and "treated" and hennatead and brilliantined and ratted and marcelled and puffed as to hair; and her hands, now freed from the cramp of the "keys," were also soaked and creamed and massaged, while the nails were pumiced and oiled and tinted and polished—and still some more, for the ordeal ended in a bout with depilatories and electric needles.

All these things did Imogene, the charming; not that she liked it, nor that she was vain, but only that her Professors insisted that "the Outer must Express the Inner."

"All-Is-Youth" and "There-Are-No Wrinkles" are the watchwords of a lady who has "found Herself."

Wednesdays were set aside for another phase of co-ordination. This day was given over to the Nature-Cure Treatment, in which process she was played upon by vigorous streams of alternating hot and cold water. She was Osteopathed and Exercised. She was warmed in the Sun-Parlor, concentrated under blue glass and aired on the roof garden.

After this she ate a Nature-Cure Luncheon of Almost-Ox-Tail Soup, Near-Meat Salad, and other pretty nearly foods, drinking Roastum Cereal—thus eliminating the poisons of other medical systems, and developing the Cosmic Consciousness.

It was therefore Wednesday evening that the lady drank lemon juice copiously and slept under the Mansard Roof swathed in wet sheets—slept calmly, with an abiding faith in the illuminative power of her Water-Soaked System.

Thursdays, however, were reserved for the higher phases of her intellectual uplift. This day was set apart, as one of the mystics expressed it, for "Interior Decoration."

This day she immured herself in her boudoir, where, with a roll before rising and a kimona all day long, she gave herself entirely to the "Contemplation of Herself." For this day were reserved the most mystical books and profounder studies and solemn exercises.

Several hours of this day she gave to "The Secrets of Mental Supremacy," and in the effort to attain "Consciousness without Thought" she spent many a half hour. Much time she consumed before her mirror in "Meditative Self-Analysis." Again and again would her lunch grow cold while she was occupied in one of these many expensive Occult or Therapeutical Courses, purchased from leading Wise Men in Illinois. One of these covered Practical Occultism, another was Transcendental Mysticism. In still another she worked upon Rhythmic Inspiration, and yet another she was studying the How to Breathe—but none among them was more profoundly veiled in mystic meaning than the Course on "How to Ascertain the Heart Beat Unit." At times she was so engaged in "Concentration" that she would fall asleep. At other times she became enthused in the effort to discover the Inner Meaning of the Meaningless. She became very skillful in the Expansion of Self and Manifested the Joy Philosophy every time she enlarged her Aura.

Fridays were set apart for what the lady termed "Expression"—that is to say, Fridays were selected for Social visits and "At homes," on which day she gave a Manifestation of her several acquirements, making the rounds—that her friends might observe the Outer Beauty from the Radiant Center. This she felt to be the solemn duty of the Elect—that they set up the Joy and Beauty Vibrations in other women.

As a result of her strenuous lessons in Attainment she became the admired and envied of other New Thought Ladies. This could not fail to be, for aside from possessing an Original Design for this ever increasing beauty, Mrs. Vanderhook had both the time and money to search for her Highest Self in the best shops and under the most expensive Seers.

Still further and at odd moments Mrs. Vanderhook increased her wisdom by visiting such Mystics as did business near the Beauty Parlors and the Department Stores. To one she would go for a Horoscope—a reading of the Stars. Another would trace her glowing future in the lines of the palm, and another would instruct her in Psychological Polarity, and another dealt in "Character Sketches by Inspiration."

There were still others who gave short lessons in Vibrations—some who taught "The Inner Meanings of Everything" in small blocks for large checks, and another, the Telo-Psycho-Theraput, who taught his patients to meet him at fixed times—and for fixed rates—out in stellar Space, where "soul to soul" and "freed from the Material," he best could diagnose and "impart the healing word."

Still other half hours—for she doted on symbolism—Mrs. Vanderhook would spend with one who advertised as "The World's Most Famous Seer," from whom she purchased expensive Charms and Sacred Bugs and things.

Again she would slip into the "Temple" of one whose Circulars "guaranteed" information concerning the Origin of Everything and its "Absorption into Nothing."

Inspiring moments she would steal for the study of Vivilore and in these brief snatches she would "Contemplate the Path of Perfection," or, breaking away from the downtown luncheon, she would rush for the Masonic Temple, where an American-East Indian was imparting Fourteen lessons in Philosophy in a few minutes.

With Saturday for Shopping and the Matinee, and Sunday for home and Bill, the mistress of the Mansard Roof led the life of the up-to-date New Woman.

Thus, as time went on, the erstwhile Typewriter became thoroughly "Advanced," and the "Yards" became a far off memory.

And of all this Bill knew nothing.

Like other students of the "Ultimates," Mrs. Vanderhook found that her "Attainments" did not mix well with every-day commonplaces. Her husband's absorption in the drug store, and his fondness for a "Game," seemed quite to unfit him for Higher Thought.

Indeed, at times Imogene seriously doubted Bill's understanding of the Unknowable.

Bill was not watching for the subtle changes taking place in his Imogene. But one phase of it seemed to reach his obtunded consciousness, for this made a direct inroad upon his bank account.

The Special Course in "OPTIMISM AND OPULENCE"—for which "Ten Lessons at reduced prices" had captured Mrs. Vanderhook as a special bargain—produced direct results for which even the generous druggist was not prepared.

From the first "All-is-good" to the middle "Opulence-is-MINE" and to the final lesson, "I-AM-IT," Imogene Vanderhook absorbed and radiated this beautiful Attitude of "I-am-entitled-to-everything-I-can-get."

Matters of expense were airily dismissed. Bill's "We-can't-afford-it" was met by that splendidly wide Optimistic Smile and ignored with that expensively broad sense of Universal Opulence which is so perfectly fascinating in those who do not pay the bills.

The beautiful feeling that "I can tap the Universal for all I need" and that "I have only to affirm OPULENCE and have it," encouraged the Mayor's wife to extend her Charge Accounts with a childlike faith in the "Higher Currents of Wealth."

Then again, Bill had experienced a sense of loneliness at times, when he would come in with a toothache or a touch of gastritis, to be assured that it was all in his Mortal Mind, and that what he supposed was Pain was but an "error" and instead of the earlier coddling to receive but a calm, vague, unsympathetic glance and a frosty little smile of one who "Functioned in the Realities."

But these were all mere incidents, and the still devoted husband went on earning dollars for his Imogene Silesia to "radiate."

Thus it was that the Mayor's wife had been drawn into the rage for "Occultism" and the current "Uplift," without his knowledge or consent, and by "Holding a Thought" or two and by means of fifty-seven Varieties of Unfoldment, had gradually unfitted herself fully to share her husband's ambitions and tastes, which still centered in the Drug Store, the Lighting Plant and Politics.

Thus, unknown to him and scarcely apprehended by herself, the fair Imogene was preparing for a Change. This was why the Appearance of Alonzo, the Wise Man, had not disturbed her more, and why she so quickly accepted him as a matter of course and adjusted herself to Orientalisms.

But now that her perceptions were sharpened, the lady could not but perceive the primordial relation between herself and the once despised Mystic. She also was forced to cognize the enormous advantage of astral attainments over physical conditions and physical powers. She began to draw odious comparisons and invidious distinctions between her lawful master and her extra-lawful mate.

"Fool, and blind,"—she now murmured, from time to time, in just the same tone and with the same wild, back-handed gesture she had seen at the Chicago Opera House.

And the Gnani, day by day, murmured to *his* Higher Self,—*"She is advancing beautifully."* He noted the sweet trustfulness with which she now leaned upon him—that is, philosophically speaking.

"She now Aspires from choice"—he would whisper to himself again and again. "She will lop off several reincarnations, while I—aha! ha ha!"—and his gaseous form would undulate with ethereal ecstasy.

In that astral realm where thoughts are things and business is transacted by mental checks, the inhabitants have distinct advantages over mere human beings who are circumscribed by purveyors of goods and settlements on a cash basis.

The learned Mystic quite obscured the Mayor of Kankakee. He covered him with humiliation at his own fireside. He trifled with the husband's prerogatives. For, did the good-natured Bill, thinking to propitiate her on the old lines, send home to Imogene a Paris model from the swell modiste, then did his skillful rival at once materialize for her another headgear out of nothing, a "dream" so unique, so gorgeous, so becoming and so altogether stunning, that Imogene would shriek with delight, while Bill could only grind his teeth in rage.

Did the husband bring to his wife a bunch of early violets, the vigilant Gnani would immediately materialize great loads of American beauties towering upon extraordinary stems. He would shower her with Marechal Niels, worth a dollar apiece. With but one sweep of his hand a hundred rare blossoms would descend from the ceiling, covering and enveloping the lady in beauty and bloom.

Could any mere, mortal woman withstand such attentions as these?

To please her eye this ardent admirer rendered his appearance as alluring as his manners. Independent of tailors, and with everything at hand, this astral man got himself up regardless of expense, and thought on his costumes at will, to meet the requirements of the fashion plates. He frequently would surprise her with rapid transformations of raiments, posing successively in the distinctive garbs of many nations, races and times.

Perhaps at breakfast it was some Oriental potentate in royal robes who hovered by her side. At lunch a velvet coated artist, at dinner a gorgeous Indian chief, whose picturesque scalp-lock, beads and feathers and whose thrilling war-whoop delighted her refined taste.

And Alonzo would discourse to her oft and long of the beauties and practices of "*Meditation.*"

"But I'll be switched"—she would say at times, "if I can understand your kind of

mysticism.”

Whereupon the seer, smiling indulgently, would with all perspicuity reply,—

“Of course you don’t. I don’t expect you to. That isn’t what we’re here for. Nobody understands mysticism; for don’t you see, if they did, or could, or were likely to, there wouldn’t be any mysticism left, and then—why, *my occupation is gone.*”

“Why, sure; I hadn’t thought of it that way”—his Mate would murmur, and then she would add, “How sweet to be taught by one so wise.”

Moreover, this proficient prestidigitator constituted himself her private secretary and astral errand boy. He not only precipitated her social correspondence upon kid-finished, but he thus prepared all of her “advanced thought” papers, thereby saving her long hours over the Encyclopedia Britannica. Still more, he would read to her all letters and notes received, thus saving her the trouble of breaking the seals; and to amuse and gratify her, would peep—astrally, of course—and report upon the private correspondence and the private affairs of her friends in Kankakee.

