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LIFE

A Novel

BY
WILLIAM W. ^{Wallace} WHEELER

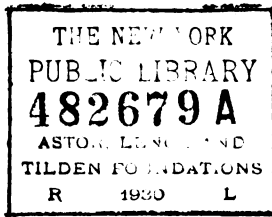
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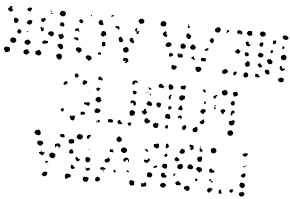
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Arena Press

LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

“DIED.—In this city, April 1st, Joseph Whitney. The date of the funeral services will be announced in the next issue.”

“The Times is unable to announce the date of services, as it is yet undecided.”

“The reporter called to-day at the late residence of the deceased to inquire if the date of services had been decided. The information received from Miss Whitney, sister of the deceased, confirms the rumors that were on the street, that the funeral services will be indefinitely postponed, owing to some very peculiar beliefs and opinions Miss Whitney has in regard to such subjects.”

“The unusual circumstances connected with the death of the gentleman, the strange opinions held by his sister, and what might be termed the weird condition of affairs, are causing excitement and much suppressed talk in the circle in which the deceased moved when alive, and which contains the warm friends of Miss Whitney.”

THE above quotations were taken from April issues of the *Meriden Times* of 1889. The last notice was written two weeks subsequent to the first.

At the time of reading the notices I was engaged in the real estate and law business in Boston, but previous to that time had been engaged in the former business in Meriden, and was still interested in much

real property there. I had the daily papers sent to me, partly for information concerning the real estate market, and otherwise to know what the people were doing; for I had many warm friends and old acquaintances there, and counted Miss Whitney—as I had before considered her brother, “Joe” Whitney, as he was commonly called by his acquaintances—one of my best friends in that place. Being acquainted with the parties made the peculiarities of the newspaper notice of much interest to me.

After reading the last reference to the case in the paper that had come in the morning mail, and feeling an interest in the case of my old friends, the Whitneys, I decided to visit Meriden the next day, as my business interests would call me there at some time in the near future.

The morning of April 15th found me in the Boston & Albany depot in Boston with a ticket for Meriden, and noon of the same day found me at the place last mentioned, at the Winthrop, preparing the physical man for an afternoon's work.

The first call I made was on my old friend Dixon, who had my affairs in charge in Meriden. After discussing the business outlook and financial affairs, our conversation turned to the case of Joe Whitney, as Whitney before his death had been a mutual acquaintance. I plied Dixon with questions to learn all I could of the case. He said that the subject was creating excitement in all parts of the town; that Whitney had been dead two weeks, pronounced so by several of the leading physicians, and still the sister would not consent to a burial, have the remains removed from the house, or even put on ice, but

insisted upon everything remaining as it was at the time of the death. There was serious talk of the authorities taking hold of the case and compelling burial.

As the estate had means and was under the control of Miss Whitney, the question was: How to proceed. For the fact remained, in spite of the evidence of death, that the body showed no signs of decomposition, and until it did, the authorities did not see their way clear to pronounce it a nuisance, and proceed to act accordingly.

Dixon also said that Miss Whitney had shown him a will made by Joe, in which he had willed all his property to her, she being the direct heir in any case. But there was another peculiar clause. He also willed his body to her, and that made the case more complicated; for if the authorities claimed he was dead, then, certainly, the body was her property, to be disposed of as she thought best. She had not only the rights of a sister, and the only near relative, but also the right of acquired property in the body, and in spite of public sentiment, the authorities saw no way to proceed except to declare the body a public nuisance, and that at the present time could not be done, for it was not a fact.

The longer I listened to Dixon, and the more I learned, the more deeply interested I became in the case.

While dining at the hotel, I decided to call on Miss Whitney in the evening, and learn from herself her side of the story, see if I could not induce her to comply with public sentiment and have the remains interred, and at the same time offer any assistance or condolence that was in my power.

That evening I rang the bell at the Whitney residence. The door was opened by the one maid-of-all-work, who had lived with the Whitneys for years, and I was invited in. She took my card to Miss Whitney, and while she was gone, I could not help noticing the surroundings. There was no indefinable air of sorrow or death in the house; everything appeared like a well-regulated home, in which the occupants had just stepped into another room. In an easy-chair by the window was some fancy work, showing that a lady had been there recently, busying her fingers on practically nothing. On the center table lay some uncut papers and magazines, and a book lay open, face downward, indicating that some one had been reading, had lain the book down expecting to pick it up and resume in a few minutes. The chairs were not precise in their arrangement around the room; in fact, the whole appearance was like that of a home where some one lived, and not like a well furnished tomb.

In a few moments Miss Whitney entered the room, and, under the circumstances, her appearance struck me as being strange. She greeted me cordially, and yet there was a shade of reserve in her manner that I had never noticed before, and while she was far from being merry, she certainly was not sad, and though she looked as if she had some kind of a trial, she did not look as if she had any particular sorrow. She said she was glad to see me, and I think she was, for her face had a truthful and at the same time a searching look, which I understood later. Her manner and appearance disarmed me.

I was at loss to know how to approach the subject for which I had called, but in a few moments

she broached the topic for me by saying that I had probably heard of the trouble Joe was in. To say that I was at a loss before, would describe my mental condition; but to describe my mental condition now, after hearing this remark from her, and in the manner in which she made it, would be impossible. I was simply struck dumb.

There was her dead brother in an adjoining room; public sentiment was against her for the course she was pursuing; many of her old friends had deserted her, and others had told her to her face that she was crazy, and yet she could sit there and speak of her brother's death as a trouble; as if her dead brother had only lost a few dollars in a wild-cat speculation, and at the same time appear perfectly sane, calm, and collected.

I could find no words in which to express my thoughts; in fact, did not have any that were very well defined. But after a time I managed to say: "Yes, tell me about it."

She was silent for a moment or two, and then turning sharply to me, said: "Mr. Wilson, you know that Joe and I have been orphans since we were children; that we have been more to each other than brother and sister usually are, and now trouble has come, and Joe cannot help me. Will you help me? I do not mean in your way, but in my way. I am not crazy, though I have often been told that I am; I know what I am doing, and why I do as I do. Will you, Mr. Wilson, be my friend and help me? I need the help of a strong man more than I can tell, and I sometimes feel that I shall go mad if I have to bear this mental strain and silence much longer; yet I will never give in so long as I have my reason

left, or have the power to fight for my rights, and my promises to my only brother. And if I will tell you all the circumstances will you promise to help me, whether or not you believe I am right in my opinions? I want your advice and help, if you assist me in my way; but I want neither aid nor advice from those who would try to influence me from my own decision. Under these conditions, Mr. Wilson, will you help me?"

While she was making this appeal, her face gradually assumed an unusual expression, frightened, timid, and yet dangerous to molest.

