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THE REVELATION

OF

JOHN LANGDON

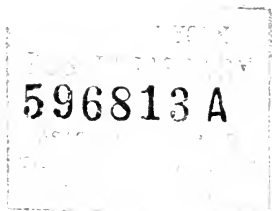
AS RECORDED BY HIM

If there is anything in this universe that cannot stand discussion, let it crack.

—WENDELL PHILLIPS.

NEW YORK:
THE TRUTH SEEKER CO.

1920



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P R E F A C E

So many books have been written on all conceivable themes that one cannot help realizing the futility of trying to add anything to our already overburdened literature. On the subject of human faith and conduct in this world there can be so little said deserving to be called new that the most any narrator can do is to tell the old in a new way, and in so doing touch upon subjects that he thinks will entertain or instruct the readers, or to which he desires to call their attention. It is for the last named reason that the following story has been thought worthy of publication.

The reader of these pages is likely to find many things that do not meet with his approval, as the story was not intended either as a sedative or to satisfy any particular taste; but what one finds favorable may be objectionable to others. This cannot very well be avoided in dealing with controversial subjects, and especially in the handling of problems concerning which nobody has any reliable information. No claim is made for infallibility. In a progressive world nothing is final—we and everything else therein are more or less in the making—and the ideas expressed here are only a point of view.

No right-thinking men, surveying the recent world events and reflecting on what is going on around them,

can come to any other conclusion than that there must be something wrong with our civilization, though they may differ as to the cause and the best and most effective remedy. The old system, based on supernaturalism, has had a very long trial, but it has not produced a sane and healthy race or an ideal human society. If we can judge the tree by its fruit, both the trunk and branches of our civilization are in much need of disinfecting, pruning and grafting. If man can make progress in the arts and sciences, there is no good reason why he cannot also advance morally and spiritually, but he is evidently not doing so under the old system of propitiation.

This book is not intended as a complete guide out of the muddle, but it contains some suggestions that it is hoped will lead to a better road if heeded. No literary merits are claimed for it nor any special reward expected for being instrumental in launching the tale.

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS

	Page
Part One. A NOCTURNAL JOURNEY.....	7
Chap. I. Pictures In The Clouds.....	9
Chap. II. In A Noiseless World.....	16
Chap. III. A Grotesque Race.....	28
Chap. IV. Who Is Responsible?.....	39
Chap. V. The Supreme Light.....	47
Part Two. THE QUEST	53
Chap. I. Reflections	55
Chap. II. The Votary.....	61
Chap. III. With A Philosopher.....	70
Chap. IV. The Woman's Side.....	84
Chap. V. A Compromiser.....	97
Chap. VI. The People	105
Chap. VII. The Aeronauts.....	115
Part Three. A RURAL ROMANCE.....	123
Chap. I. A Change Of Environment.....	125
Chap. II. The Program.....	133
Chap. III. Adeline	141
Chap. IV. Facts And Fancies.....	154
Part Four. THE MISSION	161
Chap. I. Some Prophecies.....	163
Chap. II. The Haunted House.....	176
Chap. III. Gifts of Providence.....	183
Chap. IV. Affairs Of The Heart.....	194
Chap. V. The Effect Of Revelations.....	201
Chap. VI. New Faiths For Old.....	207
Chap. VII. Before the Bar Of Justice.....	218
Chap. VIII. The Universal Solvent.....	225
Chap. IX. Making Progress	232
Chap. X. Spiritual Debauchery	242
Chap. XI. Partnership For Life.....	249
Chap. XII. Our Civilization	258
Chap. XIII. Rule By Divine Right.....	270
Chap. XIV. In Conclusion	279

The World would be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of its brightest ornaments are complete skeptics in religion. The time appears to me to have come when it is the duty of all who have on mature consideration satisfied themselves that the current opinions are not only false but hurtful, to make their dissent known. Such an avowal would put an end at once and forever, to the vulgar prejudice, that what is called, very improperly, unbelief, is connected with any bad qualities either of mind or heart.

—JOHN STUART MILL.

PART I
A NOCTURNAL JOURNEY

I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some letter of that after-life to spell.

—RUBAIYAT.

CHAPTER I.

PICTURES IN THE CLOUDS.

Having finished my day's work in the loop, I boarded the North Shore Express and soon reached my habitation—a very good place of its kind, but hardly deserving to be called a home, as profit was its main object. I did not want any dinner, as I was not hungry, and besides I felt a little languid after a warm day's work. To be exact, it was not so much from actual work as the uninteresting and prosaic nature of it. When in normal mood I experienced no difficulty, but this day I felt bored and wished for solitude. I desired to be alone and pull myself together. I wanted to get away from the madding crowd; to step aside, as it were, and let the procession pass on without being disturbed by it; I decided to row out on the peaceful bosom of Lake Michigan for strength and inspiration.

The great expanse of placid water looked very inviting as I settled down in my boat and commenced to row gently eastward. It was not my first venture on this lake, but it was the first time I had started out alone, and I felt a peculiar satisfaction in having the boat all to myself. I could think of only one whom I should have liked to have with me on this

10 THE REVELATION OF JOHN LANGDON

evening's journey, and she was not among the living. It was ten long years since she had gone to the land whence no traveler was ever known to return, and I had not yet been able to satisfy myself that it was for her or my own best. I could never see any good in the bolt of lightning striking a young woman in her bloom, and thus putting a sudden and unexpected end to her young life. True enough, there were many other young women left, but they were nothing in particular to me; and I knew of some that the world could better afford to spare, as they were only a burden to themselves and others. The only comforting hope left was that she had gone to heaven, but that did not give me much consolation as long as I knew so little about the place.

Perhaps this was the reason I wanted to be alone, or it might have been pure selfishness. One has always enough of that, especially after spending many years as a social recluse. But other disappointments had also helped to block the way for my personal progress and made me inclined to dwell more on myself and the darker side of life. This again might have been my own fault, or it might have been due to circumstances over which I had no control; but I tried not to be selfish by blaming myself.

As the distance between the land and my boat became greater my satisfaction increased. It was such a relief to get away from the huge nest of sweltering humanity and have nothing but clear water on all sides and a blue sky above. When I looked to the southwest and saw the skyscrapers losing them-

selves in a haze of smoke I wondered why I, John Langdon of Pleasantville, had come to this Babylon to earn my bread sixteen stories above the ground. What had I gained by the elevation? What was the use of so many high buildings in a sparsely settled country, and why did men huddle themselves together so close, when there was so little of brotherly love in the world? How many of them had, like myself, stranded on this Ararat after a shipwreck of some kind? Had misfortune drained them of the milk of human kindness, and made them schemers, plotters and vampires? How many falsehoods had been told during the day in that immense pile of brick and stone, and how many misrepresentations had been made for the sole purpose of making the American dollar change owners? And was it really worth while?

Opposite my craft was the North Shore, a beautiful residence section, where I dwelt among people of fine and comfortable homes. Did I know these people I lived among? No, I was a stranger among them and they were mostly strangers to one another. Why did I live among them? I don't know. Perhaps it was fashionable, or the "proper thing"—I don't know which. But that's where I spent my nights; and it should not matter so much where one sleeps, just so he is comfortable.

The shore receded more and more and room became more plenty. What a luxury the lake seemed! It was so large and peaceful. I drew a long breath and experienced an exhilarating effect. It com-

menced to be such a joy to live. I did not feel lonesome or alone—I had so much company, and so true! I became interested in the clouds. There was a dark, craggy wall of them in the west, but it did not look like rain, and I felt perfectly safe in my seaward course—the elements seemed so friendly to me. The clouds began to part and permitted the sun to shine through them. They were wonderful clouds, and as they ascended the sky they formed so many charming combinations. I lay down in the bottom of my boat and studied the handiwork of the greatest of masters.

To my right broke open a beautiful lake of a deep azure hue, with pretty little islands swimming on its bosom, and ragged promontories sticking out here and there along the shores. On the north side of this lake was a high mountain, whose two craggy peaks appeared to be snow-capped. It was illuminated on the south, where it gradually sloped down into the blue waters of the lake; but on the north it was steep and dark, and appeared to have its base in the valley of an immense forest. From the lower end of the lake a river flowed toward the southern horizon, and on it a yacht race seemed to be in full progress. It was a weird picture, altogether unlike any painting I had seen; but it was grand, it was sublime.

I looked to my left and beheld a large castle situated at the base of another mountain. This was lit up on the north, and had an opening in the center, through which the rays of the sun penetrated, throwing a dim light on the castle. Living forms appeared to be playing in what looked like a garden, but their

shapes changed continually, and at times they joined one another in a merry dance of the clouds. Along a great highway walked a giant man, and after him a large flock of fleecy things were strung out all along the western horizon. They resembled sheep following their shepherd to the fold.

Having observed this pastoral scene for a while I looked toward the first picture, but presto! The lake and the mountain had disappeared. The great artist had with one mighty stroke of the brush effaced them off the canvas, and painted another picture altogether different, but none the less interesting. This resembled a small painting that my mother gave me when I was a boy, which represented the narrow road to heaven. The road was broadest where it started in the valley, but grew gradually narrower as it wound itself toward the celestial city. It had many by-roads at the lower end, along which men and women lingered and hesitated whether to remain in the valley or mount the sublime heights. Instead of carrying crosses, the travelers heavenward rode in gorgeous chariots, and in their flight small, fleecy clouds tore themselves loose and were strewn like flowers along the road. As they approached the throne of God a heavenly light illuminated them, and they were surrounded by hosts of celestial beings.

I fell into contemplation over my dear mother's admonitions before she closed her eyes in death. Had I heeded her warnings and followed her advice? In some respects I had. I had been honest and led a clean and upright life; I had been considerate of

14 THE REVELATION OF JOHN LANGDON

others, even at the expense of my own material gains and pleasures; I had not bent my knees before Mammon, nor worshipped at the altar of Bacchus. But how about the faith of my fathers? Had I held fast to it, or was the childish belief upset by modern thought? Could I keep my promise to meet my mother in heaven, and would I join my sweetheart over there? I could not answer these questions satisfactorily. I had followed the dictates of my conscience—my only rational guide. I had been true to my highest and noblest ideals, and I felt no remorse.

After this diversion my eyes again reverted to the pastoral scene, but it was altogether changed. Instead of the castle and the sheep I saw the former home of my beloved, where I had first learned to know what it was to live. I saw the rustic, vine-covered old house standing back in the yard, enveloped in the soft glow of the setting sun. I saw the winding road and the grounds, where we used to stroll and dream by the light of the summer moon, but the being who had awakened my love was not there. I did not see that pure, girlish face with the heavenly eyes and angelic forehead, the rose-tinted cheeks, ruby lips and alabaster throat—that gracious smile that had filled my soul with joy. She was not there, but she was near me. Yes, she was with me in the boat, the same sweet girl in the fresh beauty of her nineteenth year—just as when she left me ten years ago this very day. I closed my eyes and could feel the soft warmth radiating from her palpitating heart, so pure, so innocent. She filled my soul with the

ineffable harmony of love; I again drank deep at the fountain of youth and beauty; I again worshipped at the shrine of my divinity.

When I opened my eyes I realized that I was far out on the lake, and that the sun had just touched the visible rim of land. The sky was aglow with a rich orange color and made the lake glitter like a polished sheet of gold. I watched the glowing disk gradually sink behind the edge of the earth and leave a halo on the western sky. My soul was filled with a sense of contentment; I felt that I was close to Mother Nature and at peace with the world; I was one with the Soul of the Universe; I offered up a silent benediction to the Infinite for the passing day; my eyelids became heavy; I felt a pleasing drowsiness creeping over me, and then must have fallen asleep.

CHAPTER II.

IN A NOISELESS WORLD.

My next recollection was a mountainous region altogether unlike any I had ever seen or even heard of any one else having seen. The surroundings resembled a vast cavern turned inside out, leaving a number of small caves on the surface thus made convex from concave, and converting the stalactite into stalagmite of queer forms and colors. I was not on the highest elevation of this terra incognita, but nevertheless I had a good view of a large stretch of country, if such it may be called. It consisted of numerous mountains and valleys, differing from one another only in size and shape, as the substance seemed to be the same everywhere, regardless of the altitude. There were no trees or any vegetation in sight; and if water once existed there, it had evidently become exhausted. The whole region was illuminated with a weird light unlike that of either the sun or the moon.

How I had arrived at this strange place did not concern me, nor was I surprised at being there. I had no recollection of either the boat or any part of my past history. I felt a peculiar buoyancy of body, and moved about from place to place without making any effort. It did not matter whether I stood on level surface or the sharp point of a cone—my foothold

was as good on either—and my locomotion was as unhampered in moving uphill as if I were going down. Yet the new order did not seem unnatural to me; nor did I feel lonesome or lost, as might have been the case if I had found myself in so strange surroundings under ordinary circumstances. I was not even curious to know anything about my new world. I had no motive, and everything seemed to happen by chance.

I unconsciously turned my eyes toward heaven, and that also presented a spectacle unlike any I had ever seen. There was no sky, in the ordinary sense of that term, but a vast void of inky blackness upon which were spread innumerable stars of greater or less magnitude. Those of superior luster seemed to form constellations of their own, though they were almost lost in the myriads of lesser lights that surrounded them. There were streams and convolutions of stars interwoven in fantastic garlands between great dark gaps; and over my head was a vast inclined arch of magnificent splendor, which, like a royal diadem in the heavens, surpassed all other constellations in beauty and brilliancy. Beyond were other mysterious black gulfs extending into infinite space.

Not having any conception of time, place, or existence, I could not tell how long I had been on this remarkable desert; nor did it occur to me that I was the only living thing that disturbed its stillness. But the problem of life was solved all at once, when, behold! there stood before me an object that demanded my undivided attention.

18 THE REVELATION OF JOHN LANGDON

For want of a better name I shall call her the Superwoman; for her form was more feminine than masculine, though distinctly neither of the two. Her body had no covering; nor was such a thing needed to hide any deformities, for my own body was clumsy in comparison. It was a symmetrical and harmonious form, almost transparent, and yet the graceful outlines were very distinct and throbbing with life. Her striking face had both the beauty of youth and the maturity of age; it was a countenance radiant with wisdom and compassion. Her beautiful and expressive eyes seemed to look through me as she said:

"Peace to you, my apparition! I perceive you are in quest of something to satisfy your desire. May I ask what brought you here?"

I was startled at the appellation she gave me, and instantly glanced at myself, discovering that I, too, lacked the wherewithal to hide my nakedness. In fact, it was the first thing on this unearthly place that led me to think of myself. I realized that my body was not fit to be exposed. It lacked the beauty and harmony of my superior, and I felt considerably embarrassed. I had no answer to her question, for my recollection of the past was gone. I tried to say something, but could not hear my own voice.

Noticing my confusion, the Superwoman again addressed me; and this time I discovered that her language did not consist of vocal sounds, but rather thought transference—though expressed through the lips—and that neither sound nor echo was possible in this locality, for I was in a noiseless world. The

words she spoke were: "Be at ease, my visitor! I know whence you came and why you are here, though you have lost your identity. Do you observe that globe above the horizon?"

I looked and saw a bright orb occupying a space on the heavens about twelve times larger than is occupied by the full moon, as we see her; but instead of the pale light shed by the earth's satellite, it was aglow with all the hues and tints of the rainbow, and cast a transcendent glory over the weird and picturesque land to which I had been transported. It was not as bright as sunlight, but the edge of the horizon was sharp and distinct, and I could see objects at a long distance as well as those that were near.

"That globe is the earth, and your home as well as that of your physical body," said the Superwoman. "It is the planet nearest to this, and has supported animal life for millions of years. The whole habitable area is a vast breeding ground for a large variety of animals, of which the predominating species is homo—the race to which you belong, with your claws and hairy appendages. Though man is far superior to the other animals, he does not differ from them in many respects. His principal subsistence is still the carcasses of beasts, that he either hunts or raises. In some localities he devours them raw and in others he cooks them; but his fangs are generally good, so it matters not how he eats the flesh. The effect is about the same—bestly, in the language of your own contemporaries. The species varies from the hairy bushman of the jungle to the clothed ape of the

plains, but at present his development is practically stationary. He is either an earthworm, clinging to the soil, or an idolater of some kind. Many are absorbed in clothes and trinkets, imitating one another to the extent of their ability. The spiritual foods man can most easily digest are absurdities, furnished by crafty soothsayers, distorted or perverted minds and intellectual clowns. The abnormal and the bizarre amuses him. He is a rude child in a coarse and vulgar toyland of his own creation. If any sensible attempts are made to reform him, he suspects that it is another trick to take advantage of him, and will rather turn to practices still more preposterous and degrading."

While speaking, or rather conveying her thoughts to me, the Superwoman's face had a very earnest expression, and her large lustrous eyes looked at me sympathetically. It made me feel very inferior, but I was not offended at the uncomplimentary remarks she made about the race to which she said I belonged. I was free from prejudice and vanity. My past was a blank and I knew nothing, while she seemed to be all-wise, all-good, and almighty. I cannot account for how it happened, but I began to wonder where I was and who the Superwoman might be; and the thought had no sooner come than she answered:

"This is the spiritual sphere of this planetary system, and the home of the free. You are now where creation ends and perfection both begins and ends. Here dwells the finished ego of all the countless cycles of evolutionary life—the crown of creation. No

further development is possible of either the sphere you stand on or its inhabitants. They have reached the apex of progress, and from there neither progression nor retrogression is possible. The perfect egos have no needs and no desires. If they had any wants, they would try to satisfy them; and that would not only mean effort, resulting in either satisfaction or disappointment, but it would also be the creation of other wants ad infinitum. They have, so to say, reached the goal toward which all creation moves."

There was a certain familiarity in the last phrase, though I could not remember where I had heard it before; and "the crown of creation" also had a similarity to something with which I had a slight acquaintance, though I could not account for it. The only thing I felt that I wanted further light on was her use of the plural pronoun in the third person, as I had not seen any one else, and I ventured to ask if there were others like her.

I was told to look about me; and it seemed that with a magic glance of her eyes she had conjured up a multitude of beings as beautiful as herself, moving rhythmically in all directions, like bees on a field of flowers. They differed somewhat in form and stature, but were more uniform than mankind, their figures being neither extremely large nor small. Altogether they appeared like a vast concourse of nymphs, whose radiant faces and plastic forms were illuminated with the soft, variegated light of the large orb in the heavens. The scene was, indeed, as enchanting as could be a dance of the gods in a world of spirits,

where no atmosphere, wind or sound could mar the harmony and no clouds obscure the earthly glory that shed its halo over the superb entrancement.

The sublime scene was changed, as if by a dissolving process, and I was again alone with the Superwoman at the very place I had first met her. With a radiant smile she said:

“It may seem strange to you, but these beings are claimed to be descendants of man, and the earth to be their former home, though it is a long time since any of them dwelt there. You must have heard of the mansions in the sky, promised to those who remained faithful to the end. This is the only place left for them when they become dissatisfied with their physical life on the bright orb you see in the heavens. Their number has neither increased nor diminished by any other process than transmigration. Births and deaths do not occur here, nor are there any stages known as childhood, youth, or old age. The egos are all perfect when they come here, and remain so forever. Neither could they leave here, for they have no will, or desire, and consequently no interest in their own existence. The perfect ego is an automaton set to run throughout all eternity.”

Having no recollection of any experience in a world of change, and my mind being too hazy to grasp the full import of such a sweeping statement, I could neither make any comparison nor find any objection. It was simply recorded on my brain as a self-evident truth. But out of the mist arose a question: If all the inhabitants of this place had come from the earth, where had the place itself come from?

"I perceive your curiosity is being aroused," said the Superwoman. "That question belongs to the higher order of your species. The greatest number of them are not concerned about the origin of either themselves or the world they inhabit. They are satisfied with everything as they find it, and to imitate their fellow creatures. They have not what you would call a soul. But, though in a state of coma, you possess the faculty of thinking. You have evidently passed through the various relations to persons and things, and have reached the stage of ideas, to which class your question belongs. By right effort, you can be of great service to your kind, which is more than the perfect egos can. Their thoughts and deeds are all automatic. They are simply spirits in perpetual motion.

"But I was going to satisfy your curiosity. This sphere had the same beginning as the one you inhabit. Both are the work of one power, and were originally made to serve the same end. This creator, who is also the ruler of the depending spheres, is more than a million times larger than the earth, and is the source of all life and light thereon as well as the fountain of all energy. Some millions of years ago he threw into space a chunk of world-stuff, many times larger than your earth is now, and sent it spinning in the ether, much as the children of men set a top in motion, except that he made it circle around him as well as turn on its pivot. This immense hot mass kept spinning in space for eons of ages, decreasing in size and becoming gradually cooler and cooler, mak-

ing the elements divide into land and sea, and producing vegetable and animal life, first of a very low order and finally more complex—all the way from protoplasm to an organism like your own. The experiment was on a fair way to succeed. Homo assumed the human form, walked upright, gradually shed his hair and improved in stature; but there was something in his composition unfavorable to cerebral development. He grew cunning to the extent of playing mean tricks on his fellows, but would not rise intellectually to a sufficient height to see his own salvation. He appeared to be ruled by a contrary spirit, and acted in a way that can best be illustrated by comparing him with one of your young calves being led by the halter—the only successful way to manage him is to let him go with the hind end first. The race was doomed to perdition.

“Being that there was no future for man, owing to the wrong ingredients of which he was composed, the most fortunate thing happened. By a sudden planetary catastrophe the whole race and every other living thing on the planet were exterminated in an instant, instead of their going through the usual process of growth, maturity and decay. The globe was exposed to a temperature that destroyed all the life-germs it contained, and in the heating process it shrank to what it is now—only about one forty-ninth of the present volume of your earth—and left it in the condition you see it. Then a new chunk of world-stuff, now the earth, was launched into space and a few more million years spent in a new experiment.

But as I told you before, the present crop of man is in a bad way, and unless there is a change for the better soon, he will commence to move backward. If the perfect egos could do anything for him, they would have a task before them, but they can in no way influence man. They cannot even be sorry for him, for they have neither sense nor sympathy. Man must be helped by his own kind or not at all. So you see this place is very old, as you measure duration; but with the free ego there is no such thing as time or circumstance."

Though the Superwoman's preliminary remarks conveyed to me a small ray of hope, her explanation of world-making had a stunning effect. In trying to grasp the ponderous scheme I felt a slight stir in my cranium, as if some of the gray matter had been set in motion, and it made me wonder what that world-stuff could be, and what was the ultimate object of such a stupendous project. She saw my predicament and answered:

"I see the word purpose with a large interrogation point written on your studious countenance, which is another proof that you have been an observer in a world of cause and effect. You look at everything from past experience, though you have lost the connection. I shall not promise to make plain to you what some of your philosophers have called the plan of the ages, but I may lessen your curiosity.

"In the first place, the world-stuff is of the very same substance as the creator himself, and is governed by the same exhaustless energy. The creation of a

26 THE REVELATION OF JOHN LANGDON

world is no more than an overflow of that energy—a discharge of the surplus—and really means no more. The development of a world can be compared with the growth of a plant from the seed to the flower, and final decay. The universal seed is planted in ether and bears fruit of its kind. The innumerable lights you see on the black background are other planetary systems extending into endless space. And the idea, that 'through the ages one increasing purpose runs,' is merely a conception of man, whose thoughts have become 'widened with the process of the suns'; but does not apply when 'the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law'—the conditions you see here. It would be the height of conceit to carry such a design to a stage from which no further development is possible, and is unthinkable of an intelligent creator. A plan necessarily implies an ambition to accomplish results. If what you see here were the result of a design, the mind that conceived it must either have ceased to grow or become extinct, and in either case failed to reap a lasting satisfaction. Such terms represent the attributes of man, and are out of place in discussing problems of the universe."

I cannot say that I felt particularly enlightened by the weighty information the Superwoman imparted to me; if anything matters became still more complicated. But there was one expression that had fastened itself on my brain—the term satisfaction—and that led me to think of another word closely

related to it. I asked her if the egos I had seen were happy.

“Happiness, in the sense you understand it, is not enjoyed by the perfect ego,” was the answer. “Pleasure, or enjoyment, is a gratification of the physical senses, and belongs to animal life alone. The liberated egos have no senses to gratify, and hence cannot have any pleasures. Nor would they be desirable or lasting, for the gratification of one would only create another; and what once tickled the senses would cease to satisfy them, thus requiring other and other sensations ad infinitum. Besides, all pleasure is at the expense of more or less pain, and hence unknown here. Both necessitate change, and would be foreign to a perfect state. Right and wrong, up and down, do not exist on this sphere, and its inhabitants have no desires to satisfy. Here true contentment reigns supreme.”

The Superwoman suddenly disappeared and I began to float in space over mountains and valleys, till I was above an immense crater whose depth my vision could not penetrate. Into this abyss I commenced to sink; and as I went down, lower and lower, it grew darker and darker.

CHAPTER III.

A GROTESQUE RACE.

When my subconsciousness returned I found myself, together with the Superwoman, in a subterranean world of death and desolation. We stood before the open gate of a roofless city in miniature, over which flickered a lurid light whose source I could not divine, but of sufficient strength to penetrate into the remotest corners and reveal the minutest objects. She beckoned me to enter, and while we roamed about the place she told me the following story:

“This necropolis serves as a museum of anthropology, and will give you a fair idea of the conditions that existed on this sphere at the time of the great cataclysm. It represents one of the largest urban communities of the race, or what you would call a city, and was used not only as a dwelling-place but also for the manufacture and distribution of the various commodities necessary to the subsistence and comforts of the highest order of animal life. The city itself was made entirely of what the land produced, and so was everything else therein that either filled a useful purpose or for some reason was in demand by any inhabitants of the globe. As their vanities and idiosyncrasies varied greatly, what was considered of high value at one time or in one locality was regarded as useless at other times and in other sections; but everything had a commercial value some-

where at some time. The place was called Luneville by its founder and it retained that name after it passed the village stage.

“In the first place, you will perceive that this was not a walled city, and that the gate was more for an ornament than anything else. In fact, it was no gate at all, but simply an arch, and there were even some dwellings outside of the gate. This proves that the inhabitants had little or no fear of other tribes coming to take violent possession of their homes and city. They had reached a stage when they were fairly at peace with the dwellers of other cities. There is even evidence to prove that they regarded peaceful commerce as preferable to conquest. Experience had taught the later generation that periods of peace and prosperity in the preparation for periods of war and insane destruction, arranged by the robber rulers of the different tribes, were not worth the cost in lives and treasure.

“But upon inspection you will find that they not only mistrusted one another, but that they actually regarded their fellow men as legitimate prey. Every door to every house and every room of that house has a lock with a key to it; and if you look closer you will find that every key differs from every other key, so that the possessor of one key could not unlock any of the doors of other houses. Besides, you will find in many rooms smaller compartments, such as chests and safes, also provided with separate locks and keys to keep out of them the different occupants of even the same room. In that large building you see in

the distance several hundred of the barbarians were employed making locks and keys to keep one another out of their respective homes and private apartments. The building next to it was used for the manufacture of weapons with which to protect persons and property.

“All this precaution proves that the inhabitants of this ancient city were dishonest, and this was simply a large den of thieves, to use a stronger term. They would appropriate and carry away things that belonged to other members of the community, just as a monkey steals a bit of food from another monkey and runs away with it. And they did this when they were in no immediate need of the food or goods, and hid them in these boxes with locks and keys. As you are not so familiar with the traits of a monkey, you may recollect having seen a little animal, called a squirrel, take a grain of corn, or kernel of a nut, and run away to hide it from other squirrels, and then come back again and again for another and still another kernel, till finally either the supply or the little animal, or both, were exhausted. That’s exactly the way these people did; and in their eagerness to get and hold possession of goods they often came to blows, and even killed one another, as these figures show:

“The one with outstretched arm is in the act of depriving the other of an ornament. In his hand he holds a contrivance with which he threatens to blow out the other fellow’s brain, unless he complies with the request to give up the little stone on his shirt-front. This kind of stone was supposed to be of

great value, though in reality it was almost useless. It was the most brilliant substance that had been discovered on the globe, and for that reason charmed the eye of primitive man. Owing to this quality, and its scarcity, the demand was greater than the supply; and this vast cavern as well as the minor caves on this planet were caused by digging for brilliants and a yellow metal almost as worthless. The whole surface had been honeycombed in searching for imaginary treasure. That particular stone was not even genuine; but that did not matter as long as it was not known to be spurious. The owner imagined it worth a fortune, and had the satisfaction of feeling rich and being so regarded by his fellow man, whose envy finally resulted in murder.

“Among these primordial people some had reached a little higher stage of refinement. They would not steal outright, but employed various means by which to get possession of one another’s property. They invented many devices to beat and cheat their own kind; and one of the unfailing sources of appeal was their boundless vanity and great gambling propensities. A dogfight or a manfight would be sure to rouse their animal passion and make them risk everything they had on the outcome. Then they had a drink that acted as an intoxicant, and when taken in sufficient quantities had the tendency to befog the brain and make them even less responsible than when they were normal. This large building was used exclusively for such purposes, and the scene before us represents a primitive manfight witnessed by a mob

that paid a high entrance fee. When the end came they were worked up to a delirious frenzy over two males pounding each other's faces to a pulp and seeing the blood spattering over the arena. Sometimes they used animals for the purpose, all the way from a cock to a bull, but the object was the same, and on all such occasions fortunes changed owners at the sound of a trumpet.

"A common method was to play with pieces of pasteboard, squares, or figures, and gamble on the result. This group represents a game of that kind played by four, and the pieces you see stacked up in the middle of the table represent value and that is what they play for. The male and the female sitting opposite each other are partners, and they are trying their best to get the better of the other couple. Notice the expression on their faces and the tensity of their nerves! The animals sitting by them on the floor are neither watching the game nor taking any part in it. They were called dogs, and were kept both for their society and to guard their masters against the intrusion of less desirable members of their own race. Some of these animals became more intelligent than their owners, and most of them more faithful. They could not only bark and growl like their masters but also showed their pleasure and disapproval by the wagging of their ears and tails.

"Then there were still other members of the community who would neither steal nor gamble. They were known as business people, and traded in anything that was either useful or in demand, including

the very surface of the planet. This was to a certain extent necessary to facilitate exchange of the various commodities between the different people; but the art degenerated into a condition worse than robbery. Adulteration and misrepresentation had become so common that no one could be depended on to tell the truth about anything if any profit were involved. All classes were so permeated with the idea of regarding their fellow men as legitimate prey that every individual had to devote a great portion of his life to acquiring the necessary knowledge enabling him to protect himself against the trickery of everybody else.

“The three figures before you are drones, lacking ambition either to work or gamble. The young fellow sucking the head of the cane did it simply for diversion, and derived no special benefit therefrom. The stick was used to steady his dissipated body, though he sometimes could stand erect without its assistance; but his companion sucks his stick for effect, and it was a very popular practice among these people.

“One of the more backward tribes in a less developed part of the planet discovered a narcotic weed that soon came into general use all over the globe. This weed was replanted and cultivated extensively, its leaves cured and chewed, rolled into sticks or stuffed into horns and smoked for its soothing effect on the nerves. It was also ground into powder and snuffed up into the nostrils as an olfactory delicacy. The habit had become so general that it was regarded as perfectly proper and indulged in without shame in the presence of those who were not addicted to it.

34 THE REVELATION OF JOHN LANGDON

Every victim carried a supply with him and publicly doped himself whenever the craving came on or his nerves required it. Many of them smoked the sticks or horns continually when they were awake and would have done it also when they slept were it not for the danger of setting fire to themselves and their habitations. Most of the males and quite a few females were slaves to the weed. If you met a male not in the act of indulging in it and asked him a question, he would be sure to pull out his dope stick or horn and puff smoke into your face before he could clear his brain sufficiently to muster up an intelligent answer. Every street crossing had one or more dope shops to supply the demand and the traffic assumed such proportions that it ranked next to bread stuff in the volume of business. Shrewd traders in the weed became millionaires, lived in mansions along the boulevards and were regarded as useful and respectable members of the community. It was the second biggest humbug and the greatest nuisance of these primitive people, but the habit was so popular that those who disliked it had to pretend that they enjoyed the smell. In earthly parlance these people were a race of dope fiends.

“And the female figure in front of the young fellows is also of their class. She was even more of an excrescence on the primeval society of that time. Though not exactly a marketable commodity, any longer, her principal education consisted in practicing affected airs before a mirror, in the numberless things that she hung on her body, and study of what effect

this or that combination of colors had on her sallow cheeks and bloodless lips—all for the purpose of attracting the aforementioned males. It had just become fashionable for the females to expose their breasts, but this particular one had none to expose, and hence the position of her arms when the substitutes fell off. Besides her physical exhibition, such a young female was expected to chatter incessantly, and the less sense there was in her prattle the more of a success she was regarded socially.

“We have now come to a place of amusement. These people spent much of their time in the pursuit of sensual pleasure, and the entertainment exhibited consisted of actions and noises—the latter impossible here. The row of males sitting in front, with horns and other instruments, made sounds that were agreeable to the senses of the people. Primitive man was not the only animal that liked certain combinations of sounds. There existed a variety of creepers for which music also hath charms. Both would wink their eyes and grin in approval of certain noises. Of the former species many practiced with their vocal organs as well as other instruments, and some became quite expert in producing combinations of simultaneous tones; the group of females standing to one side, with open mouths, are giving a demonstration of the harmony of sounds. But the melodies varied greatly in different sections of the globe, and even among different people of the same locality. What was considered harmony by one division of the race was regarded as dissonance by another. It all de-

pended on their education. And though this particular performance was not intended as an exhibition in gymnastics, the position of the row of females on the stage and the expression of the attendants' faces show plainly that either high kicking was also regarded as a fine art, or its resultant poses were, for some reason or other, relished by the spectators. They resorted to anything that would create a tickling in their senses, and finally had acquired such depraved tastes that nothing but the morbid and the abnormal would satisfy them to any degree.

"The whole of the next block was used as a vast female bazaar. Many of the best-looking girls of the land left their virtue at home and flocked to these buildings to trade in their own beauty. The reason that such a place attracted the very flower of the young females was the unfathomable vanity of the sex. The better a girl looked and the more charms she possessed the greater was her vanity. No wonder, then, that these bazaars were alluring temptations for youths and the pitfalls of many an older male who ought to have known better. At all such places intoxicating drinks were dispensed freely, and the scene before you represents one of those revelries in wine and sex.

"In our stroll we have reached what was known as the ultra-fashionable residence section of the city. The females who lived here would not so much as allow the name of a strumpet to be mentioned in their presence; but observe the difference! At this house they were celebrating their national Thanks-

giving Day, which was held in the fall of the year, after the crops had been harvested. It had been a very good year, and to show their gratitude they were holding one of those high orgies, called a dinner, when they were overtaken by the great catastrophe. After having drank large quantities of liquor and publicly stuffed themselves with all kinds of viands, instead of doing it privately, as they attended to the inevitable consequences of such eating and drinking, they were caught lying groaning on the floor and in side-rooms, both sexes intermingled in a drunken embrace.

“The long procession you see up the street illustrates the climax to each individual life of the community. One of the members had died from over-indulgence and his numerous friends were following his remains to the grave. The stones you see are monuments erected to commemorate the lives of such people. And their egotism did not end there; they expected to celebrate in some other existence for ever and ever.

“What I have shown you is only a glimpse of the bizarre life of this grotesque race; but I perceive you are getting drowsy again, so I will only add that out of these conditions developed three distinct professions that profited by the existing evils. One was that of the medicine men, who lived on the physical ills of the people, as vultures on carrion; the second were the lawmen, who acted as go-betweens in quarrels and controversies, and in that capacity managed to get possession of the litigant’s property; and the

third division was that of the churchmen, who for a consideration offered to purify the people morally by shifting the responsibility. This last theory is well illustrated in a passage found in an old book with which you are familiar, and reads as follows: 'And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.'

"There also arose a class of leaders who believed that the root of the evil was not the fault of the people themselves, but due to the form of government; and some of them succeeded in introducing new political systems and having them tried. But it mattered not under what form of government the people lived. They were the same irresponsible animals, requiring watchers with clubs to keep them from trampling one another under their feet. Any system answered the purpose of the ruling class, but the great multitude kept reproducing its vile kind indiscriminately, and found its highest enjoyment in giving free vent to the basest passions."

A drowsy feeling was getting the best of me; objects before me were getting very indistinct, and gradually dissolved into a cloud of star-dust, through which I thought that I could hear a distant rumbling, which also died away as the darkness increased.

CHAPTER IV.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

How long the inactivity of my senses lasted I cannot tell; but when I came out of the dormant state we stood before the ruin of an immense temple, whose lofty pinnacles were provided with the combined protection of both crosses and lightning-rods. The Superwoman pointed toward the structure and said:

“That is the most significant monument of the civilization that existed on this planet before Nemesis overtook it; but before explaining its origin I must go back a little and modify a statement that I made to you. In showing you evidence of the abnormal state of affairs that prevailed in the last stage of the life on this globe, I said that out of the conditions had developed three distinct professions that profited by the existing evils. While that statement is true, it is not the whole truth; for one of them was the progenitor of the other two, and responsible for the topsyturvy civilization of the race.