And this was but one of the many offices and arts he exploited to charm his Affinity. And so it came to be an every-day occurrence that following any social invitation into the exclusive circles of Kankakee, Imogene would call to her “Llama Lonnie,” or her “Lonnie Bird,” and say, “Please won’t you just run over to Mrs. Dr. this, or Mrs. Judge that, and rubber a while? Then,” she would say,—“I’ll know what to wear and who is invited and how much it’ll cost, etc.”

Mrs. Vanderhook’s sudden acquisition of unlimited finery and jewels created unfavorable comment. The sudden costly equipment of her house astonished everybody. Her lavish display in entertaining was severely criticised by the best people. For in Kankakee, as elsewhere, the best people keep tab on each other’s faults, follies and failures.

The ghost of this gossip drifted back to the drug store; and Bill, who was too proud of himself to betray his wife, chafed in secret.

For, of course, the world knew nothing of the great astro-human drama that was being enacted in the Mayor’s home.

But there came a day when the outraged owner of the Mansard Roof cast aside all semblance of hospitality toward his rival and broke out into a fierce and jealous anger at his ethereal tormentor.

“Begone! you bloodless villain,”—he roared one morning when he had entered his dining room unexpectedly and found his guest strewing lilies of the valley around the plate laid for Imogene’s breakfast. “Begone! I say. Get out of my sight! Leave my house! Get out! I say, now, at once. Fly! melt! disappear!—vamoose!”

But the platter he hurled at his rival’s head went straight through it, crashing against the back of the chair on which sat the seer, smiling and unruffled.

Imogene snickered, and the astral man showered lilacs over her chair, while a handful of thistles were viciously flung from nowhere—into the blazing countenance of the enraged husband.

“Faithless woman! black magician!” shrieked Bill Vanderhook; and gathering up a large, bright carving knife, he sent it spinning into the heart of his rival. That is to say, the point of the knife clove the back of Alonzo Leffingwell’s chair, while the handle protruded from that gentleman’s left vest pocket.

But the gay Gnani of Gingalee still sat in his chair, erect, tranquil, smiling.

Imogene was so tickled she stuffed a napkin into her mouth. She did not intend to betray herself before the dining room girl.

Whereupon, the Mayor of Kankakee flung himself out of his mansion in a frenzy.

He did not come home to lunch.

At dinner he did not exchange a word with his wife. He scowled through five courses. Imogene was radiant. And their guest who seated himself at the table, [merely to keep Imogene company,] amused himself by inciting the knives, forks and spoons to cut unseemly capers on the cloth.

A few days later Bill Vanderhook returned from his office an hour earlier than usual. He came with the deep, deadly purpose of seeing what was to be seen, and he saw it.

Gently turning his latch-key, softly treading the deserted hall, stealthily crossing the costly Wilton of the drawing-room, and still on, still creeping through and around and up and back, on through my lady’s boudoir, still on, to the draped portals of his own private den—the one corner of his castle which thus far had been left to its master. Up to this time he had not dreamed that even an astral man could become wholly lost to the amenities of polite society.

But here and now he came upon the guilty pair, trespassers, invaders of man's most sacred corner, his elysium in hours of peace, his refuge in times of woe,—his "Den."

Outside, and screened by the heavy portieres, Bill Vanderhook sized up the situation. He saw what made his blood first warm and then to simmer and boil. It was not simply that they sat side by side. This he expected. But this—that they had the nerve to sit in his den; and more, to sit upon his couch; and worse still, to sit upon that gay and picturesque Bagdad which, of all his possessions, should have been left to him and him alone.

For this artistic creation had been Imogene's gift to him upon that fatal anniversary wedding. That she had bought this Bagdad on bargain day and that Bill thought she had made it herself did not alter the sentiment. True, she bought the Bagdad to please herself; and true, that he cared no more for the dizzy thing than he would for a door-mat; yet, all the same, she had given it to him, and the giving was what he cared for.

Was it to be expected that this would ever have been made the background of his rival's wiles and fascinations?

"This is too much, too much. Where am I at?"—and Bill Vanderhook clenched his fists and glared ferociously.

But, hist!—what is it these two are doing? What new conspiracy is hatching against the master of the house? Why do they sit so close, with heads bent in such juxtaposition? Why are they so silent, so absorbed?

"Aha! aha! a book!" It is a book they are poring over; a great leather book. A hand of each is under it. The other two are slowly turning leaves. Aha! they search for something. This is no ordinary book. They search,—and for what?

So intent are these two, this gay Gnani and his giddy Mate, that they have neither heard nor sensed the intrusion.

Bill Vanderhook listens.

What he hears chills his blood,—congeals it. He hears the frozen pellets rattle through his veins.

"Oh, my Llama Lonnie, it is not here."

"Yes, my Goo-goo Eyes, it is, it is."

"I don't believe it, my Llama," whispered Imogene.

"But it *must* be, it *must* be there my lady bird; for I happen to know something of the jurisprudence of Illinois."

Bill was struck by the expression of their faces. He had never before seen the astral man evince any sort of anxiety over anything. He never remembered seeing that look in Mrs. Vanderhook's face, except when she wanted something he couldn't buy.

But he could no longer restrain himself. The jealous husband sacrificed his curiosity to gratify his anger. With one bound he cleared the threshold and landed in the middle of the den, full under the light of the Turkish lantern.

"You measly monstrosity!"—he cried in a loud voice. "Get ye back!—get ye back to your musty old lair in Gingalee!"—and lifting his walking stick he brought it down upon the despoiler of his peace. "And this is how you occupy yourself in my absence!"—he bawled. "These are the uses to which you put my house and my furniture, and my books! Is it for this that I run a drug store and—for Mayor the rest of the time? What new infernal scheme are you hatching now?"—and Mr. Vanderhook pounded the air,—instead of Alonzo Leffingwell.

Alonzo sat on the couch. He leaned against Mr. Vanderhook's cushions.

At the first stroke Imogene had leaped from the couch; but the mystic never turned a hair, much less his head. A shower of blows fell harmlessly upon the gilded frame of the costly couch. There were some gilt chips on the carpet, some abrasions on the walking stick, but—the gentleman who had been beaten sat wholly unmoved, upright and smiling.

When it was all over, however, he rose, bowed mockingly and silently floated out of the room alongside of Imogene, who had regained her composure.

The deserted man now seized upon the book which had fallen from the hands of the surprised couple and lay upon the floor. He glanced at the title and then—his eyes were opened a little wider. Now he saw it all. Now he understood the weepiness in their tones as they had turned the pages.

The gay Gnani of Gingalee and Mrs. William K. Vanderhook had been reading the "*Statutes of Illinois.*"

The section on Divorce was blurred by tears.

But alas, as they had discovered, even this liberal and up-to-date commonwealth does not recognize the astral. Their case was therefore without parallel or precedent. These two had

found in their particular case *that there was no cause for divorce.*

When he finally took in the whole force of the incident Bill vibrated with wrath. He dashed the book upon the floor of his den. He tore the brilliant Bagdad from its moorings of silken pillows; and then, as if by a wicked inspiration, he stooped, seized both book and drapery and dashed them into the open, glowing grate.

“So, there!—perish my love of woman!—and—and—anathema upon everything from anywhere that takes advantage of friendship and hospitality, that plays upon a woman’s vanity and with the honor of an honest man!”

And the plotters, but momentarily disturbed, had glided down stairs and sought another retreat. Their sorrow was soon modified, for they remembered presently that they could, in reality, defy all the statutes of all the states. They remembered that they could not be *separated* by law, even though the party of the third part could not be *eliminated* by law.

*It was now Bill Vanderhook’s time to meditate.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MAN IN THE CELLAR.

The genial druggist was a changed man.

Without a smile he now listened when they talked of him for Congress.

He performed the duties of Mayor perfunctorily. The hours at the office palled on him. He collected the fees with a cold, studied indifference. The Chicago papers were unread. Whether it was the "Cubs" or the "Tigers" made no impression on his preoccupation. Life seemed to have lost its zest. Even the drug store was conducted incidentally, as it were.

The attention of William K. Vanderhook was elsewhere. The episode of the preceding chapter had hardened his heart and fixed his purpose.

It was now Bill's turn to MEDITATE.

"There is,"—he would mutter to himself every little while—"there is in nature an antidote for every poison. Though undiscovered, it still exists. There is, there must be, yes, there *shall* be some force in nature to oust any astral popinjay ever projected into space. If there are astral poisons (q.e.d.), then there must be antidotes after their own kind. There is, I know, a way to trap every manner of wild beast, every deadly serpent and hurtful insect; and so there is, if I can get onto it, some principle or process by which I can reduce this astral Fakir back into his original elements. And s'elp me jimmykayjones, this Gay Gnani of Gingalee can and must and shall be swept off the face of the—no, he shall be eliminated from the atmosphere he infests."

It will be remembered that Mr. Vanderhook was not only a skilled pharmacist and practical chemist, but he was likewise an electrician of great ability.

There came a day, a damp, cloudy day, when he left the drug store early and hurriedly. He went home as fast as the auto could carry him. He avoided the parlor. He struck for the cellar. He approached the potato bins, empty now, as if to meet his requirements. Presently he had them torn out, and there was a large space for whatever might be needed.

The next day came masons and carpenters and plumbers. Inside of two weeks the druggist had a laboratory in his cellar of which no man had the key, to which no man had access save himself.

From this day forward every spare moment was spent in the seclusion of this underground apartment. The Mayor let slip his official mantle, and as far as possible leaned upon the city comptroller. He took only thought enough to pocket the fees with a cold, sardonic smile. He gave up his club, declined invitations to progressive euchre; the fall races, and the dog show he passed by. The big ball game he even forgot to attend.

His life centered in the cellar.

This was pre-eminently satisfactory to Mrs. V. and her ethereal shadow. Bill's absence furnished opportunity for unending discussions on the Unity of Vibration, which had polarized them as a unit. Absorbed as they were in the contemplation of themselves, they failed to cognize the exact nature of Mr. Vanderhook's occupation in the cellar.

They only dreamed on, happy in the present, careless of the past and hilarious in the hope of soon realizing a still closer relation—after they had satisfied the requirements of the law as made and provided in the Statutes of Illinois.

So self-absorbed were they that they gave no attention to the comings and goings of the master of the house. The man in the cellar was practically forgotten. Now and then, however, they would be momentarily diverted by subterranean reports and faint odors of gases.

"Well, he's got to get somewhere to make himself heard," laughed the "Lonnie Llama" one evening when Imogene shrieked at an unusually loud report. The walls shook with the force of it, while the cruel couple shook with laughter.

"He don't complain of being lonesome any more does he?" added the gentleman.