I hesitated, and turned my eyes away for a moment. I had made up my mind to make a conditional answer. Looking at her to reply, I met such a mute appeal for help that all my resolutions were gone in an instant; reason and judgment were gone in this case. I could only see a fellow being who wanted help, and I promised it; and I was glad the instant that I did promise it; I have been glad from then until now, and I am glad now that I consented to help her in her own way.

When I had promised what she wanted me to do, she said: "O! I am so glad that there is some one who will help me and not profess to aid me while they are trying all the time to help themselves by carrying to a successful end their own ideas. Now, Mr. Wilson, I will tell you all about the trouble; but you must agree to strict confidence for a part of it, for I am under promise to Joe not to say or tell anything in regard to any of the circumstances, unless I should be obliged to. I do not consider that Joe or myself are under any obligations to the public to tell all our private affairs, that are of no consequence to

them, and at the same time would cause more talk than is now being made. But if you are to be my friend, it is right that you should know all the circumstances. As you know, Joe and I have been orphans since father died, and that was when he was seven years old and I five. Mother died when I was born, and Aunt Mary kept house for us, and was all the mother we ever knew; then (when Joe was seventeen and I fifteen) Aunt Mary died, and we were at school until Joe graduated, and then I came home. Nora, who is a distant relative, kept house for us, and is like one of the family. We had been living but a short time as we now are, when one day Joe complained of being sick and went to his room. He did not come down to tea, and when I rapped at his door he did not answer; when I shook him he did not waken, and I became frightened and called Nora. She was about to start for the doctor when Joe awoke, and seemed confused when we questioned him; but after he had made us both promise never to tell any one about the matter, he told us that for a year or more he had been having such spells, but did not know what they were. When he felt one coming on he would feign sickness, and be by himself, and after a time they would pass off.

“He was very sensitive about them, and would never allow us to mention the subject to any one. He did not have them oftener than once in three or four months; they usually lasted but a few hours at the longest, and sometimes only a few minutes.

“At first, when he had such spells, they alarmed me greatly; but after a time I became accustomed to them, and to what he used to say after he had awakened. What he said at such times used to

frighten me as much as his condition. At first I thought him crazy, or that he had been dreaming. But if he was crazy, certainly there was a method in his madness; and if dreaming, it was more like prophecy, for he would tell of having seen father and mother, and would repeat what they had said to him. In one case we found several hundred dollars to our credit in a savings bank, of which we knew nothing until he received the information in one of his sleeps, when he said that he had seen father. Father told him that the money had been deposited years ago by an uncle of his; that while he was alive he did not know of it, and it was only after he died that his uncle had told him of it. He told Joe if he would go to the savings bank in Hartford and prove our claim to any moneys deposited by our uncle, we could get the money, and we did.

“Several times after waking he told me what father or mother had said to him about what was to happen in the future, and it always came true. Joe and I often used to talk it over, and I was afraid he would die in one of the sleeps or spells, some day; so to please me he went to New York and consulted three of the best physicians he could find, about the matter. After a long talk with each, they all recommended different remedies, but would promise nothing. Joe was disgusted, and declared that he would not make himself a chemical laboratory, or a Wandering Jew, to please all the doctors in Christendom. He thought that out of three different opinions, two, at least, must be wrong, and was inclined to think they all were. But if one was right he had no means of finding out which was the one, only by using his own judgment, and that told

him they were all guessing. After that he would do nothing, but would say: 'Well, if I die, I shall die, that is all there is to it, and I must sometime, so what is the difference? I am going to live until I must die, and not commence now.'

"There was one thing of which he was afraid, and that was that he might be buried alive in one of these sleeps. Perhaps you never noticed it, but he never went away from home without me. My friends used to think he was an exceptionally good brother, which he was; but the truth was he did not dare to be so far from me that I could not reach him in a few hours at the most, if anything should happen to him. I think that the fear of being buried alive was the only trouble he ever had, and it was almost a mania with him. He did not fear death in itself, but did fear the horror of being buried alive, and then waking to find himself in his coffin; and every time he heard of a person in a trance, or an account of any one being found where they showed signs of having died after burial (and you know one often hears of such cases), he would come to me and make me promise over and over again not to let him be buried until his body commenced to showed signs of decomposition. One day he brought me home the will, with that clause in it about my inheriting his body, and explained to me what to do in case he should die, or the doctors should pronounce him dead. He also made me promise not to tell any one about his being subject to these spells; but I did tell the doctors when they came here with the health officers. But they only ridiculed the idea at my back, and treated me with polite contempt.

"Now you know my position, and why I pursue

the course I do. And let me ask you: If you were in my place would you break the most solemn promise you could make to your own brother, or would you succumb to public sentiment and do as the people thought best? If you would yield to the public that cares nothing for you, I have made a mistake in your character; for my part I never will."

She looked me in the face with a determined look, that was not insanity, but rather a look that denoted a strong conscious will of her own, and waited for an answer. She had been so earnest that I had forgotten all my old resolutions, and felt indignant at the public for persecuting the weak. I made haste to answer, and assure her that I thought she had done perfectly right, and any help that I could render her as a friend, or as a lawyer, I would be pleased to; also, not to hesitate to call on me at any time or in any manner.

I spoke impulsively; I felt kindly, and perhaps some of my feelings were shown in my tone or manner, for in place of the look of determination came tears, and the words: "I am so glad that there is some one who does not think that I am crazy, and will be kind to me."

After a few moments of silence she looked up and said: "Would you like to see Joe?"

If there was one thing that I disliked more than another, it was to see dead people. But she had seemed so earnest, and the way in which she had presented the case seemed so plausible, that the old horror that used to creep over me when I nerved myself to look at the dead, was all gone, and it seemed to me that I was going to step into another room and see Joe—like going to see a sick friend.

As I expressed the desire, she led the way to a room, out of the dining-room, in which the gas was burning brightly. On a little stand at the head of the bed were some newspapers, and in the bed, with his hands and face uncovered, lay all that remained of Joe Whitney.

My God, what a shock! I reeled like a drunken man; for if ever I had seen a dead man, if I knew a dead man from a live one, Joe Whitney was dead. His eyes were wide open, set, and glassy; his chin drooped, and features pinched and drawn; his fingers were extended and he looked as rigid as marble. The last time I had seen him he was the picture of health and animation. The contrast was too great. I groped my way to a chair and sat down. Speak, I could not.

Miss Whitney's face expressed surprise at my conduct, and so did her voice when she said: "You, too, think Joe is dead."

My answer was to rise and go from the room and leave her to follow. Without a word, or waiting for her to conduct me, I made my way to the parlor, which we had left only a few moments before. In the presence of that ghastly object I could not speak. When we had reached the parlor she repeated the question by saying: "Do you really think it is any more than a case of catalepsy?" I nodded my head in reply, and then managed to pull myself together enough to say: "How can you so deceive yourself, Miss Whitney? There can be no question to a sane person, and while wishing to be your friend I cannot deceive you. I really think, in fact, I *know* that he is dead."