“When primitive man reached a stage in his development so that he commenced to think, his thinking was naturally faulty, as all first attempts are, especially when not evolved out of the most favorable conditions. He was then, as he has always been, surrounded by the mysteries of nature. He saw the sun rise in the morning and set at night, leaving a

red glow on the sky; he even saw him darkened in his going forth, and at times day almost turned into night; the stars in the heavens twinkled at him; the wind howled, the rain fell, and everything that he could not comprehend he attributed to a supernatural power. All nature was alive and primitive man could not understand her. If the soil produced vegetation, he thought it was a gift from the mysterious power; and if a blade of grass withered, the same power was held responsible. If he fared well, aboriginal man thought he was favored by the mysterious power; if he became ill from some natural cause, he blamed the supernatural power, and if he finally died it was the same power that took him away. Primitive man was bred, born, lived and died in nature, but failed to realize that he was part of her and subject to the same laws as all other living things.

“The race would have gradually grown out of these primitive traits if it had been allowed to work out its own salvation under normal conditions, but it was then that the crime of the ages was perpetrated. Primitive man was not actuated by the highest of motives. Love was not his ruling passion in either social or conjugal relations. Cunning was his most valued heritage, and those who possessed it in a high degree took advantage of those who had been endowed with less. A few commenced to pose as spiritual medicine-men and intermediaries between the people and the supernatural powers. The last named could protect them from harm and give them all the good things they wanted, if the offerings were commen-

THE REVELATION OF JOHN LANGDON 41

surate with the things coveted. By shrewd management these self-constituted wise men became the leaders of the race, with whom it was not only advantageous but necessary to be on good terms. Though at first not organized into any particular cult, they studied the mysteries together and formed them into systems, at the same time keeping the masses in ignorance and submission. They could also perform certain miracles that commanded the respect of the innocents. To disregard these holy men meant woe and disaster both in the present life and the one to come—and that was more than the superstitious people dared to incur. Every devotee set up an altar and demanded a good share of what the land produced, and it was cheerfully brought by the people. When the gods were particularly wrought up and bloodthirsty it was necessary to slaughter many of the choicest animals that the people possessed, but anything was done in order to gain favor with the mighty. In time these holy men accumulated wealth as well as temporal and spiritual power. They made the people build them temples, gave themselves high-sounding names, and lived off the fat of the land without doing any useful work.

“As a matter of self-preservation, these wonder workers supplied the people with the kind of education they thought would be good for their cause. This consisted in a formulated system of mysteries that depended on its authors for ultimate solution. All practical subjects were carefully avoided, for fear that they might lead to self-reliance. Self-help was

in itself evil, because it would eliminate the supernatural powers represented by the priests. There could be no such thing as a moral humanity; for whatever happened to primitive man was the result of an outside power; what he had was given to him, and what he lacked was either withheld or taken away from him. If he violated the priests' commandments, it was the result of an evil power, and could only be righted by a settlement or compromise with a higher power, always through the intermediary and for some valuable consideration. Primitive man was an irresponsible being that had to be managed by the priests, and this idea became so common that even some of the latter believed what they taught.

"But the increase of these holy men and their easy life on the toil of the masses had the tendency to open the eyes of a few who possessed a little more sense than the rest, and this resulted in a loss of faith in animal offerings. The people became more and more reluctant to bring their best lambs and rams to the altar; for they had found out that in many instances, at least, the offerings to the gods went no farther than to the priests. In other words, unbelief commenced to spread, and finally became so common among the people that something drastic had to be done to hold them in submission.

"The priests were equal to the task, however, and solved the problem by claiming that the supernatural powers demanded a sacrifice of their own race instead of animals, and that whoever was chosen would become a god and be an all-sufficient victim for all

times to come. As females were not considered acceptable, a young male of disputed parentage was offered as a ransom, and the program carried out with great ceremony and in the presence of a large multitude of people. The victim was 'led as a lamb to slaughter,' followed by a long procession of black-robed, chanting priests, to the very spot where that temple stands. There he was placed on a block by the officiating leaders, his breast was cut open, his heart torn out and held up to be viewed by the eager crowd, while his blood trickled over the stone, accompanied by the solemn chanting of the priests and the murmur of the awe-stricken multitude. The flesh of his body was then cut to small pieces and eaten by the holy men and others who were privileged to partake of the divine nature. His bones were buried in the ground, and the people were later told that they had ascended to heaven. Thenceforth all sins were remitted in the name of him who had been sacrificed for all, and the event was celebrated in the temples every lunar year. The block was used as a conerstone for this temple, which was called the Church of Atonement, and which later became the principal altar of the cult known as Churchmen.

"This awful performance put an end to the people's unbelief for a time. The churchmen became more powerful than ever, and received greater offerings than ever before. If any one expressed any adverse views, he was promptly put to death; for it was so decreed by the Lord, of whose divine nature the priests had partaken. Temples and holy men multi-

plied rapidly and the poverty of the masses increased. It was a hard struggle for the poor people, but they were promised anything in the next life, from eternal rest to eternal enjoyment, if they only believed as they were told and supported the institution of the churchmen. Those who refused to believe were damned to everlasting torment.

“This state of affairs continued for some millenniums. The priests were all-powerful, having become the virtual rulers of the people. Their system of mysteries became more and more intricate and elaborate, and was jealously guarded as sacred records of divine wisdom—and woe to those who dared to express doubts concerning them.

“The spreading of these mysteries throughout the inhabited portions of the globe, without any central authority, naturally made them vary considerably in different localities, and at times great disputes arose among the different defenders of the respective versions. Some of these controversies resulted in long and bloody wars, in which thousands upon thousands of innocent people were slaughtered in defending the cults of their respective divine rulers. This warfare was kept up till a compromise was effected and a central, infallible power established, to which all differences were referred. Again peace reigned for some time; the people worked hard and the churchmen prospered more than ever. All children born were dedicated to the institution and closely followed by its representatives through life and into the very grave. While this reign lasted, if any independent

thinking was done by the people, it was done privately and not given expression. In the interest of self-preservation, those who doubted had to pretend that they believed, so it was impossible to tell honest people from the hypocrites. They all did the bidding of the priests and acted alike. It was an age of conformity.

“But this peaceful state of affairs had a demoralizing effect on both the people and the churchmen themselves. Both felt secure by practising conformity. Honesty was an unknown factor and the social life became a colossal sham. The churchmen commenced to live a life of luxury and debauchery; and the people were permitted to do likewise if they could afford it, made liberal contributions, and expressed no unauthorized opinions. As everything that happened was at the whim of the gods and demons there could be no individual responsibility, nor was such a thing needed as long as all the iniquities of the people had been wiped out by one single stroke, and the only condition was to believe and support the churchmen. Sensual pleasure was the only thing worth striving for; and those who became impatient in waiting for it in the next life tried their best to satisfy their desires in the present. Morality was unheard of. There could be no such thing as virtue’s own reward, any more than any satisfaction could be derived from an irresponsible existence. Instead of educating the people for a practical life and to serve their fellow men, their attentions were diverted from it, and the result could be no other than the conditions you have

seen in the ruins of this ancient city. The fairy-scene you saw was the only reward promised to the believers, and this temple is the greatest monument to cunning and stupidity found in any part of the universe. I have now shown you the cause as well as the effect of a perverted civilization."

When the last word of the Superwoman's speech had been conveyed to me, the scene gradually dissolved, the light went out, and I began to rise upward, higher and higher, till finally my power of observation was suspended—my subconsciousness must have taken another rest.

CHAPTER V.

THE SUPREME LIGHT.

Again having recovered my sense of vision and the faculty of observation, I found that I had been transported to another part of this strange world. The local conditions at this place were much the same as where I had first stopped, except that this appeared to be the highest point, as far as I could see, and the light was so dazzling that it almost blinded me. As upon my former awakenings, I was accompanied by the Superwoman and she resumed the conversation:

“It being night when you landed on the shore of the Sea of Serenity, and the days and nights here being very long, each equalling fourteen of your days and nights, you could not very well stay long enough to see the greatest of all sights, the source of all life on your globe and the fountain of all power—the supreme light—a creator in all his majestic glory. But now, after a trip into the Crater of Linneus, you are on the summit of the Apennines, and behold the maker and ruler of these spheres. Observe the difference between that superb luminary and the reflected light of the earth, which you saw from the Sea of Serenity!”

I looked and saw a light in the heaven that was infinitely more wonderful than the former one I had seen, and whose brightness and sublimity greatly

surpassed the sun as seen from the earth. It was a beautiful orb of dazzling brilliancy, its intensity slightly diminishing toward the edges, and was surrounded with the most marvelously complex halo of glow. Around this another circle gleamed with a mixed luster of pink and green, through which passed from time to time the most brilliant radiations of orange, gold and yellow, and through this variegated circle projected blue and purple protuberances that contrasted beautifully with the orange and yellow flashes. The grand spectacle appeared like an immense ball of fire whose variegated flames leapt into space with great velocity, displaying the most wonderful combinations of motions and colors.

"As the father of earth appears from an airless planet, about ninety-three million miles away," said the Superwoman; and having received the impression that she was omniscient, I ventured to inquire what was the origin of the supreme light.

"That is the riddle of the universe," she answered, "and will never be solved by man, nor thrown any light on by the creator himself. Even the perfect ego has its limitations. But you did not answer my question upon your first arrival, namely, what had brought you here?"

Again I thought of myself, and this time tried to reflect on my past history, but anything prior to my meeting with the Superwoman was a mist through which I could not penetrate. I felt, however, as if I had been dissatisfied with my condition, and that I had suffered an irreparable loss of some kind, though I knew not what.

"You are in search of your beloved," she said.

Instantly I thought of my former sweetheart. I wondered if she could be found there, and again I reflected on my nakedness.

With a compassionate smile the Superwoman said: "Be not surprised or mortified if I should tell you that I am your former beloved."

It is needless to say that I could not help being amazed at this intimation. I answered that there was no resemblance between her and the dear girl I had lost; that I could not recognize in her any one I had known on earth, nor feel the attraction, or affinity, existing between lovers.

"It would not be possible for you to recognize your beloved on this planet," she answered; "nor does the ego necessarily resemble its physical home—a beautiful soul can dwell in a coarse and deformed body, while a demon may reside in an attractive form with a pretty face. And there is no affinity between man and the perfect ego, nor is there any between the egos themselves. Every ego is a soulless entity, that has neither affection nor dislike for its own kind or that of others. Affinity is a physical attraction necessary for the propagation of the species, but cannot exist outside of a physical world. As there is no sex on this planet, there can be no attraction as exists between lovers, or any such relation as marriage. The reason why the perfect egos must dwell here is simply that there is no other suitable sphere of our planetary system absolutely void of physical life."

At this explanation I felt greatly disappointed, and I asked the Superwoman why I had been shown so many things that robbed me of my happy anticipations; upon which she replied:

“All this has been revealed to you for a purpose, as you will discover in due time. I have shown you a hell that was and the heaven that is of this constellation, so that you can govern your actions in the future as seems best in your own judgment. I have also shown you the supreme light, of which you are an infinitesimally small part, but an independent and moral individual, capable of making or marring your own future and that of others. Henceforth a great responsibility will rest upon you, for you are going to elevate your race and make the earth a better place to dwell on. It is now as it was in the days of old, ‘need of some bold man who specially honors plainness of speech, and will say what is best for the city and citizens, ordaining what is good for the whole state, amid the corruptions of human souls, opposing the mightiest lusts, and having no man his helper but himself, standing alone and following reason only.’ I could tell you specifically what to do, but you must find that out for yourself. Unless you have found your own place, you will not be able to assist others to work out their redemption; for every man and woman must do that for themselves. There is no wholesale salvation. From now on work will be your watchword, but with the goal constantly before your mind, the struggle will be a pleasure and life a joy. It is a glorious privilege to live, think

and evolve. If the perfect egos were capable of emotions, they would envy your good fortune and rejoice in your victories. If you prove yourself worthy, you may yet recover your true beloved; but whether you find her or not, waste no time in the useless pursuit of chimeras. Cultivate knowledge, but always choose what is reasonable and just, and then remember that man has limitations. Do not despise a rightful means of subsistence, for only through noble work can humanity evolve, and only between the two extremes of penury and wealth can any reasonable degree of independence be found. Though absolute happiness cannot be attained in a world of change and emotions, by right conduct human life can be so regulated that the pleasures greatly outweigh the pains, and that there will actually come a time:

“By gifted men foretold,
When man shall live by reason,
And not alone for gold.”

The last discourse had greatly inspired me, but at the same time I felt a sensation as if I soon would have to depart, and there awoke within me a keen desire to know more definitely where I was. Seeing my predicament the Superwoman said:

“Before telling you where you are, I must first relieve you of the delusion that your beloved is a perfect ego and that you will ever become one, for there are no such creatures; and in the nature of things there cannot be any kind of life that is not in some way connected with the physical. Even the

beautiful, white-robed and harp-playing angels you have read about and seen pictures of in fairy-tale books cannot exist outside of a physical world. And finally, the earth itself and the dwellers thereof are often affected by this sphere, which is known as the Luna."

The Superwoman had no sooner mentioned the moon than my subliminal self fell off the precipice upon which I stood and landed in the boat, alone.

When I awoke I saw the sun on the edge of the horizon; and remembering that he had been there also when I went to sleep, I suspected that I had had only a short nap, but in this I was greatly mistaken. Instead of keeping on going down, the sun rose higher and higher in the heavens, showing plainly that I had spent the whole night on the lake.

PART II
THE QUEST

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about; but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

—RUBAIYAT.

CHAPTER I.

REFLECTIONS.

Though I reached home while the people of the house were still in bed, I did not retire, but instead sat down in my room to ponder over the strange experiences I had gone through. I felt worn in body and mind, but I was more tired than sleepy. Being an amateur student of both religious and sociological questions, the lunar excursion had given me more mental food than my poor brain could readily digest, and that naturally made my thoughts incoherent. I realized, however, that I needed rest, for I suspected that too much confinement and close application to work and study were responsible for my late experience. I decided to take a few days' vacation; so instead of going to the office that morning I sent word that I was indisposed.

A cup of coffee with a light breakfast helped to clear my thoughts a little, but I could not confine them to matters pertaining to the every-day world. They would continually revert to the strange world I had visited, and made me contrast what I had seen there with conditions here, with which I was more or less familiar. One of the first things I noticed when I came home was the lock on the door of the house, and still another lock for the door of my own

room. It had always been my habit to lock the latter door before retiring, and now I began to wonder why I did this. There was no one I was afraid of in the house, and the outer door was always locked at night. Perhaps the lock itself suggested that the key should be turned, or maybe there was left in me some of that barbarian mistrust that made the locks necessary. But it seemed that two thousand years of Christian teaching should have dispelled that fear and made me and my fellow men more non-resistant, if not created in us a more brotherly feeling toward one another.

The more I reflected on these things, the more certain I became that there was something radically wrong with either ourselves or the civilization that produced us, and this naturally brought up the question: Why are we here at all? And now that we are here, what is our mission in this world? And if we cannot find out our mission here, why not try to make one that can at least be partially realized? My impression of the other world was anything but favorable; I actually felt sorry for the automata I had seen. The spiritual state had no more attraction for me—I had no longing for perfection—but I began to feel that it was a great privilege to live and work in the world.

Not that my former dissatisfaction had entirely disappeared. I realized the shortcomings of my own life, but thought that perhaps I had taken myself too seriously. Why should I have any great disappointments, and what harm could there be in my

shortcomings when I did the best I could? Possibly some things could be remedied, if I only knew how and it was really worth my effort. The Superwoman had told me that I myself must find out what to do; but how could I find that out? Was there a man or woman who could tell me? I began to reflect. I knew of some people whom I could consult. They might not know much more than I did, but they at least pretended to be better informed on the subject, and hence should not have any serious objection to my inquiry.

There was, for instance, Rev. Jonathan St. John, a well known minister of the Gospel and author of some theological works, such as "The World's Redemption" and "The Recognition of Friends in Heaven." A man who had spent a quarter of a century piloting humanity to another world ought surely to know what business we have in this one. I would ask him. Then there was Professor Philistadius, a man who had been a preacher, instructor in a theological seminary, and was the author of some books on philosophy. Any one who could write so profoundly on abstract subjects must be well informed on the serious problems of life as well, even if he had not been able to solve them. He must be consulted. And then there was Miss Elizabeth Knickerbocker, the famous woman reformer. She must also have given the subject some attention; and, besides, I would get a woman's point of view, which seemed necessary, as long as her sex constituted half of the race. Thus I would consult a preacher, a philosopher,

and a reformer. I thought of others, but decided to try these three first.

Before starting out, however, I wanted to assure myself of my ground. It was well enough to be right before going ahead, and my past experience had taught me that the dividing line between dreams and reality is sometimes very indistinct. In the first place, who was I? Whence did I come? Where was I, and whither was I bound?

I laid all biological and metaphysical considerations aside, and simply concluded that I was a member of the large human family inhabiting the earth, and sitting in a house located at a certain point of that planet. It made me dizzy when I reflected on the high speed with which it was going, so I tried not to think about that. I pinched my leg and it hurt—I was alive, sure enough. I rapped on the table and felt the resistance as well as heard the sound—I was evidently in a physical world. I got up and looked at the mirror. O, yes! It was the same John Langdon of Pleasantville, whom I had known for many years. There was nothing extraordinary about him; neither tall nor short, neither thick nor thin, with a common face and average head. No one would be likely to single him out of a crowd as a distinguished personage. I had always looked upon him as being close to the soil, as he had experienced considerable difficulty in getting his stomach used to the upright position; but he possessed more cosmic consciousness than any of his acquaintances, most of whom had reached the appendicitis stage. I winked at him and

he responded; I tried to smile, but he grinned in return—my attempt must have been forced.

Having identified and localized myself, I thought of what I would ask these leaders of human society. I wanted light on the problems of life, and I would ask them point blank: What is man's mission in this world? It was a big question, but the people I was going to see were in a sense the lights of the world, and they must at least have given the problem some thought. In deciding on whom I should call on first, I chose the preacher. Not that I regarded him first in importance, but his class had the ear of a larger number of people than the other two. In fact, I did not expect from him more than his point of view.

I reflected on my qualifications for the task I was undertaking. I had a fairly good general education, though most of it had been acquired in the later years, as I declined my parents' offer in my youth to prepare myself for the Christian ministry, and had no liking for either medicine or the law, though I spent some time as a clerk in an office of the latter profession. I had tried various occupations, from tilling the soil to cultivating the mind of children and young people, but never felt that I had found my right vocation. I had a vague idea that somehow at some time I would accomplish something unusual, and had devoted considerable time trying to invent an instrument to record the thoughts of man and beast—a kind of thinkometer that would detect dishonesty and criminal guilt; but my experiments on a shepherd dog had been so unfruitful that I gave

it up. Since coming to the city I had tried to sell life insurance, but did not write enough business to pay for all the talking I did, and was given a position in the office of the company, where I spent the last few years. My spare time I devoted to reading and studying at home, and many of my books were neither orthodox nor popular. Though I had not mingled much with the people in the past ten years, I had always been an observer of life and things in general, and hence was by no means a stranger in this world. The opportunity to do something unusual had evidently arrived and I was both ready and willing to take advantage of it.

By this time my tiresomeness had entirely disappeared. I was thoroughly awake and felt that I had a great mission to perform. I was first going to find out how I could be of the greatest service to humanity, and then I would make that my work for the rest of my days. I felt very optimistic—nothing seemed impossible. The questions that had baffled the sages for centuries seemed like simple problems in arithmetic. It seemed strange that I had not thought of this before. Why had I spent the most valuable period of my life as a social recluse, till my horizon had almost become limited to introspection and retrospection? I had mourned my beloved for ten long years; but, thanks to my dream, the spell was broken. I was henceforth going to be of some benefit to my kind. I had a world to conquer, and it would not be altogether my own fault if I did not succeed.

CHAPTER II.

THE VOTARY.

A serious-faced, long-whiskered man sat by a table in the center of his small library. He was surrounded with books in somber bindings, and the watchful eyes of pictures of men with serene countenances looked down upon him from the walls. His elbow rested on the table and his head leaned against his hand. Before him lay an open book with many passages underlined and numerous notes written on the margin of the pages. The room had a learned atmosphere, and from its outward appearance a stranger would get the impression that the occupant was a student of some art or science.

But a close observer would soon discover that the open book was not purported to be the work of man, but the word of God; and as the finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite, and any criticisms would be absurd, the inference that the man was a student would have to be abandoned, and the conclusion drawn that he was a devotee of some kind.

It was the Rev. Jonathan St. John's study that I had entered, and I found him meditating on a sermon to be delivered the following day. He was not preparing a discourse, in the ordinary sense of that term, as that was not practiced among his brethren; but rather preparing himself by subjugation and devotion,

so as to be in tune or correspondence with the infinite when he came to act as his spokesman and interpret his thoughts to natural man. The notes on the book's margin were no addition to the contents of the volume, but simply references to other passages connected with the eternal theme of salvation.

When I was ushered into the clergyman's room he gave me an inquiring look, and seemed to be uncertain whether to receive me as a friend or as a foe. There was really nothing about my appearance to disclose whether I was a believer or a skeptic—I could have passed for a seminarian as readily as a disciple of Darwin. Though I looked simple enough, I had the faculty of not betraying my thoughts; but any student of human nature could see that I was not dangerous, and even a member of the cloth could feel at ease in my presence.

Having introduced myself and been offered a seat, I proceeded to explain that I had become much interested in the problems of life, and felt that I ought to do something toward making them less obscure; hence I had come to ask him what he considered to be man's mission in this world.

I had no sooner pronounced the question than he exclaimed: "Praise the Lord!" and then bowed his head and closed his eyes in silent benediction.

Thinking that he had misunderstood me to be a supplicant for grace, I told him that my sole object was information, and I again asked him the same question, formulated in about the same words, adding that it was his opinion I desired.

"Praise the Lord," was his second answer, and this time he looked at me as if he thought that that reply ought to be sufficient.

I told him that the answer did not satisfy me, because it seemed not practical enough in a physical world. I expressed my doubt whether it would lead even to any beneficial and permanent results and that the Lord was actually susceptible to or dependent on praise. I ventured to ask his reasons for such an assertion, and he pointed to the open book before him, saying that he had the highest authority—God's own word.

"But," I interposed, "how about people who have another book and another Lord, which you do not acknowledge, and who do not acknowledge either your God or Revelation? They have lived and died in this world for thousands of years, and will continue to do so for a long time to come. Their mission cannot be to praise your Lord?"

"They are lost, but we are doing what we can to save them," he responded.

"Do you, then, mean to say that praising the Lord will solve the complicated problems of life?" I asked.

"Seek ye first after the Kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you," was his answer.

I told him that I had seen honest people who had spent their lives seeking after the kingdom, and had found nothing but misery in this world; and I related how only a few blocks from the clergyman's residence a Christian woman had been forced out of her home because she could not pay the rent. She had prayed

for weeks and months that her husband be restored to health, so he could leave the hospital and come home to help her support their children; and even after her household effects had been carried out on the sidewalk she had not lost faith, but sat on the steps with her children and the Bible waiting for help. The only help that came was the county agent, and he would have come whether she had been a Christian or not. "You may say that her prayers were granted," I added, "and that the charitable institutions belong to the Lord, but then you must also blame him for all the poverty and misery we have in this world, and admit that the people unwittingly pray to be sent to the poorhouse."

He acted a little nervous and seemed nonplussed for a moment; but he soon recovered sufficiently to fix his eyes on me and ask how I happened not to be a Christian.

I answered that I had been brought up to be one; but in my short life had found so many different professors of that faith, both in and out of church, that I was very much in doubt what constituted a true Christian; that all of them believed something that I either did not understand or found objectionable, and that none I had known could be said to be a true follower of Jesus, because they all, including the preachers, practiced more or less what he condemned. I asked: "What is a Christian?"

The minister of the Gospel explained that a Christian is one who accepts Jesus as his Savior, and knows that he is cleansed in the blood of Christ and

lives for and in him; that there is no other name given through which man can be saved, and that salvation is free to accept or reject.

I admitted that I was not conscious of any change in my life that placed me in such relationship to Jesus; but that I used to be an admirer of the lowly Nazarene, and had recently read with much pleasure and profit Renan's "Life of Jesus." I expressed my conviction that the Galilean carpenter was a noble soul, and, though he shared many errors of his time, certainly meant well, and would not knowingly have been the cause of all the misunderstandings and trouble his teachings have led to.

A heavy frown darkened the preacher's face when I mentioned a "Life of Jesus" of which he did not approve, and he did not hesitate to tell me that if I received such impressions of the Savior from reading his life, there was no question but that both I and the author had been inspired by the very devil himself. He expressed regrets that I could be so hardened in sin as to find any pleasure in reading a "Life of Jesus" without believing in his divinity.

This last remark was a surprise to me. I said that I was simply a humble student, searching for truth, and among other books at the library had come across the French scholar's "Life of Jesus," and read it for information, unconscious of any harm in so doing.

"It is unfortunate that such books should be found on the library shelves in a Christian land, and I hope the day is not far off when they will be expurgated from the public reading rooms," answered the preach-

er. "But if you wish to find truth, you must come to Jesus, and receive it through Him. 'I am the way and the truth,' says Christ, and 'all that ye ask in my name shall be given unto you.' There is no other way of solving the problems of life, and no true success and happiness can be found except through Him. In the name of Christ crucified I entreat you to abandon the way of the world, and let the precious blood that flowed on Golgotha cleanse you from all unrighteousness, and you shall not lack either material or spiritual blessings."

"I have tried my very best to look at this subject from your point of view," was my answer, "but am unable to comprehend it. I cannot see how truth can be found by first subjugating oneself to any particular belief. If truth and belief were synonymous, there would be no differences in religions; but what is truth to one sect is error to another, and in many instances the innocent finds it easier to believe falsehood than fact."

Instead of replying to this the preacher clasped his hands, closed his eyes and offered up a fervent prayer. He appealed to the Son to intercede with the Father to send the Holy Ghost to convert me, and he particularly reminded them of the great sacrifice that had been made for all the sins of the world, including my own; urged them to spare me from the wrath of the Lamb, and deliver my precious soul from the claws of the devil and the endless torture in the bottomless pit.

When the preacher ended his prayer I told him

that, in my humble opinion, his method was useless in dealing with people who did their own thinking. In the first place, I and many others did not feel any need of the kind of salvation he offered; secondly, according to the predestination theory of his own authority, the course I was to travel had long ago been mapped out; and thirdly, it seemed presumptuous to interfere with an all-wise, all-good, and unchangeable Deity, to offer him suggestions, or try to bribe or persuade him to do anything that he had not intended or was unwilling to do of his own volition. I called his attention to the fact that it was really belittling the Supreme Being to try to exert any influence over him one way or the other, and even go so far as to fall back on the barbarian blood atonement, that in this age should be of no interest to others than students of anthropology.

But the preacher would not give me as respectful a hearing as I had to his prayer. He told me that if I could get along without a god then, I would need one when I came to die; and he related his numerous experiences at the death-beds of Christians, and also what had been said about the last hour of some famous unbelievers.

Not having been present at many death-beds, I could not give him more than two examples, but they were altogether different from those he had mentioned. I had watched the last hour of an honest old farmer, who never went to church and paid no attention to religion, but loved nature and his kind. He had lived to a ripe old age, and when the end came

he said he felt tired and contented, bade us all good-by and went peacefully to sleep. I had also been present at the death-bed of a hysterical woman who believed in heaven and hell, but was not sure but what she had committed the unpardonable sin; and if she suffered the same tortures that I did when watching her both of us were surely in hell for the time being. I explained, however, that this example only proved the influence on the weak of what he himself would call priestcraft if practiced by a representative of some non-Christian sect; that no horror for death would be experienced by any one who had lived an upright life and been brought up to believe that Mother Nature is a benign parent, and only takes back what she gave, when found of no further use in her economy.

But I told him that I had not come to argue theology with him; that we could keep that up till doomsday and know no more than we do now, or our ancestors did thousands of years ago; that it seemed useless to spend our short lives in theological hair-splitting and metaphysical speculations, when there was so much practical work to do in the world. I expressed my opinion that the evils of our time could not be cured by that method, as the existing conditions amply proved, after a trial of two thousand years; that no superstition could permanently be held in reverence by a growing race or continue to move the heart of humanity to noble impulses. I told him that we needed a religion that would appeal to the thinker as well as to the believer, a higher morality than

redemption by proxy, and a more practical creed than blood sacrifices, and that I was trying to find out what could be substituted.

“Being that you have spent many years in what you call the service of God,” I continued, “and in that time must have learned some valuable lessons of life, I have come to you for suggestions as to the most effective way to bring mankind into a closer and nobler fellowship than the narrow and selfish bonds of sectarianism, and to ask you, candidly, if you do not think that the present has a more rightful claim on us than the past, and that the class to which you belong could be of greater service to those over whom you still have influence, by simply teaching them how to live an honest, useful and honorable life in this world, instead of spending the valuable time in trying to gain any advantage with supernatural powers, and teaching that one belief concerning them has any preference over another?”

The preacher’s answer put a discouraging end to my interview, for he solemnly shook his long-haired and bewhiskered head, pointed to the open book before him and said: “He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

CHAPTER III.

WITH A PHILOSOPHER

Although the clergyman had not given me much hope, I was by no means discouraged. I realized that it was useless to try to get any valuable suggestions on either the present or the future from a man who lived in the past. Though perhaps of good intentions, if not good judgment, he was the creature of a system, in the abolishment of which his class would be the principal loser, and the self-preservation instinct naturally made him hang on, even if convinced of being wrong. Never before had I realized what a terrible mistake it was to allow a business to be made of religion; for even an honest man will find excuses to justify him in doing many things that yield him a comfortable living. Unless he is a student with a critical mind, he need not be insincere, for as the poet has truly said, most of us have been misled by education, and "so believe because they so were bred."

But I had a live problem before me, and could not afford to heed echoes of the past. My watchword was forward, not backward. I was trying to discover the causes that delayed the dawn, not dwelling on a sunset, however alluring. Though my interview with St. John seemed to be without any beneficial results, it had helped to fire my enthusiasm. The

combat had given me more strength, instead of lessening what I had to begin with, and I felt impatient to meet the philosopher while I was in the right mood. I felt confident that he could give me some light on the problem I had set out to investigate.

It being only noon when I had finished with the preacher, I went to see Prof. Philistadius shortly after lunch. Though I had not met him personally, he was not altogether a stranger to me. I knew him to be the author of a book that had attracted some attention, which I had read. It was entitled "The Moral Law," and had cost the professor his position as instructor in a theological school. His notion of morality was not in harmony with the infallible creed of that institution; and instead of trying to convince him that he was wrong the trustees requested him to "resign." After his expulsion he had written a still more radical book, entitled "The Socio-Religio-Political Oxymel." This was just off the press, but I had seen it referred to somewhere.

Having reached the professor's office, I found him at his desk absorbed in a newspaper. The man of letters swung his swivel-chair about, and stared at me over the rim of his eyeglasses. It was plain that he was ruffled about something, and it did not take me long to discover the reason. The paper was a marked copy of the "Buck-Horn," a weekly publication, and contained a severe criticism of the professor's latest book. However, my courteous greeting and respectful attitude had the effect of reducing the hard lines on the philosopher's face, and prompted

him to ask what he could for me. I said that I had come to get his advice on a matter of great importance, if I was not intruding on his time.

"No intrusion whatever," was his answer. "This paper had just been delivered when you came, and I was reading a long vituperation on a book that I have published. But what can we expect from those who have been nursed on no better intellectual food than the moonshine that is dished out from the pulpit every Sunday. Such people 'will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned onto fables.'"

I told him that I had read his former work, which I thought was very good, and seen a notice of his new one. I admitted that the new book had an interesting title, and ventured to ask the nature of it.

"It is an exposure of the absurdities of some of our popular and petted institutions," he answered. "I expected some loud denunciations from ghost-ridden reactionaries, and I see now that I was not mistaken. But the world will progress in spite of these *gengangare*."

The professor having no further comment to make, I explained that I had become much interested in the problems of life, and felt that I ought to do something toward their solution, and then asked him what in his opinion could be man's mission on this earth.

"That is the question of all questions," he replied,

“and deserves a long answer; but, for the sake of brevity, it can be reduced to just four words: To protest against nature.”

I confessed that I failed to understand what he meant by protesting against nature; that in my opinion we were already departing too much from nature, and that it seemed unreasonable that we should be here to protest against the very forces that have produced us.

“It seems strange to the lay mind, but nevertheless my statement is true. For example, these nails would grow very long if they were not trimmed occasionally,” he said, while cutting off his fingernails with a penknife. “What would be the condition of our hair and beard if they were permitted to grow wild? And not only these particular parts, but all other portions of the human body. What would we be like if we had allowed nature to have her way? Both filth and vermin are natural.”

I admitted that we might be like one of the Philippine races I had read about, that built their houses in tree-tops, according to a Chinese historian who visited the islands many centuries ago. But I failed to comprehend how the care of a thing could be regarded as a protest.

“Certainly it is, so long as we interfere with nature’s course,” was his answer. “To care for the nails according to nature would be to assist her in making them as long as possible, instead of keeping them trimmed close to the finger-tips; but that’s where our interference comes in. I will give you

another example, of a different kind, but one that will help you realize the truth of my statement.

“I know a young woman who is at the height of her bloom. The beauty of her face, the symmetry of her limbs, and the grace of her form are the acme of perfection. But what do we find? At the age of twenty she has not a molar of her own. In spite of all the skill and money that has been expended upon her mouth, it is now ‘like unto a whited sepulcher, which indeed appears beautiful outward, but within is full of dead men’s bones.’ And we find the same conditions everywhere, a struggle between life and death, the beautiful and the ugly. The condition of our society would still be like that of the race you referred to, if all of us had followed our natural inclinations, and not been hindered by a moral law. There is neither justice nor morality in nature. From the smallest worm that crawls in the dust to the largest beast that unconcerned tramples it under his feet, and from the slender plant that raises its head out of the ground to the large thistle that kills it, everywhere the stronger subdue the weaker, regardless of right and wrong. The shark feeds on smaller fishes; snakes eat the eggs of our song birds, instead of dust, as the Lord said the serpent would have to live on all his days: the spider catches flies in his net; many animals eat their weaker relatives, some their own young, and man is the greatest beast of prey of all.

“I will give you more examples: You have seen a cultivated garden with trees and shrubbery laden with

fresh foliage, the beautiful flowers displaying their many varieties and wonderful combinations of colors and scattering sweet fragrance about them. It would be regarded as very wicked for any one to go and destroy all this beauty and innocence; but a cyclone comes and sweeps it away; superstitious man draws a long sigh, attributes it to some supernatural power, and thanks Providence for sparing the unworthy possessor and leaving him the sod to toil upon. An industrious laborer has worked and saved till he has accumulated enough to build a house by the wayside for his wife and children; but what happens? A thunderbolt strikes his home and reduces it to ashes. Where is the moral? The husbandman, in the sweat of his brow, cultivates the hard ground and sows the precious seed—for a heavy rain to wash away. He sows again, and the worms eat up the slender shoots, and if they leave anything it is smothered by weeds. Where do we find any morality in nature?"

I confessed that I had not given the subject much thought, though I had often felt a longing for a return to the primitive, nor could I see how any morality could be expected from nature. But I admitted that I might have a wrong conception of the terms nature and morality, and would be thankful for his definition of both.

"Nature is the sum total of all agencies and forces in the universe, whether productive or destructive," he replied. "My reason for charging nature with immorality is that the world is supposed to be ruled by a moral being, and the acts of such a being should

be strictly moral—we know the tree by its fruit. And morality is a law of right and wrong. To assist a man on the way to Jericho is moral, because it is right. If the priest and the Levite had been moral beings, they would not have passed by the man—even if he was already robbed. To misrepresent a competitor's ideas or goods in order to advance or dispose of your own is immoral, because it is wrong. We commit many immoral acts unconsciously, more or less, according to our education and conceptions. But a wrong suffered by some one is always the immoral act of another, whether man or nature, and what is right to all is also moral to all."

I then told the professor that I understood it was the ruler of the elements he charged with immorality, not the elements themselves, and he answered:

"If the forces of nature are controlled by an intelligent being, we must hold him responsible for their acts; but if 'the wind bloweth where it listeth,' we blame meteorological conditions for bringing about destructive storms and excessive heat or cold."