"Oh, no," giggled Imogene. "He says he is wrapped up in Science now."

"And so are we, my ownest; are not we also wrapped up in Science—the Higher Science?"—and the Gay Gnani encircled his Affinity with his very diaphanous arms.

The Lady laughed gaily, and then disengaging herself she daintily lifted her silken dinner gown and, recalling the last matinee in Chicago, she trippingly danced, singing as only Imogene could sing:

"O, O, my Hindoo Honey, Honey I love you."

Such had come to be the atmosphere of the drawing room.

But what of him in the cellar? What of the husband discarded, and the friend betrayed?

He was busy—tremendously BUSY. He did not even close Saturdays at one o'clock. He was busy every daylight hour he could steal. He was busy far into the hours when just men sleep, and bad ones go a burgling.

Over and again he might have been heard to say in terribly tense tones,—“He’s no illusion. He’s no spook. He’s a fact,—a cold, scientific fact. He lives by natural law as much as I do. Therefore he’s controlled by natural laws. He’s therefore susceptible to chemical changes by the proper application of those laws. If so, he’s subject to these changes whenever and wherever scientific processes are brought to bear against him. Since an astral man is a—Something,—why, something can get at him. Something, somewhere in nature’s laboratory, must have the potency to seize him, to paralyze him.”

And Bill would continue his monologue,—“Though neither brickbat nor billiard cue is efficacious in the matter of astral substance, it doesn’t follow that the proper projectile may not be found and successfully administered. Now,” he would reason, “an astral body, like a physical one, must have certain natural, specific modes of growth, development, rejuvenation, resistance, persistence, disintegration, and dissolution; and I,—ha, ha,—I shall find this secret. Nature must and shall disclose its secret of the reduction of the astral to its original essence.”

Then the Honorable William K. would laugh a high, weird laugh that echoed in hollow cadences among the jars and bottles of his laboratory.

Then, perchance, for the moment elate, he would whistle a few bars of “I’m a lookin’ for dat niggah an’ he mus’ be foun’.”

And the awful merriment of the Mayor was more suggestive than his unpleasant language.

Over the great iatro-chemist, Paracelsus, the old German chemists, and over the discoveries and formulas of Basil Valentine, the druggist of Kankakee continually pored. Deep into the mysteries of chemical philosophy he delved. Not to his wife, but to Tyndall, Maxwell and Daniel he turned for society; not, however, until he had absorbed the “Genesis of the Elements,” by Crooks, did he show the excitement and enthusiasm of the man who gets what he goes after.

There came a day, or rather an evening, when the discarded husband rose up and called himself a “Cracker-Jack.” He shook himself with the abandon of one who finds himself master of a situation.

For days after this Bill Vanderhook was singularly jocular. He was polite to Imogene. He even indulged himself in a bit of joshing with the Mystic.

. . . . .

“Good-bye, Mrs. V. S’long, Leff,”—said the Mayor one morning as he appeared equipped for traveling.

“Going east for stock,”—he said briefly, when languidly interrogated by Imogene as to the whys and whences of this sudden trip. “You and Leff can run things a few days without me,”—he said satirically.

“I should remark,”—responded Imogene in her own pretty way.

There was a peculiar grin on Mr. Vanderhook’s face as he put on his hat. He commended his wife to the care of the Mystic with these portentous words,—“Enjoy yourself while you can, for none of us knows what may happen next.”

In a fortnight he had returned, was again in the cellar busier than ever. Presently there came by express a fresh consignment for the laboratory. A heavily wrapped and curiously crated package, not larger than a small tub, which required several men to convey it from the wagon to the underground workshop.

And the guilty pair asked no questions. Chemical experiments, as such, had no interest for them.

“Bet you it’s a music box,”—said Imogene, who had noted its arrival from the parlor window.

“Or a picture machine,”—suggested Lonnie, without taking the trouble to remove his eyes from the face of the “lady-bird.” “And do you know,” he continued listlessly, “that these ordinary humans are doing some very clever work nowadays?”

Mr. Vanderhook vouchsafed no explanation. Next day an extra lock was put on his

laboratory door.

Days rolled on, making up the weeks. The weeks expanded into months. The months rounded up a year, and yet there was no change in the Vanderhook home. No change, merely an accentuation of the old condition. No change, merely a closer absorption of the lady and her Llama. Only an increased activity on the part of the man in the cellar.

Mrs. and Mr. V. seldom met, except at meals. From these their guest usually absented himself. Having neither the need nor the desire for food, it wearied him to observe the processes involved. To see his idol feeding grated upon his super-refined senses. This process of reinforcing the fires of physical life is not attractive to astral vision. Even a lady looks rather like an animated hopper than an Intelligent Being.

Between meals, however, the Llama and the Lady-Bird lost no time.

Nor Bill.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DRAWING A CORK.

"My ownest, I must to Hindustan."

This announcement came unexpectedly, hurriedly, one evening just before tea. The Mystic was evidently excited. Mrs. Vanderhook was startled. She said,—“Great Scott”—in tones of alarmed surprise.

“Be not alarmed, sweetest of mortals. It is nothing very dangerous. Nothing, only a very disagreeable trip. My body has been left unguarded. There are some very large and unpleasant tigers in the vicinity, and should they strike the scent, you know,—I must return and get into my body and have some one kill the beasts. Then I will take some material refreshment, relocate my body more securely and back again to my Goo-Goo Eyes.”

“But why should you bother about that old body?” pouted the lady. “Ain’t you all right as you are?”

The mystic laughed. It was a soundless convulsion of mirth.

“Why, my kitten, don’t you see that even though we love, we are not upon the same—same—plane? That is to say, you’re in the physical body, and I’m out of mine.”

“Well, but what difference?”—she began.

“All the difference possible, in this particular world, my queen. Now don’t you see my little scheme? When you succeed in this divorce business I mean to resume my physical body, feed it up, cut its hair, and get it some good clothes, and then—why, then,—I intend to bring it back here in the regular way,—and then—we’ll be regularly married.”

It was now the lady who laughed.

“Well, if you ain’t too cute for anything.”

They had previously consulted a Chicago lawyer who assured them, statutes to the contrary, he not only would work the decree, but would secure alimony in addition. He said he would base the suit upon cruelty and desertion and abandonment without “visible or tangible cause.”

This delighted the Gnani, for though himself self-supporting, the lady would require physical sustenance for some time.

“And you’ll hurry back, Lonnie Llama?” pleaded Imogene.

“But twenty-four hours at most, Sweet Thing, only tonight and tomorrow, and tomorrow I’ll telep every sixteen minutes from sunrise to sunset.”

“Well, if you must—you must,”—sighed Imogene. “I wish you didn’t have to stay but a couple of minutes.”

“Well, it’s good-bye sweetest,—until—until—” and the mystic sighed dismally; “until sunset tomorrow.”

“No, no, I can’t have it so. Linger—longer—Lonnie Llama. I’m all broke up,” and Imogene wept.

“I say, what’s the rush?”

The lovers, startled, sprang to the extreme ends of the divan. It was the unhappy Bill Vanderhook who stood before them.

Unhappy? No. Surely this was not the face of an unhappy man, nor of a vengeful one. He did not even appear to be out of humor. His face was illumined with a benevolent smile. His hat was shoved well back on his head and his hands were in his pockets, after the manner of extreme joviality.

He had entered unobserved and now stood surveying them with the most genial and conciliatory smile.

“What’s this about leaving us?” he demanded of his old chum in the old friendly tone.

Unprepared for such treatment, the seer sheepishly explained the unpleasant predicament of his physical envelope in the caves of Gingalee.

“Well, do you mean to stay there then?”—anxiously, almost hopefully, from Bill.

“I should say not. I’ll be back by tea time tomorrow sure. You know, Mrs. Vanderhook expects me to look after the decorations of her April-Fool tea party. That’s tomorrow, you know, so—”

Bill’s brows contracted wickedly for an instant. Then he laughed.

"Then why in Sam Hill are you going at all?" demanded Bill; which entailed another recital of the danger.

"But what if the beasts do eat up your old hide! It won't hurt 'em even if it is a tough proposition. And you don't need your cuticle and cartilage any more, as I can see—and besides, I want you home today specially. I want you home tonight anyway, for, Leff and Genesy, too"—and Bill's voice dropped,—“suppose we let bygones be bygones. I've been a Tom-Fool to monkey with the irrevocable. I concede the superiority of the astral. I acknowledge your primordial claim upon each other. But I'm tired of these strained relations in the house. Let's have peace and a good time. And now that I'm finding consolation in Science, why not let's call off the fight? Let's have a cessation of hostilities and a renewal of confidences.”

"With all my heart," said Alonzo Leffingwell, which appeared more cordial than the fact really warranted. For in his state of being, "heart" was a very empty space. "I'm reconciled," he continued languidly.

"Me, too," sighed Imogene, suspiciously and reluctantly.

"Shake," said Bill in a loud, glad voice, laying one hand over his wife's and shaking the other cordially through the wrist of the astral gentleman.

"I say, let's celebrate. I'm dead tired of this lonesomeness down in the coal bins—and—now, the fact is, Genesy"—and Bill went on gaily,—“I've anticipated our reconciliation and I want you both to come down to my workshop. I've got a nice little layout for you in the laboratory. Of course, I know Leff isn't much on vittles—but I do know Genesy likes the pop of a cork. Don't you, old girl?”

"You better believe," assented Imogene. "And did you really get some Extra Dry?—I—"

"Well, you just come and see what I've got for you. As the French say, this is an ock-kazh-un. We'll just pop a few corks. Let's agree to swallow the past in a couple of pints of Mumm's best, and—come along or the ice will melt." And he half pulled and half pushed Mrs. Vanderhook toward the inside cellar-way.

The Mystic followed slowly, haltingly, and then hurried on to Imogene's side.

"I have a presentiment"—he murmured.

"Of what, Lonnie Llama?" tenderly.

"Alas, I know not what; but I am seldom left on these impressions. Let's not go into the cellar."

"Why, what can *he* do to an *astral* man? He couldn't hurt you if he tried."

In her eagerness Imogene spoke loud enough for her husband to hear.

Bill Vanderhook appeared to be smoking a cigar. In reality he was gnashing his teeth. Alonzo said no more, but laid his hand apprehensively over the region formerly occupied by a heart.

They were now in the cellar, and in another moment the trio had passed through the laundry—past the fruit closets and the coal bins, and were now ushered into the partitioned corner which had been converted into a library and laboratory. They entered the library, which was comfortably furnished, brilliantly lighted, well ventilated and altogether a Cosy Corner for—a studious man.