"And I know that he is not dead," was her reply.

And then there broke forth from her a torrent of appeal, argument, entreaty, and defiance, which would be impossible to describe. If she had the power to sway other men as she influenced me, as a public speaker, she would be a power in the nation. I had been acquainted with her for years, but had never known her before.

She appealed to my honor as a man who had given his word to help her in her trouble; she argued to know what I knew of life,—or any one else for that matter,—to be able to say just when a man was dead; at what time life left the body; how could I, or any other who had never seen a life, only the outside shell which covered it, speak with such assurance in regard to life or to the lack of it.

She pointed out to me the one fact, that although Joe had been in his present condition for two weeks, decomposition had not commenced, and defied me to explain the reason, unless there was some remaining life, and that if there was who could tell when all would go or when all would come back. She entreated me by all the persuasion she could command to help her; she offered me any price to stand between her and the public, as a friend and lawyer, and express the opinion that Joe was not dead.

She told of others who had urged her to have the body placed on ice, and said: "As if I would be guilty of freezing my own brother to death." She then spoke of one of the doctors suggesting a post-mortem, and said, with emphasis, "The cold-blooded rascality of asking my consent to my brother's murder, to gratify the curiosity of a lot of doctors!" and finished by again imploring me to stand by her in her trouble.

If I had not felt inclined to help her, I could not have refused, and, as my inclinations were the other way, I promised to do everything I could for her and Joe, except to look at him. That I could not do, and told her so; and at the same time, as I had now come to the conclusion that she was insane on this one point, the best thing I could do for the time being was to humor her in her ideas, and as long as the body caused no more trouble than it now did, no harm would be done the public; and I resolved to take the vacation I had promised myself for years, and make my Meriden friends a visit, at the same time be within calling distance, in case a crisis arose in the affairs of the Whitneys, for I had felt very kind toward Joe when he was alive. Several times he had helped me financially when I was struggling to get an education and get on my feet in the world. How much of this his sister knew I could not tell; but I realized that the time had come for me to discharge my obligation, and that if I ever wanted to look myself in the face in front of a mirror again I had better stay right here in Meriden for the present, and do what I could for my old friends, the Whitneys.

After promising everything she asked, I bade her good night, and went back to the Winthrop. Billiards or conversation had little attraction for me that night, after what I had passed through. I went directly to my room, but not to sleep. The strange scenes I had witnessed and the uncommon things I had heard produced anything but slumber; for, do what I would, the scenes and talk of the evening would not leave my mind, and while I walked the floor and reviewed them, my cigar suffered, and mind and body grew weary. Try as I would, those

glassy eyes would look at me, only to fade away and give place to the face of May Whitney, as she made that last appeal for me to be her friend. Tired out in mind and body, I laid down on a sofa, and at last lost consciousness. When I awoke the sun was shining in at my window, and at first I could not realize where I was; but, as in a flash, it all came at once, and then there was no chance for more sleep at that time.

After a bath and a breakfast I felt more calm, and started out for a long walk, so as to be by myself, to think the whole matter over carefully and calmly, and to come to a good understanding in my own mind just what was best to do and how to do it. To begin with, I weighed the evidence as carefully as I could, and came to the conclusion that, notwithstanding Miss Whitney's strange story and all her impulsive arguments, in spite of the fact that the body showed no signs of decomposition, I must believe the evidence of my own senses, and if I knew anything, it was that Joe Whitney was dead. If he was dead, then there was but one thing to be said of Miss Whitney — she was insane. But how to best bring about a decent burial, at the same time keep my promises, the friendship of Miss Whitney, and protect her from what she considered the interferences of a meddling public, was the problem that I was to solve. In thinking over the matter, I came to the conclusion to be governed largely by circumstances, as I knew of no case as a precedent by which I could be guided. The first move I resolved to make in the matter was to see the health officer, have a talk with him about the matter, and see just what steps the authorities had taken, if any;

and I considered myself warranted to act as Miss Whitney's lawyer.

After my walk I dropped in on my old friend, Dixon, and told him that I had called on Miss Whitney the evening previous, had become quite interested, and should act as her attorney in the case, and desired the name of the health officer, which he gave me. At the same time he asked me several questions, which I evaded answering the best I could, for I did not feel quite able to make any definite statements just then, not knowing what I should do, only I had resolved to see the matter through, in one way or another.

Dr. Holmes, the health officer, was a politician and doctor. I mention the politician first, because he always seemed to have plenty of politics, but very little practice as a doctor. I called at his office. He was in, and I asked him what information he could give me in regard to the Whitney case. At first he was inclined to be reticent and somewhat on his dignity; but when I told him that I represented Miss Whitney as her lawyer, he unbent from his high position, and was not a bad fellow to meet after one knew him better.

He said there was no doubt that Joe Whitney was dead and his sister insane; that he had examined him, and, to please her, had called in counsel (I noticed it hurt the doctor to think any one should question his decision); that the counsel had sustained him in his opinions, and that only the night previous there had been a meeting of the Board of Health. The matter had been discussed in all its different phases, and, in order to decide what legal steps to take in the matter, they had called in the city attor-

ney. The attorney had advised the arrest of Miss Whitney on a warrant of insanity, and, considering her conduct in the case, he thought there would be no question as to what the verdict would be. She would then be placed in an institution for the insane, the court would appoint a conservator over her and the estate; then it would be an easy matter for the conservator to dispose of Joe Whitney's body in a respectable manner.

If the doctor had been a lawyer, or not quite so sure, the world would have finally revolved in the direction he wished. He would, probably, have never told me as much as he did; but being forewarned was being forearmed, and when he answered my question, and told me that on account of the city attorney and judge being out of town, they had decided to let the matter remain as it was until the day following he had told me all that I wanted to know.

I left his office and stood on the sidewalk in front of the door for a few minutes, thinking. Then hailing a passing carriage, I ordered the driver to take me to the Whitney residence; in the meantime meditating upon the case as it then confronted me. While I had to admit to myself, that from a practical point of view there was nothing wrong in the steps the authorities were about to take, it did make my blood boil with indignation at the high-handed assumption of authority over the affairs of another. And while my reason and judgment told me that they were right, although brutal and harsh, every impulse of my being impelled me to defeat them if I could. Why I thus resolved to fol-

low my impulses instead of my judgment, I do not know ; but I did so.

After engaging the hackman to call for me at noon, I turned to go into the house. As I approached, the door was opened by Miss Whitney. She held out both hands and said, "Well, what have you been thinking about, and what have you been doing for me this morning; anything?"

"Yes, much. Come into the parlor and be prepared to think fast and talk much ; but first let me tell you what I have heard from Dr. Holmes this morning."

At the mention of his name she frowned, but said nothing ; and taking a chair, wheeled it to the window and motioned me to be seated. She placed a chair facing mine, and sitting down, said, "I am ready."