In answer to my inquiry whether man is improving or deteriorating morally, the professor answered:

"Man is gradually improving in all respects; and the more he obeys the moral law the higher he rises intellectually, and learns to compel the forces of nature to do his services. We have already harnessed the lightning and made it carry our burdens and messages, as well as dispel physical darkness, if not spiritual. We have also learned to understand the weather, so we can protect ourselves against it, though

its control seems yet beyond possibility. And for all this progress we are indebted to men who have unselfishly labored to make useful agents of the elements. If all men had been absorbed in themselves life in this world would be a much sadder spectacle than it is. Owing to their attention to personal appearance, women have not yet accomplished much in science or inventions. They are slaves to their own bodies, instead of to men, as some of them claim; and owing to their greater conservatism, they are also the preservers of priestcraft. The world is still largely enveloped in ignorance, and a great portion of our race has no higher wants than something with which to support, protect, and adorn their bodies; and, I regret to say, many are not worthy of the name of humanity. They have the physical form, but less morality than the beasts. In the development of mankind many fall by the wayside, while others slowly progress upward, all according to their will and ability to fight the hard battle of life: to protest against nature, and not hearken to the call of the wild."

As some of the professor's views seemed so strange, I frankly told him that I was not satisfied with his theory of protest, and I quoted Emerson, who says that "we are strong as we ally ourselves with nature, and weak as we fight against her or disregard her."

"Yes, we can use her as a means, but we must first subdue her," he replied. "I am now speaking with the present stage of humanity in mind. It will be different after we have become the masters of both nature and ourselves; but we cannot even know

nature unless we rise above her. The beast of the jungle and undeveloped man are both part of nature, but they have no intelligent conception of her. Time and space have no existence for mindless creatures. As one of our philosophers has said: 'There is no such thing as sound unless there be an ear to receive the vibration. Things and places, matters and substance, come under the same law, and exist only as mind creates them.' All of us more or less hear the call of the wild; but a return to nature would finally result in our dehumanization. What we are now is at the cost of centuries of struggles with nature and superstitions of primitive races; and yet we have an army of men engaged in directing the attention of humanity from this world, and hoodwinking the innocents on the simple question of right and wrong."

Realizing that he had the advantage of me, I did not make any more objections to the professor's philosophy, but simply asked him what a man like myself could do toward the advancement of humanity.

He looked at me in a half credulous manner, as if wondering whether I was sincere, and then told me that I and most everybody else could do something in a microscopic way; but when it came to effecting any great improvement there were many obstacles to overcome. "In the first place," he continued, "the progress of mankind is slow: a thousand years is but a day in the history of our race, and hence a man's life is but a short period in which to accomplish much. The most serious obstacles are, however, the antiquated institutions, which are upheld

and protected by private interests. Our systems of government, education and religion are in the hands of classes whose training and interests naturally make them oppose any innovations. To destroy them would be a great loss, and to patch them is very unsatisfactory as long as they rest on defective foundations; for a house built on sand is liable to tumble down at any time. The proper way would be to take down the whole structure, replace the worthless cornerstones with new ones, and use as much as possible of the old material in the erection of a new building; but that's where the greatest obstacle comes in. How would a hereditary monarchy regard a proposal to introduce a republic? How would the representatives of a theocracy treat the request to substitute their absent ruler with a present one? Would the trustees of an endowed educational institution consent to a radical change in its teachings? Have you ever realized the fact that, as soon as a child begins to understand anything, his little brain is filled with mysticisms that no grown person ever could comprehend; and that the most necessary things to know, such as to understand and care for our bodies and be of the greatest service to our kind, are actually regarded as improper subjects to teach in either home or school? Do you know that most of us have come here by accident, are propagated in a haphazard way, and that a large per cent of us are cheated out of our prime birthright; in other words to be born right? Just think of the labor and wealth devoted to teaching that humanity is thoroughly depraved, owing to

the disobedience of one man or woman; that the whole earth and everything thereon was damned as a consequence, and that we must look to the stars, or the dead, for our redemption! This system has partially succeeded in making this world a vale of tears, and a good part of its inhabitants hopeless imbeciles, vagrants, mental and physical wrecks, necessitating prisons, asylums, almshouses and hospitals. No wonder the church is engaged in charity work. 'As ye sow, so shall ye also reap.'

"These are some of the most serious problems that confront the reformer; and if you feel that you have the ability and inclination to do something toward their solution, there is much work needed right here at home. It will not be necessary to try foreign lands, except with a propaganda of such nature that it appeals more to the untutored heathen than the more intelligent, though perverted, Christian. You will find it a thankless task, as far as the masses are concerned, for they are not fond of reform. You will also be looked upon with suspicion, and your motive will be questioned; but if you are made of the right stuff your reward will be found in the satisfaction of knowing that you have done a noble work."

By this time my head had commenced to swim. The task before me loomed up so big that it almost obscured my vision; but I felt that the need of my services were so much the greater. Having learned the philosopher's views of the here, I was anxious to also know what he thought of the hereafter, and in answer to my question he said:

“That is of no practical importance to us, although spiritual medicine-men and soothsayers make the people believe that it is the only question. Our greatest concern should be to know how to live in this world; and if we learn the art of right living here we shall naturally be better prepared to live elsewhere. Professor Caterpillar, the astronomer, claims there are no migrations between the planets, and that all life produced on this earth remains here. He also says that conditions on other planets are less favorable than on our own. Mercury, for instance, is so hot that water boils continually. The poles on Venus are not likely to be as cold as here, but that makes it so much warmer at the equator. Its people must be small and lazy and at a low stage of civilization. Half the surface of Mars is evidently covered with ice, and although it may have a fine climate at the equator, rainfalls would be so few and uncertain that the whole tillable area has to be irrigated in order to produce any crops. The trees are naturally dwarfed and no birds likely to sing in their diminutive branches. It is thought to be inhabited by a race of psychologists with large heads and long and slender bodies. Jupiter is so cold and exposed to moons and comets that it is doubtless uninhabitable. Hence there would be nothing gained by emigrating to any of these places; and the scientist is of the opinion that the conditions are about the same on other solar systems.”

This being unfamiliar ground, I expressed my appreciation of the professor's suggestions, and thanked him for giving me so much of his valuable time.

I told him that I had already begun to realize that the main obstacle in the way of human progress was that very antiquated institution, the Church, and that no rapid advance could be expected as long as its representatives were permitted to practice their other worldliness on humanity from the cradle to the grave; but that I did not intend to work along theological lines, either directly or indirectly, not having been educated for that calling, though brought up in the faith the same as almost everybody else in our part of the world; that my aim was to direct the people's attention to this earth and try to show them how to make life worth living here, regardless of any reward in some other possible existence. I said that I was a little familiar with the professor's career, and admired him for the step he had taken, when it meant the severance of old bonds and practically social ostracism from the people that had formerly looked up to him as their spiritual guide; that I was free from such connections, and felt it my duty to assist him and others, who desired to live a rational life without the aid of those who had been taught that it alone is not worth while.

The professor extended to me his hand of fellowship and made the following confession:

"You are fortunate to have escaped one of the saddest calamities that can befall a man—short of insanity—that of being educated as a preacher. Such a training so completely paralyzes the reasoning faculty and warps the judgment of those who have gone through the ordeal that not one in a thousand

of them can ever again become a free man. I tell you it is simply terrible. Nobody who has not had the experience of trying to get out of the dilemma can realize what a curse it is on the mind. And if some of us succeed in throwing off the shackles, the specter of superstition haunts us as a nightmare for the rest of our lives, and none of us is safe from a possible relapse when our intellectual powers commence to wane. Even now, when I am in the prime of life, and doing my best to make amends for the many young lives I led astray from the path of truth in the years I practiced idolatry, the theological ghost often whispers in my ear that I committed an unpardonable sin when I decided to become an honest man and lead an honorable life. You have no idea of what a blight it is on the intellect and what it means to shake it off. We are such helpless products of the system that has produced us that 'nothing is more rare in a man than an act of his own,' as our own Emerson has so truly said. I congratulate you on your decision, and wish you unbounded success in helping the rising generation to become fit inhabitants of this world before yearning for any other. The field is large and the workers are few; but I hope to live to see the dawn of a new day in the world's history, when a man will be judged by his fellow men for what he is actually worth to the world, and not by what he believes and talks concerning things about which nobody has any knowledge. I bid you good day, my friend, and hope to see you again."

CHAPTER IV.

THE WOMAN'S SIDE.

It was my intention to call on Miss Knickerbocker after having seen Prof. Philistadius; but my interview with that worthy gentleman had so disturbed my equilibrium that I was on the verge of postponing it for a while—I needed a little time to collect myself before meeting the new woman. Then, upon further reflection, it hardly seemed proper to ask a woman the same question I had propounded to the preacher and the philosopher. I was not acquainted with the lady, and if she had not given the subject much thought I feared that I might offend her, and not even get her views on some closely allied questions I wanted light on. Then, again, I had heard that she was a very busy woman, so I suspected that it would be necessary to make an appointment, in order to get as much of her attention as I wanted.

By resorting to the telephone I learned that Miss Knickerbocker could grant me an interview if I called in an hour, and that she would be very busy the next few days, owing to a convention of the Woman's Rights League of America, whose president she was. This left me no choice of time. I had to take advantage of the first opportunity; for time had become a great factor with me—I had to work while it was day.

It being a whole hour till I could see the woman reformer, I had time to collect my scattered thoughts a little before the interview. Not having mingled much with the fairer sex for the past few years, I must admit that I felt somewhat uncertain how to proceed; but my mission was of so great importance that I could not afford to consider sex, conventions, position, or previous condition of servitude. I was not going to falter in what seemed to be my duty—there was too much at stake.

Having ascended by means of an elevator to one of the upper floors of a high building, and entered a pretentious reception room, a trim office girl escorted me to the door of Miss Knickerbocker's sanctum and announced my arrival. I was respectfully received by a tall and dark woman with a high forehead, keen black eyes protected with pincenez, a fair-sized Roman nose, firm mouth and a prominent chin. Her black hair was liberally sprinkled with gray, but I did not venture to speculate on her age. She was dressed in plain black, and would have made an excellent figure for a priest by cutting her hair, reversing the collar, and filling out her rotundity to conform to the standard of priestly proportions. She offered me a seat, and then leaned back in her chair, cool and dignified, with her searching eyes fixed on her visitor.

I began by stating that I had not come to ask for a public interview, or anything for the press, and that what she might say would be simply between her and myself; that I had recently become interested in the great problems that confront humanity, realized

that some great reform was needed, and would be thankful for her opinion as to what was really wrong with the world and what could be done for its improvement.

"There is nothing wrong with the world," she answered. "It is the people that are wrong, but we are doing what we can to reform them. Our position is, however, so little understood and so much misrepresented that it is not strange we are making slow progress. Yet, in the few years our League has been in existence we have accomplished wonders. Our membership is continually increasing, and besides there are a great many who sympathize with us, though some of them for some reason or other hesitate to publicly admit it. But I trust it will not be long till every sensible woman will consider it an honor and her duty to join our ranks, and work for woman's emancipation. If, in barbarian times, men saw fit to constitute themselves our almighty rulers, we ought not now consider it a sin to grumble under the oppression, and even demand our rights. It is about time that we were released from bondage. Does it not seem so to you?"

"Unquestionably," I admitted. "Men and women are entitled to equal rights in this world; but I cannot see that you are in bondage. It appears to me that women are now, especially in this country, enjoying greater advantages than men, except in politics; and perhaps it is just as well to let the sterner sex attend to government. According to our theology, the very ruler of the universe is masculine."

“The modern woman cannot share that view,” she replied. “We do not believe any longer that the Deity is masculine, man the crown of creation, and woman his helpmeet, as we read in the rib-myth. It is not difficult to understand which sex is author of that fable, as well as others referring to the sons of gods and daughters of men. Any unprejudiced man with sound sense and faculty of observation must see that woman is the acme of creation; and, judging by her higher development, must have been the first human being on this earth. Yes, even capable of reproducing her kind; for we have heard of virgins giving birth to children, but never that such a thing happened to a man; and from that we have a right to draw the logical conclusion that the Creator is feminine.”

I admitted that her argument was very good, and that I could not offer any reasonable objections to it; but I asked her how man happened to get to the helm of affairs, if her sex had such a favorable beginning.

“That is easily explained,” she answered. “In the matriarchal age woman was not only the home-maker but also the home-builder and inventor. It was from her that man learned to construct a house in the trees, cut the shell of a mammoth egg in halves and use them for drinking vessels, as well as navigating a log by either arm or wind power. When she became a cave dweller she started agriculture and domesticated the cow—in later times she invented the mirror, after seeing her face reflected in the water,

and it was actually in steaming her hair over a boiling coffee-pot that she discovered the power and use of steam. The first drop of that rare quality called the milk of human kindness was also first born in her breast, as a result of rearing the young; it is she whom man has to thank for both his home and civilization. But owing to her maternal functions, and man's greater freedom to roam about and fight with wild animals of his own and other kinds, he naturally became bold and vicious and inclined to dominate over his more gentle female companion. The primitive human society was thus gradually transformed into what is known as the patriarchal age, when woman became a chattel."

"And how about the fall?" I asked.

"There has been no fall of woman, in the commonly accepted meaning of that term," was her answer. "Undoubtedly it was a woman who first tasted of the tree of knowledge—she has always had a desire for information, as you can see even by the telltale propensities of the lowest class of women—and if she gave man a taste of the fruit, he would not have suffered any ill-effects if he had not misused it. Many good things become injurious when used to excess. Alcohol, for instance, of so manifold blessings to humanity, from a stimulus to a conservator—even a cure for snakebites; but, owing to man's immoderate use, it has become the greatest curse in the world. And it is this very intemperate man that dictates the politics of our country and the world. It is folly to expect better laws than their makers,

for a stream is not likely to rise higher than its source. But let the modern woman once come to the helm, and the corrupt system will soon tumble from its decayed foundation, man find his proper place as woman's helpmate instead of her master, and a new era be ushered into the world. As man has been woman's superior in brute force, we have him to thank for all the misery and injustice in the world, for woman could do nothing without his permission. Being the weaker physically and the gentler spiritually, she had to let him rule over her; but the enlightened woman of our time is not willing to submit any longer. She has found that man is incapable of self-government, and is thoroughly convinced that the world's redemption must be through and by her. Given the right to vote, it will only be a matter of a short time till she will transform this world into a more glorious utopia than any man ever dreamed of."

I admitted that there was no good reason why an intelligent woman should be denied the franchise given to an ignorant man, and that I was certainly in favor of equal suffrage. But I expressed my belief that it might be possible for women to improve conditions without the ballot; and I asked her if they could not through their influence in the home, school and society reform a depraved race, and thus accomplish the desired result.

She answered: "If by 'race' you mean the whole of humanity, I must protest that only mankind is depraved—womankind is depressed. The obstacles in

the way for woman's influence in the home are greater than men suspect. It is not only the political but also the social side of the question that we run against. I am now going to be frank with you and speak unreservedly, for timidity is not regarded as a virtue by the modern woman, and I judge that you are an honest and sensible searcher after truth. As you are aware, man has from time immemorial monopolized the privilege of choosing his mate, and woman had to accept his choice, unless she was favored by nature with beauty and charm, so that she could afford to decline the first offers, without the risk of remaining an old maid, which has been regarded as a shame to herself, a dishonor to her parents, and a blot on society. Woman, who by birthright and accomplishment is the crown of creation, in whom the omniscient has planted the divine seed of wisdom and love, has had very little or nothing to say as to who should be the father of her children—one of the most essential conditions in order properly to propagate, bring up and educate an ennobled humanity. A mother's influence over her children must necessarily be small as long as she holds the position of a servant, and must ask her husband for everything she needs. It is true that she is better off here than her sister was and still is in some lands. The innocent engagement ring has taken the place of the ring in the nose, by which she was formerly led, and, I am glad to say, many of our women are to-day in the enjoyment of individual purses; but still most men seem to think that she has no higher aim than to vegetate and serve

her lord and master. You can readily see that whoever has the power has also the influence. On the other hand, if woman is given her human rights both at the matrimonial and political ballot box, there will be no question about the influence over her offspring."

Though realizing that I had before me a woman of firm convictions, so intensely in earnest that she had not relaxed her stereotyped face in my presence, I ventured the opinion that women did play an important role in the choice of a mate; and that if they did not openly go a-wooing and make proposals, their eyes and actions spoke as plainly and effectively as if expressed in so many words, and that very few men were proof against a woman's rose-pointed arrows.

This actually produced a faint smile; but it soon disappeared, and she prefaced her reply with an admonition:

"You will do me a favor by not using any flowery language. Flattery has no place in the lexicon of a woman reformer. If she were susceptible to such, her mission would soon come to an end. Your supposition that women are actually doing a good part of the courting is an old fallacy, that almost amounts to an insult to our sex. No doubt the majority of men imagine that whenever a woman looks upon a man she does so with matrimonial intentions, and I presume such is more or less the case among the lower classes; but no truly sex-conscious and honorable woman will use such methods to signify her preference for any man. That would be improper,

as long as society gives such privileges to the other sex only, and a woman would run the risk of losing her good name and reputation. You see a woman has a moral reputation to lose, while that of a man's is measured in dollars and cents. But if a woman had the right to practice such arts as you suspect, there would be very little gained thereby. Perhaps in her whole life she has not a single opportunity to use those 'rose-pointed arrows' on a desirable object, and is thus compelled to go through life unnoticed, simply because she had no right to make the necessary advances. Under these conditions woman's progress must be slow, and were it not for her innate tendency to rise she would still be led by a ring in the nose."

"But are not woman's sex and maternal duties hindrances to an active life, whether in the legislative halls or on the fields of battle? Is not the home her natural sphere?" I asked.

"'Maternal duties!'" she exclaimed. "The modern woman has a higher mission than to propagate a depraved race. Her less advanced sister is reproducing more than enough under the present conditions. An if she should bear children, is it her duty more than the father's to stay home and take care of them? I fail to see why, if she is more competent than her husband to attend to other affairs. And as to the battle-field, that is the most absurd objection men raise against universal suffrage. Both that and the idea that a woman needs a male protector are based on man's own savage nature. In the first place, the

guardian she is supposed to need is really a protector against brute men, and it hardly seems fair that they should act in both capacities. I think a man is more in need of a good woman to protect him against his own sex as well as from the wiles of such females as he has succeeded in perverting.

"There will be no battles when the enlightened women hold the reins of state. The talk about the defense of our country is also sheer nonsense. There can be no defense needed when barbarous man ceases to quarrel with his neighbor. When the woman of peace rules the nations there will be no wars. The large sums of money now spent for the army and navy can then be used for education and public improvement. There are now more than enough of the steel and iron murder weapons in existence to supply the whole world with plowshares for many years to come, and if all the naval and military schools were converted into educational institutions of the useful kind, there would not only be no wars, but we could afford to transform the battleships into free pleasure boats for the people."

"Very true!" I admitted. "There must be something wrong with our civilization as long as we are killing each other by the wholesale. Though I cannot quite agree with you in some things, I realize that most of your claims are just. Personally I feel that the eternal feminine would be lost if we adopted the matriarchal system of civilization, as can be learned by a study of some primitive races; and female beauty, so highly prized by both men and women, is not

the result of a strenuous life. Before leaving, I would also like to have your views on woman's dress; I have heard that you are in favor of introducing the bloomers."

"Certainly," she answered, "I am in favor of dress reform. You know yourself that the bifurcated garment is more practical as well as more serviceable than the old skirt, that so long has kept woman in bondage. What are her limbs for if she must hide them in a sack? It is a wonder that she has been permitted to show her face, which she still has to cover up in some Oriental countries. Many women would wear the bloomers now if it were not for the scorn of men. But most people will sooner commit a crime in the old way than an unconventional act, however virtuous and praiseworthy."

I told her that I realized the woman's dress had great faults, especially its unstable and unserviceable character and the almost unlimited amounts of money that could be spent on it, and I called her attention to the fact that a good per cent. of the world's workers are engaged in making adornments for women; but I expressed my honest doubts whether the social conditions would be much improved by either a change in the woman's costume, or the custom of men doing the voting and wooing.

These remarks brought out the emphatic rejoinder, that a respectable young woman cannot afford to live on her beauty—she should do some useful work—and that the reason so much labor is employed in the manufacture of adornments for woman, is due to the

fact that when man no longer needed her for a burden-bearer, he made her an ornament and a plaything, but never allowed her to become his equal.

I admitted the truth of her statement, but ventured the opinion that it was as impossible for woman to become man's equal as it was for man to become the equal of woman; and after a short chat of no particular importance to this narrative, she gave me this parting message:

“Regardless of ways and means, there is one thing that you can fully depend upon, and need have no doubt about, namely, that the so-called new woman is as inevitable as her sex, and will become more and more modern with each succeeding generation. The only way to prevent that would have been to keep her from obtaining an education, and that is already too late—the cat has been let out of the bag. It now remains for man to keep up with her progress and give her what she demands. The time is past when sons of gods took daughters of men for wives, and so is the time when an educated man can live happily with an ignorant woman. We are no longer living in a man's old world, in which woman was only a breeding animal, and the result a degenerate offspring. It takes mothers of brains to produce intellectual men. A pretty figure may be very well, but intelligence is more necessary for the welfare of humanity. If you look into the history of our race, you will find that when semi-civilized men married barbarian women they begot barbarians, and that every great man in the world's history had an intelligent

mother. This explains the present low stage of average humanity. If you want great men in the future, intelligent mothers are more essential than fathers of brains. The latter's off-spring is likely to run in the wrong direction; and we have had enough of warriors and other cunning and barbarian egotists of the male species. Besides, civilized man needs intellectual woman companionship, and that cannot be had on unequal terms. But the race is slowly going through a melting process, out of which the men and women of the future will evolve, and they will be as unlike the men and women of the past as the master and the slave. Modern man does not want his wife to sit on the floor and wipe his feet with the hair of her head. He wants a woman who can understand him and be his partner in business as well as his social companion. There will then be harmony in the marriage relation, and neither of the partners needs to be any less attractive for that. Instead, their mutual interests will help to further cement the existing bond between them and increase the success and happiness of both. I hope you will assist us in the moulding of a new people in a new world."

CHAPTER V.

A COMPROMISER.

Before outlining a definite program, I decided to continue my quest for aid and information. There were three more leaders I wanted to consult, namely, a liberal clergyman, a socio-political reformer, and a woman who had successfully established a new church on some strange doctrine; and as on the previous day, I went to the preacher first.

The Rev. Dr. Compromaster was a very modern clergyman who preached to a class of people having so little faith in the eucharist that they used individual communion cups, and I felt it to be my duty to call on him also, as I had spent some time interviewing an orthodox preacher. Consequently I betook myself to the parsonage and was admitted into the pastor's study. This was indeed very modern, considering the ancient profession of its occupant. The furnishings were luxurious in every respect, and the chair I was assigned to so commodious that it almost made me feel uncomfortable. The mahogany cases along the walls were filled with books in rich morocco bindings. There were classics in both the original and translation; historical and scientific works, as well as poetry and fiction; numerous theological works; several editions of the Bible, and voluminous concordances. The pictures on the walls were not all

of saints or theologians, but of scientific men, authors, poets and statesmen as well; and even a large portrait of the clergyman himself, including some photographs taken on his fishing and hunting expeditions.

The divine was a fine-looking man of athletic build, with a full face, ornamented with a dark, heavy mustache, slightly sprinkled with gray. His bushy hair was parted in the middle, and a pair of heavy eyebrows projected over his black, snapping eyes. He was dressed in broadcloth with the exception of his coat, which was of some light material and evidently a cross between a tuxedo and a house-jacket. His vest was cut low, and the patent-leather shoes were unusually long and pointed, with black cloth uppers. In short, the man and his surroundings were anything but what might be expected of a follower of the advocate of poverty. He was apparently a practical man, though a mystic by profession.

Seeing such a fine and intelligent-looking man before me, and realizing my own insignificant person and position, I felt rather small when I stated my mission. I also noticed that my direct question made him frown a little, indicating that it was either unpleasant to him or that he was not ready with an answer. After a cough and a studious stroke of his right mustache, he told me that originally man had no mission, and that it greatly depended on his particular stage of evolution and the times and conditions in which he lived. There were so many things to be taken into consideration that justice could not be done

the subject with an off-hand answer, and he asked if I expected him to speak for publication.

I assured him that our conversation would not get into the newspapers; and I took this early opportunity to ask if he was a believer in evolution, as he happened to mention the word.

He told me that he certainly was, adding that Darwin was one of the greatest men that ever lived.

"Then you do not believe in the Mosaic story of creation?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," was his emphatic reply. "Evolution is God's method of creation."

"But how about the six days, the mornings and evenings, and the creation of light before the sun, moon and stars?"

"A day might have been a period of a million years, and the mornings and evenings were evidently the beginnings and ends of these periods."

"And then the Creator got tired and rested, a whole day, or a million years?"

"Of course not. The eternal energy could not get tired. These are poetical terms used by the writer."

"Don't you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?"

"I certainly do. The Bible writers were inspired, as God has inspired men of all times."

"Then we must have a good many inspired men and books?"

"We have, though not all of the same degree."

"By that I understand that God has inspired some authors to write better than others, and that the writers themselves are irresponsible?"

"That does not necessarily follow, but the human part must also be taken into consideration. All men have not received the same number of talents."

"I must admit that I cannot distinguish between a writer's ability and inspiration, and I cannot see how it is possible to harmonize the science of evolution with the theory of creation, which I understand means to make something out of nothing."

"That should not seem so difficult. As no man could make the universe, God must be its creator, by means of evolution."

"By God, then, you mean the eternal energy of nature?"

"I mean God personified in Jesus Christ and made manifest in all creation."

"The personal God question has always been a puzzle to me, and seems to be a contradiction in terms, as I understand that God is everywhere, and a person cannot be in more than one place at a time."

"That's where the incarnation comes in."

"Yes, but even then Jesus cannot be at more than one place at a time."

"You overlook the third person in the Trinity. You must remember that there is also the Holy Ghost."

"That's exactly where I get confused. If the Holy Ghost is everywhere, he is not personal; and hence I have come to the conclusion that there can be no personal gods unless they are part human, and we do not know of any such at present. But I will grant that the triune God is a reality, and not a theological invention, and then what?"

"We have a father and protector in Heaven, to whom we can look up for help and strength."

"Yes, but who believes in him implicitly? If we are in need of anything, we generally resort to other means than prayer to procure it; and the man who does not pray seems to be at no disadvantage. Both those who have accumulated the most and those who have rendered the greatest service to mankind have done the least praying. The talents you referred to are evidently either inherited or acquired. You have spent years of hard work at the university, and certainly received nothing in a miraculous way, whether you asked for it or not. I also claim to have some talents, and may even have been favored with some revelations; but it cannot be possible that God has given them to me to use against his will and to the detriment of my fellow men."

"There is a retribution, my friend."

"Do you mean hell?"

"A hell of some kind, if not the ultra-orthodox one."

"I cannot see justice in punishing any one for honestly doubting an incomprehensible dogma; and what satisfaction is there in a threat if one must die to find it out? Is it not belittling the Deity, and an admission of inability to prove your position, to say that the trolls will take us unless we believe certain things?"

"No one can escape the day of judgment."

"I expect not. According to Ecclesiastes, 'That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth

the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that man hath no preeminence above a beast.' ”

“That is meant in a material sense.”

“I don't see how 'breath' can be construed as material, nor can I harmonize this passage with the doctrine of salvation. If I had been a member of some ancient church council, I should have proposed to vote the whole verse out of the Bible. But we are getting away from the subject. Instead of discussing practical affairs, we are still wasting our time in theological hair-splitting. I have decided to spend the rest of my life for the improvement of humanity—as a reformer—and I am looking for light on the serious problems of life. What do you think I ought to do to be of the greatest service to my kind?”

“I can give you no better advice than to abandon your unbelief. Your erroneous notions are revolutionary. If carried out, they would undermine the very foundation of our society. All our institutions rest on that old book, and to disturb their foundation would result in anarchy.”

“Yes, but if the foundation is defective, the structure will tumble sooner or later. A morality that rests on a superstition cannot be any more permanent than a house built on sand, and it seems the part of wisdom to warn people against an inevitable collapse.”

“There is as little danger of a collapse of our Christian morality as there is of undermining the rock of Peter, which rests on Christ himself, who is one with God Almighty from everlasting to everlasting.”

“Such terms do not mean a great deal to me, as

they are not human enough; and it seems that even to many of the preachers they have ceased to be any more than empty words and phrases. I had a fresh reminder of that the other day, when one of your fellow clergymen died. He had been praying 'Thy kingdom come' for more than a quarter of a century, and he grew so fat on it that he was advised to take a flesh-reducer. He did take something that reduced his flesh, but no physician could stop the reduction. When he and his family lost faith in the doctors, they sent for a faith healer, but the acid had so completely ruined the clergyman's kidneys that no power could stop him from wasting away. He lived as long as there was any flesh left on him, and in the meantime he and his family did everything they could to prevent him from going to the paradise he had been preaching about. This man had, like many others, wasted a long life talking about things that he did not know, but neglected to learn himself or teach others how to live, and I fail to see either the consistency or advantages of such a religion."

The clergyman gravely shook his head and said that he was profoundly sorry for me, and I had to admit that I felt the same about him.

By this time Rev. Compromaster showed plainly that my interview annoyed him, and, besides, the servant reported a lady caller waiting for him in the parlor. Seeing that it was useless to try to get any aid from even the most liberal of preachers, I decided not to take up any more of his time with the many questions I had in mind. Though this man had so little

faith that he would not even pray for my conversion, as his more orthodox brother had done, I realized that he could not very well go back on the institution that had produced and still supported him. In taking leave I was advised to read a certain book, but not asked to call again.

When passing out of the house, I met a lady caller at the door; and I had no sooner got down the steps than a carriage drove up and still another lady stepped out, carrying a beribboned poodle. It was plain that this clergyman was a favorite with the ladies, and his callers were stylishly dressed and good-looking. I could hardly blame him for being opposed to any revolutionary teachings. He had health, comfort, and plenty of company. If I had been in his position perhaps I would also have been satisfied with the prevailing state of affairs.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PEOPLE.

After interviewing the clergyman, I made efforts to see both the socio-political reformer and the promoter of the new religion, but I was not successful. The former could not grant me the time on that Saturday, but would be glad to have me come to his illustrated lecture on Sunday afternoon, and we could then have a talk afterwards. The lady did not exactly refuse to see me, but it amounted to the same thing, as she could not set the time for an interview. I was told that services were held in her church every Sunday at eleven A. M. and eight P. M.

As I wanted the Sunday morning to myself, I decided to postpone my quest till in the afternoon, when I would first attend the lecture, then interview the reformer, and finally wind up with a visit to the new church in the evening.

It being a fine afternoon, I left home early and walked a good part of the way. A heavy rain had fallen in the morning and washed the sidewalks clean, settled the dust on the street, and freshened up the lawns, shrubbery and trees. The sky was as blue and deep as I had ever seen it, and the breeze off the lake was very invigorating. The North Shore had a charming aspect, but somehow I was not in condition to enjoy the scenery. It did not seem like home

to me, and the people walking and driving along the boulevard were all strangers to me. I felt alone, though not exactly lonesome, as I was constantly thinking of my great mission.

Reaching the Auditorium, I noticed that quite a few people were going in, though my watch showed five minutes after the time set for the lecture to begin. It was gratifying to see that many young men and women had sacrificed the pleasure of spending the afternoon outdoors for an instructive lecture on one of the great sociological problems. It made me think that there must be considerable interest among the people in the proposed reformation of our social system, and that naturally inspired me with the belief that there would also be a chance for my propaganda.

Though the house was practically sold out, I was fortunate in getting a good seat on the south side of the balcony, from which I had a clear view of most of the auditorium as well as the stage. The seat was all by itself, but so was I, and I did not feel the need of any one to converse with. I was there for instruction, and not to enjoy a show in the company of friends.

When I came in, the hall was already darkened and the impatient people were shouting for the lecturer to appear. Instead of a canvas stretched across the stage, there was a huge blackboard with numerous lights playing on it. I had a pamphlet in my pocket that I wanted to read while waiting, but the light was too dim, so I decided to rest till the lecture began. My brain had been so overtaxed the last few days that

it needed a few quiet moments. I had spent Saturday evening at the library, and the Sunday forenoon I devoted to deliberating on my new mission.

The people were getting more and more impatient waiting for the lecturer. I had never before seen such an enthusiastic audience. Men and women shouted and sometimes threw up their hands, though there was nothing on the stage except the lights playing on the board. I also commenced to get impatient, and thought it rather strange that a reformer should keep his audience waiting for him so long after the time was up, and the house so packed that there was not a vacant seat left.

Suddenly there went up a tremendous shout that was enough to bring out any live man, whether it was intended for him or not. I felt sure that the lecturer must be coming forward, though I did not see him. But nothing happened, and the yell had barely subsided when another shout went up that was enough to raise the roof of the great auditorium, and this lasted so long that I thought it was never going to stop.

I began to look at the people around me, and was greatly surprised to find them acting as if they were enjoying a performance. They were so intent on looking at the stage, and frequently broke out in such vociferous cries that it was deafening to my ears. Between the outbreaks many of the young men and women in my vicinity sat with open mouths, as if they expected something wonderful to happen at any moment. It made me wonder if I was dreaming, or

had I accidentally dropped in to witness an imaginary performance in some large insane-asylum. I felt of my limbs and the seat to ascertain whether I was awake or sleeping, as I was in the habit of doing when in doubt, but everything seemed real. The people around me were also too much alive to be taken for shadows. Feeling a slight dizziness creeping over me, I placed my hand on the forehead, and felt that a few drops of perspiration had forced themselves to the surface of my brow, but I was not exactly feverish. Everything was a mystery, but I did not like to show my ignorance by asking questions.

My next conclusion was that the performance must be the announced lecture, "The Battle Between Capital and Labor." I commenced to look at the stage and found that there were two sets of lights on the board, and that they were rapidly appearing and disappearing, as if engaged in a contest. I reasoned that one set of lights represented capital and the other labor, and that the performance was a demonstration of the struggle going on between the two, though I was not sufficiently posted on the code to understand the play—otherwise the spectators could not be so enthusiastic. I, too, began to watch the performance, and became more and more interested. I took the green lights to represent capital and the red ones labor, and I reasoned that this play was given simply to show that they both have one source and are really the same, though they reflect two different colors. I also reasoned that the intention was to demonstrate that when the new party got possession of the means

of production and distribution nearly all labor would be eliminated, and even a lecture be given by machinery.

While I was thus interpreting the signs, the lights were making rapid motions and the people were applauding. Sometimes the green lights were evidently scoring and sometimes the red ones. As far as I could see it was a close battle. I cannot say that I had taken any sides; except that my sympathy had always been with the under dog, it was natural that I should side with the oppressed party. Again the red lights were moving very rapidly and the enthusiasm of the spectators increased till it finally broke out into an ear-splitting howl, waving of hands and throwing up of hats, that must have lasted several minutes, and even made me join in the applause. The lights were then turned on in the auditorium and the people started to file out. The battle was evidently over—and labor had won.

In passing through the lobby, a lone man edged up to me and said: "The Bandannas played a good game today, didn't they?"

"What bandannas?" I asked.

"The ball team: I thought you were watching the game."

I did not answer him, but again felt of my forehead, and then put my hand in my pocket, feeling for some coins that I had. They were there sure enough, but I was far from sure of myself! Well, well, so I had been watching a game of baseball!

Getting across the street, I asked a man where so

many people came from, and was told that they had been at the Auditorium watching a ball game. He explained that there was such a craze for baseball that it had been found profitable to make this indoor arrangement—reporting the game by wire—to accommodate those who found it impossible or inconvenient to be at the ball grounds; that the interest of the people was not so much in the action and to be outdoors as in the score, and the opportunity to gamble on the result. He also told me that a good baseball player received a much larger salary than our college presidents or any of our best paid diplomats representing us in foreign lands.

After walking around the block and pondering over the situation, I went back to the Auditorium to inquire about the lecture, and learned that it was given in a small hall on one of the upper floors. I took the elevator and reached the right place just as the audience was rising to leave. I naturally felt disappointed, and was at first undecided whether I should try to see the lecturer at all, as I could not very well tell him the truth. It had been my practice of late not to give away my experiences, be they real or such stuff as dreams are made of, and it seemed discourteous to ask a man for an interview and not come to his lecture, closely related to the subject on which I wanted information. My time was very limited, however, and being anxious for a talk with the reformer I decided to interview him anyway. If it became necessary, I could truly say that I had bought a ticket and started for his lecture, but had

been most unwillingly prevented from attending it.

Upon finding Mr. Heartman, and passing a few general remarks, including some comments on the futility of trying to get people to attend a lecture on such a beautiful Sunday afternoon, I stated the object of my interview. Instead of asking him about man's mission in this world I simply said that I had begun to realize that there was plenty of room for reform; that I had decided to spend the rest of my life with that end in view, and had come to consult him as to the best and most effective course to pursue; that I had known him to be a persistent worker for what he believed to be right, who in his career must have learned many valuable lessons of life.