Book-shelves encircled the walls, and many and musty were the ancient volumes which jostled the modern authorities thereon. The further room, connecting the laboratory, was now in total darkness. But through the black open doorway came a soft musical burr-r-r-r-ing, whirr-r-r-r-r-ing. Now and then little sparkles of light crossed the black aperture.

Bill beamed upon his guests. He tilted his hat back a bit further, then he took off his coat, his cuffs. He began to look like Business.

Out of the big, wooden pail he lifted a long, slim, dark bottle. From his pocket he drew forth a corkscrew. The bottle he set on the table. The corkscrew he laid beside the bottle. Then he ranged three-wide-mouthed, slim-necked glasses side by side.

"And here's to us—later,"—he lightly remarked.

But to such as Alonzo Leffingwell "Extra Dry" does not appeal. The Seer viewed the spread with something like scorn. Then he turned his attention to the connecting door. He riveted his gaze upon the open doorway of the darkened inner chamber.

"I feel strangely drawn to that room," he murmured to Imogene.

"Well, I don't," she answered with emphasis. "Let's go straight back—after the Mumm."

"Well, I should say—*NIT*"—and Bill playfully pushed her toward the room where the little sparkles flew across the blackness. "Come along Leff, we're now ready to draw the first cork." And reaching up, Bill Vanderhook pressed a button in the door-jamb.

On the instant, in a flash, quicker than thought, without one word of apology or glance of farewell, the Illuminat of Illinois shot from the side of his Soul Mate, straight into that yawning doorway and was swallowed up in a sudden, blinding glare of light.

## CHAPTER X.

### A PRIVATE EXHIBIT.

"Oh, Bill! Bill! Bill! What have you done?"—and a woman's wild scream rent the atmosphere.

And no wonder our heroine, standing there in the doorway, was upset. No wonder she clutched at her pompadour in frenzy. No wonder she shook like several leaves. The suddenness of her admirer's departure was so very—in fact—sudden.

After she had shrieked she leaned against the door-jamb, gazing incoherently at that which she saw.

It was now Bill's turn to laugh, and this he did, long, loud and uproariously. Then he shouted in a triumphant crescendo,—“Hi, there, my lady—catch onto the display. And well you may squeal at the sight of your old familiar pig-wheel. Dollars to doughnuts you never shackled as slim a one as this at the yard. Say, watch him. He's in the swim sure, ain't he? See him swing—round toward the sticker. That's me. D'ye hear, madam? I'm the sticker in this yard. And he's coming to the knife in fine style. Now watch me close, for he's going to land against the point this time, and then—Aha! ha! ha!—and then—the last hot water plunge, and —”

“Monster! monster!” sobbed the lady.

Bill laughed again.

“Oh, my Lonnie, my Llama!” wailed Mrs. V.

And again Bill Vanderhook laughed.

“Aha!—your Astral Mate got a move on him that time. Go ask him if he has any fresh data on affinities. Ask him how he likes this newest *attraction*.”

“Brute!”—and, dashing past her husband, the distracted lady rushed to the rescue of her primordial mate. She flung herself wildly into the workshop from which she had been so long excluded.

The picture presented to her gaze as she crossed the threshold struck terror to her soul. All at once Mrs. Vanderhook felt weak as boiled water. She clasped her hands in frantic protest.

“Get onto his curves” bawled Bill. “What d'ye think of your Lonnie Bird now? He's off his perch, ain't he? Never miss a Mystic when he moults. And here's your Lonnie Lammie—at shearing time. Here's your little piggy-wiggy on a hook. Here's your-r-r-r”—and the angry husband wound himself up in a knot of words and spluttered off into monosyllabic ravings.

Angry and frightened and bewildered by the very unusual scene, Mrs. Vanderhook staggered, moaned a couple of times, and crumpled up over against a big empty packing case.

It would have been a braver woman who could look unmoved upon the revenge of the Kankakee druggist.

In the center of a long, narrow room strewn with jugs, jars, bottles and chemical apparatus, whirled a small and curious cylinder, a little black machine that gave off a trail of glittering sparks upon the brilliant atmosphere, a tiny monster that sang and purred and whizzed in its dizzy revolutions.

It was not, however, this curious machine that attracted the attention of Mrs. Vanderhook. It was neither the brightness, nor energy, nor speed, nor the whizziness of the things in the room that spellbound her. It was the novel attachment of that satanic cylinder which riveted her gaze and temporarily paralyzed her vocal organs.

The ethereal despoiler of the Vanderhook home had, indeed, gotten a move on himself. He was “in the air,” and no mistake.

At a distance of perhaps ten feet from the revolving cylinder swung the gay Gnani of Gingalee. He was suspended in the air without visible sign of support, and was following the rotary motion of the machine; which meant that he was appearing and disappearing through the floor and ceiling of the room with a rate of motion akin to that Bill Vanderhook was giving the machine. Even the woman, though unfamiliar with theories of electro-dynamics, realized at once that this whirling cylinder possessed electro-magnetic attraction for astral substance.

All at once she realized that the Mystic had been captured by the Mayor; that the wise man was in the toils of the druggist.

Alas, and alas, the mystical lover was in the clutches of the scientific husband.

"You nasty thing!" sobbed Mrs. Vanderhook wildly. And as the awfulness of the situation grew upon her, love lent her courage. She darted past her husband's outstretched hand and flung herself forward to the rescue of her Mate.

Mr. Vanderhook, however, was a true scientist. He was given to detail. He had provided for just that emergency. A fine wire, strung several feet from the floor immediately over a circular copper track which was laid in the floor and around the cylinder, was to serve a very practical purpose. The impulsive creature who would have plucked her "Lonnie Bird" from his unpleasant predicament, was instead, flung violently backward into her husband's arms.

"Soul communion temporarily suspended, you will observe," grinned the master of ceremonies as he seated his wife upon the packing case. "His hunkey highness from Hindustan is now taking a whirl at physical science. He'll be able now to prove, as I have said, that all matter isn't illusion. Ah, there, Lonnie Lammie, how's this from an astral point of view?"

"Extremely unpleasant," admitted that gentleman, trying to smile. "But I say, Bill, explain this cruel joke. I don't understand why you should do this. I'm awfully anxious to know how you—that is—one not illuminated could—thus—thus—"

"Get the drop on you?" queried Bill pleasantly. "Glad you asked. Dee-lighted to explain. You'll appreciate the importance of the discovery. It's a great addition to scientific knowledge"—and the experimenter warmed to scientific enthusiasm, lessened the current which was driving its prisoner relentlessly through floor and ceiling.

"I shall undoubtedly appreciate this particular process"—and Mr. Leffingwell appeared to be catching his breath, as he felt himself released from the terrific force generated from somewhere. "But pray go on. I'm deeply interested."

"Very good," responded Bill, holding his rival suspended that he might converse with him. "You are, of course, aware that, as an astral being, you've had enormous advantages over the man encased in the physical."

"True, and yet, you—"

"Pardon me," interrupted the druggist dryly when the Mystic would have chipped in. "This advantage you've used remorselessly, to break up my home. You broke the spirit, if not the letter, of occult law. You know you did. You ignored our agreement made before you left Kankakee. You knew and you acknowledged my claim upon Mrs. V., for at least this present dispensation. I told you then that I was perfectly willing to take a back seat in a century or so. Apparently this didn't satisfy you. You took advantage of your superior learning to sneak into my house like a thief. Oh, yes, of course, you came astrally. Of course you didn't use skeleton keys. But,—you got there just the same, and you got in your work."

"But,—but,—" pleaded the man from Gingalee—"I never agreed not to seek her enlightenment, at such times and places as might be convenient. I merely returned here to instruct her in the Fifty-Seven-Fold-Path, and to discourse to her upon those several and sundry sheaths which do clothe her higher principles. And—"

"Oh, Bosh!" growled Bill. "All that sounds very fine, in your measly old Sanscrit; but you stole her just the same, and that's plain United States. And now, Mr. Mystic,"—and the angry husband shut his teeth with a savage click—"you must know that outraged confidence will seek revenge. That's your karma, ain't it, Mr. Alonzo Leffingwell, Gnani of Gingalee, and Grand High Muckymuck of the Order of Nowhere? I've got you, and I've got you in your own trap. You're hoist by your own petard. You went in for Science, and so did I. Science is going to settle this dispute, and you're about to learn that nature has *several* laws. Oh, pusillanimous pirate of the air, you are about to realize that invention is the hand-maid of justice, and that science is—the—mother-in-law—of—doom."

"How,—what,—Bill,—I do not comprehend," murmured Mr. Leffingwell perplexedly, as he disappeared slowly through the ceiling in response to the faint current with which Bill was now holding him.

"No?"—queried Bill sarcastically as the gentleman reappeared. "Then there are, after all, some few things you don't comprehend. Well, then—" and the druggist drew himself up with calm ferocity—"I will enlighten you. Hear then my pronunciamiento. You've been weighed in the balance and found wanting—everything that didn't rightfully belong to you; and because of that I, your self-appointed judge and executioner, have resolved—upon—your—complete—annihilation."

"A-n-n-i-h-i-l-a-t-i-o-n-!"

"A-n-n-i-h-i-l-a-t-i-o-n-!"

The mournful tenor of the Mystic mingled with the high C of his primordial Mate.

"Yes, just that"—burst forth the druggist savagely. "When I discovered that you were not

only dead to the proprieties and deaf to appeals, but that you were impervious to boot-jacks and bullets, I set to thinking as to the best manner of dealing with the situation. When I saw you chipper as a lark when impaled on a carving knife, I realized the insufficiency of brute force. It was then that I turned to science and planned for this my long sought and well earned R-E-V-E-N-G-E."

This last word came out in a long hissing whisper, the which is so effective upon the stage.

The Seer was now staring at the druggist in open faced dismay. Imogene was whimpering softly.

"To this end," continued Mr. Vanderhook, "I practically gave up my business. I constructed this laboratory. I gave up Mrs. V.'s society. I permitted *you* to entertain her while I buried myself to work out *my revenge*. During the past five months I've acquainted myself with all the great authorities on chemistry, electricity, alchemy, astrology, theosophy, and occultism generally. I've studied Darwin and Haeckel and Huxley and Tyndall. I've familiarized myself with all of the facts of all of the sciences. I've saturated myself with the theories of all the philosophers, prophets and cranks. I've studied the body from monkey to man. I've chased the elusive soul down through the unintelligible symbolism of Buddha, on down to the ultimate atom of Huxley—and I've made a Great Discovery. Your school of mysticism's a fake. I've smashed your occultism to smithereens, and I can bear witness to the wisdom of that eminent materialist who said,—'I have tried the soul in the crucible and found it Protoplasm.'"