As I told her in substance what Dr. Holmes had told me, about the plan to have her arrested, she gradually grew pale until she was as white as marble, but not a sound did she utter.

When I had finished speaking, it was some minutes before she spoke. At last she said in a husky voice, "I had felt impressed that there was a crisis approaching in the affairs, and that was the reason I implored and urged you so strongly last night to help me. My guardian angels must have brought you to me yesterday, for I had never before felt so weak and unnerved, and if this plot had come upon me when I had no one to help me, and in whom I could confide, I think that I should surely have gone insane."

The last part of her remark made me start, for it was only a few hours before that I had calmly

decided in my own mind that she was insane. And here I was, discussing affairs of vital importance to herself, and at the same time holding the opinion that she was insane. The absurdity of my position made me feel ashamed of my own mental caliber. At once, and for all time, I decided that whatever else she was, she was not insane.

I still had no doubt about her being fearfully mistaken, neither did I have any doubt that her mind was as well balanced, and perhaps better balanced, than the majority of the human family. And following these thoughts, came this: Should I, a friend of the family, desert the sister of my old friend, who had helped me in my younger days when I needed help, and allow the arrest of that sister under the plea of insanity, no matter what eccentric opinions she held, when I did not believe, in the bottom of my heart, she was insane?

No! By Heaven, no! Humanity and individual human rights existed when the whole State of Connecticut was a wilderness, and those birthrights were inherent. State law might, in the hands of the careless or the unscrupulous, rob one of those rights; but abridge those rights, never. And I would not calmly stand by and see the sister of my old friend robbed of her birthright of liberty, even though I had to fight the whole State.

The next thought was: But how shall I help her? Like a flash of inspiration the thought came to me, if she only had a lover and I could induce them to marry at once, the whole game of the Health Board would be blocked, for if she was married before her arrest her husband would become her legal guardian, and the court could not appoint

another. With this view in mind I asked her if she was engaged to be married or had a lover.

Without a change in her attitude or expression of countenance, she spoke the one word, "Why?"

I then told her as well as I could what thoughts had come to me on the instant, and as I explained, it grew more plausible. I showed her that it would protect her thoroughly; that at all times she could protect herself from legal intrusion behind her husband, and if he was a man she thought she could trust through any trouble, all she would have to do was to arrange with him, and he could defy the authorities to arrest his wife for insanity. He could claim the peculiar views held by his wife were not his, and if she was insane, it was no business of the city or State. He was her legal guardian, and she was his ward, and he would answer to no one for her keeping until it had been proven that he had abused her, or was squandering her property.

When I had finished speaking she was silent for a moment and then said, "Let me think." For as many as ten minutes neither spoke. I nervously fumbled the charm to my chain, and she looked steadily at the carpet. Finally, with a deep sigh, she raised her face, looked me squarely in the eyes, and commenced to speak.

"What I am about to say, Mr. Wilson, may perhaps appear strange, bold, and unladylike; but be assured I do not mean it as such, and don't judge me until I have finished. Before I came from school I had one or two beaux, but nothing, of course, at that age, was serious. After I came home, and Joe and I commenced house-keeping, it was but a short time before Joe told me about his trouble.

From that time I resolved never to marry until Joe did, for I would not leave him alone; neither would I accept the offer of any man, for I would have been obliged to tell him all the history of Joe's difficulty, and he was so sensitive about it that I would not pain him by so doing. Whether I would have had a chance to marry, I do not know, for I would never allow myself to become well enough acquainted with any man, for him to make any advances. It has caused my friends to joke me about being a man-hater, when they knew nothing about my motive for doing as I did. You, probably, was as intimately acquainted with me as any man, and from this you can judge about my gentlemen acquaintances, although I have felt better acquainted with you, for Joe used often to speak of you to me, and you can readily see the difficulty in carrying out the plan that you suggest, although it does look to me the most feasible one that could be suggested, if the man who is to be my husband could be found. There is the difficulty. But I have thought of a plan, and before I speak of it, I wish to explain a little, and tell you what my views of marriage are. I may be wrong, but it is my settled religious conviction that the ritual of the Catholic Church on the subject of marriage is right, and in my own heart I consider marriage by the Church a religious covenant that cannot be altered or broken by any legal encounter; while I consider a marriage by the State authorities a civil contract, made under the authority of the State, and the authorities that sealed the contract have the power to break the seal and grant a divorce. I think that a man and woman married by the Church may live together or apart, but they should

never marry again so long as they both live ; while a man and woman married by the State can re-marry as often as the State will grant the privilege and they can satisfy their own consciences. Holding these views, I have thought of this plan : I might be married to a man by a justice of the peace, who would declare us man and wife by virtue of the laws of the State of Connecticut, and then, if we had borne to each other none of the relations of husband and wife, except the legal relations, my conscience would not trouble me in the future if I were a divorced woman. I would have then met legal tyranny with legal cunning ; the State and I would be quits, and after the necessity for the relations had passed, we could easily procure a divorce, having never been man and wife, only in name. And now comes the question, who is the man ? ”

With these words she hesitated, and I said,

“ Have you any one in mind at present, Miss Whitney ? ”

She dropped her eyes for a moment, and, raising them to me again, said, with a faint blush :

“ Why can't you be the one, Mr. Wilson ? ”

The suddenness of the proposition made me fairly spring from the chair, and, without answering, I commenced to pace the floor. As I did so, she resumed her talk by saying :

“ Mr. Wilson, do not think me bold or forward, but, really, what can I do ? I am as well acquainted with you, and better, than any other man whom I would willingly trust, on his honor, to carry out this strange contract. Suppose that I should hire a man to marry me in this strange way for pay. He might, after the trouble had passed, refuse to live up to the

contract, and either force himself on me, or blackmail me for money. And, while we are not very well acquainted, personally, I have known of you for years through Joe, and there is no man living whom I would trust as much, except Joe. Of course, Mr. Wilson, if you are engaged to another, or there is any private reason why you cannot marry me, I will try and find some one else; but if you could lend me the shelter of your name for a little time, you know better than any one else how great a favor it would confer just now, and when I do not need it longer we can be divorced. I will bear all the expense, and you may bring whatever charges against me that will be necessary to procure the divorce. I know, Mr. Wilson, that there is a certain amount of stigma attached to a divorced person; but the stigma, as the world goes, is greater for the woman than for the man, and I will gladly take my part for Joe's sake. You have promised to help Joe and I, and this, as you have shown me, is the most practical way in which you can help us at present, and if there is not some strong reason why you should not do it for us, will you not be my legal husband?"