He thanked me for the compliment and welcomed me to the ranks. It was a thankless work, he said, but the mere satisfaction of knowing that it was for the benefit of humanity was ample reward. No permanent reform could be expected, however, until the capitalistic system was removed, and the only effort worth while was to work with that end in view. The root of all evil was private ownership of property, and with its abolishment all other evils would also disappear. The only salvation was collectivism, which was making great progress. The workingmen were rapidly waking up to the fact that they always had been and were daily being robbed of the major portion of what they earned, and would continue to be bled just as long as they consented. The power to change this unjust system also rested with them. By means of the ballot they could effect this bloodless revolution

in this country whenever they wanted to, and the signs on the political horizon indicated that the time was ripe for action. The party had already a good organization with willing and efficient workers; but the greatest need was capital and opportunity to convince the toilers that it was their only salvation from bondage and the only means by which to obtain the full product of their labor. He wound up by saying he was glad that I had hearkened to the bugle call, asked if I had studied their literature and was prepare for service.

I confessed that I was not prepared to take up my work along those lines. I told Mr. Heartman that, in my humble opinion, while the prevailing system was far from perfect, it was as good as the people, and that they needed reform far more than the social or political arrangement under which they lived. The existing conditions being the effect of man's development, not the cause, it seemed like putting the cart before the horse to improve the conditions before the makers of them; and I called his attention to the fact that they had crowded the large auditorium below to see the report of a ball game, but would not fill a smaller hall to hear an instructive lecture on one of the greatest problems in the world.

For this state of affairs he said that the capitalistic system was responsible. Individual ownership of property and the struggle for gain had so perverted the people's minds that everything else was neglected. But when the new party got possession of the means of production and distribution, labor would be so

evenly divided among all the people that no one would have to work more than a few hours a day, and could then spend the rest of the time in study and self-improvement. With the chase for gain eliminated, man would get time to think and cultivate himself.

My answer was that I could not see that the main problem would be solved by that method. I had known workingmen with plenty of leisure time and others with very few hours to spare, and had also observed them both in localities where they earned small wages and in sections where they received a great deal more money; but I could not see that the number of hours they worked or the amount of their wages made much difference, as long as they had not learned any sensible use of either time or money. The prevailing notion seemed to be that life offered no other pleasures than physical or spiritual debauchery. I had come to the conclusion that the main defect was in the people's thinking. In other words, they were brought up and educated wrongly; and as long as that practice was continued it made very little difference under what political system they lived; and I asked him what his party was doing to curtail the power of the popular necromancers.

He admitted that I had touched upon an important and at the same time a very sensitive point. Personally he regretted the prevailing state of affairs, and had always kept his children away from the pernicious influences of priestcraft; but the rank and file being of varied opinions, the party had not committed

itself on the subject. It was, however, an unwritten law that the institution should be quietly ignored, on account of its influence to retard the success of the movement. But all these things would right themselves under collectivism, and there would be made some suitable provision for even the preachers.

Not being able to see any genuine improvement by merely a change in the political system, I frankly told Mr. Heartman that I preferred to work along other lines, and that by so doing I could be more instrumental in promoting his cause than by working with him; that any scheme to ameliorate the condition of the masses without reforming the individual could not meet with permanent success, and that I proposed to strike at the root of the matter—to improve the people first—and then collectivism or almost any other system would answer the purpose.

Mr. Heartman shook his head and said that I had a still harder road to travel than he; but he admitted the truth of my contention that an irresponsible individual is not fit to govern either himself or others, and does not even know the relative value of any form of government. We parted with mutual well-wishes.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AERONAUTS.

Though I had studied various forms of both ancient and modern practices of religion, I had not considered this particular new cult of sufficient importance to give it any serious attention until I started on my quest for information to guide me in the proposed campaign of reform. True enough, I had seen some jeers in the newspapers—which in modern times seem to have the same effect as persecutions of old—but somehow it had escaped my investigation until forced on me by an accident that I witnessed. A woman got hurt by a street car, and requested that she be taken to the home of Mother Magdala, founder of the Church of the Aeronauts, whose teachings denied the possibility of physical injury.

Upon inquiry, I was told that this new denomination was drawing upon the membership of older churches to such an extent that their pastors had found it advisable to denounce openly the new movement as an imposture and a menace to society. Although the new church was founded on the Bible, its interpretations were so radically different from the old way that it was actually regarded as a source of danger to the older institutions. The founder herself was reported to be a questionable character, who claimed to have received a new revelation; and, though

not married, had some years ago given birth to a child which she claimed had been conceived in some mysterious or unnatural manner.

I took all this information with several grains of salt, as my informer was a Sunday-school superintendent and showed evidence of being prejudiced; and by "society" I understood him to mean his own denomination.

Having arrived at the First Church of the Aero-nauts, and been escorted to a seat by a gentlemanly usher, the singing began; but instead of joining in, I devoted my time to surveying the temple and congregation.

The church was a modern and substantial structure, considering the use it was intended for. There were no barbarian ornaments or images of either saints or sinners, but both the interior finishings and the furniture were of the finest, and the pews were nicely padded so as not to be uncomfortable to the sensitive forms of the worshippers, of whom the majority were women. Both sexes were well dressed and exhibited a remarkable similarity in the bland peacefulness of their countenances, which were almost as expressionless as those of the white-gloved ushers.

A polished, long-coated man and a dignified middle-aged woman were seated on the platform, and from the man next to me I learned that the woman was Magdala herself, who was to conduct the services on that evening. It was an anniversary celebration, my neighbor said, and he had come there of curiosity to see the founder of the sect that had

created so much controversy among his relatives and friends. Magdala was to act as first reader, from the Bible, and the man was to act as second and read from the new revelation.

After the singing, first by the congregation and then by a soloist, the woman and the man stepped forward, and among other things read the following:

First Reader.—And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

Second Reader.—When Maria sat on the shore of Michiganum, watching the moon glimmering on its surface, and hearkening to the waves beating against the wicked city, chanting the wrongs suffered by its inhabitants, owing to ignorance, selfishness and man's inhumanity to man, there came walking on the water a beautiful woman clothed with glory and leading a lamb by a golden chain.

First Reader.—And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

Second Reader.—In her hand she carried a roll of paper.

First Reader.—And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.

Second Reader.—She delivered the roll to Maria, saying: "Henceforth thou shalt be called Magdala, and I give thee this everlasting Covenant to expound to men of all creeds and faiths."

First Reader.—Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those

things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Second Reader.—Thou art blessed and consecrated to raise mankind out of carnalism, and for a faithful discharge of thy trust thou shalt receive a rich reward in Heaven.

First Reader.—And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God.

Second Reader.—The lamb bleated Amen, and he and the woman rose toward Heaven, bestowing on Magdala the glory and the blessing for evermore.

First Reader.—The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Second Reader.—And it hath all been revealed in Aerology.

First Reader.—For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are spiritual.

Second Reader.—Man hath great need to be informed of his aerial predestination and turn his mind from matter unto ether.

First Reader.—For that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

Second Reader.—And so is every one that is born of the air.

First Reader.—Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.

Second Reader.—Thou foolish man, toiling in an imaginary world of dust, to support and protect a

body which thou hast not, wake up and behold thy destiny!

First Reader.—For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Second Reader.—Yea, mortal man is like unto the beasts of the field, a creation of his own mortal belief; but the Spirit only endures.

First Reader.—Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

Second Reader.—The beast is not born of ether and therefore hath his home in the dust and in error, which are both unreal.

First Reader.—They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.

Second Reader.—Whosoever accepts the new Covenant shall rise above the beast and remain forever young.

First Reader.—Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Second Reader.—For thy aerial purity shall secure for thee a home that mortal mind cannot defile.

First Reader.—Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

Second Reader.—Be then of good cheer, and have faith in the One who hath been appointed to redeem mankind, and through whom is given life ethereal.

First Reader.—In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Second Reader.—For all is wind and there is nothing else.

First Reader.—And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

Second Reader.—Boast not of thy escape, but be filled with ether.

First Reader.—Despise not prophesying.

Second Reader.—For she hath no human aid.

First Reader.—Quench not the Spirit.

Second Reader.—Subdue not the breath.

First Reader.—Rejoice evermore.

Second Reader.—Be merry in Magdala the prophetess.

First Reader.—These are they which follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the lamb.

Then the congregation rose and sang: A-m-e-n.

I commented on the strange performance, and my neighbor answered that it was a mystery to him how any one could profess one thing and practice another; he called my attention to the fact that these people, who pretended to believe that the only real thing is air, acted as regular materialists. They had paid good money for the ground, erected a substantial stone church with windows and doors, and that they all, including Magdala, used the latter in entering and leaving; when, according to their creed, they could just as well assemble anywhere, in any kind of

weather, and imagine that they were in a temple and provided with everything they wanted.

The new revelation was in a printed book, protected by copyright under the name of "Aerology," and one of the conditions of membership was the purchase of a copy at the seemingly high price of five dollars. Magdala had decreed that no preaching should ever be allowed in the churches of the Aeronauts, which my informer construed to mean that no improvement could be made on revelation, and had the advantage of protecting it from wrong interpretation. He also advanced the opinion that the fad was harmless. While it was a radical step from the ultra-materialism of those who hang up a skeleton or a picture to represent their god, its followers would never believe in it enough to neglect the ordinary duties of life, and the movement would hardly extend to the tillers of the soil, on whom all must depend for support.

As to their sincerity, he thought they were as honest as any other class who believed what others thought for them. They were intelligent enough to discuss the various breeds of *Canis* and *Felis* infesting the city, and perhaps dilate on the latest society scandal; but when it came to religion or any other philosophical theme, they lacked the faculty of comparison. When approaching a religious subject, they and most all other people laid aside whatever reason they used in the practical affairs of life. The fad had the redeeming feature of keeping its followers from many imaginary ills; for if they believed that they had no cranium they would not be likely to be trou-

bled with headache. But it was no credit to our civilization, he declared.

My neighbor said Magdala had intimated that there was a still newer revelation in store for her followers, but that they were not prepared for that yet. He also told me that she had claimed the man who acted as second reader to be her affinity.

I expressed my surprise that Magdala should have any special affinity if she believed that all is air and all in all and all else seemeth to be but is not. I suggested that it would be more consistent for her to look for "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

On my way home that evening I tried to review the day's work; but I had not recovered sufficiently from my astonishment to think soberly and logically on any subject. The performance I had witnessed at the hall and the church were both so utterly incomprehensible to me that it seemed either I or a good portion of humanity must be insane.

PART III
A RURAL ROMANCE

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

—RUBAIYAT.

CHAPTER I.

A CHANGE OF ENVIRONMENT.

Being convinced that I would receive no aid from representatives of any cult, party or institution, I abandoned the quest and resolved to begin my work. I realized that I could not expect men of influence to give up their comfortable conservatism for my proposed propaganda. Even if they agreed with me, they had too much at stake even to admit it; and the leaders of new movements had their own pet theories to promote. The crying need of the time was a bold leader, "having no man his helper but himself, standing alone and following reason only;" and when I reflected on the situation, I could not avoid the conclusion that I must be the very man.

But before taking up the work, I felt the need of rest in order to collect my thoughts for a rational plan of action, and for that reason I decided to spend a few days with an old friend in the country. He and I had the same start in life; but instead of moving to the city he became a tiller of the soil and a man of family. I had often been invited to spend my vacations with him, but had not accepted. In going to his farm I would have to pass through the

village in which once lived my lamented beloved, and this I felt it best to avoid. I had done so once and suffered for it more than the pleasure was worth. But the old wounds were fairly well healed, and other interests in life absorbed my attention. I was now in search of neither pleasure nor knowledge, but of a quiet place to commune with nature and myself. If I was to stand alone and follow reason only, I needed to get out of a community of imitators for a few days. I packed my grip and started for the country.

It was evening when I reached my destination, and the workers were returning from the field. They had been neither sowing nor reaping, as the corn had long ago been put into the ground, and it was not yet time to harvest; but they had nevertheless been working in the field. Agriculture was evidently more than sowing the seed and gathering the crop, as some city dwellers seemed to think. Besides congenial soil and favorable weather, much care is necessary to produce the best results; and this reminded me of my own campaign of reform. I also had to put the right kind of seed in the soil at my disposal, and then patiently keep on cultivating and trust to the future for results. I could not even expect to see the fruits of my labor materialize in a few short summer months, after which I and the field could enjoy a winter's rest. I realized that humanity is a very slow plant, that sprouts in all seasons, and is more likely to run to weed in good ground than in poor. Constant care and cultivation are necessary to prevent the enemy from sowing tares among the wheat.

The cattle were also returning home from the pasture, and they, too, acted as if they had done their portion of labor. This could not well be disputed, at least in the case of the milch cows; for they had both large and full bags and seemed anxious to be relieved of their burdens. They unceremoniously demanded an entrance to the yard, and seeing the relish with which they drank water from the tank made me help myself to a cup at the pump.

When I looked into the innocent eyes of those beasts, I almost envied them their honesty. They were not all alike, however. One cow in particular had a strong resemblance to an acquaintance of mine; and as she looked at me inquiringly I wondered if she was capable of reasoning. If she could not think so profoundly, she at least saw that I was a stranger, and looked upon me with more or less distrust. Could it be possible that she was studying me the same as I was studying her, and that our principal difference consisted in expression?

My friend George and his assistant seemed glad to get home, and were evidently satisfied with their day's work. Their faces had a healthy tan, and no worry wrinkled their foreheads. Their arms were browned and sinewy, and their hand-clasps both hearty and unaffected. I had now before me a people that were not trying to outshine one another in wearing apparel. Their clothes were for practical use, and not for ornament. Both the men and the women were what they were regardless of what they wore. I could not help thinking of the class of city dwellers that are

best known by what they have on them, and whose interests in life are limited to the material things they are enabled to put in and outside of their bodies.

Gathered around the table, we all partook of a plain, palatable and wholesome supper. In the preparation of this also, utility had been considered more than style; and the radiant young housewife, in a clean calico dress, and with unaffected manners, made a better impression on me than most society ladies did. These people were evidently not interested in either preachers or actors. From their silence concerning them, one would almost infer that they knew nothing of either church or theater. But they were prepared to discuss the vital questions of the day, both state and national legislation, the latest scientific researches and the newest inventions. Instead of asking about Mrs. Richer's fudge party and what she wore on that occasion, they wanted to know something about the intellectual life of the city and its great commercial and industrial enterprises.

I had suspected that my friends in the country led a narrow life, but in this I was greatly mistaken; they followed the world's progress closer than I did. The postman brought them daily the important news of the world, and now and then a new book or periodical, and they had a better chance to digest what they read than we city dwellers, who see and hear so much that we do not remember anything. I was delighted with my discovery, and resolved to incorporate into my program the depopulation of cities.

After supper I and my friend sat on a bench in

front of the house and reviewed bygone times. We talked of our playdays, our boyish pranks, our school-days, our struggle for position, and how the world looked to us in the enthusiasm of youth. All this was very pleasant and made me feel young for the time being; but though he avoided mention of the sentimental part of our experiences—when we went a-wooing together—I could not prevent that from crowding in on my memory. Though this was now long ago, it appeared as vivid and close as if it were yesterday, and again I felt the same pangs that had tormented me for years. My mind wandered away from our conversation, and I commenced to doubt the wisdom of coming out to the scenes of my youth when I was in the greatest need of forgetting the past.

Seeing that I was getting absent-minded, George proposed that we go and look at the cattle, and thus our thoughts were turned from retrospection to the present realities of life. He showed me his cows and horses, and informed me as to the age and pedigree of the best ones. He also showed me some young stock, of which he took special care, and was evidently much interested in both his work and his possessions.

And thus we strolled among the cattle and the horses, inspecting this one and commenting on that one. They were all so peaceful and satisfied. The whole animaldom was quietly awaiting the approach of night, and somehow the mingling with the brute creation had a comforting effect on my disturbed mind.

Returning to our former position in front of the house, George told me that he was perfectly satisfied with the simple life he was leading; that he had everything he needed, and wished for no more. The same was evidently also true of his bosom companion, for I don't remember having seen a happier faced and more contented woman. Having finished her day's work, and put the children to bed, she joined us on the bench and in our conversation; and from the knowledge I had of humanity, I judged them to be as well mated a pair as Mother Nature turns out and circumstances succeed in bringing together—he strong and manly, she lovely and womanly. I could not help envying my friend's good fortune, when I contrasted his settled and happy life with my own wandering disposition.

To her inquiring look and expressed desire to know how I was progressing in the city, I could only say that I was doing as well as might be expected under the circumstances. Both Rose and her husband knew that I had left the country for the sole purpose of drowning my sorrow in a sea of people, and I did not like to tell them that neither the city nor its inhabitants had any particular attraction for me. Instead I felt like telling them about my intention to become a reformer, but I thought it best to keep that also to myself. Not being familiar with the conditions in cities and the artificiality of its denizens, I feared that they might not understand me, and hence would try to persuade me from what I clearly felt to be my duty. But we discussed less personal mat-

ters, including the advantages and disadvantages of both urban and rural life.

Not feeling sleepy when the time came to retire, I asked for permission to stay out a while after they had gone to bed, just a little while to watch nature going to rest; bade my hosts good-night and sat down on the ground to drink a few deep draughts of the pure, sweet-scented air that came floating from the west. The grass, the flowers, the bushes, the trees, and everything around me exhaled a life-giving fragrance that was so soothing and refreshing. It seemed that I had never before known what a sweet comfort it was to nestle close to Mother Nature's benign bosom and unburden on her all my worldly cares. Back of me was the white-painted farmhouse, with green blinds, surrounded with large, flourishing trees—a picture pretty and inviting enough to make any normally constituted man or woman think of home sweet home. To my left was a wooded hollow, through which I could hear the babble of a brook losing itself in the vigorous song of a large invisible choir of crickets. These songsters of the night sang so merrily and with such unrestraint that they must have been satisfied with their condition, be it ever so lowly. Perhaps they were singing a song of thanksgiving for the growing crop, though it seemed that much of their music was wasted on the desert air. Before me was a long stretch of country, dotted with farmhouses and vaulted with the western sky, on which lingered a faint sign of the passed day, as if hesitating to say the last farewell. Over it all rested

a sacred stillness that made me feel a happy kinship to every man, woman and child, as well as all other animate and inanimate things in the world. To my right lay my friend's fields of wheat, oats, corn and clover; and beyond that I could see clearly before my mind's eye the home of my former beloved and the scenes that were dear to my memory. Again I commenced to live over the days of youthful happiness that I had indulged in so many times before. Again I saw the divine form I had worshipped, and felt the sweet presence of her loveable soul.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROGRAM.

Though I retired after all the rest had gone to bed, I awoke long before any of them got up in the morning. Being accustomed to the rumble and din of a great city, the stillness of the country tended to prevent my sleeping soundly, and with the dawn of day, the crow of the cock and the merry makers in the tree outside of my window made any further sleep impossible. Looking out, I discovered a bird's-nest almost within the reach of my hand. It was a belated brood of robins, that had their home right outside of the window of what was known as the upstairs guest-chamber. They were not old enough yet to take care of themselves, and it was amusing to watch the little fellows blink at me while their mother was away hunting for food, and then see how they all demanded to be served first—just as some people do when they have the chance in a crowd.

But I felt refreshed, and was up and out with the first ones. The country now looked altogether different from what it did in the evening. A heavy dew had fallen during the night, and in the form of myriads of diamonds greeted the sublime luminary as he sent his bright rays over the throbbing earth. No crickets sang in the hollow, but instead the woods were alive with the sweetest of warblers that made the

air reverberate with their joyful tunes. The grass and the foliage had taken on new strength and beauty, and the rose blushing opened her moist petals for a kiss of the morning sun. The air was sweet and exhilarating, and everything seemed to be teeming with life and good will to men.

All this was very delightful, and almost made me forget the real object of my coming out there. But after the men had gone out to the field, and I had played a while with the children, I went over to the ravine and sat down by the brookside to study over my program. The romping around with the little ones had set my blood in such lively circulation that I needed a shady place to cool off, but I felt none the worse for the diversion. The idea struck me that lively children and a sunny hill would be the best prescription for people searching for the fountain of youth; and this reminded me of the pessimistic sentiment expressed in the Christian hymn, that "every prospect pleases, and only man is vile." No argument could have convinced me that those innocent little boys and girls were conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and could be saved only through the hocus-pocus performances of men who make a living by trafficking in the destiny of their own race. This was one of the unmitigated falsehoods that I would denounce as long as I had voice, and there was any one left to defend the infamy.

When I thought of the destructive teaching that man is a fallen creature, totally depraved, and that the very earth he walks on is cursed by his maker,

I realized the reason for the present deplorable state of affairs. To bring up people in the belief that they are helpless, and preyed upon by demons and phantoms, cannot help but deprive them of all self-reliance and enslave them in the universal bondage. No wonder that humanity was getting to be a race of paupers, invalids, lunatics and criminals, necessitating the continual erection of new almshouses, hospitals, insane-asylums and prisons. As one cannot plant thistles and reap roses, it would be folly to expect sane, healthy, honest and noble men and women as long as they are brought up under such depressing influences.

To clear away this erroneous notion I would devote the rest of my life; and I wished then that I could with one stroke of my hand sweep away the whole theological cobweb and leave the race free to work out its salvation along rational lines; for it would be useless to try to cure a malady with the same medicine that had produced the disease, as the prevailing conditions amply proved. When I analyzed the whole Christian philosophy of life, I found it to be one long negation from beginning to end, and the only rift in the dark cloud a promised mansion beyond for those fortunate enough to be able to believe what they are told by speculators in the most sacred of man's tendencies—the dream of immortality.

Instead of this pessimistic and destructive philosophy, I would substitute the constructive sciences of biology and evolution. I would teach that man never fell en masse through the disobedience of one

man or woman, but has gradually risen from lower to higher stages, in spite of the check held on him by an organized system of priestcraft; that the only original sin that can be accounted for its heredity, and that this cannot be eradicated by holy water, formulas, or believing in them; that the human race is not exempt from the fundamental laws that govern all other animals, and hence subject to no other miracle in its propagation; that man is what prenatal influences and environment have made him, and that the only salvation possible is a physical and moral regeneration; that all supposed redemption by faith in a proxy is an immoral flimflam that destroys individual responsibility and produces both cowards and criminals; that man's weal or woe is not the result of supernatural interference, but simply the operation of a well-known law of cause and effect; that this life is too serious to gamble away for uncertainties, regardless how many lives the future may have in store, as the preparation and duties of one life at a time are all any human being can do justice to; that this world can be made as good a place as any one should desire to live in, by eliminating all strife and egotistical notions of preferences in both the here and the hereafter, and devoting such wasted energy to the amelioration of physical, social and moral conditions; that no other reward is needed for doing one's duty than the satisfaction of having spent a good and useful life; that there can be no valuable comfort derived from the thought that those who believe differently, or in any way offend us, shall be eternally

damned, and even roasted on slow fire before our very eyes, as the story about Lazarus and the rich man implies; that no one has a moral right to teach anything that he does not know himself, and that it is criminal to draw any revenues from the people by pretending to represent any other power than man, or to act as the intermediary between him and the unknown; that all fortune-tellers, so-called evangelists, soothsayers and necromancers should be regarded as vagrants and swindlers, to be shunned by all self-respecting men and women, till such a time as public sentiments would put an end to their nefarious traffic; and finally that love is the supreme regenerator and savior of mankind, and through its benevolent ministration ignorance and selfishness will have to vanish from the earth and humanity blossom into sweet, sane and beautiful men and women, and this "vale of tears" become a place more fit for the gods than the ancient conception of a material heaven of barbaric splendor, made of gold, crystals and precious stones.

All these propositions seemed so simple and sane that no reasonable person could make any valid objection to them; and when I thought of my mission, I became so enthusiastic that I almost preached to the cattle that were grazing on the opposite side of the creek. I wished that I were back in the city and within hearing of a great multitude of people, so that I could tell them of the good tidings.

It was gratifying to me that the country people seemed not so much in need of reform—they had so

little time to spend in the pursuit of chimeras that they were evidently not in danger of falling a prey to spiritual confidence-men. But the simple-minded of the city dwellers, with more time on their hands than they have been taught to use wisely and profitably, surely needed to be aroused. They were in sore need of being informed that life has a greater claim on them than to go on their knees and request the great unknown to save their shriveled and egotistical souls from the devil, when salvation can be found in so simple and plentiful a thing as the service of man. It made my heart ache when I thought of the countless thousands that have toiled and suffered to build up and support such a large army of social parasites, and all this at the neglect of learning the simplest lessons of life, their duties to themselves, their offsprings and the society in which they live.

But if they had not been told the truth before, they would soon hear it in unmistakable words. I was resolved to proclaim it from the housetops, if it became necessary; and if the people would not come and listen to my message, I would bring it to their homes. If I could not speak to them personally, I would enlist the services of my friends to print and distribute pamphlets so attractive and numerous that no man or woman could help reading one. Having spread the message in my own city, I would go to other towns and thickly populated centers throughout the land; and when my own country had been brought under the reign of reason, it would then be time to consider the salvation of other nations of the world.

And thus I reasoned on this beautiful summer day, in the midst of a munificent nature under a cloudless sky. The country was in the height of its summer beauty. The grass was fresh and green, the flowers were pretty and fragrant, the trees were luxuriant, and the breeze was balmy. The brook sang a cheerful song as it wended its way to eternity; the birds fluttered to and fro, and cooed and chirped and trilled in the branches above my head, while I thought and planned and dreamt of a moral and intellectual conquest of the world.

The program I had outlined was short, but fairly satisfactory to myself. It embraced the fundamental truths I wanted to popularize, and to them something could be added from time to time, as conditions required and it seemed necessary. I did not regard my ideas as final, nor expect that I had drawn up an infallible creed, to which all coming generations must subscribe. It was simply what the world needed for the time being, and would naturally become needless when people had advanced to a higher stage and the problems that had called it forth would cease to be a factor in their life. While the truths it contained would always remain, those as self-evident as two times two would no longer be a subject of dispute, and thus be relegated to the realm of other axioms that are so plain that they seem to have no further purpose to serve.

Later in the day I had a romp with the children; so that when evening came, I, too, felt as if I had done a day's work, though it might not have been

regarded as the most useful kind from the farmers' point of view. But play has its use as well as work; and thinking is also necessary in order to get away from antiquated customs, that are accepted as good and useful by people who have no higher ambition than to do what others have done.

The beneficial effect of spending a whole day in the open air had already commenced to show to such an extent that I was complimented on my improvement in outward appearance; and to this I could truly testify that I felt fully as well as I looked, and that my mind was more clear and active than I had known it for many a day. But when I intimated that I was already thinking of my return to the city, they all expressed great surprise, and George said that on the morrow he would provide for me something with which to occupy my mind to the exclusion of both the city and the inhabitants thereof.

CHAPTER III.

ADELINE.

At the breakfast table George told us that he had to make a trip to town, to attend to some business, and he suggested that I accompany him. It promised to be fine day, he said, and the drive would be both pleasant and beneficial. Besides, I would be sure to meet some old friends that I had not seen for many years.

This offer was such an agreeable one that I accepted it without hesitation. True enough, I thought of my former sad experience, but that was now so long ago that it seemed safe to venture a visit to the very graveyard of my former happiness. Moreover, my head was full of the previous day's program and my enthusiasm for my mission too great to be swayed by old memories, or influenced by incidental trifles that only concerned individuals, and were of no importance to humanity as a whole. We started for town about nine o'clock in the morning.

It was a fine road all the way, partly lined with large elms, maples and hedges, with here and there a gate closing the private road leading to some farmhouse. The country was not a monotonous prairie, but rather rolling, and was cut through with some hollows that were covered with woods. We also crossed a small river, over a picturesque old bridge, and drove through

a ravine that was decorated with ferns and shrubbery. We passed numerous fields of new-mown clover and timothy and growing crops of various kinds, and also pastures with grazing cattle, both plain and spotted, of which some looked at us with large and wondering eyes. It was altogether a pleasant scene, restful to the eyes and pleasing to the senses; and besides making me feel that life was a joy, the perspective seemed also to enlarge my mental horizon.

As we went along George related the changes that had taken place since I last traveled that way. Some old farmers had died and been succeeded by their sons, of whom some were small boys when I last saw that country; and it made me reflect on the short span of human life, and the necessity for useful effort while there was time. Other farmers had sold out and moved to the city to educate their sons and daughters in the accepted ways of the world. He also related the tragic life and death of a young woman I had known in our early youth, who had lost her reason brooding over an unfortunate love affair. After living in a world of delusion some years, and raving about heaven and angels, of whom she claimed her former lover to be one, though yet living, she put an end to her own life for the purpose of joining him in another world.

All this history was both new and strange to me. It seemed so recently that I had passed along the same road that I could not realize that it was a whole decade; that the little tots had grown up to be boys and girls, and the boys and girls had become men and

women, married and had little boys and girls of their own. It seemed as if I had been asleep all these years and just awakened from a dream, and while I had dreamed the world moved on just the same as if I had been awake. Some of the older generation had passed away and a younger generation had taken their places, but the earth not only abideth but was so young and fresh that any dissolution seemed to be very far away.

Reaching the outskirts of the village, we passed the spot that was so sacred to memory that I had kept away from it all these years—the peaceful little cemetery in which were buried many hopes and secrets besides my own earthly happiness. And finally we approached the quaint old brick house with vines growing all over the wide verandas, and so fond of the old home that they had even crept up the bare walls. There was the spacious ground with the winding roads that I had trod arm in arm with my beloved, and the same old rustic seat on which we had rested and dreamt of an endless voyage under a smiling sky. Again I recalled vividly the last scene on that seat in which I was an actor, and I could almost feel the lifeless lips I had kissed ten years before.

An overwhelming emotion was getting the best of me when George called my attention to a vision that was emerging from some tall lilac bushes on the side of the house, and at the sight of which I was very much affected. The apparition was none other than that of my beloved, and again I had good reason to question my ability to tell dreams from reality. I took

hold of my friend's arm to ascertain my true condition; and he told me afterwards that I had scared him not a little by first turning deathly pale and then crimson as the fluid that coursed through my veins.

But instead of a mere shadow, it proved to be a real young woman of flesh and blood, who had seen us coming along the road and came out to greet us. It was Adeline, the younger sister of my beloved, and she appeared to be such an exact counterpart of her that I could not for the time being see any difference between the two. George introduced us as old friends, and though she at first colored up a little, she did not show any embarrassment. When he informed her that I was spending a few days in the country, and, with a mischievous look in his eye, asked her if she would be so kind as to take care of me while he went to attend to some business, it was both her and my turn to blush; but she laughed heartily and said that she would be glad to do so, and that she had just been wishing for something to turn up.

I dismounted from the buggy and George drove away, saying that he would be back before long. I shook hands with my new-found guardian, who had grown from a little girl to a young woman since I last saw her. But my actions must have seemed awkward to her; for when I gently pressed her chubby, soft hand and looked into her heavenly blue eyes, I felt as if all the self I had ever possessed was lost and absorbed by the gracious, kind and charming girl before me. It was the second rebirth I had experienced; but this one felt sweeter and more blissful than

the former, and for a long while, time, space, the world, and humanity with all its problems to solve were as completely obliterated as if they had never existed.

We sat down on the rustic seat, and the first thing she did was to give me a gentle reproof for staying away so long—to which I pleaded guilty; but I said it was not altogether my own fault, and that I would have liked to come before if I could have done so and have felt that the pain was not greater than the pleasure.

Her face became very serious, and she turned to me with a sad and sympathetic look in her clear and expressive eyes. She said that, though only nine years old at the time, she had realized that I felt very bad over Amy's sudden and unexpected demise. She too had felt the loss very much, but had since become accustomed to be without her, and now looked back to those childhood days as a remote period of her life; and then she expressed her surprise that I had "not changed the least bit," but looked exactly the same as she remembered me ten years before.

I confessed that I had changed greatly since she last saw me, although my face might not show it so much, and that from being almost a child mentally I had advanced considerably toward maturity. Though I had spent the last few years practically as a recluse, my life had been more of the mind than of the body, and I had had neither time nor occasion to grow old physically. I then told her that I had never known of two people to look and be so much alike as she

and her sister; that not only her face and form but also the expression of her mouth and eyes and the very intonation of her voice were the same as I remembered her beloved sister's to be. And this she said pleased her very much, because Amy was known by all of her acquaintances as an exceptionally good and noble girl, and that there were some people besides herself who still kept bringing flowers to her grave.

This last remark pricked my conscience at first, because I had neither brought nor sent any flowers since I left Pleasantville; but I found consolation in the recollection that I was about the only one who gave Amy flowers while she lived, and that her memory was dearer to me than to any of her relatives or friends.

After enjoying a sociable dinner hour with the whole family, we again strolled through the grounds, and cultivated each other's intellectual acquaintance; and it was in this respect that I found Adeline differed from Amy. Besides being a beautiful woman physically, and as warm-hearted, sensitive, and emotional, she had a clearer intellect, a more vivid mind, and a modest brilliancy that made her still more fascinating than her sister. She was also as unconscious of self as a bird soaring in space, and entered into our conversation with a simplicity and frankness that made me feel as if I were the object of her whole confidence and affection; and that after many years of unsatisfied yearning and a haunting sense of heart thirst I had at last found a blessed fountain, overflowing with life, sparkling with wit, rich in sympathy and constant

in love—more healing than the balm of Gilead and far more satisfying than a prospective place in the bosom of either Abraham or any descendant of Abraham.

Seeing that my new-found friend had a fair knowledge of history, as well as the best thought and literature of the world, and was prepared to discuss questions that are outside the usual pale of a young woman's mind, I asked her how she had come into possession of so much culture, and where she had obtained her education.

Her answer was first a surprise to me and then a delight, for she frankly said: "I never had any education worth mentioning. Of course, I attended the public schools, as all girls do nowadays, but there one obtains only the tools with which to learn something elsewhere. Then I spent a few months at a ladies' boarding-school in the East, and perhaps got some roughness polished off, as we had a sociable time there; but my knowledge of life and the world has mostly come from my father and his library. He is quite a student himself, and he likes to talk with me about what we read. Sometimes when his eyes are tired I read aloud to him, and as we proceed we generally discuss the ideas advanced or subjects treated. Our library is not large, but it contains not a few good books, and father says one does not need so many if they are of the right kind. Outside of the reference works and the so-called Sacred Books of the East, I have read through all the volumes we have, and they are on varied subjects, from how to raise

vegetables to metaphysical speculations. I am fond of history and literature, and the few novels we have are by good authors, though they may not be as popular as some others. I like to read a good story once in a while, but father calls both popular fiction and popular religion dope; and I have noticed that people who indulge much in them act as if they lived in some kind of fool's paradise, and are generally ignorant of the common realities of life. My girl friends read nothing but silly novels that are published and advertised from time to time, and hence we have very little in common on the subject of literature. They read for the sake of the plot or the story, while I like something instructive, that gives me ideas, and is beautifully expressed. I guess I am the only girl in town who has read 'The Origin of Species'; most of them do not even read a magazine piece unless it is a story, and the sillier it is the better they like it—but I am talking so much that you have no chance to say anything. The reason is that I seldom have an opportunity to talk as I really like to."

"By no means," I answered. "Your conversation is the most refreshing I ever had with a young lady, or any man or woman for that matter, and I must congratulate your father on his apt pupil. In referring to the Sacred Books of the East I understood you to intimate that you have not read them. Don't you like religious literature?"

"Oh, yes," was her prompt reply. "I do like certain kinds of religious literature, and I have read a good deal in the so-called Bibles of the world, too.

They all contain truths and good sentiments, but one has to go through such a mass of repetitions of worthless stuff to find them. I think it's very well for a student on those subjects to read them, but they are of no particular interest to others. It was once my intention to read through the Hebrew scriptures, but I gave it up in disgust. I don't know how you may feel about it, and I should hate to say anything that is offensive to you; but candidly I think that book is the worst of them all, and certainly not fit to be read by young people, anyway. It seems to be one continuous conglomeration of murder, robbery, debauchery and the crudest of manners. And when I realized that all this inconsistent stuff is palmed off on the innocent under the presumptuous authority of 'thus spake the Lord' my senses rebelled against the imposition, and it also lessened my estimate of the Jewish Jehovah. I realize the great mysteries of nature and of life, and the stupendous and incomprehensible universe, but sooner than to swallow the contradictory rant of ignorant writers, I don't want any so-called revealed religion. I hope you don't think that I am very wicked for telling you my honest opinion."

"I should think not," was my answer; "for an honest opinion must be less wicked than a dishonest one, and your ideas on religion fully agree with my own. What surprises me most is that your intellect is so mature for a girl of your age. You must have spent all your life reading."

She modestly thanked me for the compliment, and then answered: "No, I don't spend all my time read-

ing, nor even the biggest part of it. I have my music to attend to, and then I do a certain amount of housework every day, though it is not much, as we have a girl to do that. I also cultivate the flowers you see around here, which require quite a bit of work, as they must all be tended to in their respective seasons in order to do well. Besides, I have a garden-patch, back there, on which I raise a good many vegetables; so you see I don't read all the time. Several of my girl friends read just as much, but they do so to kill time or for amusement, while I read to learn something; and then, too, I began very early—long before you left here. And for all this I have my father to thank. He has always been very good to me, and was willing that I should stay at least a year at the boarding-school; but after being there four months, I wrote him that I thought it was no use for me to stay any longer, and that I preferred to come home and get the spring garden in order. If you look at my hands you will see that I handle something besides books and—cosmetics." And then she laughed and held out her hands for my inspection.