"You—you—deny the soul?" broke out the Mystic in astonishment.

"Quite the contrary," said Mr. Vanderhook. "I'm convinced that there is a soul, or more scientifically speaking, an astral man. But this astral man is nothing but a duplicate of the physical man, consisting of highly attenuated substance. This soul man, or astral man, under certain conditions, can separate himself from the coarser body and cut up just such didos as you have. But"—and Bill's voice assumed the patronizing intonation of the pedagogue—"now the fact is, confidentially, this astral man is nothing but a mere emanation of the physical, and is governed—that is, ultimately—by the same physical laws. Now, for instance, you talk of a soul, and a spirit, because you don't know any better. In reality these phenomena of the astral plane are only material phenomena of a higher grade or quality than we can ordinarily get at through our physical senses. But, and again,"—and Bill Vanderhook sniffed disdainfully—"you're no more immortal (because you can't be seen by everybody) than a wiggle-tail is. Now we can't see nor feel the millions of baby tadpoles nor wigglers in water. But that ain't saying they're spirits, nor that they have immortal souls. Now, Mr. Mystic, a soul or an astral man is just as natural as flesh and bone. He is in no sense independent of the finer physical forces, and he is subject to natural law just as much as if he were going around wearing his body."

"You have certainly studied to some purpose," admitted Mr. Leffingwell.

"More than this," continued the materialist enthusiastically, "I have studied and completely mastered this principle of soul mating."

The Mystic started—but he did not get very far.

Mrs. Vanderhook looked up eagerly, hopefully.

"Yes, I admit," continued Bill genially, "that I find your old Oriental fakirs were mainly right. I, however, have been able to prove that your soul affinity is just plain chemical affinity—just plain chemical affinity without any frills. It's an affinity that depends upon whether you're made up of the kind of chemical substances that naturally combine. F'r instance,—I can take any two people and feed 'em both on pie or pig or potatoes, and produce the same kind of affinity you talk about."

Alonzo Leffingwell shuddered. Mrs. V. looked at him questioningly. Bill's unexpected wisdom was making an impression upon his wife.

"Fact," continued Bill, delighted with the impression he was making—"now I don't deny"—turning to Alonzo exclusively—"that by a proper course of diet and an ultimate arrangement of particles, my wife might coördinate with you; but I do say, and you hear me, that she has been, and is, and is likely to remain, much nearer to me than to you. Chemically speaking she has not attained to you. She quite lacks the refinement, attenuation and imponderability you have achieved. In short, she is not yet quite as swift as you are, and therefore much better suited to my condition than to yours."

Continued Bill—"When once I had established the 'Immortal Soul' of the occultist and the 'Atomic Energy' of Science as identical, I had a reasonable basis, a sound hypothesis upon which to proceed. You, Mr. Gnani, representing this 'Soul' became the material for a rare experiment. And you are now, at this hour, as it were, my working capital."

"And now, having satisfied yourself that certain scientific methods may be applied to

certain astral phenomena, what more would you have?"—ventured Mr. Leffingwell nervously. "Now that you have made your point, I implore you, Bill, to let me out of this."

The Honorable William K. Vanderhook (with his hand still on the lever) cocked his head to one side. He gave the Mystic one long look out of one eye. The other one he closed.

"As you must know," he continued serenely, "primordial matter, which is astral matter, results from a condensation of ether substance into helium, or biogen. It is of this attenuated, gaseous matter that you are composed. This being true, it is easily possible to convert or reduce you back into a semi-material state of hydrogen. Catch on?"

"I do," admitted the Seer sorrowfully as he passed slowly downward still swaying along the circle of attraction. "But now"—he implored—"as you have no further use for me, can't we take a spell off for further discussion? I'm getting pretty tired, Bill."

"I never did see such a kicker," said Bill. "When I've been so considerate, too. Why, you see, Leff, that the chrysalis of attraction in which you move is so cunningly tempered as to swing you in a perfect circle about twenty feet in diameter. So, you see, you are in no sense exposed, as it were, publicly. You are so adjusted as not to be dragged through the roof, over the damp grass, through the sewer pipes nor yet across the clothes-line in the back yard. In thus making you a strictly Private Exhibit I've paid the deference due to your profession which you yourself have so disgraced. I wonder, now, Leff, if you haven't guessed what I've been up to all this time?"

Alonzo shook his head dejectedly.

"No?"—interrogatively. "Well, then," said Bill—"I've just reached the delicate point of practically solving the problem of astral substance; or, of reducing astral substance to visible, tangible, physical substance. And the proof which is necessary depends now only upon the nicety of modern mechanical construction. In short, I believe that I am about to demonstrate that in electro-dynamics lurks the secret of the 'Soul.'"

"But, Bill, I say,—Bill, old fellow. Surely you are not going to experiment on ME? Surely you are going to release me from this uncomfortable situation?"

"Why, my dear boy," said Bill Vanderhook good humoredly, "would you balk such an experiment on the very threshold of success? Permit me to assure you that the performance is only half over and the best of the features are yet to come."

## CHAPTER XI.

### UP AGAINST IT.

"But, Bill, Bill, old chum,"—and the Mystic shook like a mold of jelly. "I *must* away. My body, don't you know? My body that I am going to need very shortly—is in danger. Even at this great distance I sense the approach of those wild beasts. Pray let me return for a brief time to my studies of the abstract. I'm already away behind in Yog. Release me old boy, release me, I must hence!"

"I say, Leff, if I'd let up on you would you swear by the One-Horned-Hair-of-the-Sacred-Rabbit never to show yourself again in Kankakee?"

"But, the law—the law"—groaned the erring lover, and he gazed upon his Lady-Bird in an unutterable fashion. "How—are—we—to—get—around—Chemistry? I—we—are not to blame —"

"Enough," snorted Bill Vanderhook. "No more fooling," and it was now the baseball captain to the front.

"But my body," pleaded Lonnie. "It will be eaten. Do you hear me? It will be eaten, chewed up, and destroyed."

"Well," said Bill impatiently, "what if it is? What then?"

"What then?" cried the Seer excitedly. "Why, don't you see that I'll be regularly dead? Just dead, and my body no good to me? Why, don't you know that I'll be nothing then but a mere angel? Don't you know that I'll be altogether confined to another world? I'll be a Mystic no longer? Nor be able thus to materialize, and to travel at will—to—"

"Aha! That hadn't occurred to me," chuckled Bill. "I see. I see. And in that case you can't crawl back into your terrestrial jacket and come back to marry Mrs. V. when she succeeds in getting that divorce? Aha! good! I see, and wouldn't that be one on you? But"—and the injured husband once more became the scientist. "I say, Leff,—suppose you telep to some old Yogy to go and get that body of yours and ship it to me. I give you my word that you'll not need it again; and I'd like it more'n anything for chemical analysis. Have it sent C. O. D. of course."

"Monster!" again sobbed Imogene.

The Mystic was speechless with horror.

"How selfish you people are. Can't you see of what enormous scientific value that cadaver would be? You'd even block this experiment right now when it's on the verge of success. You have no sort of gratitude nor interest in the welfare of posterity. I arranged this whole exhibit quietly. And even yet I am willing to conceal your depravity, but the advancement of science ought to mean something to you, and you should be glad to make a few small sacrifices yourself. Think of the time and money I've squandered in experimenting while you were sitting on my Bagdad entertaining yourself with my wife. In order that this demonstration might do credit to us all I went down east, down to Jersey to consult Edison personally, and at his suggestion I bought this plant, which was constructed under his orders.

"And I tell you," continued Bill, "that there's a wizard what is a wizard. He can give you cards and spades any time in the moon. Just let me call your attention to the machine itself. In other words, get onto it."

"And that I seem unwittingly to have done," said Mr. Leffingwell mournfully.

"And it's a daisy dynamo, I tell you. It produces, for its size, electricity at a higher pressure than any other machine in the world. Why, the output of this little power is sufficient to keep five thousand incandescent lamps burning at the same time. It can knock an ordinary man silly in the fraction of a second. And with its two thousand volts I can lay you out in a minute"—said Bill, nodding enthusiastically toward the cylinder. "Understand, this is an improved machine which in detail, of course, you couldn't understand. The increase of power here isn't through the size of the dynamo, but by a new armature and the field-magnets. This produces in the current what we call the Three-Phase-Alternating-System which you will observe to be a corker. Edison gave me points and I tell you I've got a machine to fit—to fit—the crime. See?"

Mr. Leffingwell "saw," but he made no attempt to "pass." He only bowed his head sorrowfully.

"But look here, good people; we're wasting a lot of time," said Bill presently. "And I think it is about time this mill was pulled off"—and he now bent eagerly forward, his hand upon the

lever and his eyes riveted upon the "Exhibit," reminding Alonzo of the position he used to assume when set to bat a ball.

"Notice, please," said Bill, "that I am able at will to increase or decrease this current which prevents your escape from the sphere of attraction. You will see that I am thus able nicely to regulate your speed from the slow and comfortable to the dizzy and dangerous."

"Dangerous? Dangerous, did you say? I hardly understand you"—faltered the Mystic, paling as he spoke.

"Let me illustrate,"—and the hand of the avenger sought the lever.

The little monster whirled fiercely, increasing with each revolution both the speed and the terror of its victim. Faster and faster whirled the cylinder. Faster and faster flew the lately fascinating Seer.

"Hold,—hold,—I—I—I—must ask—one—question," shrilled brokenly upon the sparkling air.

"Certainly," responded Bill, lessening the current as he spoke.

"I say, Bill—upon what prin—principle do—you—op—operate?" gasped the suddenly released gentleman. "I must know if it agrees with—with our sch—ool."

The man at the machine bowed graciously, and jauntily saluted his old chum. Bill was flattered. To be thus interrogated by one whose profession was wisdom, was a distinct compliment. He straightened himself and lifted his chin.

"Helium,"—he said, in a loud, cheerful voice,—"that of which you are composed, I discover to be nothing more than a dephlogisticated condition of matter. Now this highly attenuated substance is (as you may, but probably do not know) highly susceptible to electrical forces. I further discover that by virtue of electro-dynamics we are able to convert this highly refined substance into hydrogen, a highly volatile metal. This, under increased pressure, is finally raised to the point of ignition. D'ye hear, my gay Gnani? For here's where I get in my fine work. Let me repeat,—this highly volatile hydrogen is, or will presently be—raised to the point of ignition—Phlogiston is Restored and—*pish—you go.*"

"Horrible! horrible! but true, alas, too true,"—and the Mystic and his Mate bowed their heads in unison.