I stopped in my walk, and, looking at her, said, "Let me think," and then began to walk again. I thought fast and hard, becoming unconscious of my surroundings. I reviewed my past life, how hard I had worked when a boy, and how in my youth I had, almost without a friend, struggled for an education. I remembered my good father and mother, who had both died in the same year, when I was twelve years old. I remembered my little sister, who was my playmate, and who died of the same fever that killed mother. I thought of the blow to

father. And at the same time the business losses came, and, all together, caused father's death. I also remembered how Joe Whitney, in his quiet way, had helped me when I most needed it. Then came the thought, Why had I never married? I certainly was old enough, but had never had the desire to be. Life with me had been all business. I had been obliged to work out the problem of making the world yield me a living, and now it had become a passion with me to make money, and, for the first time in my life, I realized that I had always looked at life from a business standpoint; and when she proposed this new relation to me, I comprehended her meaning, and admired her clear business-like way of stating her case, but did not take to it. Somehow I would have much preferred she had not made it so clearly a legal trick. I do not know why, but I wished she had not qualified the word "husband" every time by the word "legal." In a short time, I turned to her and said:

"I will do as you wish, on two conditions: the first is, that you agree to have the best medical assistance procured, and try to resuscitate Joe"—and I told her plainly that I did not think it could be done; the second condition, that, at the first signs of decomposition in the body, she should listen to reason, and consent to a burial. Somehow, I did not care to make any conditions in regard to the divorce. I did not like to contemplate that part of the case.

As I finished speaking, she rose, held out her hand, and said, "I accede to your proposition"; then, taking my hand in both of hers, said, "As I

hope for future happiness, I will do as I have agreed."

As we stood with my right hand in both of hers, the door-bell rang. We were so engrossed that we had forgotten time, and as the bell rang, it startled us so that we jumped from the floor.

Going to the door, she found the hackman who was to call for me at noon. As I heard him speak I stepped to the door, telling him to wait outside until I called him, and then we came back into the parlor. When we had reached it, I turned to her and said:

"What is to be done must be done now, to-day; to-morrow will be too late. The authorities must never be allowed to serve a warrant for insanity on Miss May Whitney, and they will never try to on Mrs. George Wilson. We must be married at once; time is precious. Now, what are your plans?"

She walked twice across the room, then, coming to where I stood, said:

"Write a note to a justice of the peace, and have the driver go for him. It is fortunate that the carriage is at the door."

At the same time she led me to a writing-desk in the library. I changed the plan a little, by writing to Dixon to get some justice of the peace, and come with him at once in the carriage to the Whitneys. I thought it was not best to say what was wanted of them until after they arrived.

Taking the note to the driver, I told him to find Dixon and give him the note, then bring him to the house, and any one whom he had with him; and if he could not find Dixon in thirty minutes, to come

back and report to me. I then went back to the parlor, and awaited the turn of events.

The Whitney household evidently followed the old custom of having dinner at noon and supper at night, for I had not been in the parlor more than a minute when Nora appeared at the door of the dining-room and announced dinner. Miss Whitney turned to me and proposed that we eat something, at the same time remarking, that she did not care to lose this last chance to have one more dinner as May Whitney, for she did not know how long it would be before she would have an opportunity to do so again. We had been seated at the table a few minutes (the strangeness of my position did not make me very talkative, for I was doing much thinking; I thought of the step I was about to take, and what effect it would have on my future), when it suddenly flashed on my mind we had no license. My residence in Meriden in the past had taught me that people, in order to get married in Connecticut, must have a license from the town authorities. The thought decided me what course to take. I arose from the table and started for the hat-rack. Miss Whitney followed me, with wonder expressed in every feature, asking, "What is the matter?" I explained to her, in as few words as possible, the case, and told her to admit no one until I returned except Dixon and his companion.

As I was going out of the house fortune favored me, for a street car was at that moment passing. I stepped aboard, and was almost instantly on my way to the town clerk's office. It was only a short ride of perhaps ten minutes, when I reached the office. Luck was on my side again, for the clerk

was in, and I at once made my business known. His face looked like a Chinese puzzle when I told him that I wanted a marriage license for myself and Mary Whitney. I answered his questions about my age, and guessed at hers, while he was writing it out, and waited for no ceremony or talk, but paid him, pocketed the document, and went. As there was no car in sight going in the right direction, I started to walk back to Miss Whitney's. I had gone but a few blocks, when a hack passed me, and I recognized the driver as the one I had sent for Mr. Dixon. I called him to the sidewalk. In the carriage were Dixon, and Pine, a justice of the peace. They were surprised to see me down town, and, as I took my seat, at once commenced to ply me with questions about the business to be done at the Whitneys. I put them off by saying that I preferred to talk the matter over in the presence of Miss Whitney as soon as we arrived there. I felt relieved when she answered the bell, and told me that no one had been there; for now that the course to be taken had been decided upon, I felt nervous, lest, by some chance, Dr. Holmes had not informed me correctly, and a warrant might be served before we could be married.

CHAPTER II.

WE all entered the parlor, and I asked Miss Whitney if she had finished that last dinner.

She nodded a yes, and said she was ready to proceed. I turned to Messrs. Pine and Dixon, and told them a straight out and out lie ; that, unbeknown to the public, Miss Whitney and I had been engaged for years before I left Meriden ; but owing to some differences, we could never fix the time in which to be married ; but those differences were now adjusted, and as she needed a protector now more than at any time in her previous life, and we had decided to be married at once, we had sent for the justice to perform the ceremony. I wanted Mr. Dixon as a witness, and Nora could act as another.

Mr. Pine looked as though he would rather not ; as if he was not quite sure that it would be best, and raised the objection of no license ; but it did him no good, for I immediately handed it to him. After reading it and looking at the back of it, he hemmed once or twice, and said : " Well, I suppose it is legal. Are you ready ? " We answered by stepping in front of him and joining hands. There was nothing left for him to do except to go ahead and marry us. After asking the usual questions, by the laws of the State of Connecticut he pronounced us man and wife.

Nora had been standing in the doorway, and looked like one struck dumb with amazement. After he had declared us man and wife, we stood there

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like five sticks, no one thinking what to do next, when Nora broke the ice by saying: "For the Lord sakes, Mary Whitney, what be you doing?"

The stiffness of the occasion was gone, and, spite of the fact that there was a dead man in the house, we broke into a shout of laughter, and I feared that Miss Whitney — or my wife, I should say — would have hysterics, and considering the nervous strain she had been under, she would have been excusable.

When the confusion had subsided, Mr. Pine and Mr. Dixon congratulated us; and as they were in the midst of their congratulations the door bell rang a clattering peal. I led my wife to a chair and told her that I would go to the door. I did not go at once, but asked Mr. Pine to step to the desk with Mr. Dixon, and requested them to sign the marriage license. They hesitated and looked mystified, but did as I requested. I then took it and put it in my pocket, an act I had no right to do, for it belonged to Mr. Pine; but I told him at the same time, that I would see that it was handed in to the town clerk for record. Before he could reply, the door bell rang twice in succession. At this I left Messrs. Pine and Dixon standing at the desk and went to the door.