I told her that, while I had no reason to doubt what she said, her hands showed very little evidence of rough work, and that the little I could see of her arms did not look as if they had been much exposed to the sun.

To this she replied that she tried to protect her neck and arms by wearing a wide hat and sleeves, and that she also wore gloves when doing rough work in the garden; that she thought coarse hands and brown arms

were not as becoming to a woman as they were to a man, though she preferred strength to femininity. And again she told me that she was talking too much about herself, while I was not saying anything about either myself or what I was doing.

I admitted that I was more interested in her and what she had to say than in anything I could think of concerning myself or my work. But as she seemed desirous of knowing, and was surely intelligent enough to understand my position, I related what I had been doing in the city for the past few days, and for what purpose. I also told her what my intentions were, and showed her the program I had drawn up the previous day; and it was then that I learned to know the real spirit and character of the girl, for instead of being disappointed, as I suspected, she was delighted with my proposition and became intensely interested in my proposed campaign of human enlightenment.

From a remark she had dropped in regard to my work I inferred that Adeline was not quite satisfied with being a woman, so I asked her if she would sooner have been a man if she had her choice, to which she answered:

“No, I thank my stars for being a woman. While they have their disadvantages in this world, I think women have many privileges, in this country at least, that are not enjoyed by men. A woman is seldom exposed to the roughest phases of life, and she is generally respected if she deserves to be, which is not always the case with men. She has also a higher and nobler function to discharge, and is greatly respon-

sible for the class of men that are produced. Of course, she should enjoy political equality; but though it is a great privilege to be a man, I think it is a still more glorious privilege to be a woman; or don't you think so?"

She spoke so convincingly, and her question was so earnest and naive that there could be only one answer. I agreed that it was certainly a glorious privilege to be Adeline Stanton; and the puzzling look that she gave me and the eternal feminine playing on her fine features more than repaid me for the compliment.

And so we spent the whole afternoon. Between talking about this and that, Adeline both sang and played for me, and she could do both remarkably well. When George failed to return in reasonable time I went to town to look for him, and learned that he had driven over to the city some miles beyond, but would be back by evening. The village looked very primitive to me, and the people had changed greatly since I last saw them—or perhaps it was I that had changed the most. I had several invitations to supper, but declined them all, saying that I was staying at Judge Stanton's, and this they all seemed to take with a special significance.

It grew dark before George returned, and while waiting for him I was sitting with Adeline on the rustic seat in front of the house. We talked about the present and reviewed the past, to our mutual delight. She had so many questions to ask about the leaders I had seen in the city and my proposed campaign. She proved to be a good judge of things in

general, and could readily tell the trivial from the serious. Her memory being better than my own, she reminded me of several things that I had forgotten, but did not remember that she had once when a little girl sat on my lap all the way from town, and I did not have the heart to confess that I actually kissed her on the cheek when lifting her from the buggy, and was more anxious now to repeat the experiment. I felt, however, a certain restraint in the presence of the young woman that I did not have towards the little girl, but I entertained a hope that the reserve would not be permanent. When George finally arrived he almost gave me the impression of an intruder, though we both had wondered why he tarried so long. It was with a warm pressure of Adeline's chubby little hand and an earnest look in her confiding eyes that I bade her good night and expressed the hope that we could soon have another evening together, and she responded with both words and soul.

CHAPTER IV

FACTS AND FANCIES.

The night after my visit to Stanton's I spent in a blissful state of spiritual exaltation that is difficult to describe. Though in a semi-conscious condition most of the time, I felt as if I had been transported to some unearthly region, where my senses had become keener and my capacity for enjoyment more refined. While I had a vague realization of my surroundings, they all seemed to be things of the past, with which I had no immediate connection or was in any way dependent upon. I seemed to be enveloped in a kind of aurora australis, in which I beheld only one radiating figure, the divine Adeline; and while her form and features were the same as I had seen them the day before, pulsating with life, and I felt as conscious of her presence as if she had been with me in person, yet she seemed like a spiritual being, devoid of flesh and blood, and I also felt elevated above the physical plane and released from all human passions. Then again I seemed not even to be a separate entity, but a part of her and she an indispensable part of me, that neither could nor would be separated. I seemed to have neither past nor present, hopes or regrets, longings or expectations, old or new love, but simply one continuous absorbing, semi-conscious existence, in which we, two in one, were lulled to sleep on the ether waves by the har-

mony of the spheres, and looking forward to neither morning nor evening, day or night, earth or heaven, death or resurrection, life temporal or life eternal.

I was roused out of my spiritual reverie by George's shouting up the stairs that they were going to have breakfast, and jokingly asking if I felt like going to town again. To this I gave no definite answer, but hurriedly got up in a half-dazed condition, dressed, and joined them at the table, where I tried to act as normal as possible and partake of the breakfast as well as their conversation. I felt a strange sensation, as if I had lost something that either belonged to me or was part of myself, but this gradually wore away as my normal senses returned and I got more in correspondence with my new environment. Everything appeared rather commonplace, though, and I could at first see no poetry in the sparrow's tripping up on the threshold of the open door and with an inquiring turn of his little head greeting us a happy good morning.

But when I came out into the bright sunshine my dream-life grew less and less real, and I became more and more conscious of the glorious and fragrant world around me. I could not contemplate any beautiful thing, though, without in some way associating it with Adeline. She seemed to be the ruling spirit in everything that lived, moved and had its being. The garden seemed to be of her making, and the berries tended by her own little hands. The flowers seemed to have received their delicate tints from the pink in her cheek; the very azure of the sky reflected her soulful and

beautiful eyes, and in the song of the birds I recognized her sweet and melodious voice.

When the children came out I played with them, as usual, and they, too, seemed to be related to my beloved, though I imagined that her own child would naturally surpass all other children in beauty and loveliness. When in our rompings little Florence slightly hurt herself in a fall, and I picked her up and kissed away the hurt, I imagined that it was Adeline I was kissing and comforting. The children also acted more friendly to me than on any former occasion, and hugged and clung to me as we rolled and tumbled on the hillside and made merry till we all panted from exhaustion.

All these things helped to bring me out of my delirious fancy, and restore me to sanity. I had, however, lost all interest in my proposed campaign of reform. The world seemed so perfect and the people so good that there was no immediate danger of their going to perdition, one way or the other, or any need of the missionary work I had outlined. Moreover, I felt too humble and incapacitated to accomplish anything worth while. From my viewpoint in the paradise where I was then dwelling, the absurdities and iniquities of the city people had faded away, and seemed to be things of a remote past that had already righted themselves. When I thought of my program, it seemed more like a Middle-Age measure than anything needed for the modern era in which I was living. I could not even think of a preacher without associating him with the gray garb of a medieval monk, and

his profession a species of ancient witchcraft that long ago had ceased to yield a living.

After playing with the children I went down to the ravine to rest and meditate on my immediate future. There was a wild spot that had a great attraction for me, and where I loved to linger. At this place nature had been let alone, and evidently had her own way about everything. The trees had never been trimmed, and the underbrush grew in great profusion and disorder, or perhaps it was order of the highest perfection. The fresh and green foliage made the hollow look like a veritable sanctuary, and here and there wild flowers nodded to me as old friends and acquaintances. The clear water of the brook came gurgling down the ravine as if it were in a great hurry to get somewhere, and a little farther down, where the banks of the creek were covered with daisies, it lingered long enough to let them mirror themselves in the tranquil pools. Along the hillsides the robins were flying from bush to bush, and in their way giving expression to the life that was in them; in the adjoining clover fields the bees were industriously gathering honey and carrying it to their hives. They made no fuss about their work, but quietly and harmoniously toiled away as if they were intensely interested. It appeared to be a very busy season both for animate and inanimate things, and the very air seemed to be full of life and joy and reverberating with one continuous love song.

In contemplating all this beauty and activity the idea struck me that I was idling away valuable time that

could be used to good advantage, and I began to feel restless. While it was very well to take a little vacation now and then, it seemed that I was in no need of any more rest, and could just as well be doing something useful. And then again what was I going to do? I had lost interest in my proposed campaign and did not feel like taking up my former occupation.

The more I thought of these things, the more lost I felt, for it seemed that Adeline had robbed me of all power of resolution and self-reliance. When I tried to think of any plan of action she would crowd in on my mind to the confusion of everything else; and while this was very delightful, in a way, I realized that I could accomplish nothing as long as my mind was in such a condition. My thoughts sometimes reverted to the program, but it no longer possessed much interest for me. It was both dull and commonplace, and in addition seemed like a thing that had served its purpose.

But all of a sudden I recollected that Adeline had not only given it her approval but actually shown much enthusiasm for my project; and having no doubt as to her judgment in the matter, I began to find more sense in my intended work as I viewed it with the aid of her light. Although it seemed a long time since I was in the city, I realized that it was only a few days, and the scenes and doing of its inhabitants now began to return more and more vividly to my memory; but even then Adeline seemed to hover over them all like a ministering angel and guiding star.

The old subject commenced to have a new attrac-

tion for me. Formerly I alone was interested in my proposed work, but now there was another, who was very dear to me; and if I did not feel inclined to do anything for myself, or humanity, I would do something for her, and to make myself worthy of her love and esteem. I hastened back to the house and told George, who had just returned home for dinner, that I could not remain any longer, but had to return to the city to continue some work that I had taken up.

He looked at me in a questioning way, but fortunately did not ask what the work was, which saved me from either telling him or giving an evasive answer. He replied, however, that there was no sense in going back so soon, as I did not come out very often, and would have plenty of time to do whatever work I had on hand; that there could be no immediate need of me in the city, as there was no growing crop that demanded my attention, or any grain that would spoil unless I returned. Besides, he had to go to town the next day, and he said I could just as well accompany him; but that he expected me to go back home with him again in the evening.

This seemed to cool my enthusiasm a little, and another possible meeting with Adeline rose up before my mind to the exclusion of all other considerations. We went in to dinner and chatted about current events, till I felt satisfied to stay at least another day and accompany George to town.

We did go to town the following afternoon, and, as on our previous trip, George had so much business to see to that it gave me considerable time with Adeline. In my proposed reform work she was with me

heart and soul, and gave me much encouragement and inspiration. She seemed even more beautiful and spiritual than on my former visit, and we spent a few very happy hours together. When the sun commenced to set in the West she and I went to the peaceful little cemetery and laid a few fresh flowers on Amy's grave. The little mound was green and had some flowers already in bloom, but we found a certain satisfaction in leaving something reminiscent of the departed's transitory life.

Returning to the house, we again sat down on the rustic seat, but we were no longer matching our wits or discussing world problems. There seemed to be no other world than that rustic seat with just two inhabitants; and though it seemed as if we had always been intimately acquainted, we were far more interested in each other than in our individual selves. Our conversation had quieted down to a simple heart to heart talk that did not concern any one else. Sometimes we said nothing, but still we felt that we understood each other; and though every moment seemed so precious, there was really nothing to do but enjoy life, sweet and abundant. The very air floating about us was charged with a heavenly essence that made us feel sanctified, and the distant song of the crickets sounded like celestial music to our ears. No dream that I ever had could compare with those rapturous moments of reality; and when the time came to part, and I timidly took Adeline in my arms and pressed a farewell kiss on her left cheek, it seemed that there was a whole eternity of indescribable bliss crowded into that one kiss and embrace.

PART IV
THE MISSION

Ah, Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
 Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remould it nearer to the Heart's desire?

—RUBAIYAT.

CHAPTER I

SOME PROPHECIES

After spending a whole week in the country, I returned to the city to begin my campaign. The trip had greatly benefited me, both physically and mentally, and I felt impatient to get the work started as soon as possible. I would have returned sooner if it had not been for George's persistent entreaty to have me stay longer. It seemed, however, that after formulating my program and getting at least one friend's approval I could not afford to lose any more valuable time. Before leaving my hosts I told them what I intended to do in the city; but it was a subject upon which they did not venture either opinion or advice. They simply left that to my own judgment and wished me success.

As I had had no experience in the kind of work that I was going to do, and could not expect any one to guide or assist me, I thought it would be best to adopt the methods of a missionary band I had seen holding open-air meetings at the square. On fair evenings there could always be seen a goodly number of men, who, I presumed, did not belong to any particular church, and who were ready to listen to almost anybody who had anything interesting to say. That seemed

a good way to begin. So illustrious a personage as Socrates taught philosophy on the street corners of Athens, so why should not I speak to the people in a public square? It would give me the needed practice in addressing and managing a crowd. Of course, I would not descend to the use of a hand-organ—or foot-organ, whatever it was—as my intention was neither to amuse nor lull the people mentally to sleep. I felt that they needed to be fully awake to receive my message, as it was more of an appeal to their brains than to their emotions. I had resolved not to tell any funny stories or pitiful tales to attract attention, but to speak plain common sense that stood the test of reason.

Having learned that it was necessary to procure a permit to hold these open-air meetings, I went to the proper authorities and applied for one. I was questioned about my proposed work, if I was an anarchist, and whether my speeches were of an incendiary nature, likely to cause disturbances, etc.

To this I answered that my work would be confined to ethical, religious and other sociological subjects; that I would advocate no violence, take up no collections, or try to obtain money under false pretenses. My intention was simply to enlighten the people on some of the important problems of life. I admitted, however, that my religious views might be considered revolutionary; but I was informed that I could say anything on that subject, even condemning people to hell for not believing me, as our system of government did not include religion; but that in cursing or accusing the people of wrongdoings, I must speak in

the name of some god, and not make it appear as my private opinion of them. He also said this advice was private, as the publicity of it would be sure to put him out of office.

I thanked the outspoken official for the permit, assured him that I would not be found guilty of abusing the privilege, and went home to study over my opening address.

The subject I had decided upon was "Useless Education," and I wanted particularly to call the people's attention to the absurdity of trying to prepare humanity for a world or condition of which we have no knowledge, and neglect a real world in which we are placed and compelled to live for a certain number of years and of which we can learn something that will help us to make life here more beneficial to ourselves; that if man has a mission in this world it cannot be to prepare himself for life in another world, whose requirements are beyond human knowledge. "Know thyself and thy world" seemed to be the most important mission here and I spent the rest of the day preparing an address to prove this fact and the utter folly of trying to reach for the moon before we had obtained a secure footing on earth.

When I came to the square to deliver this message I found the hand-organ band there ahead of me and quite a gathering of people standing around listening to the musical program. I was about to pass them when the singing stopped and a small long-faced young man with drooping eyelids began to pray. I heard him ask for many things, both reasonable and unreason-

able, and he gave me the impression that he was on very intimate terms with the Deity. He not only addressed his God in a familiar manner but ventured to offer several suggestions that the All-wise had either overlooked or neglected, and finally wound up with an insistent request that all people be subdued to his own level and made to view life and death from the same angle.

After the prayer, a larger and more bold-faced man stepped forward and read a few passages from what he called "the Word of God," but which was evidently the writing of some one less proficient in his craft than the manufacturers of the book, which was a work of art in itself.

The first passage he read was the fourteenth verse of the seventh chapter of Isaiah: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Then, instead of continuing to read what this passage had reference to, which followed in due order, he skipped about seven hundred years, according to Bible chronology, and read a part of Joseph's dream recorded in the first chapter of Matthew, how Mary should bring forth a son "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet," etc. And then he went on to enlarge and comment on this remarkable prophecy and its fulfillment.

This so-called prophecy had been exploded long ago by abler men than I, but judging by the countenances of these people, they must not have heard of it. I found it difficult to remain silent, but realized that the

preacher had the right to say anything on a religious subject, without interference or contradiction. It struck me, though, that this subject being so closely related to my own—useless education—I could do these people no better service than answer him in the light of reason and history. I proceeded to my allotted location determined to explain this prophecy and inform the people how the Hebrew Scriptures had been falsified and were continually misconstrued.

Seeing that I carried an American flag, and perhaps looked as if I intended to do something rash, I was immediately followed by a few of those who stood listening to the missionary; and I had fairly established myself on a strong wooden box, and told the men before me that I was going to controvert some statements made by the other speaker, when I saw one of his lieutenants going over to a policeman who stood by the lamp-post at the street corner. Suspecting that I was the object they had in view, I just kept making a few introductory remarks till I should get a larger audience and feel safer to launch on the subject that had been suggested to me by the missionary. I was just telling the men that I had not come there to amuse them, and hence had not brought with me either organ or monkey; nor was I going to preach a sermon to them, unless the truths I advanced should have that effect on some of my hearers, when, lo and behold! the officer walked up, gently touched my arm with his club and asked if I had a permit to speak there.

This I told him that I certainly had, and confidently reached for my inside coat pocket; but just then I

recollected that I had changed garments since I was down town, and left my permit at home. I explained this to the officer, but he answered that he would not let me proceed unless I could show him the document—and there I was. Some of the people giggled, and others thought it was too bad and expressed sympathy for me.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to get my permit; and having received a sympathizer's promise to guard my box and flag for a while, I started for the nearest telephone to communicate with my place of residence. In going I passed the missionary band and heard the speaker remark that good people always had the Lord on their side, and those standing around him certainly looked credulous enough to believe what he said.

Fortunately the boy was at home, so I instructed him to get the document from my room, and also the marked Bible that stood on the top shelf of my bookcase, and bring them down to me at the square as quick as he could make his bicycle carry him there. It had not been my intention to use the Bible in this campaign; but after listening to the Christian workers' misrepresentation of the book, and the treatment I received, I decided to meet them on their own ground. I had recently had occasion to look up the so-called prophecies in question, and felt that I could do them justice. My ears felt a little warm when I thought of the treat I had in store for them.

I returned to the square and told the policeman that the boy was coming with my permit, and that I would

wait till he arrived. The officer accompanied me to my stand, and then the people commenced to gather around us, curious to see what was going to happen. They came from the missionary band, till there were very few left to hear their speaker, and from all parts of the square, so in a little while I was surrounded by a large crowd eagerly waiting for my message.

With the officer's permission I got up on the box and told the people it was gratifying to see that the Lord had actually shifted to our side; but the machinery not being quite in order, I asked them kindly to have a little patience and wait till everything got ready, and in the meantime they could just as well go and hear what the other speaker had to say, as I expected to deal with the same subjects as soon as the boy came with my license.

But I was told that they knew what he was saying; and, for fear of missing any good things, they stood around and eyed me good-naturedly and curiously till the boy came with my Bible and permit. When the officer saw the paper he said, "let 'er go." I mounted the box, took off my hat, and told the people that I was ready to proceed. By this time only the workers were left around the organ, and they were singing about a fountain filled with blood, which sounded very barbarous to me.

I began my discussion with a statement that I would prove by the words of Isaiah himself that his so-called prophecy, which the missionary discussed, was fulfilled shortly after it was uttered, and that it was a bungling piece of work by later writers and interpreters to make

it have any bearing on something that would happen many hundred years hence. * If they had any doubt as to the accuracy of my representation, I told them to look up the passages in their own Bibles and see for themselves. I then turned to Isaiah and read both the verse given by the missionary and also the two following verses:

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.”

Then I explained that, according to Hebrew scholars, the word translated to virgin in Isaiah simply means a young woman, and that the passage has also been tampered with otherwise. I explained the reason for the passage; that at the time this so-called prophecy was made the Jewish nation was divided into two monarchies, one called the kingdom of Israel and the other the kingdom of Judah. Ahaz was king of Judah, with Jerusalem as capital, and Pekah was king of Israel, with Samaria as capital. The latter king had joined Rezin, king of Syria, and they were marching their combined armies against Jerusalem, which alarmed Ahaz and his people, and that it was at this stage of the game that Isaiah made the promise to Ahaz, though some of it never came true, as it is related later on that Ahaz was delivered into the hands of the king of Syria and the king of Israel, and that they dealt rather badly with him.

But the prophecy about the son came true, and not only that, but it was evidently Isaiah's own child, and after all not so hard to prophesy about; for in the second and third verses of the eighth chapter he says: "And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah; and I went in unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son."

While this was as plain as anything could be, and in the prophet's own words, I called their attention to the fact that he furnishes still another testimony in the eighteenth verse of the last named chapter, where he says: "Behold, I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel."

Then I pointed out the facts in the case: That the two kings were about to make war on Ahaz, and that Isaiah tried to assure him they were not going to succeed; that in those days so-called prophets always spoke in the name of the Lord; that the prediction would come true before the child should know to refuse evil and choose the good; that it would have been ridiculous for Isaiah to promise Ahaz relief from his enemies many centuries after he was dead; and finally that the prophet himself relates the birth of the child and the circumstances connected therewith.

Having shown that the passage in Isaiah had no bearing whatever on what was to happen seven hundred years later, I turned to Matthew and read what Joseph was supposed to have dreamt about the angel informing him of the doings of the Holy Ghost; and

then I asked my hearers how much reliance they were willing to place in dreams of that character.

A large chorus answered "none"; but an old lady shook her fist at me and said I was tearing down the word of God, and would go to perdition unless I stopped and repented in time; to which I answered that if the "word" could be torn down, it was ample evidence that the writers or compilers were irresponsible, and their product not even worth being called the word of men; that no such blunders and inconsistencies could be found in the works of any self-respecting modern author, and that all so-called revelations were the work of ignorant men, who generally had one aim in view, namely, to further their own interests by deluding the innocent. I also told them that I could go through all the prophecies in the Bible and show by the book itself that they were all of the same character as the one I had discussed.

The old lady insisted on interrupting me, and even went so far as to prophesy that the Lord would smite me with the plague or a fever unless I quit defaming him and the good name of his children; but one of my sympathizers succeeded in quieting her by threatening to call the officer, and telling her that she could secure a license to speak, the same as I did, but had no right to disturb me or any one else. She left in an agitated state of mind, and with her went also a meek-looking man who seemed very dissatisfied with my interpretation of the Scriptures, but either lacked the necessary courage or had too much sense to make a protest.

After disposing of the prophecy, I told my audience

that it had not been my intention to spend much time in discussing the absurd inconsistencies of the Jewish-Christian combination known as the Bible; but as it seemed to be the principal obstacle in the way for any rational reform, I would devote at least one more evening to the other prophecies of the Old Testament that were supposed to have any bearing on the New; and to show not only that they had no reference to Jesus of Nazareth, but were in themselves so contradictory and mixed up with so much vulgar trash that they were not worth the serious attention of an earnest student; that the whole collection was written and compiled by men who had no critical faculty or sense of historical accuracy; but had been foisted on an ignorant people under the pretentious claim of being "the Word of God"; and that in the course of time it had become an accepted and respected authority, upon which the priests had built up the colossal institution that for thousands of years had kept the torch of reason so low that very few dared to question the imposition, and still held seemingly intelligent people in thrall, lest they should be called infidels by a class who did not even know the meaning of that word, or any other epithet they used to designate conscientious men who refused to accept the fetish. (Considerable applause.)

I told my hearers that we could not have an ideal human society as long as civilization was based on priestcraft; that it was useless to teach children something that they in later years would have to unlearn; if they were ever "admitted to the right of reason," but still would have to pretend to believe in order to

appear conventional; that a morality that places crime on the same level with a money debt, and can be settled by another, is not worth the name; that the most necessary factors in a people's civilization are honesty and truthfulness, and that we cannot have either in a society that offers premiums for trickery and stupidity; that we could not have a humane and moral humanity as long as we are taught that right and justice are things to be juggled with and truth found only within the narrow confines of a musty creed; that the dead have a greater claim on us than the living, and that our salvation consists in suppressing the only light given to us by our Creator and accepting the barbarian system of propitiation; and finally the harmful notion that love, the divine spark within us, is sinful if interchanged between the sexes, and the most sacred relation of man and woman only permitted owing to their evil propensities—all of which have converted a large portion of humanity into irresponsible weaklings, hypocrites and impostors, more fit for a place in the orthodox heaven than to be members of an enlightened human society in this world. (Great applause.)

Thus I continued to speak to the large gathering of appreciative hearers till I commenced to feel exhausted, and I then announced that I would speak again from the same rostrum on the evening of the day following the morrow. My reason for setting it two days hence was that I needed time to post myself further on the prophecies I was going to discuss, so that I should be able to give them the justice I thought they deserved.

When I descended from the box I was immediately surrounded by a large number of men, of whom some extended a friendly hand of greeting and complimented me on my frank and lucid exposition, while others looked at me in a distrustful and unsatisfied manner, which seemed to indicate that they were not quite convinced of the truth of my contentions. In answer to one of those men, who asked me on what authority I based my argument, I frankly confessed that I had none other than my reason, except for what I had said concerning the prophecy, which was as Biblical as anything could be; and as to the rest he would have to use his judgment, as I was neither infallible myself nor pretended to be the mouthpiece of an infallible One.

Upon his admission that he was not prepared to discuss any part of my discourse, but thought the whole thing sounded strange and different from anything he had heard before, I advised him to depend less on what others said than on his own judgment; that, though he was sure to make mistakes, they would not be more numerous than in repeating the blunders of other people; that the exercise of reason was the only road to spiritual independence, and that it was far better to think faultily than not to think at all; that my purpose was not to lay down any dogmatic rules, or laws, but simply make people think and reason out things for themselves—and that seemed to brighten up his face a little.

It was already late, and feeling that I had made a fairly successful beginning, I thanked the people for their attention and bade them good night.

CHAPTER II.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

The two days that I had taken to prepare for my second discourse were diligently devoted to the investigation and study of prophecies and their supposed fulfillment. With the aid of my former investigation and by means of a concordance I was enabled to give them a fairly good examination in two days; and though I had known of many inconsistencies I was surprised to find that they were ten times worse than I had ever even suspected. It astonished me when I realized that in these modern days there could be found apparently intelligent men who gave such botch-work any serious attention, letting alone accepting it as Holy Writ. But when I reflected on their education and the fact that the first requisite for a Bible student is prayer and resignation of judgment, I could readily see how easy it is to fall into a hypnotic stupor and imagine that black is white, and time, space, force and matter no factors in the lives of men.

With the encouragement I had received on my initial appearance before the public I felt that it was not only a great privilege to live in this world but a real pleasure to work for the release of humanity from intellectual bondage. I was also impressed with the fact that a great responsibility rested upon me, and that I could not afford to slight any studies or do any slipshod work, as one single mistake might hamper me in my campaign and seriously interfere with my future

usefulness. While I felt confident that a good portion of the American people were ready to accept the commonsense view of life, I also realized the fickleness of the crowd, and that one gust of ill wind was liable to do almost irreparable harm.

Toward evening of the second day I received a letter from Adeline, acknowledging the receipt of my note upon reaching home safely, and that helped greatly to fire my enthusiasm. She expressed pleasure at hearing that I was ready for work and confidence in my success. Ever since I left she had been thinking over my program, and she was constantly sending me her well-wishes "via the universal wireless." She said that she felt sure I would make a great success, for I was the right man and the time was ripe for my message. Then she told me about her work, her reading, and her flowers, of which she inclosed one, and she also related an incident connected with my visit that concerned only us two. Her letter was quite long, and yet it seemed so short. Every word of the neatly written pages seemed to be a heart-throb of its author, breathing the warm love of her pure and noble young womanhood. Surely she had not used any language to hide her thoughts, for the letter was a very mirror of the sweet girl herself. I felt rich in the possession of such a friend, whose love and sympathy I was assured that I could rely upon in misfortune as well as in good fortune.

When I reflected on the great change that had been brought about since I took that memorable boat ride, I could hardly realize its significance. Instead of weeks it seemed years since I sat in the same room

speculating on the lock on my door and even questioning my very existence. Then everything was in a haze, but now it was as clear as sunlight. Then I had to feel of the table and myself to ascertain whether we actually existed; now I not only knew that I was real, but a new man with new interests in life. Then my love was a thing of the past, which yet lingered in my memory, but now it was both the light of the present and the star that beckoned me on. The old love had not died, but blossomed into a rarer flower of greater beauty and sweeter fragrance—I was born again, and the world was also new.

In compliance with my announcement, I appeared at the square to deliver my second discourse on prophecies and was greeted by a much larger audience than on my first appearance. As on the previous evening, the hand-organ band was there ahead of me; but I paid no attention to them, and both they and the policeman let me religiously alone. Perhaps they realized that they had already given me more free advertising than they intended. When the people saw me coming with the flag and dry-goods box they all flocked in my direction, including most of those who stood listening to the missionary.

Unlike the occasion of my former appearance, I recognized not a few friends, of whom some extended their hands of greeting and expressed pleasure at seeing me there again. One studious-looking young man, by the name of Erasmus, introduced himself and said that he had recognized the gospel I preached the former evening and assured me that there was much more need of it than of the old version. He evinced

so much enthusiasm for my work and impressed me so favorably that I made an appointment to meet him the following morning.

All this naturally made me feel more at home and gave me more encouragement. Though I believed so firmly in my mission that no special endorsement was necessary, it was gratifying to find intelligent men and women who appreciated my effort in behalf of reason, and were not afraid to say so. It was thus under more favorable auspices that I began my second discourse on a subject that had been practically forced upon me by the hand-organ band.

Before launching on my theme, I explained the deductive and the inductive methods of education, and the reason why so many intelligent men are led astray. I explained that the adherents of the former method started out with a theory that certain things were so, and then they went to look for evidence to support that theory. Certain things existed, had happened at some remote time, or were true; and any slight indication or scrap of plausible evidence was a confirmation, while all evidence to the contrary naturally had to be disregarded, because it was against the well-known and accepted theory. As there was no doubt concerning the premises, there could be only one conclusion—the theory was not only an established fact, but further proof had been found in support of it. Around a false hypothesis was thus woven a huge and intricate cobweb of musty errors, that gradually increased in proportion, and in the course of time became so formidable that no timid person dared either

to question its soundness or to disturb the spiders that made their living thereon.

To make this more clear I gave them an illustration. A residence in a certain locality had stood vacant for several years, because it was known as a haunted house. This was regarded as an established fact in the neighborhood. People had seen ghosts there and heard noises, so there was no question about their existence. Some of these good people had been brave enough to investigate, and hence spoke from personal experience. The large old brick house with broken windows stood on the spacious grounds as a warning to the timid that they must keep away from it, at least in the night, and it was let alone for a time.

A real-estate dealer bought the property and after a little overhauling sold it at a handsome profit to a man who did not know it was haunted. The broker went there one stormy night to investigate, and he both heard noises and saw things, but they were all due to natural causes. The wind howled through the openings; the windows rattled, and the old weathercock squeaked as he turned around to face the elements. He also saw the ghosts that infested the house. Having been neglected so long, the roof leaked, and water had soaked loose sections of the wall paper, so that they flapped and waved menacingly at the beholder. He put on a new roof and replaced the old wall paper with new, and with these and other needed repairs the ghosts left the house and the noises also died away.

I told them that this was as good an illustration as I could give of the difference between the theological and scientific method of study. The Bible was known

as a haunted book, but scientific men could neither see any ghosts nor hear any noises by its perusal. All it needed was a little overhauling in the way of rational interpretation.

The deductive method was used in educating preachers, and the result could not be otherwise than as it is—ghost chasing. The inductive method, on the other hand, is to look for evidence first and then build the structure on that, which is also the scientific method.

By this time I had a large and attentive audience, and I realized that it was time to take up my regular subject for the evening. For the benefit of those who had not been there on the previous night, I gave a short resumé of my former discourse and the incident that had led me to it, and then I proceeded to discuss the Old Testament prophecies that are supposed to have a bearing on the New.

I showed by the evidence furnished in the Old Testament itself that none of them could have any possible reference to the coming of Jesus; that they all referred to something connected with the present or immediate time in which they were spoken; that many of them are even worded in the past tense, relating some incident or scrap of history that cannot be interpreted as predictions by any sensible person; that when the prophet promised the depressed Jews a military chief, who would conquer their enemies, he did not mean a nonresistant, who was to appear many hundred years hence, but a successful fighter who would come soon; that when the mothers lamented over their sufferings and wept for their children, that had been car-

ried off into captivity, and Jeremiah tried to comfort them by promising that their offspring should be restored to them, he could not mean the children that Matthew makes Herod kill centuries later, which would have been no comfort to the mothers; and besides, the slaughtered children could not be restored to their parents.

And thus I devoted a whole hour to the Old Testament prophecies, taking them up one by one, and comparing them with the bungling work of the New Testament writers, from the absurdity of making the west-bound wise men follow a star that was on their back in the East, to the elevation of an ass into a prophecy. I further explained that the old Jewish scribes had no logical conception of the arrangement of their ideas, and in many cases left no definite conclusions to the thoughts they intended to convey, all of which had given the interpreters of this wild and ranting jumble plenty of opportunity to construe it to their own advantage, with which to impose on uncritical and superstitious people; and I wound up my discourse by saying that I could not think of any greater dishonor to the name of our creator, and one more likely to degrade the reader, than to palm off such stuff under the pretentious name of Holy Writ. (Thunderous applause.)

As on the previous evening, I talked till I was exhausted. After my regular discourse, in which I was left practically undisturbed, I had to explain certain points that I had not succeeded in making quite clear to some of my hearers, and answer many questions both on and outside of my subject.

CHAPTER III.

GIFTS OF PROVIDENCE.

Having made such a successful beginning, I could not help feeling greatly encouraged, nor fail to see a brighter future before me than I had dared to hope for. I had not only obtained the hearing of a large number of people, but I had received a hearty endorsement of my views and even offers of moral and material support. Mr. Erasmus, an able young man, had agreed to join me in my campaign of enlightenment, and a gentleman of means had offered to assist me with funds to carry on my propaganda, though he did not care to advertise himself as a reformer.

Both of these offers I gladly accepted, without questioning if the men were of the right faith, or whether the promised funds were clean or tainted. I simply took it for granted that any one willing to promote the religion of human reason must surely be saved himself; and regardless how the money was earned by the donor—even if in the way of a bishop's salary—I thought it could not be purified by a worthier use than in the service of man. I realized that I had a great task before me, and that I needed all the assistance I could get; for my own personal work could not amount to more than small rays of light on but a few of the myriads that wandered in the dense theological fog that hung over the earth.

Accordingly, I called on the man of means, and got

his promise to pay for the printing and distribution of tracts that would act as eye-openers for the people and be instrumental in promoting the religion of reason and commonsense. He said that by a liberal circulation of pamphlets, containing such addresses as I had delivered, my propaganda would reach more people than I could with my voice, and be more effective, as a great portion of the people read more or less. He also agreed to pay for the necessary expenses of preparing the discourses for publication. As to my personal subsistence, I told him that I did not need much assistance for some time. Besides a small inheritance, I had saved a little during my stay in the city—only spending money for books and other necessities; had no one depending on me for support, and my new vocation was not for the purpose of material gain.

Having settled this much of the financial problem, I entered into an agreement with Erasmus, whereby we solemnly promised each other to devote our lives to the service of humanity. He was a tall, well-proportioned young man, with an earnest and clean-cut face that carried conviction with it. Aside from having a good education, he was a man of general ability, and hence very valuable for my purpose. One of his accomplishments was stenography, and he surprised me with a complete report of my two discourses on prophecies. He was also a fluent speaker, having taken part in many college debates and enjoyed the enviable position of having lost his situation on account of his rational views and frankness in expressing them. It would have been difficult for me to have found a better

man by extensive searching, and I could not help regarding both him and the promise of financial support as gifts of Providence.

We procured a typewriter, and I let Erasmus prepare my two discourses on prophecies for publication in pamphlet form, while I was working out a historical review of Revelations. The last named discourse and also one on the Effect of Revelations on our Civilization I prepared for delivery at the square, with the view of revising them afterwards. I always found that my spoken or written discussions could be much improved by revision, but I never believed in polishing my sentences till they became so artificial that their sense and spontaneity had disappeared; nor did I consider my views final on any subject—my mind was always open for more light.

Having been an amateur student of religions, I was fairly well informed on that subject and had some valuable books to aid me in my work, and when they were insufficient I resorted to the nearby library, which had a large collection of books on ancient and modern religions. Between Erasmus and myself, we managed to find the desired information, and sometimes we consulted a retired clergyman living next door. He was both willing and able to give us valuable pointers, but insisted on taking up so much of our time talking about nonessentials that we went to him only in extreme cases.

The reverend gentleman had not been very orthodox in his ministerial career, but rather than let that interfere with his profession, he had taken Solomon's cyni-

cal advice: "Be not righteous over-much; neither make thyself over-wise; why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" He admitted, though, that his conscience had commenced to bother him a little in the later years of his ministry; but instead of resigning or having his difficulties aired in a heresy trial, he asked to be retired on a pension; and his request was granted, having rendered long service to a wealthy congregation.

Erasmus was very much amused at the old gentleman's flexibility of conscience, and would have liked to argue with him, but I explained that it would lead to no beneficial results; that we were not interested in converting old people, as it made very little difference what they believed after their days of activity were past, and that we could make better use of the ex-preacher by being on friendly terms with him. It was younger people we were after, to prevent them from following in the footsteps of their ancestors; and Erasmus agreed that this was a sensible view of the situation.