"And, hear me still further, Mr. Psycho-Bunko-Hiero-Phanto," continued Mr. Vanderhook remorselessly. "I'd have you know that the curriculum of your musty old schools in Hindustan never counted on a tussle with physical science. They go no further than the application of certain metaphysical forces to nonresistant physical substance, or noncompos gray matter of certain fool people I know. They never equip their alleged pupils to meet nor to resist an active and rational campaign on the lower planes. With all your tricks you Oriental fakirs aren't in it with an Edison plant. You're not in it with the twentieth century scientist, when he has a real ax to grind,"—and by way of illustration Bill increased the current and ground his teeth.

Moved by his enemy's science, rather than by his satire, Alonzo Leffingwell passed on his way—lamenting.

But he returned again, and hung suspended at his tormentor's pleasure.

The man of science continued: "You forget, my Alonzo the brave, that physical science hasn't been asleep the past five years. No, my boy, modern science has got a cinch on you—and the modern scientist has wiped out your musty old magic. And the rude every-day porter-house-Budweiser scientist has likewise been studying nature's finer forces. Now we don't levitate, to speak of, but we're making pretty good time, just the same. Your scientific brethren out there in Gingalee will discover in a couple of centuries that we've got the drop on them—that the occult isn't occult, a little bit, and that the Plain Citizen of this great, western republic is after them."

To this the miserable Mystic made no reply. He saw that he was discovered and lost at one and the same time. Nothing but the scarcity of water in his organism restrained the now hopeless gentleman from tears.

He made one more attempt, one more appeal.

"Is there nothing, Oh, William K. Vanderhook,—is there nothing in our past friendship,—nothing of the past,—in memory that will melt or soften you?"

"Anything in *memory* to *soften* me? Well,—I—should—say—NIT. Every revolution of the second-hand on the dial plate of my memory drives another spike into the lid of your—figuratively speaking—coffin."

"There was a time when I was soft. Oh, yes, I was *soft*! Five years ago I was softer than putty, softer than a bread-and-milk poultice or a batch of dough. But my friend, I've been

baked since. Hard baked. It took a lot of kneading and a mighty hot oven, but I got myself baked, hard-brown, and I've got a cast-iron crust on me,—and don't you forget it."

"Yes, I admit I *was* soft, but that was long ago, before you made a profession of bamboozling silly women."

"Memory—well I should say. D'ye think I've forgotten that inspired old Manhattan Mystic? Not much. I've been studying that same old muddle myself. Yes, sir, and I've got the volume right over there in my scientific library, in the section marked CRANKS,"—and Bill Vanderhook jerked his thumb disdainfully in the direction of the library.

"And hear me further, Lonnie boy. It was just my reading of your own High Joss, and it was out of his profound profundity that I dug your condemnation. And it is he, and not Bill Vanderhook, who has settled your eternal—hash.

"Now you hear me a minute. I'm going to do a little quoting myself. I spent days and nights wading through that illuminated slush to see if I could find any excuse for you. But instead of that I picked out the biggest spike in the lid.

"But, Gee, wasn't it a job? My nerve nearly brought on paresis. I did have congestive chill, ticdouloureux, meningitis, lock-jaw and curvature of the spine. But I read it just the same, and here's what your old misfit says. Listen, and when you strike that eternal oblivion take a day off and go back through your disintegrated, dissolved and scattered gray matter and see if you can remember anything like *this*,—

"Mechanism does not escape this trope and rhapsody, being indeed their most conspicuous illustration, since its fundamental principle is that of leverage, whereby there is libration or oscillation, as of a scale or a pendulum, or circular motion as of a wheel. In celestial mechanism the material fulcrum disappears, and there is the invisible centre of motion, of light and return, through tendencies which seem to balance each other, giving the motion the orbital form."

"And here's your old Manhattan Mummy come home to roost."

"Henrymillsalden, second chapter and fifth verse."

"Congregation sing."

Alonzo Leffingwell bowed his head. He pressed his hand to his solar plexus and then faintly did he murmur—"Then there is nothing that will melt or soften you—nothing?"

"Oh, ring off. D'ye take me for the ice man? Well, I'm not. I'm pig-iron, pipe-clay and steel filings; and what's worse, the more I *remember* the madder I *get*."

"And then—and then—there is nothing that I can do—or can say?—"

"Once—and—for—all,—NOPE, my gay Gnani of Gingalee, for the last time, you're up against it."

. . . . .

And there was silence in the cellar for the space of about eight minutes.

. . . . .

And then,—*"It is not, O William, simply for myself I plead. I am thinking also of you, and of the Karmic consequences of this Act. Had you,—had you—been illuminated—"*

"I'd a hoisted you out of my house a year ago,"—interrupted Bill fiercely. "But I wasn't illuminated. My aura wasn't anything but fuzz. Wasn't lit up. I was in the gloaming. But I'm not there now. I'm out of the woods. And I've got a pink halo of forty-four horse power. D'ye hear me?" and the materialist grinned away his scowl. Waving his hand outward in the glaring atmosphere, he continued,—*"I'm getting there. If this ain't illumination I don't know light when I see it. Oh, yes, I'm a small incandescent myself. But see here"*—and Bill suddenly closed the conversation and his jaws with a snap.

"What are you up to anyway? You're trying to josh me out of this experiment. I don't mean to let you buzz the vitality out of this dynamo. You're slick enough to weaken the coils of any old machine if you're not watched. Anyway, we've had enough monkeying, and I've got other fish to fry. The Board meets at eight and I'm punctual."

Bill Vanderhook now consulted his watch. "Holy Mother of Mud!"—he shouted. "It's seven o'clock, and no dinner, and this is Saturday night, and the barber shops crowded. Now, see here"—to the silent, despairing culprits,—*"I don't want any more back talk. I'm going to wind up this business instanter. For this whole mess has to be out of the way in just fif—teen—minutes."*

"No—no more talk. You just get ready for your last sprint. This farce is played out. The last act is over. The curtain's rung down. Alonzo Leffingwell, the wise man of Kankakee flats is no more. Bring on the—flowers—your 'Gates Ajar' and the other pin-wheels. The pallbearers

are without. The baked meats are on the sideboard—mourners in line, and hark you to the funeral march,—

"Fare-well for-ev-er to old Kan-ka-kee,  
Fare-well, my Lonnie-Bird, don't wait for me."

As the hand of the avenger had touched the lever he had burst forth into impassioned song.

And there was more truth than either poetry or music in his improvisation.

For the cruel energy of this modern executioner was beginning to tell upon its ethereal victim. Never in his varied career had that polished and elegant gentleman been so completely "in the whirl."

There were now subtle but certain changes and transformations taking place in his attenuated substance. The gay, gallant and fascinating sojourner from the Orient was slowly but surely undergoing some character of transmutation.

"Now, once for all, and finally,"—resumed Bill, bending forward to readjust some part of the machinery,—“Once again and for the last time I say to you, that you must make up your mind,—no, rather your everlasting substance—to your fearful and final experiences as an individual, as an astral man, as a NEE—go. You have proclaimed that all is spirit. I contend that—ALL—IS—MATTER, and HERE SHE GOES.”

But she didn't go.

As these last fierce words of Bill Vanderhook cut the air like whip strokes, the unhappy prisoner trembled with fear. With one mighty effort of will he gathered his forces into one last effort to break his bonds.

But in vain. He writhed, struggled, twisted and swayed in the unequal contest. But he was bound, as securely bound by the invisible chain of electricity, as was ever the manacled criminal in the strong, barred dungeon. He was rooted to the rim of that fearful aura of his mechanical captor.

Lifting his eyes and his hands toward the ceiling, the despairing captive raised all that remained of his voice in one last wild, weird cry of supplication:—

"Master, Master, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And what had stayed the avenger's hand as it reached again to press the fatal button? Was it that wild cry, or the wild *words* that stayed the bloodless executioner in that torture chamber?

Or,—was it the sudden infusion of another element, of another force, of another individuality superior to the little learning and the little arts of both the modern mystic and the modern scientist?

For, at that instant, in a flash of time, occurred a curious thing.

The echoes of the Mystic's wail were still resounding among the jars and jugs when Mr. Vanderhook might have been seen to stagger, to relax, to waver as he stood, to reach blindly for a chair, and then, to crumple up and drop gently upon the floor, to close his eyes, to sleep.

And Imogene, who sat upon the cask of copper wire, whose interest had not flagged for an instant, now changed expression suddenly. She yawned, leaned backward to the wall for support, dropped her pretty head to one side, closed her tearful eyes, and she, too, slept.

## INTERLUDE.

And then unsensed by the sleepers, but clear to the vision of the miserable Mystic a sudden, luminous cloud appeared, grew and gathered in intensity. It appeared a few feet from the floor, close to the dynamo, within the radius of its attraction.

Steadily the brightness increased until the electric lights were as candles burning at noonday.

From the midst of this increasing splendor was gradually shaped a majestic figure, the face and form of an unearthly being, a man, yet a man so transcendent in presence, so lofty in pose, so dazzling in vestments, so celestial in expression as to separate him—almost wholly—from the little beings who run to and fro upon the earth, calling themselves men.

The wise man—late of India—looked, shuddered, moaned, closed his eyes and bent his head.

The Radiant One paused an instant, and then spoke,—saying:—

## CHAPTER XII.

### "THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH."

(By a Member of the Order  
of  
The Brotherhood of India.)

Perverse and degenerate Soul: I have heard your cry, and have come once more to admonish the wilful and wayward child of evil.

I approach you from a plane of life so far above and beyond the physical that these children of the flesh neither see my form nor hear my voice. By the exercise of a power which has been wisely withheld from you, I have arrested the forces of nature which have been but clumsily employed to entrap you. For a few fleeting moments of earthly time I have lulled to harmless sleep the conscious powers of these earth-bound Souls. My message is for you and for you alone.

Listen: Before you were permitted to open the door of knowledge which leads to the exalted spheres of spiritual illumination and power, you were informed by him who held the key, that no man can ever pass that sacred portal and hope thereafter to evade any of the responsibilities which lie beyond.

Patiently and explicitly you were instructed as to the nature, the scope and the meaning of those responsibilities, and the penalties which nature imposes for their conscious and intentional evasion or violation were made plain. Of your own free will and accord you elected to enter and assume those responsibilities, well knowing the consequences of their violation.