As I opened it a man put his foot in, so it could not be shut again. I swung the door wide open, and on the steps stood a policeman and constable. They seemed surprised to see a man, and asked for Miss Mary Whitney. I read the situation at once, for in the hands of the constable was a paper which I took to be a warrant.

It would be hard to describe the feeling of exultation I felt as I said: "There is no such person living here."

The constable gave me an insolent sneer as he said: "I know better, and shall search the house."

"Certainly, gentlemen, walk right in," and I led the way to the parlor. He stepped toward my wife and said: "This is the woman I want," and attempted to grasp her by the shoulder. I stepped between them saying: "Not so fast, my friend, I am this woman's attorney. Produce your warrant for arrest."

He unfolded the paper and commenced to read. I let him finish before answering, and then said: "That warrant is to be served on Mary Whitney; she does not now exist. This lady whom you would arrest is Mrs. Mary Wilson, my wife, and under my protection!"

The officer said: "I do not know it. How long has this woman been married?" I answered him, "About ten minutes."

We were interrupted by Dixon and Pine; Dixon saying, "Now, Wilson, I understand this haste;" and Pine made the remark, "A sharp trick."

But what they said now made no difference to me; I held the winning hand in this game. I then told the officer that the writ he held was defective; it contained errors, and as the attorney of my wife, warned him not to attempt to serve it, and if he laid his hand on my wife, or attempted to carry out the instructions of that warrant, I should at once commence proceedings against him, personally, for assault, advised him to take the writ back to the city attorney, explain the case to him before he proceeded further, and be guided by his instructions, for it might save him trouble.

Dixon, Pine, and the policeman assured him that

they thought my advice good, and when my wife and I told him that we were going to remain in Meriden, and if at any time in the future he wished to serve that warrant he could find us at home, he took his departure, and with him went the others. My wife and I were alone, with the exception of Nora.

Nora, the general maid-of-all-work, was as much a friend as servant, and had the entire confidence of the Whitneys. My wife, or Mrs. Wilson, as I called her from this time, asked her to be seated, and explained the whole situation to her, why it was necessary to do as she had that morning, and finished by saying, "If they had found me insane because I held the opinion that Joe was not dead, and placed me in an asylum, they would have to keep me there the rest of my life, for I shall never change that opinion until decomposition begins. But if that should commence at any time, I should send for the undertaker at once, and have the funeral services as soon as possible after." Then turning to me, said: "What are your plans for this afternoon?"

In reply I told her that I had had excitement enough; a marriage, and an officer of the law to contend with, so far in the day, and but very little to eat. That the first thing I should do would be to get something to eat at the Winthrop, and then see the city attorney and, probably, a reporter, for the whole matter would be in the paper at any rate, so I thought it best that they should have a correct, and not a false report. She invited me to wait, saying she and Nora would get me a lunch, but I told her that, as I must go down town to see the reporter and attorney, I would not trouble them.

She followed me into the hall, and assisted me in donning my overcoat. As I took my hat from the rack, and turned toward the door, she took my hand in both of hers, and looking me full in the face, said: "In romance I have read of, and in my day-dreams I have pictured myself as having, such a friend as you have proved yourself to be this morning; but that I actually should have such an one never has entered my mind. Now that I know and realize that there is in the wide world one such friend for me, I cannot thank Heaven enough, and it would be mockery for me to try and express my gratitude to you in words." Her words and acts affected me strangely. My impulse was to clasp her in my arms, but there was a feeling of respect for her that held me back. It seemed to me to do so would be treachery; as if I was abusing the confidence a friend had placed in me. I tried once or twice to speak, but the words stuck fast in my throat, and finally, without a word, I opened the door and went out.

Who I passed on my way to the Winthrop, or how long it took me to get there, I do not know. I walked like a machine, and my mind was chaos. I went into the reading-room and taking a seat tried to collect my thoughts, and to realize what had happened to me, in one short morning. As I sat there, I actually pinched the back of my hand to see if I was awake, and could feel; I rose and took one or two turns around the writing-desk to see if I was really dreaming or awake, and gradually came to the conclusion that there was no doubt as to my position: that I was alive, awake, and in a very queer predicament; married legally, yet not mar-

ried; that I had undoubtedly made myself the subject of much gossip and talk in the future; that I had been under a greater excitement and mental strain than I realized at the time, and now was suffering the reaction, but I must brace up, for I was by no means through with the day. I felt exhausted, yet not hungry, and did what many men do in the same mental and physical condition—went to the bar and took a stimulant. My hand shook as I poured the liquor, and the bar-tender gave me a look which said as plainly as words, “You have been drinking too much.” Without stopping for any words, I went back to the reading-room to my old seat. It was seldom that I drank spirits of any kind, and I soon felt the effects by growing hungry. I went into the dining-room, ordered the majority of the bill of fare, and ate all that was brought to me. After dinner I took a seat in the office, and by the aid of a cigar regained all my old composure, and was again ready for business.

The hotel clerk told me where the city attorney's office was located, and I went there direct from the hotel. The attorney and I were somewhat acquainted, having met professionally. I opened the case to him at once, by stating how it stood at the time, and asked him what he proposed to do about it. He was very affable, and said while he did not wish to interfere with the private affairs of any one, at the time he made out the warrant he could see no other course to pursue, but now the position of the affair had changed, and as I was personally interested, and well known, any suggestions or recommendations I should make would be gladly received, and would carry weight with them. But as the

affair stood at the time he made the order for arrest, he had seen no other way to bring matters to a crisis, for he had understood from the health officer that a man had been lying dead in a house for two weeks, and (begging my pardon) in the care of a crazy woman who would not bury the body herself, or permit the authorities to do so, and he had recommended the arrest of the sister, on a warrant of insanity, as the best thing to be done, under the circumstances. Now the situation had changed, and instead of having to deal with a crazy woman, they had to deal with a man, who at least had the reputation of being in full possession of his mental faculties, and what he should do in the future would be governed largely by what I proposed to do, and he would like me to state, if I had no objections, what steps I contemplated taking in the matter. I looked at my watch; it was 2.30 P. M. I knew that the evening paper went to the press at four, and I wanted my side of the story told first, and correctly.

I turned to Mr. Downs, the city attorney, explained my situation and why I wanted him to wait a short time before giving him answer in detail; but told him if he would wait, I would gladly tell him all, or if he would buy an evening paper, he could read for himself what I had to say to the public. He thought he should prefer to read the paper, as he had important business on hand for the remainder of the day, and we parted with a good feeling existing between us. From Downs I went to the *Times* office. Several of the editorial staff, who were old acquaintances of mine, greeted me warmly, and at once wanted to know all about the stories the reporter had picked up on the street.

I explained that I had come there for that express purpose, and as soon as I began to talk, the local reporter commenced to make copy. I will insert what the *Times* printed that evening, as the best means of giving my words at that time. It was printed under the head of

“A STARTLING SOCIAL EVENT.