Never have two people gone to work with more faith in the righteousness and ultimate success of their cause, or had smaller anticipations of material gain. We were so wrapped up in our mission that we forgot ourselves, and worked in such perfect harmony that it often seemed we were thinking the same thoughts, and even doing the thinking for each other. When one of us had difficulty in finding the particular word wanted to express the right shade of meaning, all he had to do was to call on the other for help. The word we were groping for seemed to be recorded on the other man's brain, that only needed to be con-

sulted to render the required service. The same was also true in clearing up certain points that seemed hazy. The solution was generally ready in the other fellow's head and could be had for the asking. We were almost completely en rapport most of the time, even when not doing exactly the same work.

In this respect we were about equal, but when it came to the scope and promotion of our movement my ideas were naturally more mature, I having given the subject more thought, and even been favored with an interview with the Superwoman. This experience I had not told to anybody so far, as I was in doubt whether it would be prudent to do so owing to its miraculous nature.

Were it not for fear of tiring the reader, I would give my review of Revelations in full; but in view of that probability, and the fact that I am writing only the story of my career as a reformer, I shall refer to it briefly. Should the reader desire complete copies of my discourses, they can be had for the asking by applying to The Society for the Encouragement and Advancement of Human Reason in this World. And if anything that I have spoken or written should fall into the hands of some superstitious persons, I ask them to disabuse themselves of the notion that any gospel is too sacred for investigation—not even my own. Rational criticism is the only method by which to distinguish between the good and the bad, and if a scripture is unreasonable it makes no difference in what style it is written and by what name it is called.

Inasmuch as very few of my hearers had any knowledge of more than one Bible—the Jewish-Christian—

I gave them a short definition of the Vedas of the Hindoos, the Zend-Avesta of the Persians, the Five Kings of the Chinese, the Tripitaka of the Buddhists, the Koran of the Mohammedans, the Eddas of the Scandinavians, the Book of Mormon of the Mormons, Sciatica and Help of the Sciatics, and Aerology of the Aeronauts. I explained the relative ages of these books, and by whom they were supposed to have been written, though the author of none was certain, except in the case of the last named and youngest one, and that they were all regarded by the respective cults as gifts of Providence in the form of Divine Revelations.

Having referred to these Bibles of the world, I began my review of the Jewish-Christian scriptures by reading the 24th, 25th and 26th verses of the thirty-first chapter of Deuteronomy:

“And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of his law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.”

I then followed the recorded progress of this ark, which was jealously guarded by the priests. I explained how no one was allowed to touch the shittimwood box, let alone to look into it, not even when transporting it from place to place on ox-carts, as often was necessary in times of war; how Uzzah, the driver, was instantly put to death by the Lord when he came in contact with the ark while in the

innocent act of trying to prevent the cart from tipping over; what happened to the people of Beth-She-mesh, who were curious to see what there could be in that mysterious box and ventured to look into it, it being recorded that the Lord "smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men" for their curiosity; and how the book of the law was thus protected for many years by the priests, instead of being given to the people.

And when Solomon had completed his famous temple, how he ordered the ark to be opened—a rather brave venture—and, to everybody's astonishment, the book of the law had disappeared, and only "two tablets of stone" were left in the chest. The book that had been ordered placed there as a witness could not be found, and I ventured the opinion that it was doubtful whether there were more than two stones in the box when the ox driver and the five thousand and seventy men were reported killed. I also expressed my surprise that such a valuable thing, so closely guarded by the priests, should so completely disappear.

But three and a half centuries after Solomon the book of the law again turned up. It was supposed to have been found by Hilkiyah, a priest, and in the temple too. Inasmuch as this priceless document had been in hiding so long, there appeared to have been some doubt as to its genuineness, and the high priest appointed a committee to investigate; but instead of doing so in a scholarly manner, they took it to Huldah, a medium, she apparently being more able than the scribes to pass judgment on a historical document of such great importance.

Still later, when the temple was destroyed, this book of the law was reported burned, so the Jews were again without the law-book, but not for good. It was again restored, and this time rewritten, not found. A sort of French Academy did the work. In forty days, with the assistance of a like number of associates, Ezra rewrote the laws revealed to Moses.

All this, I said, was several thousand years ago, and neither the ark nor the original book of the law was known to be in existence anywhere, not even Ezra's copy; and after giving the details of the production and history of this Revelation, and commenting on them, I could not help adding that it was a remarkable record that would be hard to duplicate in modern times.

After devoting as much time as I could spare to the Old Testament I took up the New, and explained to my audience that after the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity a great variety of Gospels appeared; that it seemed to have been profitable to manufacture such literature, just as many novels are written in our day; that a great number of Gospels were put on the market as soon as Christianity was established, and that out of this mass the church fathers selected by vote and prayer what was genuine from the spurious; that the reason they reduced the number was probably because they could not use them all, as the discarded Gospels could not have been more incongruous than those they selected; that ever since, the revisers have been adding and taking out parts, as the spirit moved them to act; that some pas-

sages, and even whole verses, that for thousands of years were regarded as the revealed word of God, have by later revisers been declared impostures, and among such expurgated verses the very one upon which the doctrine of the Trinity is based; that, according to the translators of the Revised Version, the oldest manuscripts do not contain whole sections attributed to Jesus, about damnation for unbelief, the harmlessness of juggling with live serpents and drinking deadly poison, that are found in the King James version, etc., etc.

Having given the old book a fairly good shaking up, I called my hearers' attention to the fact that all Revelations have come from Asia, and that before accepting the assertions of a people we should investigate their character and reputation for veracity; that any one who has any knowledge of the Orientals knows that they have an uncontrollable tendency to prevaricate, and cannot relate a simple, everyday incident without coloring and exaggeration, even to the extent of upsetting the laws of nature; that this practice was so common among the Bible writers that it was regarded as perfectly proper, and they themselves admitted that they lied, sometimes for their own benefit, or their friends, and sometimes "for the glory of God." And as Jehovah was made in their own image, they naturally credited, or discredited, him with the same attributes that they themselves possessed, and accused him of sending lying spirits among them, even Paul being reported to have said that "God shall send them strong delusion, that they might believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth"

—by no means a noble thing to do; that the same apostle claims to have caught the people “with guile,” because of himself “being crafty,” and he also pleads guilty of prevarication in the sentence: “For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory,” etc.

And thus I demonstrated to my audience that the Revelation itself was sufficient proof of being the work of priestcraft, needing no other evidence, and I expressed my conviction that one of the reasons why the Christians were so anxious to destroy Greek and Roman temples, and burn their libraries, was that they should not remain as witnesses against them.

I experienced considerable difficulty in delivering my review of Revelations, as it seemed that my reputation had spread and brought to the square a number of men bent on causing disturbance and breaking up my meetings. They shouted and interrupted me with questions, and some rowdy boys even started a rah-rah yell that completely drowned my voice, so it became necessary for the policeman to come and restore order.

Among the many questions I answered was the one: “What have you to give the people for what you take away from them?”

To this I replied that I was only encroaching on the priest’s occupation, and could not take away from the people something that they did not have. What they imagined that they had was a lie, and to correct an error was to give something instead of taking anything away. I told them that if any one could show me that the people had something worth possessing, I was the last man to deprive them of it.

“Yes, but suppose the whole Christian religion is a falsehood,” some one asked, “is it not a great comfort to many, and the only solace in a world of sorrow?”

I answered that if there were people who derived any comfort from a system that has made this world a “vale of tears,” they were welcome to all the pleasure that they could get out of it. But if some found solace in the thought that most of the people would be eternally damned for not believing as they did, he or she should not object to other people having a brighter and nobler view of life, which they desired to spread among their fellowmen; and that an egotistical notion that has the misery of mankind for its foundation is not worth perpetuating, as I understood that the comfort consisted in the idea that the particular believer’s little soul had escaped the damnation of the many—a thought far less elevating than the satisfaction of doing something for others. My object was simply to turn the people’s minds from the barbarian notion of blood-sacrifice to pure humanitarianism.

Whether this was satisfactory to the questioner I do not know, but he asked for no further light on the subject.

My discourse seemed to have created a stir among the people; for when I descended the rostrum, they formed into several circles, in which excited men were talking and gesticulating, some of them calling me very uncomplimentary names; and I learned afterwards that many had been debating the subject long after Erasmus and I went home, and even resorted to physical force in their zeal to crack some particularly hard theological nut.

CHAPTER IV.

AFFAIRS OF THE HEART.

On the day after delivering my review of Revelations, I felt that I could not postpone any longer informing Adeline of my successful beginning. It was true that my time was so taken up with reform work that, by right, I had none to spare for social purposes, but, time or no time, I had to write my beloved Adeline a letter. Her love was after all what I most desired and needed to help me carry on the work, as I had no Jesus or Buddha to draw upon for strength and inspiration.

I was giving only two new addresses a week, in order to be able to do the subjects justice and assist in preparing my discourses for publication. We had already my first effort in the hands of a printer, and were anxious also to have the second one set up in type so that we could issue the two on prophecies in one pamphlet. We reasoned that the distribution of two in one would not cost more than a single discourse, and the two would go very well together. With the one I had just delivered on Revelations and the one to follow on their effect on our civilization we intended to do likewise.

Besides typewriting my discourses and assisting me in other ways, Erasmus was also, at my suggestion, preparing to speak on kindred subjects some evenings when I did not occupy the rostrum, and for this proposed venture he naturally evinced considerable enthu-

siasm. He had already prepared a lecture on education, in which he contended that the prevailing system was in reversed order to the development of the human mind—beginning with what it should end with and stopping before there is anything in the brain worth educating.

Before proceeding to write *Adeline* I asked Erasmus if he had ever been in love, and it was the first time that he hesitated to give a prompt answer to my questions. A bashful, half-guilty expression stole over his honest countenance, which showed me plainly that he had a heart secret which he was reluctant to divulge, and the recollection of which was not perhaps pleasant to him.

But on my assuring my friend that the divine passion was nothing to be ashamed of, and relating to him my own past disappointment and recent good fortune, he became more willing to speak on the subject, and finally unburdened his heart of the following story.

When Erasmus was at the university he fell in love with a young woman student, who encouraged his suit. She was poor, like himself, but beautiful and ambitious, and his greatest aspiration was to make himself worthy of her, so that they could make life's journey together as man and wife. He had woven around her a halo of romance in which he dwelt day and night, and that seemed to be as necessary to his life as the air he breathed.

As Erasmus was thus enjoying a foretaste of conjugal bliss, the girl met an elderly widower, who offered her his heart and hand, together with wealth to lead a life of ease and social distinction. Though she

was only twenty, and the man gray, with grown-up children, she accepted him, and forsook the poor student struggling to give himself an education, but with no immediate prospects of wealth. This was such a blow to the sensitive young man that he left college before graduating, and it so lessened his faith in womankind that he had since left them alone.

I expressed my sympathy for Erasmus, and told him that his experience was only that of many others, for which our system of education was responsible; that as long as the display of vanity and sensual pleasure of some kind were the only prizes held out to youth, whether to be enjoyed in this world or the next, we could not expect any other result; that this was one of the principal evils we were trying to correct, and it would gradually disappear with the dissemination of human brotherhood among men, instead of the egotistical notion of preferences, reward and punishment for belief and unbelief.

But I told Erasmus that he must not lose faith in the better half of our race, that has mothered and nursed us in our days of infancy; that, in spite of the deplorable system under which we were brought up, there was something inherent in humanity that prevented the complete perversion of all; that there were many noble young women worthy of such an exemplary young man as himself; and though there was only one Adeline, he was sure to find the right one sooner or later, and that such a hope would be helpful to him in fighting the battles of selfishness, conventionalism and superstition, and the cultivation of human reason and humane tendencies in the world.

THE REVELATION OF JOHN LANGDON 197

To this Erasmus answered that he had always retained the ideal, thought it seemed unattainable, and that he realized that a hope like mine must be a great help to any man.

That it meant much to me, the following letter will show :

“My Beloved Adeline: When I received your very delightful letter it was my intention to answer it before this, but I have been so pressed for time that I have hardly had opportunity to get necessary sleep, and I know you will not credit my delay to negligence. Nothing in the world shall keep me from writing to you as often as you wish to hear from me, and even oftener. I don't see how I could live unless I were permitted to bare my soul and tell you of my undying love for you and my struggle for humanity. If I could not reach you with either voice or pen I would communicate with you anyway, 'via the universal wireless', as you so strikingly call it; and it seems to me that this mode of communication can be greatly improved by practice.

“You don't know how much your letter cheered me, and what a help it has been in my work. It is a talisman that I carry next to my heart when I go out to face the world, and put under my pillow when I retire at night. It came a few hours before I was going to deliver my discourse at the square, and it was a wonderful inspiration to me. When I got up on the box that evening I felt as if I had you with me, and could draw on you for light and strength to make my message effective. With your divine image before me, and the fragrance of your sweet-scenting rose, I felt

that I could face any audience, and had to restrain myself from falling into sentiments that the people would not appreciate. You may smile at my mention of a box, but that is my pulpit in God's great temple. I really don't know what it was used for originally, and I do not care. It may have had as humble a beginning as myself, but I am proud of it just the same. It is simply an ordinary wooden box, and I have bored a hole in one corner for the pole of my American flag—a symbol of freedom that I use, instead of the cross—and when I ascend this rostrum to address the people I bow to no master save truth, and know of no other devils than ignorance, selfishness and superstition.

“I would give you the substance of my addresses, but as they are to be published you will soon have a chance to read them in printed form. I must say that Providence has been very kind to me since I saw you, and even for that I feel grateful to you; for it seems that you have opened the very treasury of the cosmos for my benefit, and that all good things are flowing my way. A gentleman of means has volunteered to pay for the printing and distribution of my discourses, and I have secured a most valuable assistant in a young man by the name of Erasmus—also a volunteer—and one whom I wish you to meet, as I know you will like him. He also has had some disappointments in life, but it is due to that very fact that he is now my co-worker in the great cause of human enlightenment. It is certainly true that the ways of Providence are past finding out. In her great scheme nature seems to sacrifice heartlessly the happiness of individuals for the good of the whole. When I look back on my own

life I see now the use of misfortunes, but no sorrows nor trials could begin to pay for one single hour's realization of my Adeline's love, nor could any heaven that has been pictured to me compensate for its loss.

"My work being of the reconstructive kind, in which it is necessary to disturb old foundations, I am naturally subject to much misrepresentation and abuse, but they have about the same effect on me as water has on a duck. All the vile names and epithets flung at me are scattered by your divine radiance, and leave me so much more invulnerable for the next onslaught. Though I try to be just in my criticisms, I am accused of being shallow in my treatment of so-called sacred literature. From the theologians' point of view depth seems to consist in finding another meaning back of the apparent sense conveyed by the sentence; but this has the great disadvantage, or advantage, of giving each mystic the opportunity to construe the passages to suit himself, which has naturally led to so many interpretations and controversies. I don't claim to be profound; I simply use the common-sense method of taking the ancient scribes at their word as far as practicable. When they speak of the prevailing conditions in their time, and refer to some past or pending historical event, I make no attempts to understand them to be prophesying about something to take place many centuries hence, and of which they had not the slightest intimation. So you see I am not regarded as a public benefactor by everybody, but for such I was amply prepared.

"And now, my beloved Adeline, I must bring this letter to a close, and read the proof of my first dis-

course just come from the printer, and also look through Erasmus' typewritten copy of the second one. You see there is a lot of work on these addresses besides the first preparation and delivery.

"I know you will accept these lines in the same spirit that they are written. If they contain errors, they are not of the heart, and I have no time to look for any of the head or hand. In all my work, you are the sun that beckons me on, my morning and evening star, and my comfort and strength that admits of no doubt. Your pure and noble soul is the ideal for which I strive. You are my guardian angel that keeps me from doing anything that I would hesitate to look into your heavenly eyes and tell you about. I can see you now among the flowers radiating life and sunshine that reaches even to this great city; and when my day's work is done, and I close my eyes for meditation and soul communion with my beloved, I am with you on that rustic seat enveloped in your sanctifying aura, and dreaming of a blissful journey that has no end and that no man hath ever known or tasted. As a token of my love I seal this letter with a kiss for my only Adeline, and shall look for a few love-breathing lines as a thirsty plant longs for the refreshing dew."

The letter was addressed and posted without correction, and I returned to my work as a man who had enjoyed a refreshing rest that had been ended by a pleasant and inspiring dream. Erasmus took another look at Adeline's photograph, standing on the table, and remarked that he did not blame me for writing her a long letter.

CHAPTER V.

THE EFFECT OF REVELATIONS.

In studying the effect of Revelations on our civilization I found that the Jewish-Christian version of them was principally to blame for our backwardness, being the only one of the Asiatic books that has had any perceptible influence on the western nations of the world, for which the Roman emperor, Constantine, deserves censure, or commendation, according to the angle from which the subject is viewed.

Before attempting to discuss the effects, I found it necessary to define such terms as "Christianity" and "Christian civilization"; and for the former I could do no better than go back to the original sources and see what pure Christianity stood for, as expounded by its originator and promoters, unmixed with the moral teachings of the Pagans and older systems of religion. I never thought it honest or fair to use the modern preachers' method of taking whatever they saw fit from all other sources and calling them by their own pet name.

By pursuing this course I found that the Jesus of the New Testament was more a prophet of woe than of optimism, as far as this world and its people were concerned; and that almost everything that has been instrumental in making for human progress was regarded as evil and denounced by him; evidently be-

cause he saw the world and its inhabitants in a state of bankruptcy, with the Devil as receiver, and that out of the wreck a few would escape to another world somewhere above the clouds. If correctly quoted, Jesus said that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he was going home to his father to prepare room for his followers. No reorganization of the prevailing system seemed possible to him, for as to the material part thereof he said, "there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down"; and human society was so near its dissolution that among his hearers there were some standing who should not taste of death till everything he predicted had taken place. According to these reports Jesus had not come to save the world, but a few people out of the wreck of a world.

By reflecting on the past history of mankind I found that Revelations have always stood as fossilized sentinels and blocked the way of human progress. Being the products of primitive minds, they are naturally limited to the narrow world in which their authors lived, lacking in knowledge of the real world that surrounded them. The most popular one being based on the fallacy that the earth and everything thereon had been cursed by the Creator, any attempt to improve this earth and make it a fit habitation for man was naturally regarded as irreverent. When the grave held out the highest prize attainable, the promotion of human life and happiness in this world could not be worth the effort, and must be looked upon with disfavor by the Creator. For the less man knew about

nature and himself, the more familiar he was with supernatural powers and the more sure he was of the infallibility of his belief in the great unknown; and a Revelation being final in its nature, woe to the man who ventured beyond its sacred precincts or questioned the authority of its guardians.

The effect could then not be otherwise than stagnation and retrogression; for if anything new was attempted, in way of invention or discovery, it was promptly turned down on account of its absence or diversion from the inspired book, which was an all-sufficient guide in all matters pertaining to man's life and activities in this sinful world. If provision was made for any human comforts or the elimination of pain it was at the risk of offending the supernatural powers and losing a whole eternity of bliss for a fleeting moment's satisfaction. The people always lived in the last days of the world and the most important thing was not to be found napping when the trumpet was sounded.

When I came to the square to deliver this address I found a great gathering of people there ahead of me, and several officers with clubs, evidently to keep them from encroaching on one another's rights. This made me suspect that my former discourses had created this situation, and that the officers were sent there to prevent a repetition of the scenes enacted after I left there upon delivering my previous address.

But I found some comfort in the thought that it was the opposition to my work that made the police necessary. The hand-organ band had been there whole

seasons before me, and though their work was disgusting to me and others, and positively harmful to people who had to live in a physical world, none of us had attempted to interfere with them, or made it necessary to disturb the regular officer stationed by the lamp-post. But now that I was talking history and common sense the sympathizers with the church militant had evidently come out in force to prevent me from doing what I had a right to do and felt to be my duty—necessitating officers with clubs to keep them from giving free vent to their passions. Again I realized the great need of my mission, even if I could do no more than in a small way counteract the baneful influence of a religion that has demanded freedom of expression for its followers, but denied the same privilege to others.

Notwithstanding the protection given me by the city authorities, I found it too difficult to deliver my discourse. Besides the frequent interruptions with various kinds of questions, rowdy men and boys insisted on talking loudly and walking through the dense crowd of people. Some of these unruly youngsters got themselves clubbed by the policemen, but that seemed only to increase their rage. When they could not do as they liked in my immediate vicinity, they formed a separate crowd some distance away from me, and by yells and catcalls and various kinds of shouts did their best to drown my voice, till it became necessary for officers to go over there and disperse them; and during all this disturbance I noticed that a great many of the people that had congregated around me were more attentive

to the outside noises than to my discourse and seemed even to enjoy the accompaniment.

After the mob of disturbers had been chased away it became reasonably quiet for a while, which gave me a chance to land some sledge-hammer blows on what I called "the fruits of two thousand years of the inculcation of redemption by faith and shifting of responsibility." I called my hearers' attention to the fact that, as none of that disturbance could come from those who were friendly to my propaganda, it must be from the opposing ranks; and that alone, if nothing else, showed the great need of my mission—to replace an educational system of dissimulation with one of living truth and moral justice.

But the lull proved to be only temporary; for the disturbers, who, I learned afterwards, worked under the command of a captain, had been preparing for another attack. They returned from the other side of the square, singly and by twos, to within a short distance of my stand, and appeared peaceful enough; but all of a sudden there came from the rear rank a volley of stones that produced a long pause in my discourse. Those who threw the stones were shielded by their confederates, who seemed to be as surprised as the rest of us. Fortunately no one was hurt, as the missiles were not heavy enough to injure anybody, and had not been well aimed, if the intention was that they should strike any particular one.

While this happened the officers were at the other end of the square trying to quell another disturbance, but they returned to curb the peace-breakers and

caught two boys suspected of having thrown the stones. They protested their innocence, however, and as nothing could be proved against them they were released. The whole gang had evidently agreed to stand together, for they were cunning enough to know that singly they would surely fall.

I was thus prevented from delivering my discourse on the effect of Revelations on our civilization. When I first undertook to do this I did not expect to see any phase of it enacted while attempting to deliver the address; and seeing that the surging crowd was very restless and worked up to an excited state of mind, I left for home under the protection of an officer.

This man, who spoke with a strong Celtic accent and was a fairly good fellow, told me that he was not pleased with my speeches. He said that he did not care for my criticism of other denominations—he admitted that they deserved it; but he thought that most of my addresses were directed against his own church, and that he assured me was both bad policy and like rubbing up against the rock of Gibraltar.

No reference had been made in my discourses to any particular denomination, but I admitted that my message was intended for all who were opposed to it; and I told him that a social reformer could not let either policies or other considerations interfere with what he believed to be the truth, regardless of how bitter it might taste to those in need thereof.

CHAPTER VI.

NEW FAITHS FOR OLD.

The unfortunate ending of my last discourse was a great disappointment to Erasmus and myself, and we felt keenly the inevitable effect of such a disturbance. Though we were not to blame for telling the truth, as we found it, we realized that we had indirectly created a critical situation, and that it would not be to our advantage. We had no intention of posing as martyrs, nor did we think it would advance our cause. As our propaganda did not appeal to the emotions of the people, we could not see any blessing in our being persecuted, even for the sake of righteousness. It was the brain that our message was intended for, as well as the heart, and that could best be reached under tranquil conditions. Peace was to us, therefore, as necessary as freedom, and hence we deplored the belligerent stand taken by our opponents.

On account of the disorder at our last meeting, the city authorities revoked my permit to speak at the square, as they claimed that my discourses tended to stir up bad blood among the people, and were instrumental in disturbing the peace of the neighborhood.

That was a great blow to us; for Erasmus was about to apply for a permit to speak at the square when I did not occupy the rostrum. We also felt innocent of being peace-disturbers, and regarded our public ad-

dresses as necessary advance agents for the printed word. But we were not discouraged, as we could still fall back on a campaign of pamphleteering.

Suspecting that I had been misrepresented to the city authorities, I went to see the man who gave me the permit, and I learned from him that, besides the outbreak of rowdyism, there had been lodged against me two complaints by prominent residents of the ward, and that one of them was in writing, which he showed to me, and wherein I was termed a "crank" and an "infielder."

I understood the last term to mean that I had held, or still filled, a certain position with some ball team, and I protested that I was not guilty of either that or the other charge.

But the man explained that the intended word was evidently misspelled, and that by removing the first "e" and the "r," and placing the "l" at the end of the word, I would come nearer to the intent of the writer; and he surmised that I must have said something that was distasteful to some of my hearers, or delivered some denunciations on some other authority than that of Jehovah.

To this I pleaded guilty; but I added that I had only repeated some historical facts that all enlightened people ought to know, and that it would not do for a reformer to put his light under a bushel—to which he replied that those who dwell in intellectual rat-holes cannot stand much light.

Seeing that my own speaking at the square had come to an end, I asked for a permit for Erasmus; but I was denied that also, as the two influential men had

suggested that none but evangelical speakers should be allowed on that particular spot of public ground—others being likely to set the people thinking about things that would not stand reasoning without offending the “little ones.”

Being thus thwarted in my plans, I got time to reflect while wending my way homeward to discuss the situation with Erasmus. I had been so busy of late that I had no opportunity for retrospection; but now that I was deprived of my permit to speak at the square, I naturally reflected on what I had done to merit this penalty; for to me it felt like a punishment, though I could not see that I had done anything wrong. Instead I felt that I was engaged in a greatly needed work and that I had as much right to give my side of the question, and express my view, as others had to give theirs and threaten people who did not believe them. If a venomous reptile were visible to my discerning eye in their alluring garden, I felt it my duty to warn people against its hypnotizing influence, even if it should reduce the income of the keepers of the premises.

When we could not speak any longer at the public square, Erasmus obtained a large tent from an acquaintance of his, and we succeeded in renting a vacant lot, where we opened up in semi-revival style. We had some difficulty in securing suitable ground, and it was at first a question whether we should be compelled to pay for an “amusement license” for the privilege of carrying on our propaganda; but by ably pleading our cause, and the assistance of some influential friends, we

finally convinced the authorities that we had more right to do free educational work on private property than the mystics had to promote superstition and addle-patedness and take up collections on untaxed property.

Honesty compels me to admit that we felt a little proud when we got the tent ready for service. Aside from the satisfaction of knowing that we did not need any special permit to use our own auditorium, we felt that we had advanced considerably as public speakers in the scale on which such are weighed. While there was a certain charm in the open-air meeting, it had some disadvantages besides the realization that we were at somebody's mercy. In the tent it would not be so hard to speak as in the open; it would no longer be necessary to postpone our meetings on account of the weather, and the sense of ownership seemed to make us feel braver to speak what we thought ought to be spoken.

Not that we had any intention of becoming intemperate in our expressions—our aim was too high for that. We also remembered the suggestion given to me by the city official, that some people live in intellectual rat-holes, and would have to be treated accordingly. If anything, we felt that we had greater responsibility after we became firmly established than we had at the public square under the censorship of the police.

As our new location was some distance from the square, and a good part of the audience would also be new, we decided that I should repeat the discourses I had already delivered, one every other night, and the evenings between Erasmus was to speak on education,

liberty, health, wealth, happiness, and other useful topics, for which he had been preparing.

It was our intention to have meetings every night in the week, except Sunday, which we needed for rest and recreation. On that day we would let other social reformers use the tent for the discussion of such subjects as socialism, woman suffrage, single tax, the liquor and tobacco problems, and other questions in the line of human advancement. But no advocate of any supernatural religion, or any form of mysticism, would be allowed to occupy our platform, except in a public debate.

Consequently we had some handbills printed and distributed, announcing my first lecture; and this, together with the reputation I had already acquired, attracted enough people almost to fill the large tent on our opening night. They were, however, quiet and orderly; even the ruffians among them seemed to feel a certain restraint in the tent that they were evidently without at the public square.

By this time we had gained quite a number of adherents and sympathizers, who complimented us on our progress, and many expressed their willingness to help us in making the movement a permanent success. When it became necessary to go to the additional expense of using a tent, our financial backer had enlisted the co-operation of one of his friends; so that, after all, the outlook was far from discouraging.

While I was repeating my former discourses, I outlined and began to prepare a new course on the science of life. This I regarded as my principal subject to

teach; but, being along scientific lines, I had to knock the most popular props from the prevailing structure of superstition before taking up positive subjects, such as nature, life, work, humanitarianism, love, etc.

In my lecture on nature I tried to convince my hearers that we know of nothing grander, more mysterious, and so deserving of being called a revelation as the marvelous universe with its vast systems of suns, planets, and intricate details down to the smallest atom; that, though evidently unmoral, this is sublime enough to inspire us with awe and reverence, if not worship, and certainly big enough to absorb our attention to the exclusion of all imaginary phantoms that were created by immature brains in the childhood of our race, and foisted on us by an ancient profession before our reasoning faculty had been developed. After calling my hearers' attention to Emerson's statement that "an actually existent fly is more important than a possibly existent angel," I tried to prove that there is so much to learn in this world, in our short lives, that we really have no time to spare for fabled beings that this same profession had found it profitable to propagate in order to hold us in spiritual bondage, especially when they could not give a sensible reason for their claim, and that every faction of these mystics accused the others of imposture. I wound up my discourse with a quotation from another great scholar: "All temples not founded on the rock of natural science are on the sands, where the angry tides are setting in."

My discourse on life resolved itself around the insoluble mystery of that priceless possession; but I

tried to make it clear to my hearers that if we can not understand a thing, there is no reasonable excuse for forming ridiculous conceptions of it and force them on posterity with a threat of penalty for unbelief; that life itself should be one of our absorbing studies, so that we may make the most of ourselves, and not be guilty of repeating the mistakes of our remote ancestors, resulting not only in stagnation, but actual deterioration and demoralization of our race; that regardless of how many incarnations we have to pass through, each one sensibly spent can not be to our disadvantage, though we know absolutely nothing of the conditions in the next; that this view is at least wiser than belittling and neglecting the present for the preparation of an unknown future; and that it is positively criminal to make a business of diverting the people's attention from this world to another, and scaring them with imaginary hells and heavens outside of those that may be found within their own conscience.

Work, both physical and mental, I told my audience, is the greatest savior of man, and the only means by which he can evolve to moral and intellectual heights; but that this should be so divided that it will not fall too heavily on any one class and too lightly on another; that no one has a moral right to live a useless and extravagant life on the toil of his fellow men, and should be regarded as disgraceful as gambling on the product of other people's labor, which has become a habit with some men, whose morality is so diluted with the theory of redemption by grace that they can no longer distinguish between business and highway-robbery. I ad-

vanced the opinion that some day, which I hoped would not be in a too distant future, the majority of the people would throw off their spiritual yoke, and cultivate themselves into moral and intellectual beings, who would not be at the mercy of governmental, industrial and commercial sharks, if there still were any such left; and this, I said, was the very work in which I was engaged, and would be my mission till the end of my days.

By the cultivation of a humanitarian spirit among men, the representatives of an arbitrary system of retribution would be eliminated; gross selfishness would disappear from the earth; man become conscious of the solidarity of his race, and find his highest enjoyment in being of the greatest service to his kind. Private gain and the gratification of his personal whims and idiosyncrasies would no longer be the ruling passion. He would not even expect measure for measure, or do only as he wished to be done by, but be so absorbed in doing for others that there would be no occasion to think of self. Any social system, from despotism to collectivism, would work satisfactorily when man became capable of governing himself, but he would first have to be relieved of the colossal egotism that he is a favorite of the gods, and made to understand that he is only a very small cog in the great and wonderful wheel of life.

My lecture on love, which I called *The Universal Solvent*, proved to be the most popular one of my entire course, and won for me many warm friends, especially among women. This was a subject that was

very close to my heart, and one on which I did not have to speak from second-hand information, but from actual experience. I had tasted the bitters and the sweets of this powerful regenerator and knew what a mighty force it is in the world. My own love for my adored Adeline made my words burn like fire into the hearts of my hearers. I became transfigured, as it were, when I stood before that large assemblage of men and women and told them of loves that were long enduring, could suffer hardships, conquer difficulties, brave dangers, and defy the very jaws of hell; and my enthusiasm seemed to electrify the audience, till it became so still that there was only one harmonious breathing from one end of the tent to the other. Even Erasmus admitted that he had been carried along with the current created by my enthusiasm and unconscious eloquence.

By delivering the last discourse I became reconciled with many who had looked upon me with disfavor; and to some of these I admitted that in my first enthusiasm I might have turned on a stronger light than I should have done to begin with; but as no permanent constructive work could be done on defective foundations, I felt it to be necessary to begin at the bottom. If I had started at the top and worked downward, most of my labor would have been wasted. The structure would have collapsed when I disturbed the rickety foundation. The rubbish had to be cleared away before attempting to erect a permanent edifice. I was primarily a moral teacher, and it was useless to discuss the questions of right and wrong, and at the same time lull the conscience to sleep by the hoodwinking method

of sanctioning irresponsibility—and this all right-thinking people had to admit.

As we became better established we added music to our services. Public brawling was distasteful to both Erasmus and myself, but we realized that congregational singing helped to enthuse the audience, and we were fortunate to secure good soloists to give us suitable selections, both vocal and instrumental, before and after the address; and while this brought to our tent a few people who could not stand the strain of listening to an intellectual discourse, they were of the orderly kind, and perhaps susceptible to some stray spark that flew from our thinkshops, though neither soothing nor produced in rhythmical order.

In addition to our regular work at the tent, we managed to publish and distribute one of my discourses each week. Besides giving one to those who attended our meetings, we had them distributed throughout the part of the town in which we labored, and these naturally brought our work to the attention of many who had not heard the discourses delivered. That some of these pamphlets were read we had ample evidence; for John Langdon received many letters of commendations and denunciations, especially the latter kind, as my name and address appeared on the title pages.

It seemed that the clergy regarded our campaign of pamphleteering with greater apprehension than our work at the tent, which might have been due to the fact that the printed word was delivered to the homes of people whom we would not have reached otherwise, and among them those who dared not come and hear us, because they had been warned against the fallacy

of our teachings, and the great risk of listening to so deceptive and unsound doctrine as ours was represented to be. Our message was even delivered to the very homes of preachers, which was a still more aggressive method than they themselves pursued, and naturally made them feel that we were poaching on their preserves. One of them declared that we were "turning the people away from the house of God, and starting them on the broad road to perdition."

The Rev. Mr. St. John, to whose home one of our emissaries went with a pamphlet, requested the boy to step inside and asked him if he knew that he was walking on the brink of hell and trying to pull others down with him. He also tried to persuade the lad to throw away such godless stuff and come to Sunday-school the following day. But this particular young fellow was manly enough to answer that he could not throw away what he was paid for distributing, nor would he throw up a good job just to accommodate somebody else.

The distribution of my discourses led the preachers of the canvassed territory to unite in a request to the city authorities to stop us from scattering abroad what they called blasphemous and seditious literature; but the keepers of public order could not find anything seditious in my pamphlets, and could not even agree on what constituted blasphemy, letting alone having any jurisdiction in the matter. Hence the ancient phrasemongers could not stop us from carrying on our propaganda to save souls, by the light of reason, from the claws of superstition and the debauchment of conscience.

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE THE BAR OF JUSTICE.

When our opponents could not prevent us from exploding their absurd Revelation, they tried us on civic grounds. The American system of government not recognizing any forms of religious practice, but giving the various factions freedom to fight out such questions between themselves, there was only one legal resort left in trying to put an end to our educational campaign, and that was to charge us with violating the civil laws, by spreading among the people doctrines that were "immoral and against public policy." These terms being somewhat flexible, they offered to the theological mind plenty of opportunities for interpretation and application, and hence I was summoned before the Court to answer the charge of teaching immorality.

In my discourse on love I had said that there were holier bonds between men and women than the sacerdotal edict. I had also said that no sacrament could save the unfit from demoralization, and referred to some unions as wedded immorality; and these remarks they construed to mean that I was an advocate of "free love," in the common acceptance of that term. Not being satisfied with turning the people away from the temple of Jehovah, and responsible for their spiritual damnation, I was also accused of working for their

temporal ruin, by attacking the institution of marriage and suggesting the discontinuance of family life.

This was naturally a great surprise to me. Though I regarded marriage as a purely civil institution, with which the church had nothing whatever to do, I knew of no obligation more sacred and inviolable if entered into on equal terms. I even went so far as to advocate equality in the marriage relation, and the elimination of a spiritual adviser, and publicly denounced the ancient notion of giving woman to man as a helpmeet, whose head he was authorized to be, as well as the savior of her body. Hence it acted like a blow on me when I learned that the sophists had gone so far as to accuse me of trying to undermine the very foundation of civilized society.

It seemed, though, that the prime reason for this was because I had laid greater emphasis on the marriage relation itself than on how the ceremony was performed, and discouraged the practice of paying to a useless profession a handsome fee for being told a string of lies when starting out on this important journey and in most need of being told the simple truth. The rather expansive term business loomed up before me, and I could not prevent that closely related word "graft" coming to my mind when I thought of this last move by our adversaries.