When you first entered our sacred Temple of Light, and knelt as a voluntary initiate at our Altar of Truth, you took upon yourself a solemn and binding Obligation. Well you knew its import. You have not forgotten it. Neither can you now evade the penalty of its violation.

That Great One, in the light of whose deific presence all other light is but a somber shadow, has fixed the seal of his judgment upon it. That judgment is irrevocable. From it there is no appeal. You stand condemned.

Before you were permitted thus to bind yourself to the faithful discharge of a sacred trust you were carefully and minutely instructed as to all the principles, forces, activities and processes of nature on which that obligation rests.

That instruction was given to you as the tribute of a higher knowledge and the dispensation of a higher Power. You knew then, as you know now, that the only compensation required from you is that which must flow to all mankind from your right use of the knowledge and power with which you were then and there invested.

Under that instruction you learned to know the fundamental Attribute with which the Great Universal Intelligence has invested you as an intelligent Soul. You have not forgotten it.

Under that instruction you learned to know the fundamental Power with which you were invested as one of our special messengers of Truth. By the development of that power you have opened the door to higher and nobler possibilities of life. You have not forgotten that lesson, nor the responsibility it imposes.

Under that instruction you learned to know the meaning and the application of the Great Law of Compensation to your own life and intelligence. You accepted the responsibilities which that knowledge inevitably imposes. Nor have you forgotten.

Under that instruction you learned to know the primary and fundamental Duty which rests upon one who voluntarily enters the portal of our venerable Order, and when that duty is fully performed. These conditions you have not forgotten.

Under that instruction you learned to know the great underlying *Purpose* of your individual being, as well as the ethical effect of that purpose accomplished. You have not forgotten them.

From a yet higher Intelligence and an Authority more transcendent you learned to know the full measure and scope of your own Personal Responsibility to yourself and to your fellow men. None of these things have you forgotten.

Thirteen searching questions were asked you and your answers are inscribed in the records of our Order. You have not forgotten them.

Each question and answer form an immutable link in the chain of your individual record. This golden chain of thirteen mighty links of truth was accepted by you as the rule and guide

of your conduct toward yourself and all mankind. Behold it now! Each link is broken into many pieces, and each piece becomes a new link in an unbroken chain of evidence against you.

You knew then and you know now, that the right application of knowledge and the right use of power lead upward to the Pathway of Light and Life; and that the perversion of knowledge and the abuse of power inevitably lead downward to the Way of Darkness and Death.

Notwithstanding your knowledge of all these things, you, of your own free will and accord, have turned your face from the light of truth and your feet from the pathway of eternal life and infinite joy. You have scorned the counsels of the just, ignored the judgments of the wise, defied the immutable and inexorable penalties of broken laws, and have walked boldly down the broad highway of darkness and death. Your feet are now hovering on the brink of despair, and your eyes are peering over deep down into the blackness of everlasting darkness. And what then?

Ah, yes, what then? Then it is you cry out to the Master whose loving admonition you have ignored so often, and you entreat him to save you from the doom you so persistently have invited.

You cry for help, but what is the motive that prompts your cry? Is it humility? No. Is it love? No. Is it any motive which could possibly inspire an honest prayer? Alas, no. It is, instead, the lowest and meanest impulse that ever moves the springs of human action—the impulse of Fear. And fear of what? Fear of Justice. Fear of the inevitable penalties which you so deliberately and persistently have invited; penalties which your own conscience recognizes and your reason approves. Fear of the operation of nature's most beneficent law, the Law of Compensation.

Oh, selfish lover! false friend! unworthy student! obdurate sinner! unconscionable outlaw and indefensible miscreant! Where now is all your boasted power? Why do you cringe and writhe in an agony of fear? Why are you here, the helpless plaything of forces under the control of this witless child of earth?

Listen, and I will tell you: The Law of Retributive Justice is but a single phase of the great Law of Compensation. That Law is immutable, irrevocable and inexorable. Whosoever invites its judgments must suffer its penalties. Under its inevitable and relentless decree you stand a guilty and condemned Soul.

You have violated the most sacred law of your being—the Law of Love. Neither time, place, circumstance, duty nor responsibility has deterred you from your unholy purpose to wreck the happiness and fortunes of a defenseless home.

You have betrayed the trust of a faithful friend. You have abused his generous hospitality, and violated the sanctity of his household.

You have permitted your own degenerate and selfish desires and passions to override every principle of Equity, Justice and Right.

To accomplish an ignoble purpose you have employed all your little knowledge of our noble science in conscious and deliberate violation of a most sacred and binding obligation; and I am come to behold you now, a blackened and perjured Soul, expiating your crimes and suffering a self-invoked and righteous penalty.

Nay, more: It is you and such as you who have made it possible for offended ignorance to travesty our noble science, misinterpret our exalted philosophy, bring our ancient and honored Order into ignominy and shame, and all our beneficent instructions under the blighting and humiliating ridicule of this Occidental world.

It is you and such as you who have made it necessary for us once more to shut the doors of our sacred Temple of Light against all who shall come to us from your western shores.

It is you and such as you who have furnished the inspiration which prompts the vulgar wit of your overfed, western semi-civilization to amuse itself in derisive ridicule and mockery of the splendid legacy which our Oriental civilization is but waiting to bequeath to your people.

It is you and such as you who furnish the plots and dramatic settings for your literary travesties; and because of your trivial and degrading uses of magical powers, our august Fraternity becomes the target of your caustic, western wits and merciless satirists.

It is you and such as you who deliberately, persistently and flagrantly violate and misrepresent the most beneficent and sacred law of life—the Law of Affinity and Love—and by your wicked perversions and vicious subversions fix upon our noble Order a burden of cruel and unjust criticism, in the presence of which we who are thus maligned and misrepresented bow our heads in humiliation, in sorrow and in shame.

It is you and such as you who knowingly and intentionally substitute sensuality for affinity,

lust for love, license for law, and by your brazen and shameless disregard of noble principles and benign teachings, say to the world, "Thus saith our Ancient Order of Light."

You cringe and writhe in double agony, and well you may, as you look upon the picture in all its hideous deformity; but your punishment is not yet completed.

Listen yet further to the voice of one who would have spared you this unhappy hour. You were informed by one whose words you can not doubt, that no man can apply his knowledge of our higher science to selfish or ignoble purposes without himself, sooner or later, falling a victim to the forces and processes he thus employs.

Had you been true to yourself, true to your friends, true to your instructors, true to the obligation which God or Nature fixes upon every intelligent Soul, this would have been the day of your triumph and joy. Instead of this you have made it the dark and gloomy hour of your humiliation and exile, and in the records of our Order it marks the closing earthly scene of one more dismal and ignominious failure.

When this sleeping child of the flesh shall awaken and once more shall set in motion the forces which hold you in their relentless grasp, what then? Ah, yes, what then? I will tell you.

The vital element which still binds your spiritual body to its far-away physical counterpart will soon be dissipated. Nature's magnetic chain which heretofore has enabled you to return to the physical body will be broken. Physical death will have overtaken you. The element which enables you to manifest yourself to these children of earth no longer will be at your command. You will pass from their vision and their knowledge for time, and who knows but for eternity.

In the realm of spiritual darkness you will be left to wander alone, and alone to expiate your crimes.

As it has been here, so will it be there, for you and you alone to determine whether you will follow the path which leads onward and upward to infinite light, perfect happiness and eternal life; or backward and downward along the pathway of deepest darkness to disintegration, dissolution, individual extinction, and a resolution back into nature's elements. Farewell.

## CHAPTER XIII.

*"A maximis ad minima."*

### PHLOGISTON IS RESTORED.

And now, an awful silence brooded in that fateful chamber. The Great Light had vanished. Darkness was there.

And then, as swiftly as came sleep, so now the awakening of Bill Vanderhook and his wife.

"Gee, I nearly slipped"—muttered the druggist "That infernal machine must have made me dizzy for a second."

"And here she goes,"—repeated Bill, wholly unconscious of his lapse. His hand is again upon the lever. His eyes are again riveted upon the private exhibit.

But the voice of the gay Gnani is heard no more by man. He makes no more appeals. His freshness is departing forever. His etheric countenance is distorted by unspeakable anguish. Despair looks from his eyes. His delicate hands, unclasped, are fallen to his sides. His head is bowed upon his breast. The foolish wise man now faces himself on all sides. He sees the past, the present, the future,—sin, suffering, and impenetrable silence.

"And here she goes,"—

Whirr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r.

Whizz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z.

And go she did,—and so did the Illuminat of Illinois.

Without so much as a farewell word to his Alter Ego, the gaseous and now ghastly gentleman was violently lifted from the perpendicular and suddenly bent in a curve corresponding to the arc of that electrical circle in which he revolved.

He was shot like a ball from a cannon, in and out, up and down, and round and round the Vanderhook laboratory. He was projected with fearful speed along the fatal pathway of that deadly attraction.

Words can not exploit the possibilities of electricity when centered upon a human organism, however attenuated. Up to this last moment the captive had been stirred only by his internal emotions of baffled love, and of deadly fear. Now, however, to internal agony was added outward destruction. To the convulsions of the soul were added the contortions of the body, and with every revolution of the fatal cylinder the reappearing envelope of the doomed soul was seen to be shrinking and shriveling out of all semblance to a man.

What at breakfast had been the lithe and debonnaire Gnani of Gingalee, a transparent and elegant gentleman, was now but a thick, cloudy shape, an opaque, formless figure, an unhandsome thing resembling the body of a bent, crooked and deformed child.

Bill Vanderhook was wildly elated.

He beamed upon the exhibit with satanic glee. He laughed for joy over the pallid and lifeless thing whirling under his hand. He emitted a low whistle of profound satisfaction. He made notes in his book with excited dots and dashes. At last his triumph broke all bounds. He roared like a whole grandstand at the last touchdown.

"I say, Genesy, that's what you call a *Neego* on the home run. Get onto the size of him. Looks like 'leven cents, don't he? Dollars to dimes he hasn't enough mysticism left to illuminate a hollow punkin. The next Gooroo from Gingalee won't run up against an Edison plant. If he does, he'll find he isn't the whole push. Just look at the shape of him. Now ain't you stuck on that? And isn't he just swinging round the circle like a presidential candidate? Well, well, well, I say, Genesy, if this don't beat the tom-tom."

The transformation of the mystic was sustaining the hypothesis of the materialist. The reduction of the astral man was a visible, tangible and scientific fact.