“Yesterday afternoon, Mr. George Wilson of Boston, formerly of this city, arrived in town to attend to some of the numerous business interests he still has here, and also to learn the condition of affairs with the Whitneys; they being old-time friends of his. He being acquainted with the trouble which Miss Whitney (now Mrs. George Wilson) is in, through reading the *Times*, of which he is a subscriber, states that he was prepared by the report he had heard, to find Miss Whitney mentally deranged, and he went to the house last evening to see what could be done for the family, but at present he considers the lady possessed of an intellect remarkably clear, and of sound judgment, but holding some peculiar ideas on the subject of death, which some of the facts in the case of her dead brother would substantiate. For while the body has lain in its present condition for two weeks in a warm room, it has shown no signs of decomposition; and in regard to the disposal of the body, Mr. Wilson states that he shall telegraph immediately to Dr. Hamilton of New York, the renowned specialist on nervous diseases, to come to Meriden at once regardless of expense, and see if Mrs. Wilson's ideas are right and if the body can be resuscitated. If not, the body will remain as it is until it

shows signs of decomposition, no matter whether that time comes sooner or later, but at the first change in the appearance of the body for the worse, the remains will be buried in the family lot at the expense of the estate; that the estate has ample means to do this without assistance, and the friends have a proper regard for the views of society and will pay all the respect to them consistent with their own interest, but will not violate their own conscience or sense of right to conform to any set usages or unwritten laws of society. Mr. Wilson also told his experience for the last twenty-four hours, which was certainly out of the common course of human events. This morning he learned that a warrant for arrest was to be made out and served upon Miss Whitney, and in order to stand between her and the authorities, they were married at noon to-day, and when the officers called to-day to execute the warrant, there was no such person as Mary Whitney, she having vanished and Mrs. Mary Wilson taken her place.

“What will occur in the future in this strange case, Mr. Wilson was unable to say. The *Times* forbears making any comments out of respect to the parties, and will only add that the city attorney told the reporter the authorities had not intended issuing the warrant until to-morrow, but the matter had been decided at the meeting of the Board of Health last night. The matter had been postponed one day because Mr. Downs had intended to be out of town to-day, but as he was detained here by important business, he attended to it this morning, instead; and as he says if George Wilson had not been a hustler, the lady at present would have been

under arrest as Mary Whitney, instead of being at home as Mrs. George Wilson."

On leaving the *Times* office, I went immediately to the telegraph office and indicted the following message to Dr. Hamilton of New York :

To DR. HAMILTON, 605 Fifth Avenue, New York City :

I need your services in Meriden immediately. Answer when you will be here. Keep yourself in telegraphic communication with me on receipt of this, until details can be arranged. My reference: Home National Bank.

Before leaving the telegraph office, I made arrangements to have them telephone me at the Winthrop when the answer arrived. I went immediately to the hotel, called a messenger boy and sent the following note to Mrs. Wilson :

MRS. WILSON: — You need have no more anxiety, for all matters are arranged for the present. I have seen the authorities and the reporter, have also telegraphed Dr. Hamilton of New York, a specialist on nervous diseases, to come to Meriden and do all that can be done for Joe. I shall keep in direct telegraphic communication with him, and wait here for an answer. I will try and call a few moments this evening.

GEORGE WILSON.

I was now in a position to stop and rest for a short time, and leaving instructions to summon me to the telephone when I was called for, from the telegraph office, I went to my room, drew a chair to the window, lighted a cigar, and sat down to think and decide on my course in the future.

It was plain that it might be weeks before I could leave Meriden. I had left my business in Boston for an absence of only one day, so one of my first duties to perform was to arrange my affairs at home or in Boston. It suddenly came to me as a conundrum to be guessed, just where my home now

was. My next duty was to decide as to what I should do for the Whitneys or my legal wife, and certainly my friend Mrs. Wilson. There could be no two courses to take in the matter, for in spite of our legal relationship we were actually no more to each other than we were twenty-four hours previous; so for the present I decided to live at the Winthrop, do what I could in the way of managing and helping in the affairs of Mrs. Wilson and Joe; but in his case I did not think there would be much to do. I knew nothing about such matters, but I had an impression that when Dr. Hamilton arrived, he, by some means, would prove beyond a doubt, to the mind of Mrs. Wilson, that Joe was surely dead, and a quiet funeral would settle that part of the difficulties. It gave me a deep pang of regret as I thought of the loss of my old friend. Many of my friends and acquaintances had dropped off the stage of existence; I had felt sorry to lose them, but none had seemed to come quite so near to me as the loss of Joe. The others had seemed to be afar, away from me in some way, but this seemed more like a flash of lightning striking the tree that sheltered me. It was a close call, and I found myself saying, what is death, what does it mean? Then came the opposite thought, what is life, what is the meaning of it, what is it for? I knew that mine had resulted in my making money, but sum up the total the best I could, life had produced for me only money and an honest name.

Something was certainly wrong somewhere. I had never had any such thoughts before, had never felt dissatisfied with life, and the more I thought, the more I became mixed up in my mind, and it

was really a relief when the hall boy rapped at my door and told me I was wanted at the telephone. It gave me something to do that I could understand and grasp. As I expected, it was the telegraph office that wanted me in the central office at once. They said the party I had telegraphed to was waiting in New York to talk to me over the wires.

When I arrived at the telegraph office, I found the following message :

I can leave here at 6 P.M., and be in Meriden at 9. What is the trouble, shall I need instruments? Telegraph a synopsis of the case. Reference satisfactory. HAMILTON.

I answered with the following message :

Come. Will meet you at the train. A man has been pronounced dead; his friends will not believe it. Has been subject to spells of inanition. Dead or alive, he has been in this condition for two weeks. Answer, WILSON.

I waited in the telegraph office a few minutes and received this message :

Explanation sufficient. Will meet you at 9 P.M., to-night. HAMILTON.

I had left the telegraph office to go to the Winthrop when I met Mr. Dixon on the street, who stopped and invited me into his office. On the strength of his long acquaintance with me he said he felt at liberty to talk plain and criticise my actions in a spirit of kindness; invited me to make a confidant of him, as he would have many questions to answer, he being my agent in that town, and did not wish to say anything but for my interest; that I must be aware that since coming to Meriden I had been acting in a manner that would appear strange to the public, and would create talk. He wanted to

know just what position to take in order to protect my interests.