When I read the frequent exposures of the various methods used to defraud the public, I had often wondered why it was that the greatest of all swindles had been let alone, and even supported by those who made it a business to disclose the crookedness of others.

Private individuals, as well as national and municipal authorities, had shown great zeal in curtailing the traffic of fortune-tellers, astrologers, spiritualistic mediums, medical, stock, and other fake schemes to obtain money under false pretenses; and I had always regarded it as a praiseworthy work to protect the innocent people against those who were trying to get their hard-earned savings by foul means. But here was a formidable institution, conducted by a class of apparently respectable men, who promised everything unreasonable—from relieving you of your criminal guilt, to giving you an eternal paradise in the sky—for the simple consideration of believing in and supporting them. They gave absolutely nothing in return for the money they collected. They were not even trying to make people honest in words and deeds; for, had they been, they would not be trying to make converts of those who already possessed these virtues, and overlook these shortcomings in their followers; nor were they instructing the people in useful arts, or even manners, unless egotism could be classed as such.

And if evidence had been lacking there might be some excuse for hesitating to expose them, but they themselves furnished plenty of it. They were even barefaced enough to offer a judge the same paradise that they promised to others, if he only believed what they told him; and if this was not enough to convict them of fraud, all that was necessary was to accept their own testimony, that all other religious systems carried on under the names of other deities were impostures. Still, this remarkable class of men were not

only let alone in their operations, but the public paid taxes on their meeting houses, and they were regarded as enlightened and honest men. In touching upon the peculiar position of these men, in one of my discourses, and the position of the public toward them, I could not find any better word to express the situation than simply to call it naive.

The Rev. Simon Halloway was instrumental in bringing me into court. In his self-appointed capacity as guardian of public morals he found immorality in things that seemed quite innocent to a pure-minded person, and in his social warfare he often resorted to sensational methods. One warm day, for instance, he went down to the beach, in disguise, and took snapshots of the bathers, also caught on the street some women who he judged were not dressed sufficiently, and of these pictures he had lantern slides made and gave an illustrated evening sermon in his church. Among those pictures happened to be a snapshot of one of his parishioners, a handsome married woman riding on a large wave in the arms of a man unknown to the kodak-fiend; and for this diversion the preacher just missed being mobbed after the sermon. It was this class of men that had brought me before the bar of justice on the charge of teaching immorality.

Fortunately I had no difficulty in proving that I was innocent of the charge against me. Besides my lecture on love, which we had in print and offered as evidence, we submitted Erasmus' stenographic report to prove that our opponents were using the same tactics in construing my words as they did in interpre-

ting their Revelation. In the same discourse was a long paragraph on the sanctity of the home, that compared favorably with anything said on the subject by those who received a fee upon the establishment of each one, as well as the births and deaths that occurred therein.

Our opponents and their followers proved by their testimony that they were irresponsible witnesses, both at my lectures and before the court. The Rev. Mr. St. John testified that I had denounced the marriage relation as immoral, from which he had drawn the conclusion that I was a believer in what he termed "free love," and he also said that I had called him and his followers knaves.

I had no difficulty in satisfying the court as to my position on the marriage question; and not remembering having used the term "knave," though I had indulged in many others, I asked the Reverend gentleman to spell the word, which he did as correctly as he had pronounced it; but I showed the court that the term I had employed was spelled n-a-i-v-e. This witness was dismissed therewith.

Another witness, a woman, testified that I had sworn in her native tongue, and had, in referring to married people, used the phrase "sacramentliche idiot." The nearest thing we could find in my lecture, that might have sounded anything like it, was sacerdotal edict. This witness was also excused. Dr. Halloway did not testify but acted as an assistant prosecutor.

Erasmus' stenographic report was especially valuable in this case; for those parts that we needed agreed

perfectly with the printed sentences, and were testified to by reliable witnesses. Ever since he had surprised me with his first report we had kept up the practice of reporting my discourses. It was not an uncommon thing that, in the midst of a public address, I experienced something akin to inspiration, and for the time being rose to oratorical heights that it would otherwise have been difficult to rescue from oblivion; and we found these notes of great help in preparing my discourses for publication.

Both the jury and the spectators seemed to be highly amused at the way this trial turned out, as it did not require much sense of humor to realize the farcical nature of it; but the judge showed plainly that he was annoyed. He was a solemn-faced, long-whiskered man, and when we showed him the words I had used, instead of those I was accused of having uttered, and their relative values, his eyes expressed a peculiar, half-guilty look, and his countenance showed evidence of mental distress, and anxiousness to be relieved of the unedifying spectacle.

There was no interruption in our work on account of this interference, and we were evidently the gainers. The newspapers reported the trial, and thus brought us to the attention of many to whom we were strangers. And it helped to bring before the public some fair samples of the character of the men who are in the business of piloting people to another world, while densely ignorant of the one in which they live. It also promised to have something of the effect that religious persecutions always had; namely, to cement the

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bonds of those engaged in our cause.

This trial, to which I had invited Adeline, led me to deliver a lecture on intellectual honesty while she was in the city. The subject was not new to me and did not need much preparation. In this address I endeavored to make it clear to my audience that this kind of honesty is just as necessary as to refrain from taking things belonging to others. In fact, that it is a greater crime than petit larceny for men posing as models for the public to juggle with words and pretend to have any knowledge of, or communication with, the Infinite; that this pettifogging system of bringing up the youth is really responsible for the small regard people have for truth, and the canting hypocrisy so common among men and women; and that we can not have intellectual honesty as long as a large class of men is supported by the public for the sole purpose of confusing the innocent with their air-beating and wind-sawing sophistry. I also told my hearers that there are many immoralities besides the sexual, and that the intellectual kind is really responsible for all the others, as no one will perform an immoral act until he has first committed it in his mind; and hence the crying need of the replacement of these semi-official simulators with instructors in simple honesty, kindness and truthfulness.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNIVERSAL SOLVENT.

When Adeline received my invitation to attend the trial, she came to the city promptly and without the least hesitation. She admitted that the news was quite a shock to her, as I had not informed her what the specific charges were and on what ground they were based. I had simply written that I was to be tried for "heresy" before a certain judge on a set day, and asked her to come and learn something new. She said, however, that she had not entertained any doubt as to my guiltlessness of doing wrong, or anything unlawful; and I naturally appreciated her confidence in me and willingness to stand by me in adversity, if such it can be called.

As the affair turned out so farcical, she could not help being much amused over it. She marveled at the stupidity of the participants, and expressed her doubts whether such a comedy could be successfully staged in her home village. Her estimation of the guardians of the local churches was by no means high, but she was confident that they had more sense than those she had seen at my trial. She proved to have been a keen and attentive observer of what was said and done, and surprised me with many humorous narratives of events and incidents that had escaped my attention, being so absorbed in the main question before the court. She

also said that she had never before realized the truth of my contention that humanity is paying a great penalty for permitting an ancient Asiatic institution to mould the minds of the people before they became capable of thinking for themselves.

It was Adeline's first visit in the city while I had been engaged in reform work, with the exception of two hurried trips to my lectures, and she found it both novel and interesting. She admitted that the city itself and its inhabitants made an altogether different impression on her from what they formerly did. Even old friends and acquaintances appeared somewhat strange, and some of them looked upon her with more or less distrust and suspicion, especially when she mentioned what had brought her to the city at this particular time. A former chum and schoolmate, who sang in a church choir, did not invite her to a little party that she had for their mutual friend, though she knew that Adeline was in the city and stopping in the neighborhood. But all this she took as a matter of course, in a kindly spirit, and said that she sympathized with them all. It hurt me to see that the poor girl had to suffer such slights for my sake, but her brave and hopeful spirit more than made up for any unpleasantness caused by her former friends.

This also being the first opportunity for Erasmus and Adeline to become acquainted, I must admit that I had looked forward to the time with a little uneasiness. I knew that they were the very kind of man and woman who would find each other congenial, though I could not tell to what extent, and I had even resolved

to give up the girl if that should become advisable, and if by so doing I could promote her happiness. Hence it was not a little relief to me when I found them satisfied with being good friends, and even treated one another as brother and sister. It was very gratifying to see that the good recommendations I had given both did not result in anything else than the enhancement of our mutual esteem.

I had been so overwhelmed with work that I did not find time to write to Adeline as much as I should; but not delivering any lectures on every other Sunday, I generally spent that day with her, and I always found that the inconveniences connected with these trips were nothing compared to the benefit I derived. Aside from the purely personal delight of seeing and conversing with my beloved, these visits helped greatly to supply me with the necessary motive power to keep up my work.

My reputation had also found its way to her little village, so I was regarded by its people as a bad character, whose very garments it was well enough to avoid coming in contact with, owing to the danger of heretical contamination. But such trifles did not influence Adeline in the least. She was the same sunny, sweet-tempered girl to her foes that she was to her friends, and was really the one who had been most instrumental in saving me from feeling unkind towards my enemies—for I regret to say that I had such. One Sunday evening when leaving her home town, a good part of its curious population was at the station to see me off; and to save her from such unpleasantness in the future,

I thereafter took a much later train, which was just as agreeable to us both, though I could not get back to the city before morning.

There were two good reasons why I had hesitated to broach the subject of an early marriage to Adeline. One was that I could not provide her with anything near like the home she was accustomed to; and the second was that I was a little uncertain how she would like the kind of life I could offer her in the city. I had always felt that a man should not ask a woman to make too much of a sacrifice to become his wife. Then we had been so happy in our relations as lovers that we had no urgent need for any greater bliss. We had also been informed that the pursuit of happiness is greater than its possession, and hence we were in no hurry to disturb the blissful relations that already existed between us. The correspondence and occasional companionship with my beloved had been heaven to me, and Adeline was exceptional woman enough to confess that she felt the same.

I was naturally very happy to have the dear girl with me in the city a few days, and did all I could to make her visit as profitable and enjoyable as possible. Besides taking her to our meetings, I showed her both the good and the bad sides of the life of a great city; how extravagant wealth and extreme poverty rub elbows with one another, and yet the almost impassable gulf between them; how the free libraries are filled with books on all imaginable subjects, including the natural sciences, and how the masses still cling to the popular fairy tales, in blissful ignorance of historical

and scientific information on the subject; how the beautiful and the ugly dwell side by side, and the people's lack of discrimination between the two; how right and wrong, the good and the bad, face one another on every hand, and how little is done to deal effectively with the problem, and how much to preserve the indifference. And in all this she displayed much interest and expressed both appreciation and regrets.

Having returned with her from the meeting and being alone in the living room awaiting the time when she would depart for home, I told Adeline that I had her greatly to thank for the success of our movement; that love is the supreme motive power and Universal Solvent in this world, and that without her inspiration I could not have accomplished what I had done. I also admitted that I felt very sorry that her interest in me should result in the estrangement of her friends, and I frankly asked her if she felt that the sacrifice was worth the cost.

Adeline answered that she had not made any sacrifice; that the loss of her former friends was nothing compared to the greater satisfaction of knowing that she had my love and could be of some help to me in my work; that her girl friends had their lives to live and she had hers, and that she could not consider their likes or dislikes in preference to her own; that she had always been of an independent disposition, and never had much regard for the conventions of society, and that her love for me and interest in my cause were worth more to her than everything else in the wide world.

This I confessed made me extremely happy, as it was really more than I had dared to expect that a daughter of Judge Stanton should cast her lot with a man associated with such an unpopular movement; that I felt profoundly grateful and owed her more than I ever could repay; that with her by my side all the discords of life would melt into one sweet melody, that I hoped would be a great blessing to us both and to our fellow beings on our common journey through life.

We sealed this with a long kiss and vowed to remain faithful to the end. I took Adeline to the railroad station and sent her home on the night train, with my best well-wishes and a typewritten copy of my *Nocturnal Journey*, which she knew nothing about, and in due time I received from her the following letter: "My dearest:

"I must write at once and let you know that I got home safely and feel as if I had been on a journey around the world. I spent my time on the train reading that weird tale you gave me, and it and the trip so affected me that I could not sleep when I went to bed. My brain kept repeating some incidents of both my trip and those related in the tale, and sometimes I could distinctly hear the rumble as of a distant drum. Did you actually spend a whole night alone on the lake and have such a dream? It almost made me shiver when I read that you went out so far all alone in a rowboat, but I too became so interested in the clouds that I forgot everything else. I can hardly believe that you have made it all up; I must confess that I

don't know how to take it. If I did not know you so well I would be tempted to believe that you are like the people on the moon, superhuman. I am very impatient to see you again so I can assure myself that you are real and that I can hear your familiar voice.

"You have no idea how dead and dreary our little town looked to me after I had been gazing at the big blocks and crowds in the city. There is something inspiring in that huge pile of buildings, swarming with people, that I did not experience before. Perhaps I was not in the right mood on my former visits. But I have now the whole panorama before me and can still hear the din of the streets and the hum of the multitude. However, father says that I don't look any worse for the wear; and you should have seen how tickled he was when I told him about the trial. He said it was first class comedy.

"And now, my Dear: Do not work too hard! Though you are strong, you cannot do everything all at once. Take enough rest to preserve your health, and come out here every Sunday for recuperation. Never mind my rambling style. It will improve when I get a little rest, and then I will write you more. In the meantime I am your former little girl and your present big girl, all in one, and your ever faithful

"Adeline."

CHAPTER IX.

MAKING PROGRESS.

Having conducted our campaign in one part of the city, we moved to another section and did the same work all over again, till our gospel of common sense had been brought to the attention of all the inhabitants who were not spiritually dead. Owing to the reputation that had gone before us, we generally found it difficult to secure suitable location for our tent. While there were plenty of vacant lots to be found, the most desirable ones were owned by people who refused to rent them for our purpose. Some of these owners were opposed to our propaganda, and others were indifferent, but feared to offend their friends, or customers, by letting us use their vacant grounds for our educational campaign. We were thus prevented from using some of the best locations; but we always found somebody willing to accept a fair rental to help pay taxes on an unproductive property, and some of them were pillars of the church, though it was not even suspected. To large signboards ornamented with nude female figures and announcing some superior brand of highballs there seemed to be no objection by the pious property owners. During the winter months we used an old exposition building instead of the tent.

While doing repetitious work we added new discourses to our repertoire, and kept continually studying the situation so that we could supply the most urgent needs in the most effective way. We found that the lecturing and distribution of pamphlets was not enough to get the people permanently interested in our cause. We had to do a great deal of other missionary work besides, such as talking to people who came to our meetings and making them acquainted with one another. For this purpose we had to enlist a number of assistants, and we found that both sexes were needed, as bright, intelligent women were more successful with men, and vice versa. We employed, however, no young and silly people, such as the gum-chewing kind we had seen in Sunday-schools and revival meetings of the orthodox variety. We also established neighborhood centers and clubs, where people could come together and exchange ideas, sympathies, and compliments with their kind, and we were always on the lookout for suitable material to keep such social centers alive and growing.

Whenever we settled down in a new part of the city there was always more or less excitement aroused in the neighborhood. To the clergy it meant a disturbance in their flocks, and it acted as a shock to the dignity of their assistants, such as deacons, Sunday-school teachers and Christian workers, as well as other pillars of both church and society. To the people in general it meant a waking up of many who had been spiritually asleep most of their lives, and an invoicing of their mental and religious stock. It meant a resuscitation.

from the stagnant pool of conservatism, of many bones that had shown no signs of life for years, and that were made to rattle when exposed to the strong light of reason; and many of these transitions proved painful to the converts. It was so hard to give up the notion that they were the elect, for whom gods had suffered death, and that they could expect nothing more in this or any other life than just what they made of themselves—that each individual is his own redeemer. It seemed so cruel to them that Mother Nature should be an impartial judge, not affected by either bribes or supplications. It was so hard to give up the idea that they needed a reward for being decent, and they seemed to be much bothered by the fear that those who deserved punishment would escape—something to which they themselves only felt entitled. The egotism was so rooted in them that it was difficult to make them understand that the giving up of self was their only spiritual salvation, and a much sweeter bliss than the satisfaction of feeling that their own little egos had been rescued from damnation by a fortunate turn in their beliefs. For as to the question of eternal life, we had to admit that it is just as absurd to deny as to affirm something that is beyond the sphere of human knowledge, and in an age of extravagant promises of all kinds such moderation does not appeal to people who place a high value on themselves.

Even fairly intelligent men and women, who knew that the whole system of priestcraft is a deception, thought it good for the crowd. They believed that some kind of a bogey is necessary to hold the people in check, and that even the grown-ups have to be prom-

ised sweets for not being naughty to grandma. They expressed their fear of anarchy if the common people were given the same knowledge that they themselves possessed, and that even a deity that can be influenced is better than moral responsibility; while to us it seemed that the form of anarchy produced by human enlightenment and redemption from the greatest of infamy—superstition—could not come too soon. Such people were even harder to convince than the honest believers.

Some of our converts naturally relapsed into their old ways, which was to be expected, as the calls of the wild, or ancestral traits, are not easily gotten rid of. But the majority of those whose minds had once been permitted to enjoy broad daylight seldom slid back to the gloom of intellectual night, and those who came in full possession of the glorious privilege of the right of reason never relapsed.

As I had anticipated, Erasmus developed into an eloquent and forceful speaker, and this rare quality, together with his earnestness and remarkable persistency, made him a powerful instrument in the great cause of human salvation from the degrading influence of diabolism. As a complement to his high mental caliber was his attractive personality and kind disposition. Though an aristocrat both physically and intellectually, he was as simple as a child in dealing with the mentally undeveloped—for which quality of greatness it sometimes happened that he suffered in the estimation of low-minded people. And though it may seem egotistical for me to say it, he regarded me

as his savior, it being through my influence that he had become engaged in the work for which he was most fit and for which there was the greatest need in the world. He was also very successful in interesting and organizing young people in the various parts of the city, and was president of our central young people's association, to which all subsidiary bodies belonged.

Then we had the good fortune of adding Professor Philistadius to our regular staff of lecturers, which was both a delight and great help to Erasmus and myself. Owing to his thorough knowledge of priestcraft, in all its branches, he was a very valuable addition to our force, and we were glad to place him at the head of our theological department. It was no longer necessary to call on the retired clergyman for information, or spend our valuable time searching the Scriptures; for the professor not only furnished us with the information we asked for but gave us many valuable suggestions besides. It takes a man who has gone through the theological mill to know its defects and how to expose them; and being familiar with the enemy's position it becomes less difficult to meet him on his own ground. He possessed a magnetic personality and a powerful voice, having acquired the latter in preaching to a large congregation that numbered many old and deaf members. When we covered the part of the city where his old church was located we could hardly accommodate the crowds that came to hear him, and many of the younger set of his former parishioners "hit the sawdust trail" and vowed

thenceforth to lead an honest life. Among the many publications from his pen was "The Pledge of the Free and the Brave," which our converts were required to sign and urged to read every day, and it is so simple and sensible that I recommend it to the readers of this story:

"In the presence of and before this assemblage of good men and women I solemnly promise from now on to lead an honest and upright life: To practice cleanliness of mind as well as of body; to make no pretence of being what I am not or knowing what I do not know, and not in any way encourage the practice of simulation in any form or manner; to treat my fellow men and women as I would be treated by them in the various relations of life; to do the right for the satisfaction derived therefrom, and not for any possible reward in some other possible existence; to find strength and inspiration in the love of my kind, the work of the world, and the grand and glorious universe."

The professor became practically indispensable to us and his lectures on comparative religion were masterpieces of the first order.

Ever since I first met Mr. Heartman, the collectivist, I had kept in close touch with his work and been on friendly terms with him. He was the very first man I invited to speak in our tent on Sunday evenings, when we did not use it ourselves, and he returned the favor by announcing our meeting to his own audiences. The result was that our mutual interest increased till we commenced to "exchange pulpits," now

and then, and sometimes spoke from the same platform at the same meeting. He admitted that he was mistaken when he told me that I would have a harder road to travel than he had; for I succeeded in the first few months to get a larger attendance at my lectures than he had been able to work up in the same number of years, and it proved to be permanent. My audience was also made up of a much larger proportion of women, which he realized was a good sign.

Mr. Ulysses Heartman was originally a "Sixteen to One" reformer, but had abandoned that theory and taken up the Marxian philosophy of property, which he was expounding with great zeal and ability at the time I made his acquaintance, at his lecture on Capital and Labor. I often told him that his work on purely economic subjects did not appeal to a great number of people, and suggested that he branch out on other sociological subjects, that would not be so prosaic, though perhaps less necessary, and would help to pave the way for as much of an economic change as the prevailing conditions warranted.

It was not an easy task to get Mr. Heartman to listen to my suggestion; for he knew "Das Kapital" by heart and regarded it as a sort of Holy Writ, though the prospect of putting it into practice seemed not so good when he reflected on the people's conservatism and the factors involved in the sudden change of an old and deeply rooted economic system. Nevertheless, the evidence of my own success before him, and our harmonious relations, finally induced him to affiliate with our organization and simply act as a sort of John

the Baptist, as I was doing, in preparing the way for greater things to come when conditions made their realization possible.

This consolidation was a great step in our progress toward the goal we were aiming at and proved to be beneficial to both sides. The element of any possible competition was eliminated and it gave us both a wider field and greater opportunities for our campaign of enlightenment.

The affiliation of Mr. Heartman with our organization was partly instrumental in the valuable acquisition of Miss Knickerbocker to our staff. Though she had no aptness for economics or leaning towards Collectivism, in the sense Mr. Heartman used the term, that part of the program, placing women on the same political equality with men, appealed to her strongly, and she naturally felt drawn toward any one promoting that cause.

I had kept on friendly terms with her, too, ever since I made her acquaintance when in search for information to guide me in my proposed reform work, and I had also given her opportunities to speak at our tent. I often called her attention to the fact that the education of the young was mostly in the hands of people who believed that the instilling of an Asiatic superstition in the minds of children is of greater importance than making good and useful citizens of them. I held that the moulding of the youths' mind is a greater factor in their education than any information they may acquire later in life, and that there was a great field for a woman of her ability to take up some work along that line.

Miss Knickerbocker admitted that her work had been altogether with mature women, "whose minds had already been made up on the subject of Churchianity," and that a great portion of the membership of her own organization were half-hearted about the suffrage question, owing to the adverse stand of the orthodox clergy, and her own reputation for liberal ideas, not conducive to their interest. But she said that she had regarded the work as her mission in life, and felt that it was a duty she owed to her fellow women to secure for them their natural rights.

I answered that her work for political equality for women need not and should not be given up, as I believed in that and preached it myself; but that I felt confident that she could accomplish more good by devoting at least part of her time to the education of the young, as it mattered not so much if women voted as long as they clung to the old institution.

Her decision was finally brought about when she was relieved of the office of president of the League, which was principally due to religious prejudice; and Elizabeth Knickerbocker joined our ranks and began at once to organize a secular Sunday-school, as a branch of our forward movement.

By diligent labor and through the assistance of our friends we effected a strong organization. Other men and women of ability and means were enlisted in our cause, and Erasmus and myself did our best to see that the talents and money were judiciously employed. By this time we had our own printing press running day and night, turning out discourses and educational tracts in large editions, and were rapidly getting them

into the hands of the people. After supplying the inhabitants of the city with our pamphlets, we took up one section of the country after another and carried on our campaign by mail. Uncle Sam proved to be our most efficient missionary; for he could render more service for less money than our own organization, and showed no scruples against the promotion of our cause. No piece of printed matter that we offered him was refused, and most of it reached its destination.

This auxiliary campaign created considerable stir in the districts that were covered by our pamphlets and increased our mail to such proportions that it became necessary to establish a correspondence department. For this we were fortunate to secure an efficient lady manager, who had much experience in dealing with people of all shades of religious and political opinions. As most of the letters contained nothing but denunciations and abuse, they did not require any special answer. We had a form-letter that we sent to such writers, and answered only those who made any specific points, not covered by our general letter, or who seemed to deserve our special attention.

Personally I saw very few of these letters, as I could not spare the time to read them; but they all received the attention of our official correspondent. She had even opened one of Adeline's letters by mistake, and she solemnly declared that she had not read it, which I never had any reason to doubt. I offered her to read the sweetest lines ever penned by womankind; but she blushingly declined, saying that she was not in the least curious—and thus there was no unpleasantness caused by this incident.

CHAPTER X.

SPIRITUAL DEBAUCHERY.

By the time we had covered the city the effect of our work was making itself pretty well felt among all the Asiatic cults. There was a considerable falling off in church attendance, especially at the prayer meetings, and many who came to the services exhibited unmistakable signs of indifference. Some of those who used to pray aloud in church basements ceased to make such appeals, for conscientious reasons; others began to ask questions of their pastors, that sounded irreverent to the ears of the faithful, and caused much uneasiness among the preachers, and even made some of them lose their temper in trying to give satisfactory answers. Among the many sheep that had decided to leave the fold, some sent letters of resignation to their shepherds, in which they admitted that, in roaming about, they had found better pastures than those they had been formerly led to, and in consequence of the better nourishment felt that they could henceforth shift for themselves—and for all of this defection we were naturally blamed.

In addition to these external signs within the respective city congregations, the pastors received letters from their colleagues in the country towns, asking if antichrist had actually broken loose, and if nothing could be done to prevent the country from going straight to hell before it was too late. These corres-

pondents were mostly in the territory covered by our literature, and some of them had otherwise been made familiar with the work we were doing. I also received letters from preachers; but it was useless to write to me, as I was not going to be influenced by their damnations, and none of them made any attempts to convince me of the error of my ways.

Most of this stir was naturally among the lower and middle-class people; but not a few of the upper set also attended our meetings and read the printed discourses, though their pastors pretended to be ignorant of the work that had been going on in their midst. The Rev. Mr. Compromaster and a few others, who were familiar with our work, intimated that it was not worth their serious attention, but at the same time acted as if the ground they stood upon were slipping away from under their feet.

Owing to these external and internal promptings, the so-called evangelical preachers realized that something drastic had to be done to regain the lost ground; so, instead of having the yearly carnival with its games of chance, spielers, tooters, and clowns, to boom the finances of the churches, the syndicate decided on a vigorous revival to recover the lost sheep. A campaign of city-wide awakening was planned, to take the place of the usual orgy for the sole purpose of raising money; a large tabernacle was erected on a convenient piece of ground and extensive preparations were made for a successful spiritual debauch.

The preachers, not having sufficient faith in themselves to make this a success, had arranged with two

professional revivalists to come to the city and work up the necessary excitement among the lukewarm people. The intention was to storm the headquarters of antichrist and this was more than the local clergy felt able to do. They realized that it required specialists to counteract the influence of our work, if it could be done at all.

One of these revival experts was an ex-prize-fighter by the name of Billingsgate, who had changed his field of operation from the physical to the spiritual sphere of action, and had the reputation of being the most scientific reason-sluggler in the country. He was the personification of muscular Christianity, and had been given the title of Reverend by one of the branches of the church militant, though he was altogether devoid of any reverential quality.

His partner, Mr. Quackenback, was a musical prodigy, and could sing very doleful songs, and some regular groans that made the weak-minded hearers feel the agony that the words and tunes expressed, while they were being prepared for Mr. Billingsgate's hypnotic ejaculations.

The revivalists came and took charge of the meetings arranged by the syndicate, and all the preachers belonging to the combination advised their followers to attend. This was not a factional affair, but conducted along broad Christian and undenominational lines for the good of the whole—which was perfectly safe, as the hired experts were not working up any following of their own, but were simply specialists in the service of the regular practitioners.

Billingsgate was as different from the ordinary type of preacher as a jockey is from the proverbial circuit rider. He did not wear long hair, nor even a long coat, and was not particular about the color of his clothes. In fact, he was not a fit spectacle for the old-fashioned pulpit, and it's doubtful if he ever appeared in a real orthodox one. But he could make the most wonderful grimaces, and contortions of his body, on a platform where he had plenty of room to display his orang-utan-shaped form and shake his large fists at the audience. There was a Svengali gleam in his eyes when he looked the people in the face, and his voice rose to a loud shriek when he told them of their cursed wickedness, and how the abysmal monster stood by their side ready to pull them down into the pit that has no bottom and where the gnashing of teeth shall continue throughout all eternity.

It made no difference what character of a man you were and what kind of a life you lived. Unless you believed in demon worship and the inspired book, including the Billingsgate exposition of it, you were simply lost. This evil world had been cursed by its Maker and doomed to perdition by his Son, and in consequence this modern follower damned everything and everybody therein who did not accept the contemptible lie.

But after long sulphuric discharges of all the strong adjectives used in the damnation program, and having succeeded in confusing the intellect and depressing the spirit of his poor victims, the scowl vanished from his face and his harsh voice became milder. There was

hope for those unfortunates if they confessed their sins and embraced the fetish; and not only reasonable hope, but an eternal paradise of continuous pleasure. And all this was absolutely free to accept—it had been dearly purchased by the Son of God, who suffered death that others might live and have a good time for ever and ever without end.

The penitents were then invited to come forward and accept salvation, and many witless people acted on the suggestion. While Mr. Quackenback sang "There is a fountain filled with blood," semi-stunned men and women rose here and there and started towards the mercy seat; hysterical women cried and shook with emotion—the Holy Ghost was working among them—the revival was in full swing.

Mr. Billingsgate would keep on asking if there was any one else who wanted to make peace with God, and whenever he saw some sinner rise he pointed at him or her and thanked the Lord for one more. When he had kept this up for some time the supply of penitents seemed to be exhausted, but it happened that another person would arise, and the preacher declared that there was more joy among the angels in heaven for just that one than for a whole sheepfold full. And when there was not a single man or woman left who wanted to be saved from eternal damnation, he prayed for those who had accepted the call; he thanked the Lord for their miraculous escape, and implored him to keep them and protect them from the wiles of the world till he was ready to come and meet them in the cloud.

After the prayer the converts were led aside for private interviews, and were further impressed with the great importance of the step they had taken. They were now greeted as brothers and sisters, and complimented on being among the elect.

In the meantime Mr. Quackenback kept on singing, and many of those who were already saved canvassed the audience and tried to persuade others to join the ransomed flock. Some handsome young woman would bring forward a semi-helpless young fellow in the last minutes of the eleventh hour, but he was not refused; and after a few assuring words from the revivalists, the lady triumphantly walked away with her convert.

The campaign appeared to be a success both as to the number of converts and the collections. It was liberally supported by captains of industry, who evidently thought it good for the workers, and other influential people also gave it their approval, for reasons of business or politics. The degrading performance and those who took part in it were not only regarded as respectable but actual promoters of public good.

It made me feel sad that such state of affairs should be possible in this day and generation in a country of liberal education; that these confidence-men were permitted to keep on enslaving humanity in the worst form of bondage—the shackles of the intellect—which would also make them fit subjects for all other forms of tyranny. For “the man who gives up the whole of his moral nature to an unquestioned authority suffers a paralysis of the mind, and all the changes of out-

ward circumstances in the world cannot make him a free man."

Billingsgate and Quackenback were a modern kind of whirling dervishes, whose profession was to assist preachers to perpetuate the pessimistic superstition that man is a fallen creature who cannot rise on his own accord; and in order to do this successfully, common sense had to be avoided as much as possible and the greatest stress laid upon bemuddling his reason, which could best be accomplished by such drunken revelries of the soul as a religious revival.

The permanence of these converts was even less sure than Mr. Billingsgate's chances of winning when he followed the prize-ring. No gambler would risk any money on them, as it was not an uncommon thing that a breath of fresh air brought some of them out of the trance and had restored them to sanity by the time they reached their homes. On others the delusion lasted longer, and some became mental imbeciles for the rest of their lives. The net gain to the churches was very small, however, as they lost some of their more sensible members, on account of the disgusting spectacle arranged by the preachers, and it would be necessary to keep up the bowwow indefinitely in order to prevent the congregations from settling back to the normal state of indifference.

CHAPTER XI.

PARTNERSHIP FOR LIFE.

The time naturally came when I and Adeline could no longer live profitably so far apart. We needed each other for our mutual development and future welfare. In other words, we both wanted to get married, and we thought it was perfectly proper to do so. We realized that if Mother Nature had intended man and woman to live apart she would have evolved an intermediate human sex—instead of male and female—and we would then have a cold and cheerless world, regardless of all that has been said and written about the love of gods and other sexless phantoms of primitive minds. But sex being the very soul of the universe, man could no more escape that function than the less advanced species of the animal world. We also knew that the reason man has abused the sex nature more than the lower animals is not that it is evil in itself, but owing to the perverted notions that have been instilled into his mind for millenniums by teachers who had been educated wrong themselves—and thus the greatest good turned into one of the greatest evils of the race.

Adeline and I had not contemplated marriage for social or economic reasons, nor for the sake of convenience. It was a love affair pure and simple, that started when we first met as man and woman, and

developed and grew stronger and stronger till it reached the inevitable stage. We did not have to seek advice on the subject. We knew that we were well mated and could not keep apart if we had tried it ever so hard; and for this we felt that we were no more to blame than for our own existence, nor did we take any credit for having brought about the situation—we were simply clay in the hands of the potter, and well satisfied with the result.

At the same time we realized that it was a serious matter to enter into a partnership for life, and especially one in which the propagation of the race is involved; for Adeline and I desired to have children and we wanted them to be a credit to ourselves as well as the State, the third party to the contract. We believed that the chief aim of life should be the perfection of humanity, and that such an object is less difficult of attainment through a better offspring than the reformation of ill-bred or perverted adults. We did not believe that marriages are made in heaven, and blame God for the consequences, nor did we agree with Paul that they are only a concession to the evil flesh. We regarded marriage a duty we owed to ourselves and to society and held that by entering into this relation we were fulfilling the highest purpose of life.

There were no family objections to our union. Adeline had already lost her mother when a little girl and she sat on my lap riding home from town, and the reader is familiar with the sad fate of her older sister. Her father was a fair-minded man who did not meddle with his daughters' love affairs. When I spoke to him

about our desire to marry he said that he hated to lose the girl, but would not stand in the way of her happiness. He admitted for the first time that he had expected me to become his son-in-law once before, and hoped that we would enjoy many happy days together. The living members of my own family were not in sympathy with my work, and of so little importance that it was not worth consulting any of them; and my reform associates and supporters evinced almost as much happiness over the approaching marriage as I did.

Accordingly, preparations had been made for our wedding and a company of relatives and friends gathered at the Stanton home for the occasion. Professor Philistadius, Erasmus and I arrived a little ahead of the rest, with the exception of Adeline's two cousins, who were to be her bridesmaids. Not having a suitable relative for the purpose, I was fortunate to get Erasmus to act as my best man, for he had been that on many other important occasions, and the professor was to perform the ceremony. Having once been an ordained clergyman, he still retained the function of marrying, and it proved to be very useful in uniting people who would not tolerate a religious ceremony. He had worked out a new ritual, however, and officiated only at rational weddings.

There was quite a gathering of people, as the judge had invited many to be present at his daughter's marriage, and the ceremony was to be performed on the spacious ground in front of the house, being more roomy than inside, and more appropriate for two souls

who loved the great outdoors more than musty temples, and their own kind more than the idols for whose worship shrines have been erected. A suitable "altar" had been constructed on the lawn, and this was covered with the earth's own green carpet and decorated with the flowers that Adeline had cultivated for the occasion. The ceremony could thus be witnessed by all the guests, under the open sky.

Both Adeline and I were dressed in snowy white, as she had a dislike for the conventional black worn by men, and had requested me to have a white suit made for the wedding. But when we inspected ourselves before the large mirror, my garments looked clumsy in comparison with the gown that draped her graceful figure, and my newly trimmed skull appeared undressed beside the luxuriant sun-kissed hair that adorned her womanly head. Her only other ornaments were a few forget-me-nots, as she would not wear a bridal veil, and was not to be given away by any one. This preserved her natural charm and made her look so sweet and radiant that I experienced a new falling-in-love every time I looked into her soulful eyes. She said the white suit was very becoming to me and that she was so glad we could both wear the same color. One of the bridesmaids wore pink and the other light blue, giving the national colors a fairly good representation. The only long coat in the party was worn by Professor Philistadius, as he had found it less easy to shake that off than the creed, and he was taken for a clergyman by all who did not know him. Erasmus was dressed in his light gray summer

suit, as I had requested, and he was by far the most handsome man present, and naturally attracted much attention among the women.

As the big hall clock began to strike the hour of Twelve, the first strains of Soderman's wedding march came floating from the grounds and mingled with the glad tiding that the appointed hour had come. Adeline and I, arm in arm, started the slow procession down the steps and to the temporary altar, preceded by the professor with his book, and followed by the bridesmaids, the judge, Erasmus, relatives and friends.

It was one of those beautiful days in the height of the mating season, when Dame Nature pulsed with new life and fervently hummed the tune of the universe. She had arrayed herself in a nuptial robe of exquisite charm and fragrance and beckoned to mankind to behold her in all her majestic glory and follow in her footsteps; her fresh emerald drapery bore numberless jewels of all the hues and tints of the rainbow and myriads of inimitable ornaments, no two exactly alike, and defied the comprehension of man; the feathered songsters chirped and flitted to and fro between the inviting branches of the luxuriant trees; the sky was deep and blue, and white fleecy clouds sailed across the warm rays of the midday sun and tempered the light breeze to the delight of the assembled guests.