And Imogene, the faithless,—what did she? She gazed and shuddered. That which she saw was not her ideal. It was no longer her lover. Nor was it a man. It was not even suitable bric-a-brac for a refined home. It was only a Spectacle.

She did not speak. There are times when even a woman feels the advantages of silence. But she gazed upon her late admirer and then upon Bill. She had to acknowledge to her inner consciousness that her own husband cut much the better figure of the two.

Round and round swept the cylinder, its fierce currents and their fated victim.

The features of the mystic were no longer recognizable. The contortions and distortions of

body, limbs and features were fearful. The external application of electricity and the internal throes of passion and pain have done their fatal work.

Again and again an increased current, regulated by the avenger, hastened in exact ratio the destruction of the astral man.

The victim first lost control, limb by limb, of his entire organism. Then his voice failed. When he would have called to his Lady-bird, speech was silenced—paralyzed. Nothing of sound but a gurgling, hissing whisper issued from that tiny hole—no longer a human mouth. Only the eyes lived. In that small, corrugated sphere, once a perfect head, was left nothing now that was human, nothing of human intelligence save the eyes—two gleaming sparks of light—and even these, receding and diminishing, gave evidence of the vanishing soul. So long, however, as these two glittering points shone through the vapor mask that had been a face, they sought and chilled the marrow of the disillusioned Imogene.

So long as these two points of intelligence burned in that misshapen ball they rested only upon her, and then—finally as the sodden curtains of phlogisticated matter fell before those windows of the soul and conscious love was swallowed up in vapor, she for whom this tragedy was enacted fell shrieking across the cask of copper wire.

Conversation ceased in the death chamber. The cylinder continued to whirl—dizzily, madly, satanically. Sheets of crackling sparks, blue and wicked, streamed out from that insatiable monster. The full current was on. Every horse-power was let loose. The silent but resistless force of electricity was unchained. And the victim of this awful experiment was no longer a man. It was now but a shape, a cloud, a vapor, a shadow.

There was now but a spinning mass of vapor, a shape no larger than an infant that shot in and out of the laboratory, obedient to the avenger's hand. The rapid revolutions in that fearful orbit traced out a misty band of cloud. That central cylinder became the hub of a huge spokeless wheel.

With every pulse of time the whirr-r-r-r and the whizz-z-z-z-z of that soulless, bloodless executioner seemed to increase. The invisible avenger flew on its tireless wings with vindictive glee. The air of the room was white-hot. There was an ominous snapping and crackling in and above and around.

There was now but a tiny, shapeless mass of cosmic matter flying in and out through floor and ceiling. There was but the faint, shadowy rim of a phantom wheel.

The heat increased.

The light was blinding. The crackling of the atmosphere was maddening.

Only a faint, misty line now marked the path of the departing soul.

During these supreme moments Bill Vanderhook stood like a statue, tense, rigid, implacable. And his wife, the erring Imogene, crumpled and unconscious, overspread the cask of wire.

The dire noises increased. They became more terrible than the ghastly exhibit; and the heat—it was stifling, consuming; and the light—it was paralyzing. What could it mean? The chemist himself was puzzled. He had not anticipated these very unusual phenomena. He did not, however, cease to press the button.

But that strange, unearthly noise, heat and glare increased. They deepened and widened until, as Bill said afterwards, it seemed like a legion of devils had come to escort the doomed to his final abode in chaos.

Now, everywhere, above, below, and roundabout, there was a twisting, grinding roar, like that within the cylinder of a cyclone. All in an instant—to the man at the lever—his house, the world, the universe, seemed to have been swallowed up.

An explosion, long, loud and terrific, shook the Vanderhook habitation, from the foundation stones to the mansard roof.

And after this was silence, thick, oppressive, damp, dead and awesome.

And phlogiston was restored.

. . . . .

**AND BILL IS IT.**

. . . . .

A tiny, black, glistening, motionless monster stood between a man and a woman. There

were now but two people in the laboratory—the Honorable William K. Vanderhook and his beautiful wife. The one was flushed with victory, the other was pallid with perplexity and fear.

In another instant our hero was eagerly bending over the instrument of his revenge. In one hand he held a tiny spoon, in the other a small vial upon which was a freshly printed label.

It was with infinite care that he scraped the spoon along the rim of the now stilled and silent cylinder. It was with unmeasured caution and infinite pride that he scraped up three great drops of clear, shining water and transferred them to the yawning mouth of the vial.

This done, the druggist fitted a cork nicely into the vial, while a wide smile of satisfaction illumined his countenance from brow to chin and from ear to ear.

When he turned and looked upon his wife the illumination increased.

And what of her? The woman for whom friendship had been sacrificed and a Mystic cut off in the height of his uselessness? Womanlike, as she watched Mr. Leffingwell disappear into vapor she had sensed the possibilities of the new dispensation. Alonzo had certainly lapsed. Bill had not. She had lost an admirer, but her husband was still in evidence. Alonzo was reduced to nothingness. Bill was yet a substantial fact. The Mystic could no longer contribute to her entertainment. Bill could make things very disagreeable. Astral advantages were gone. Material things remained.

Opinions to the contrary, women are philosophers—in accommodating themselves to the inevitable.

The lovely Imogene had almost dried her tears, even before the explosion came. When it was over she shook herself into adjustment as to her draperies and ribbons and frills. She fluffed up her bangs, slicked her eyebrows and looked almost as fresh as she generally felt.

When it was all over the avenger turned and, tossing the vial to the lady, said in a loud, triumphant voice,—“Well, here we are, Mrs. Vanderhook; here’s your essence of mysticism for your *mooshoir*, and here”—laughing uproariously,—“is a soov’nir spoon for your next pink tea. And now, my dear girl”—as Imogene began to look mournful again—“if you’ll give up this strenuous occultism and be contented with your old Billsey on the earth plane, I’ll cry quits, and get you anything you want—that isn’t astral.”

Imogene wiped her eyes. She looked at him inquiringly. Then she looked at the vial. Then she sidled up alongside her husband.

And now Bill smiled—but it was under his breath. “What is it, Petsey”—and his arm closed around her. “How would you like one of those dandy little watches, or—”

“Oh, Billsey boy, I do believe after all that it’s you that’s *IT*. I feel this very minute as if we’d just vibrate together after this splendidly. I bet anything, if you’d just practice a little, you could be up to me in no time.”

The Honorable Mayor of Kankakee turned away to conceal his emotion. And when his expression was out of sight he winked—once—slowly and—judiciously—at the now silent cylinder.

Then he said modestly,—“Yes, Honey, I mean to get even with you if I’m spared. And if you want—”

“The watch? Oh, Billsey dear, I should think I did. If you hadn’t dissolved Lonnie he would have gotten me one soon. But, say, can’t I have, too, one of those dear—dear—markee rings? They’re just too, too, utterly—”

“Course you can. You can have a whole tray full if you want ’em. You see, Leff saved me a lot of money; and now I’ll spend it on you. You can have rings and pins and any other truck necessary to your happiness.”

“Oh, Billsey, you don’t mean that you will take me to Chicago this winter to the grand opera, and the charity ball, and the horse show, and all the big department stores,—and—and —”

“Yes, yes, old girl, I’ll take you to all these and everything else that you can’t think of now, and then to the Stock Yards; for it won’t be like going home without seeing the Yards.”

“You’re a dear, sweet, blessed—”

“But here, see here, Imogene, all this is *provided*—that there are no more Dudes from Devachan to deal with. D’ye hear me? Is it a go?”

“Here’s my mitt,”—and Imogene laid her delicate little hand in Bill’s big paw.

And thus, over the—no, not the ashes—but the essence of the late Alonzo Leffingwell, Gnani of Gingalee, and Modern Mystic of Low Degree,—was enacted the full and complete reconciliation of Mr. and Mrs. Vanderhook...

“I say, Genesy, girl, it’s supper time, and I’m hungry as a wolf. And say, too, I’m as dry as a

fish.”

“Me, too”—murmured Imogene, and clutching up the back of her gown in one hand she laid the other tenderly and confidingly upon her husband’s arm.

And the husband and wife turned from the laboratory and paused in the library. The untouched spread was still on the table.

“What do you say, my dear, to the removal of this cobweb? What would you say to a little ‘Mumm,’ or a ‘High-ball,’ before we go to dinner?”

“Well, Billsey, I’d just say ‘Let’s,’ for I really do feel nervous. But there—goodness gracious! I’ve gone and left that bottle of Lonnie in the laboratory. Oh, well, never mind; I don’t believe he’s much good as essence, anyway. Patchouli’s good enough. Don’t you think so, Billsey?”

. . . . .

And close to the cask of copper wire had rolled a tiny vial, rolled and lost itself in the litter thereabouts, a vial on which the double label read as follows:

*“Aqua Vitae”*

ALONZO LEFFINGWELL, D. P.<sup>[2]</sup>

*“Memoria in Aeterna.”*

FINIS.

*“Tacks Vobiscum.”*

<sup>[2]</sup> Defunct Philosopher.

## POSTLUDE.

Literature is but a symbol.

A book is but an array of signs by which ideas are conveyed, facts transmitted, or truths revealed.

The office of literature is to instruct, inspire, entertain, or demoralize the reader.

Varied as individuality itself are the literary devices of authors.

Innumerable are the expedients to which human intelligence resorts in its efforts to transmit knowledge, to impart ideas and ideals, or to illustrate and elucidate truths.

Born of individual aspirations, ambitions and convictions, and formulated by individual genius, are the poems, essays, dramas, songs, sermons, and even the satires of literature.

And none of these has excuse for being, except its creator has something of value to express, reveal or illustrate.

If the author's motive be pure, and if his cause be just and his art sufficient, we forgive the mere literary form or trick by which he commands attention and awakens interest.

If, for example, a feathery skit be employed to illustrate a substantial fact or lofty principle in nature, or some current social or philosophic pretension, it should not offend the wise. It could in nowise minimize Truth, nor belittle the great purpose in the background.

It is possible, however, that it may teach a valuable lesson by indirection. It may enlarge the understanding and remove the prejudice of a few people.

To travesty a noble theme is easy, for in this great world of ours the sublime and the ridiculous forever march side by side, and oftentimes their relation is one of great intimacy.

Side by side walk the noble and the ignoble, the wise and the foolish, the serious and the mirthful, the fine and the unrefined, the lofty and the trivial, the religious and the sacrilegious, the philosophic and the foolish.

The wise man and the faker hourly cross each other's paths, and their contact and contrast often afford a laugh for the merry and a lesson for the thoughtful.

F. H.

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