Having reached the improvised altar, Adeline and I bowed our heads in reverence before the balustrade of flowers, and then we faced the professor and listened to him reading from *The Book of Ceremonies*:*

* Selections from the essays on love and marriage in "*The Golden Gems of Life*," edited and arranged by the author.

“Dear Friends: The marriage ceremony is one of the most solemn spectacles that social life presents. To see two rational creatures, in the glow of youth and hope which invests life in a halo of happiness, appear together and acknowledge their preference for each other, voluntarily enter into a league of perpetual friendship and amity, and call on all to witness the sanctity of their vows, awakens deep feeling in the hearts of all beholders; a holy influence is felt to pervade the place; the spirit of the hour is sacramental.

“Though mirth may abound before and after the formula is spoken, yet at that particular time there is a shadow on the most laughing lip, a moisture in the firmest eye; and it may well be so. To think of the endearing relations, and the important consequences which are to flow from it as the couple walk side by side through life, participating in the same joys and sharing the same sorrows, two frail human natures thus taking upon themselves the weighty duties of a new and untried state of existence exerts a solemn influence on all.

“But love is the perpetual melody of humanity. It sheds its effulgence upon youth, and throws a halo around age. It glorifies the present by the light it casts backward, and it lightens the future by the gleams sent forward. The love that is the outcome of esteem has the most elevating and purifying effect on the character. It tends to emancipate one from the slavery of self. It is altogether unsordid; itself is the only price. It inspires gentleness, sympathy, mutual faith, and confidence. True love in a manner elevates the intellect.

“And the love grander than any other, before which all the other elements of civilization pale and dwarf to utter insignificance, which is as powerful today as in the morning of time, which will continue to rule until time is ended, is that indefinable, indescribable, ever fresh and beautiful love betwixt man and woman—that love which has the power to tame the savage’s heart; which finds man rough, uncultivated, and selfish; which leaves him refined and courteous; which transforms the timid, bashful girl to the woman of matchless power for good. Love is the great instrument of nature, the bond and cement of society, the spirit and spring of the universe. It is the sun of life, most beautiful in the morning and evening, but warmest and steadiest at noon.

“Of all the institutions that affect human weal or woe on earth none is more important than marriage. It is the foundation of the great social fabric, and conceals within its mystic relations the coiled secrets of the largest proportion of happiness and misery allotted to man.

“Marriage, to be a blessing, must be properly entered. It has its fundamental laws, which must be obeyed. It is not a mysterious, wonder-working institution of the Almighty, which cannot be studied by the common mind, but a simple necessity laid in man’s social nature, which may be read and understood by all who will investigate that nature. The reasons for every enjoyment of the matrimonial life may be understood before entering upon its relations. The conditions upon which its joys and advantages are realized

may be learned before hand. It should not be entered in blindness, but rather in the daylight of a perfect knowledge of its rules and regulations, its promises and conditions, its laws and privileges, so that no uncertainty shall attend its realization, no unhappy revelations shall follow a knowledge of its reality.

“Marriage, then, should be made a study. Every youth, both male and female, should so consider it; for it is the grand social institution of humanity. Its laws and relations are of momentous importance to the race. It is incomparably the most important and holy relation of life, involving the most sacred responsibilities and influences, social and civil, that bear upon men. It is the source from whence originates, as from a radiant point, the most beautiful glories of life, and also the deepest cares. But if entered understandingly, and lived as becomes thoughtful, considerate human beings, each of whom tries to bear with the other’s infirmities, and to consider the other’s happiness as paramount with their own, it then becomes a delightful scene of domestic happiness, to which all true men and women look forward as the condition of life most consonant to their true happiness.

“Intellectual beings of different sexes were surely intended by their Creator to go through the world thus together, united not only in hand and heart, but in principle, in intellect, in views, and in dispositions, each pursuing one common and noble end—their own improvement and the happiness of those around them.”

The professor looked up from his book and paused. All the guests stood in breathless silence—the only

sound was the note of a chickadee flying over our heads. He then turned to me with the question:

"In the presence of these friends and witnesses I ask you, John Langdon, have you deliberately chosen this woman to be your conjugal mate and companion, to love, aid and comfort on your common journey through life?"

To which I promptly answered: "I have."

He then turned to Adeline and asked:

"Do you, Adeline Stanton, of your own free will, accept this man as your wedded mate, to love, aid and comfort through the pilgrimage of your married life?"

To which Adeline unhesitatingly answered: "I do."

The professor closed the book and addressed us both:

"By the authority vested in me by this great commonwealth I now pronounce you man and wife. I also present each of you with a white rose, as the symbol of a pure life, and I wish you many happy and fruitful years together."

Adeline and I embraced before the assembled guests and sealed our union with a sacred kiss.

After receiving congratulations and well wishes from the guests we had a wedding dinner on the lawn, listened to short addresses by the judge, Mr. Heartman, Miss Knickerbocker, Prof. Philistadius and Erasmus, and made merry till evening, when Adeline and I started on a little journey.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR CIVILIZATION.

Of all my printed pamphlets the one that seemed to wound the preachers most was my discourse on the effects of Revelations on our civilization, and this made me suspect they realized that my contentions were true. The more liberal papers had also given this particular pamphlet lengthy reviews, in which appeared numerous quotations of my most salient points, and thus brought my discourse to the attention of many who would not have read it otherwise.

The phrase, "our Christian civilization," had so long been a pet slogan of the clergy that they had great faith in it, and were naturally grieved to find that any one had the audacity to question its meaning, let alone demonstrating that Christianity has been the most reactionary element in our progress toward the stage of culture we have reached, and that the western nations of the world have forced their way to the front in spite of the pessimistic message. In being carried so long on the very tide they had fought against, the preachers had gradually commenced to believe, and finally became firmly convinced, that they were the actual promoters of the good things they undeservedly enjoyed—which is a natural consequence of an education and profession of belief, regardless of facts, and the failure to subject the mind to a critical analysis

for the purpose of finding out one's actual value to society.

It was, then, not a surprise to me that Rev. Simon Halloway, the gentleman responsible for my heresy trial, actually challenged me to publicly debate with him the question: "Are we indebted to Christianity for what is good in our civilization?" Nor should it be a surprise to anybody that I promptly accepted the challenge; for this was something that I had often wished for, but my mind had always bounced against an automatic figure of ready-made beliefs and sophistry, with which it would be as futile to reason as with a man of stone.

However, I was not going to let this scare me; for I could not afford to miss this opportunity further to prove my position. I felt that I was capable to meet any man in public debate on that question and defend the negative side. My experience as a debater was not extensive, but if the preacher could afford to take the chances, I certainly could; I admired the gentleman's grit.

Consequently arrangements were made for this intellectual contest; the largest hall in the city was engaged, and admission tickets were sold to defray the expenses. If there should be any money left it was to be given to an independent charitable institution.

It proved to be so difficult to secure satisfactory judges for the debate that we gave it up. We had under consideration a Christian of the Baptist variety, an agnostic of the vegetarian persuasion, and one Jew, to preserve the balance of justice; but my oppo-

ment would not agree to "two unbelievers out of three." We finally decided to have only a chairman and let the people judge for themselves, each of us confident of being declared the winner.

The debate took place according to arrangement, and it was attended by a full house of interested men and women. As in the case of my "heresy" trial, Adeline was in one of the front rows, so I did not have to look far for encouragement and inspiration. She had even helped me to prepare the argument, and hence was doubly interested in the outcome.

My opponent, having the affirmative side, opened the discussion and spoke for half an hour. He displayed considerable ingenuity in depicting the numerous blessings enjoyed by nations having the Christian form of religion, and contrasted these with the conditions in China and other Oriental countries with other systems of religion; but he never attempted to show how Christianity had produced this superior state of affairs, and hence I need not give a report of his discussion. His argument sounded plausible enough to the uncritical ears of his fellow believers, and he received a thunderous applause when he was obliged to stop at the expiration of his time.

I must admit that I was very hopeful when I rose to reply. My opponent having stated the difference between Oriental and Occidental civilization, it remained for me to prove that the former was actually Christian, regardless of what name it went by, while the latter was not. I did not find it hard to point out to my hearers that none of the good things we enjoyed

could be traced to Christianity, but had nearly all been fought against by its exponents, and that the most visible fruits in western lands of this Oriental religion were some defects and weaknesses peculiar to people in the countries whence it came, such as disregard for truth, and the pessimistic outlook that the majority of people would be damned. I proved by history that the learning and high ideals we possessed were simply a revival of the Greek and Roman civilizations, and that the inventive and commercial progress of our time was due to the fact that science had been allowed to flourish after the persecution of the church had ceased, but for the promotion of which she had done nothing.

I referred to the reported saying of Jesus: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth"; "Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor"; "Blessed be ye poor"; "But woe unto you that are rich"; "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God"; "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep"; "Give to every man that asketh of thee"; "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also"; "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"; "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword"; "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one"; "Thou hast hid these things

from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"; and Paul's: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness"; "God has chosen the foolish to confound the wise"; also "If any man preach any other gospel than that which I have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

I held that these quotations contained the fundamentals of the message of Christianity; for most of the moral and ethical sayings credited to Jesus were uttered by sages before him, including the golden rule, to which he adds "for this is the law of the prophets"—perhaps having in mind Confucius; and the principal ideas embodied in his Sermon on the Mount are scattered throughout the works of other ancient writers.

From Jesus' point of view, I claimed there was no prospect for any improvement of conditions in the present world, nor any hope for a humane and enlightened humanity on this cursed earth. The final dissolution was at hand, and the only thing worth the people's while was to save their own souls, by believing in him. As for the rest, there was nothing left but woe and damnation for ever and ever; and judging by the results that followed, the people must have acted on the suggestion.

I found no occasion to express surprise at the disappearance of "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." Their art, literature, temples and monuments were evil in the sight of Jehovah, and as soon as Christianity became a power its fanatical followers thought they could render their God no

better service than to destroy them, so that they should not remain as witnesses against him.

The intellectual world was thus thrown into a chaos that lasted for a thousand years. During that long period the priest was supreme, and the common people filthy and ignorant specimens that were permitted to live by the grace of God if they did nothing contrary to the wishes of his self-constituted representatives. No great work of literature or art was produced, or any valuable inventions or discoveries made, during those centuries of dominant Christianity. The natural sciences could not be studied, because all worldly wisdom was foolish, and likely to contradict the Revelation. Man was a creation of the priest, worked for him, and believed that ablution from his own simple and involuntary thoughts was more necessary than it was from the filth of his body. He suspected a devil behind every bush, and dared not look up at the sun for fear of offending the powers that be. This reign of the priest is now referred to as the dark ages, and all the sophistry of latter days has not been able to prove that it was not Christian, or that it advanced our civilization.

When this theocratic state of affairs had lasted for so many centuries there commenced to appear men with ideas not found in the revealed word. They began to study nature, made themselves instruments, and even ventured to look up at the heavenly bodies that had been regarded as too sacred even to speculate upon. They came to the conclusion that this earth might not be flat, and that those celestial lamps, supposed to have been hung out by God for man's special

benefit, might be other worlds like our own, and perhaps of as great importance. Some of these men ventured to express such opinions, others went so far as to put them down in writing, and even embodied them in books; and this could lead to only one thing—their suppression.

The priest was still supreme, and he was not going to permit anything that would endanger his position. He had the word of God and was His representative on earth, so it was no more than his duty to suppress everything not found in the Revelation. He had plenty of precedents in the book itself, from stoning men for not being able to pronounce the word "shibboleth," to accursing those who preached any other gospel, and that the Master himself "came not to send peace, but a sword."

A cursory glance at the history of the Inquisition was enough to get a fair idea of how thinkers and scholars fared in those days of priestly rule. No barbarian methods of torture could exceed in cruelty the ones used by those agents of heaven to put out the intellectual lights that commenced to shine in that world of superstitious gloom. A picture of that sad period was too revolting for perusal.

But as a reaction generally follows all forms of extreme oppression, so it was in this case. When this reign of terror had spent its fury the priest slackened in his zeal, and commenced to grow more and more tolerant toward men who had other messages to the world than Revelations. There followed a revival of

letters and arts in Europe, and instead of persecuting scientists, scholars and artists, the high priests began to encourage them—perhaps realizing that the time had come when further protest was inadvisable. The intellectual world was on a fair way to be rescued from the evils of the dark ages, and recover the lost Greek and Roman civilization. Universities sprang up and learning commenced to flourish again; scholars studied, poets sang, and artists painted without much interference. It was what is known in history as the Renaissance period.

But it was then that a so-called reformer appeared in Germany, and reversed the tide by shifting the people's attention from one superstition to another. By denouncing the infallibility of a man—which he had good reason to do—and emphasizing the infallibility of a book, he succeeded in checking the world's progress, emptying the universities, because they were not founded on the Bible; stopping the scholars, writers, and artists, as there was no further demand for their works, and again throwing the intellectual world into a darkness which it so far has not been able to dispel.

I told the audience that by consulting history, both sacred and profane, it would be found that man's progress had thus been continually held back and fought step by step by the priest with his book, and that this interference has worked immeasurable harm on the people, in that it has discouraged individual worth and made them depend on their spiritual curates instead of on themselves; that the priest has edu-

cated the youth to believe that man is a fallen creature, not entitled to a decent existence, but allowed to live by the great mercy of his Creator; that his thoughts and acts are all sinful, and that he can do nothing of his own accord; that sickness and misfortunes are sent to him by God, and should be looked upon as favors from the Almighty to make man realize his own helplessness; that no man is worthy of health and reasonable comfort in this world, but is permitted to enjoy them sometimes, and this at the risk of forgetting the giver; that this earth is not man's right home, but simply a cursed breeding-ground, for which he should form no attachment—not even to the extent of making any graven images of anything thereon, or elsewhere, lest he should think too much of them; that he should earn just enough bread by the sweat of his brow to support himself and the priest, but lay up no treasure which might lead to independence; that he should not acquire any wisdom, because it is foolish in the sight of God; and that for all this sacrifice he shall get a whole eternity of delightful rest in heaven, and those who dare to think otherwise shall have an equally long term of all imaginable tortures.

The result of these teachings I claimed could not be anything else than what is seen all around us. The innocents have taken the priest at his word, and have found comfort in the thought that there is a premium on ignorance and disease, because they are gifts of Providence that should be borne in patience, life being so short compared with the long eternity. Instead of

studying the science of life, how to promote and care for their health, and prepare themselves for this world, they have been preparing for the next one, by submission, humiliation and self-debasement, and let a crafty, ruling class govern the nations of the earth to its own advantage. It was no use to cultivate and preserve anything that was evil in its nature, and so shortlived. Eternity was the only thing worth striving for—the bird high up in the tree was more valuable than the one in the hand, etc. When I thought of these things I had to agree with Paul that: “If in this world only we have trusted Jesus, then of all men are we the most miserable.”

I could not come to any other conclusion than that this system has not only been productive of long and bloody wars but of countless moral and physical wrecks, that it has unbalanced the brains of thousands upon thousands of weak-minded people, by brooding over the infinite before learning to think clearly of the finite; and these physical and mental human wrecks have also been regarded as gifts of God and worthy of reproduction, till modern communities have become large camps of almshouses, hospitals, insane-asylums and prisons.

When I reflected on what is good and praiseworthy in our civilization, I could not find that any of it was distinctively Christian, but had forced its way among men in spite of Christianity. Not even the hospitals conducted by the churches could be classed as Christian institutions, letting alone those that were built for purely commercial reasons, with their attend-

ant high doctor fees. The Nazarene is reported to have lived on charity himself, healed the sick by the laying on of hands, without remuneration, and told his disciples that they could do likewise if only they believed. Poverty and disease could, however, be classed as Christian virtues, because the people had been brought up under the suggestion that they were both gifts of God—the modern craze to accumulate vast fortunes being a reaction from this doctrine of poverty. But there would have been less need of hospitals and poorhouses if the time, money and energy spent on teaching the people that they were depraved, and how to die, had been devoted to instructing them how to live a sensible life and serve their kind.

My picture of the Middle Ages showed what kind of civilization Christianity produced when it had the power, and I defied any man to prove that it was not Christian. I expressed my disgust for the practice of the church to call her own fruit an outside product that she could not longer successfully combat; and as my opponent had mentioned the Chinese, I dwelt on the well-known fact that they are the most honest nation in the world, and that all the Christian missionaries have succeeded in doing with them is to make tricksters of the few they claim to have converted, but should call perverted.

This was the substance of my debate; and the only rift I could see in the dark cloud was that the reactionary teachings of professional Christianity were being disregarded more and more. From the sad blunders of the past I could see no other salvation than the

substitution of science for priestcraft, the study of life for theology, faith in man for trust in gods and fear for demons, work for prayer, individual responsibility for reliance on spiritual quacks—in short, the enlistment of the whole human family into the service of man.

By this time my opponent had lost his patience with me; but he got up and said it was useless to discuss such a subject with a man who had no regard for the sacredness of Holy Writ, and whose deceptive argument was plausible enough to have the devil himself for its author. And that ended our debate on "Our Christian Civilization."

CHAPTER XIII

RULE BY DIVINE RIGHT.

Some of my friends familiar with international politics had for years been telling me that it was only a question of time when a great war would break out between the principal nations of Europe, and that the whole world would likely be drawn into the conflict before it was ended; that the stupendous preparations by the foremost military power, though pretended to be in the interest of peace, and the anxiety with which the neighboring countries viewed the questionable program, could lead only to one thing—a final test of arms in a gigantic struggle for political dominion over the world.

I realized the colossal egotism of the man at the helm of this military power; how he had been reared from childhood in the glamour of military life and his principal education devoted to the making of a successful war lord; his constantly repeated claim that he was divinely appointed and anointed to rule not only over his own people, but other nations of the earth as well; that he regarded himself as the instrument of the Almighty, whose acts were the acts of God, and hence would not likely stop for anything to demonstrate his supreme power. I also realized that the people he ruled over believed in him as they had been brought up to do, and that the intense educational regime they

had gone through, from the kindergarten to the army, had made every man a cog in the great military wheel, with "Ich und Gott" as the center—a formidable instrument with which to impose a despotic will on the rest of mankind.

Though I realized all this, and that wars have been considered unavoidable both on earth and in heaven, I protested that a war between the foremost nations of Europe would be practically impossible in these enlightened days. In spite of the fanatical symptoms of the divinely appointed one, I reasoned that the social and commercial relations between the European nations, the intermarriages of the ruling families, the profession of religion by the rulers themselves, and finally the great destructiveness of modern warfare, would prevent such a calamity. Notwithstanding my firm conviction that nations and individuals professing one thing and practicing another cannot be trusted, I still had faith in the peace of Europe and thought that the nightmare of war would gradually wear away, the nations of the world disarm and agree to settle their disputes by more civilized methods than physical force.

But, though I had looked upon the camouflage civilization with distrust, I was rudely awakened to the sad fact that I had placed a higher value on it than it was actually worth; for the predicted war broke out, not only in accordance with the generally accepted rules of warfare but with such inhumanity and barbarism as had never before been known in the history of the whole world.

The excuse for lighting the torch was the murder of

an heir to a decadent throne, perpetrated by a revolutionary band of a small neighboring nation that had been robbed of both people and property; and to uphold the divine right of kings, the ruler by divine right pressed the button that set the whole infernal machinery going in the twinkling of an eye.

Treaties with other nations were regarded as useless scraps of paper; conventions and national courtesy might be well enough in the nursery, but not worth the attention of a superior rare bent on world conquest. Small neutral countries were invaded, for reasons of "military necessity," and their inhabitants made prisoners; able-bodied men were exported and pressed into the service of helping their conquerors; young women were raped and old people put out of the way in order to make room for the spread of "kultur"; peaceful villages were destroyed and the very temples of Jahveh rent with cannon-balls; airships were loaded with explosives and sent out to bombard defenseless cities and towns and kill helpless women and children, supposed to be enemies; submarines were dispatched to paralyze peaceful commerce and sink passenger boats freighted with human lives; all the industries and people of the country were turned to the pursuit of war, and those who objected were promptly shot down on the spot; hymns of hate were composed by rimesters and sung by the people, to keep up the war spirit; the preachers and their followers prayed to their God to bless the sword of the nation and annihilate its opponents; a previously perfected network of spies was set in motion in all parts of the world, directed from embassies in neutral coun-

tries and from there reported to headquarters in Potsdam; the very flower of the human race was being mutilated and killed by the wholesale and the living and coming generations were expected to pay the cost; the work of the war god, as decreed by the divine ruler, was in full blast; the system had blossomed and bore fruit of its kind—the destruction of human life and property and the suffering of mankind—hell on earth was an accomplished fact.

To many of us, in this democratic country, the doings on the other side of the Atlantic were so utterly insane that the whole thing seemed like a bad dream. It was hard to realize how a people that had been counted among the most civilized nations on this earth, who had given to the world some great men and a famous religious reformer, could turn barbarian overnight; but the evidence was there to prove it, not only abroad but at home, where intrigues were carried on under the guise of friendship, industries and means of transportation blown up, or set on fire, and people and cattle killed or poisoned. There was no escape from the fact. There was the full fledged savage by divine right; the veneer had fallen off and left him undisguised; the Christian military system of education had not made him humane, but simply a cunning and egotistical brute, laboring under the hallucination that he was a favorite of the gods, destined to rule the world.

The leaders of our Asiatic cults were naturally shocked at this species of a Christian, and disclaimed him as one of their own kind. Some of them ventured the opinion that he was an emissary of the devil,

but that the Lord permitted him to punish the world for unbelief; others claimed him to be the beast mentioned in Revelation and that it was the final windup of this old world, so long looked forward to by the faithful, when they would go to meet their Savior in the clouds. Still, they all prayed to their God that he would put an end to both the massacres and the beast; but no help or promise came from above. The God that is reported to have said, "I make peace and create evil" showed no mercy to the innocents in the claws of the hellish fiends.

Those of us who claimed to be rational could not take a neutral stand, as we felt that we were in a sense our brother's keepers. We also realized that the liberty we possessed had been too dearly bought to gamble away for the enslavement of mankind by a military autocracy, and that the civilization of the whole world was at stake. It was either to stand idly by and watch the loss of human rights and freedom or fight for them, as verbal protests were futile with a divinely appointed ruler running amuck. We and other nations with a popular form of government were anything but prepared for war on such a stupendous scale, but it was the only thing that would cleanse the earth of this curse. When the enemy of human liberty smites thee on one cheek he will smite thee on the other also if you let him. And thus the great peace-loving America, with malice toward none and charity toward all, turned its energy and vast resources to the pursuit of war, to protect her institutions and see that human liberty might not perish from the earth.

From a peaceful people, absorbed in our own

affairs, we thus became a warring nation, and our private and domestic interests had to give place to the great problem of restoring peace to the world. Evil had to be resisted, and the only thing that would have any effect on it was a necessary evil, employed as an instrument for good. Poisonous gases could not be fought with prayers and frankincense any more than thistles in the field could be killed by planting roses between them. The promoters of evil had to be given their own medicine, and their supporters to suffer the consequences.

Personally I was beyond the military age, and also had other hindrances, so I felt that I could do more good at home than by going into active service. Erasmus tried twice to enlist, but was rejected owing to defective eyesight, the only blemish on his otherwise good physical constitution; but many of our co-workers and friends volunteered and were accepted, and I advised every man who could to enlist.

There was, however, much work needed at home that our organization could do, and to this we turned the biggest part of our attention. The reluctant and indifferent had to be made to realize that our part in the world war was for humanitarian motives, and not for any selfish or economic considerations; that our cherished traditions and national policy did not permit a medieval institution to usurp the power of popular government and restore the rule by divine right over the nations of the earth. Together with our propaganda to make the individual a sane and rational being in private affairs, we devoted a great part of our work to discussing national and international problems and

teaching the people that unless they turned their serious attention from other worlds to the present one, the divine rulers would continue to take advantage of them and keep them in bondage. For my first address on the war I could not find a better text than Paine's immortal words:

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value."

In this great conflict the souls of men were tried to the utmost, for the greatest possession of the race was at stake. Tyranny was on the throne and in the saddle, and right and wrong were becoming obsolete terms. Christian fought Christian and infidel fought infidel, till the fairest portions of earth lay prostrate under the military heel; the whole world seemed to have been turned over to the Power of Darkness—the price of human liberty was more exorbitant than ever before in the history of mankind.

To crush the world's greatest military autocracy was a stupendous task that required millions of men and billions of treasure; but America had them both and was willing to sacrifice them for the most precious jewel on earth. When justice was being trampled upon, and human liberty swung in the balance, she produced an army with the blood of all nations in its

veins and sent it across the sea to help turn the threatened defeat into an overwhelming victory. Divine right of kings, chaplains and bibles, proved to be as helpless against intelligently directed red blood and cold steel as was Jahveh of old when he was with Judah and "could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." Fortunately, this time, might came to the aid of right and sent "Ich und Gott" tumbling from their thrones, never again, I trust, to raise their hydra heads to dominate over the people of this world.

I regret to record that our country's part in the great war was not free from the shackles of superstition; for in this respect we imitated the enemy, and the church was officially classed as an essential industry—in spite of the fact that more "slackers" were found among preachers than in any other class—but perhaps it was done to reconcile nonresistant and militant Christianity for war purposes. This and public prayers to the god of battles were against our principles, but we made no public protest, as our position was already mistrusted and misunderstood, owing to the popular superstition that one cannot be a patriot unless he believes in priestcraft. To crush the military autocracy was the most important business, and we were willing to overlook many absurdities with that end in view. We knew that our cause was just and that we were promoting true human progress, even if the churches succeeded in temporarily scaring up an increase in their membership on account of the suffering and sorrow that had overwhelmed the world.

When I reflected on the past years of incompre-

hensible destruction of human life and property it made my heart feel heavy. Besides the actual waste caused by a war of so great magnitude, I could not avoid entertaining a fear for its brutalizing effect on a good portion of humanity, and that, in the great struggle to get out of the wreck, man's spiritual liberation would be retarded and the promoters of superstition get a new lease on the life of their antiquated semitheocratic system.

The enormous cost in lives and treasure and the unspeakable suffering of man and beast would, indeed, have been altogether in vain if the old order had been restored among the rulers of peoples; but out of the greatest of world tragedies developed a covenant of nations that it was hoped would prevent such calamities in the future; and the poet who:

“Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and
there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in
the central blue”;

Also pierced into the future and:

“Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argo-
sies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping
down with costly bales”;

And he foresaw the time when the nations of earth would cease to destroy one another and come to a mutual understanding:

“Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and
the battle-flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation
of the world.”

CHAPTER XIV.

IN CONCLUSION.

Peace had again been restored to a war-swept world. Adeline and I were sitting in the living room of our home enjoying a quiet hour together, and incidentally reviewing the past few years of our married life. It had been fruitful in many ways and the future was pregnant with great possibilities. Our union had been blessed with two healthy children, a boy and a girl, and our domestic happiness was as complete as it could possibly be. Adeline had not lost any of her former charms and our courtship had not become less ardent with the years. The nurse girl relieved her of many home duties so that she could devote a certain amount of time to our educational work, in which she was much interested and took an active part. Besides, she was looked upon by our comrades and friends as the wife of a pastor, and this position she filled to our mutual credit. Our home was not luxurious, but cheerful and commodious for our many visitors, who were made up of all sorts and conditions of people, from the poor in spirit and property to the highly endowed with both material and intellectual wealth. But the extremes met under our roof and we were instrumental in lessening the distance between many men who had been unequally favored by fortune.

It was thus with great satisfaction that we paused and reflected on the good work we had helped to carry on, and from which we were reaping a rich reward in the continuous increase of rational human beings, interested in the present life of their kind, and willing to let the dead be buried by the dead.

The door bell rang and the caller proved to be our good friend Miss Elizabeth Knickerbocker, a welcome visitor at our home. She was the guiding genius of one of the most necessary branches of our work, namely, the moral education of children, which she had taken up at my suggestion. As ex-president of the Women's Rights League of America, with whatever influence that office carried, she had been very successful in organizing The Secular Sunday-school, patterned after the orthodox kind, but on strictly rational lines. In this Sunday-school Americanism and good citizenship were substituted for New Jerusalem and the qualifications for admission there; our duties to the living was taught instead of any obligations to the dead; real human beings with hearts and hands were given the place of angels with wings, and the music and songs were for the young people's own edification in this world.

Miss Knickerbocker had never abandoned her work for equal suffrage, but she realized that the education for it should begin with the young, and not with mature men and women who have been inoculated with the germ of man-master and woman-servant. She had already made a bigger success of The Secular Sunday-school than of the older suffrage organization.

It had many more branches throughout the country and a great number of children and young people enrolled in its schools, which were growing at a rapid rate. She looked younger than I had ever seen her before and appeared to be in a very happy mood. In answer to my compliment she said that her mind being almost constantly on the younger generation it might have had a rejuvenating effect.

We had barely had a short chat when the door bell rang again, and this time it was none other than my co-worker Professor Philistadius, minus his chin whiskers, in a new suit of clothes and as spry as a young man. He showed no surprise at seeing Miss Knickerbocker there, but the unusual timidity she displayed in greeting him made me suspect that they had a secret between them that heretofore had escaped my attention.

True enough, Professor Philistadius was a widower, with grown-up children; but I had regarded him as past the matrimonial stage, as he had to my knowledge refused at least two good offers, and I knew that once upon a time he and Miss Knickerbocker had very little in common. She had, however, changed greatly since I first met her, on my hunt for information concerning man's mission in this world, and in the great melting process going on around us they had come nearer to an understanding about the problems of life. I was glad to see them so congenial to one another and naturally felt that I deserved credit for being instrumental in bringing them together.

The professor had been very busy during the past winter. Besides his regular work as lecturer for the society, he had been preparing for the press another book, on which he had been laboring for some years. It had the short name of "D. D." and gave a fairly complete history of the various forms of demon worship that have been practiced from the hazy past to the present time, with its elaborate system and finished product—the Doctor of Demonology.

But there was no sign of the scholar about Prof. Philistadius on this particular afternoon. He seemed to be more interested in children than in musty records of man's blunders on this globe. He even joked about trifles that are usually outside the pale of a professor's mind. I must confess that I was somewhat dumfounded at his gaiety, and Adeline was even more mystified. The secret came out, however, when I told both the professor and Miss Knickerbocker that they looked twenty years younger than when I first met them, and he answered that they had me to thank for it, and that he and Elizabeth desired to make a declaration of intention to marry.

Miss Knickerbocker blushed profusely, and I and Adeline hastened to offer our congratulations, which were mingled with our own confusion over the sudden and unexpected announcement.

We had not quite recovered from the shock when Mr. Heartman called; but he was the father of a large and happy family and so engrossed in his work that there could be no question about his having any new courtship on hand. We were naturally glad to see

him, being one of our own and a great power for righteousness among men. I told him the good news and it pleased him very much. Being a competent sociologist, he pronounced the professor and Miss Knickerbocker an excellent match; but declared that they would never have come to such an understanding if they had not been attracted by the resistless reform movement and thus hurled into the great melting pot of human equation.

In the past year most of Mr. Heartman's time had been devoted to teaching people how to live under the prevailing political system and make the most of themselves without the aid of a purely benevolent commonwealth. His lectures and books covered the most important sociological subjects, such as the evolution of society, eugenics, economics and other popular sciences. He was still a firm believer in Collectivism, but no longer claimed it to be a cure for all human ills, and had become very tolerant toward people who could not see in it the only means of salvation. He said that he needed a rest from the continuous grind of trying to make something out of people against their will, but he felt thankful for the good results of his labor and had great faith in the future.

The telephone rang and I was not a little surprised to hear that our highly esteemed Erasmus was in the city. He asked if it would be convenient for us to have him and a friend make a short social call in about half an hour.

I answered that we would be delighted to see him and his friend, and that both Professor Philistadius and Miss Knickerbocker were there, which pleased

him so much that he asked me to detain them till he arrived. To this they readily assented, as they would be as glad to see him as I was; but we were a little puzzled over his early return.

Erasmus had been visiting in the East since we closed our lecture season for the summer vacation, only three weeks ago, and we expected him to remain away much longer. He had worked so hard during the past season that he both needed and deserved a vacation. With his lecture engagements, class work, and as general secretary for the association, he did the work of three fairly good men, and hence had no time to spare for recreation and social diversion. He was evidently proof against all appeals of the gentler sex, except as a friend, teacher and counselor; for more than one worthy young woman had failed in her attempt to make a benedict of him. He seemed to have only one mission in this world, and that was his work for the cause. I really don't see how I could have got along without him; for he was my right hand man, on whom I could always depend, and the only one among us who possessed enough business ability to manage our financial affairs.

When the half hour expired a car drove up with Erasmus and his friend, who proved to be a very attractive young woman. He introduced her as his old school chum, sister Marion, and that seemed enough to us to give her a hearty greeting. In fact, she was so modest, congenial and interesting that we all fell in love with the girl. We naturally expected them to stay awhile, but they would not even be seated, as they

claimed not to have any time to spare, and, according to Erasmus, had just made a hurried trip to the city to be married by the professor.

The announcement almost took our breath, as we had entertained no such suspicions about our honorable secretary; but we could not have made any reasonable objections, if we had felt so inclined, especially with the marriage license before our eyes. The young woman, too, appeared to be a worthy companion to our beloved Erasmus, though we had no knowledge of her past history.

Professor Philistadius smiled and asked for the Book of Ceremonies, which was promptly produced, and the marriage was performed in accordance therewith. In offering his well wishes the professor confessed that Erasmus had stolen a march on him, but that he had no reason to be disappointed. We were all profuse in wishing the couple much joy and happiness. They consented to stay long enough to partake of some refreshments before going on their wedding trip.

Before leaving, Erasmus explained that his wife was his former sweetheart, whose husband had died a year ago and left her a large fortune, with which he hoped they could do some good; and Mrs. Erasmus blushing confessed that she had suffered enough for her youthful mistake and would try to make amends for it by devoting most of the wealth to the advancement of our cause, including the erection of a large auditorium in the center of the city.

This we regarded such a good fortune that we could

not adequately express our appreciation and heartily enough welcome to our ranks our new benefactress; but they insisted on leaving, so we could do no more than shower our blessings on them.

After they had gone our little group spent the evening rejoicing and giving testimonials, in which Erasmus and his bride received the highest praise. We could not help regarding the whole thing as a belated gift of Providence that would go far toward promoting sanity and brotherhood among men. We all had some encouraging piece of news to relate.

Miss Knickerbocker gave a glowing account of the progress made by our Sunday-school with branches scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and surprised us with the good news that it had been officially endorsed by the Church of the Aeronauts. This institution had become more liberal since the death of its founder,—the board of directors realizing that her aerial teachings were too intangible for the age we live in—and had at their last annual meeting discussed the advisability of turning the whole institution into a school of domestic science. She was also much gratified to see that her work for woman suffrage was bearing fruit.

Mr. Heartman testified that he was now regarded as quite respectable and even treated kindly by people who formerly considered him a dangerous man. He had just been invited to attend a meeting of the North Shore Ladies' Poodle Society to deliver a lecture on Tolstoy, and had accepted.

Professor Philistadius said he recently had a talk

with the Rev. Mr. St. John and been informed that his church had to modify its teachings to keep the younger set; that this clergyman had practically given up the brimstone route to salvation and come to the conclusion that through the great mercy of God men could be saved by other means.

For my own part I read a letter that I had just received from my former antagonist, Dr. Halloway, stating that he had resigned from his pastorate and asking if he could be of any service to the society, which news was heartily applauded.

Adeline's testimony consisted in relating how I had happened to become a reformer and reading my *Nocturnal Journey*, which was received with reverent attention and recommended to be published as *The Revelation of John Langdon*, together with an account of the work resulting from my trip to the moon.

So the outlook was very encouraging and our guests departed in a happy state of mind.

After Adeline had retired I sat on the porch a while watching the stars and musing over the bright situation before us. I felt that I had done some good in the world and would continue the work as long as I was able and permitted to do so.

And I dipped into the future and beheld the most beautiful city conceived by the brain of man and built by human hands. The architectural gem of that city was the Temple of Reason, whose grand dome towered over all the other buildings of the city and served as a beacon light to all its inhabitants. Around this dome could be read in large letters of gold by day and sym-

bols of fire by night: "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty!" This temple was the center of the intellectual life of a free and united people, whose factional strife had ceased when the divine right of kings, the traffic in human destiny and speculations in the great unknown had given place to the simple service of humanity. Beyond this city lay a picturesque landscape of smiling streams and verdant fields, dotted with the cozy homes of a happy people. There were neither rich nor poor, neither idle nor over-worked; poverty and disease had vanished from the land; ignorance and selfishness were no more; sectarian strife had given way to humanitarianism undefiled; every man called every other man his brother; the vale of tears had been transformed into a charming country, whose inhabitants labored under the inspiration of love and whose civilization rested on the Good, the True, and the Beautiful—all for the promotion and perfection of human life in this world.