After a few minutes of thought I told him that the truth would come out eventually, and I might as well tell him the exact position of affairs at once; he could publish it to any one. Also that I felt to do this would save both my wife and myself from any suspicion or talk in the future; that if the public knew the real relationship existing between us, it would save scandal, and would not reflect as much on the good name of either my wife or myself as it would to carry out the plans we had already formed, and at every new step or development in the case give gossip and talk a new impetus by adding to it a new subject to talk about, thereby keeping our names before the public for some time in the future. I told him that circumstances beyond our control had forced us deep into the difficulties, and brought our names prominently into notice without any wish on our part to have it so. I was aware that there were three events in a person's life when they were talked about if at no other: when they were born, married, and when they died. They became of interest to the public then, and their names and reputation, acquired or inherited, became public property; and taking these facts into consideration, I was glad of an opportunity to state the whole case to him that he might repeat it, or publish it to any one who cared to know. I then related all the events that had taken place up to that time. He smiled when I told him about my trip to the town clerk for a license, and remarked that he now understood why he had found me down town at noon, when he expected to find me at the Whitneys.

In regard to the sanity of Mrs. Wilson I told him that she was sane as any person I had ever met; that in my opinion she was one of the most level-headed women I ever saw. There was no question in my mind but that her judgment on most matters was unusually sound and firm; that her comprehension of a situation was uncommonly keen and complete; that the sixth sense, called tact or intuition, which pre-eminently belongs to womankind, was in her strangely evinced. But she did have this one opinion, that her brother was not dead, and being a person of strong character and convictions, would not yield until she was proven to be in the wrong. When the evidence was offered, there was no doubt in my mind that she would comprehend and accept it, and that she had judgment and common sense enough to do the right thing, when in her mind the proper period had arrived, and probably some decision would be reached in a short time in one way or another. As to the relations that Mrs. Wilson and I sustained to each other at present, they were certainly somewhat unique and uncommon, but really, not so very complicated so long as we acted an honorable part. We were legally man and wife and nothing more; the same as two persons might enter into a business contract or copartnership for mutual advantage or some business enterprise; that it was understood between us that, aside from the legal view of the case, we should sustain none of the relationships of man and wife, and when the time came that the partnership was no longer for our mutual interest, we should simply dissolve it by a divorce; that I felt confidence enough in her to think she would not interfere with my personal

property rights, and I certainly should not with hers. I should stay in Meriden until the whole affair was settled, be the time short or long, and my address would be the Winthrop. Mr. Dixon said: "That is all right, Mr. Wilson, and I appreciate the situation; but it is a mighty funny way to get the best of the courts."

"True, Dixon, but what else could we do? If she had been arrested on a warrant of insanity, in the court I could have defended her as a lawyer, and that is all; we would have had to take our chances with the court. In the present state of public opinion she would have been found insane, for she would have insisted that her brother was not dead, and lost her composure; would have raved about the matter, and that would have only confirmed the charge. You know as well as I that, with the present political ring in power, some of their crowd would have been appointed conservator. I might as her lawyer have demurred, but I would have been put out of power; their programme would have been carried out, and Joe Whitney would have been buried, and his sister confined in an asylum, with the belief that her brother had been buried alive, and she would have been a remarkable woman if she had not finally gone insane and remained so for the rest of her natural life.

"I saw all these possibilities. They looked so threatening that I would prevent every possibility of their happening if I could; and as I was not married and had no intention of being, it would not interfere with my plans to lend her the use of my name for a little time. The only inconvenience it would be to me was the gossip and notoriety, and

certainly I ought to be willing to do that much for the sister of my old friend Joe. Aside from friendship, I would do it for the sake of what I believed to be right, and to prevent the wrecking of a life by a blunder of the law."

When I had finished my talk with Dixon, it was six o'clock. Going to the Winthrop Hotel, I had tea, then called a carriage and drove to the Whitneys, telling the driver to call for me in time to meet the nine o'clock train.

When Mrs. Wilson met me there was a feeling of constraint on my part, after the interview at noon, and apparently the same feeling clung to her, for she was not as social as before we were married. We talked over the situation in a calm, business-like manner; I recounted what had happened in the afternoon after I had left her; told her about my different interviews with Downs and the reporter, and last my interview with Dixon and the substance of what I told him; expressed to her my ideas of Dr. Hamilton and what I thought he might do, explaining that I did not actually know about such matters; in fact, talked about every and anything except our personal relations. She did not say much, but left the burden of conversation to me; and what I felt the most interest in, our personal relations, I did not know how to speak about, so talked against time and waited for the occasion when I should go to the station to meet Dr. Hamilton. Mrs. Wilson expressed gratitude to me in a quiet manner, said the nervous strain had all gone, and now she felt ready to meet any emergency that might arise, for she knew where she could go for advice. The talk proceeded in this manner until

the driver called to take me to the station. Everything had gone as we had planned; there was no fault to be found with the situation of affairs up to the present, only I was not satisfied. I felt dissatisfied; and what made it the more exasperating, I did not know what I was dissatisfied with.

After waiting in the station for a few minutes the train arrived, and with it Dr. Hamilton. There was a certain distinguished air about him, which made me single him out of the crowd as the man I wanted. When I asked him if he was Dr. Hamilton, he replied by saying, "And you are George Wilson." Giving the driver the check for the baggage, we took seats in the carriage and drove to the Whitneys. On the way I explained to him that the dead man or patient was a brother-in-law, and the person who objected to the burial was my wife, without mentioning the circumstances connected with our marriage. On arriving at the house I presented my wife to him. It gave me a queer feeling as I introduced her as my wife to a stranger, and to hear a person address me as her husband in a matter-of-fact way made me feel like kicking some one or something, although I did not know who or what. I wanted to swear, and yet I did not realize what at.

The doctor accepted an invitation to a lunch, and did not allude to the case until he had finished. We then all went to the library, and, after we were seated, he commenced the business by saying:

"Now give me a complete history of this case. Give me a history of his parentage as far as known, and his own, as relating to his health, as far as possible. Tell me why you do not think him dead, in

spite of the verdict of your own physicians. I will then view the body or person, and be able to apply the knowledge obtained from you, and act intelligently."

This duty devolved on my wife, and I kept silent, scarcely speaking, while she related to the doctor all the details of the case, and the family history so far as she knew it. She was nearly an hour talking and answering his questions. Several times the thought occurred to me, How can any one call this woman insane? I had been a fool to entertain such a thought for a moment; but, as a last clinching argument, I resolved to ask the doctor his opinion, to be used in the future, well knowing the opinion of Dr. Hamilton would carry more weight than that of all the doctors in Meriden. When they had finished their talk, and the doctor arose, I asked him to step into the next room, as I wished to speak to him privately. He followed me. Mrs. Wilson sat with a look of wonder on her face, but said nothing. When we were out of hearing, I turned to him and said:

"Doctor, do you think my wife insane?"

Looking at me, he laughed in my face, and said:

"If every one is insane that holds a queer idea, then there are but very few perfectly sane people in the world. Your wife has sentiments that certainly are uncommon, but at the same time, from what she has told me, I think she has good reasons for her opinions, and yet she may be mistaken; but her simply possessing these ideas is no sign of insanity, only one of a strong mind and independent thought. Do not be uneasy about your wife's mind unless she

shows more indications of insanity than she does now."

I was satisfied. My judgment had been confirmed by one of the most eminent physicians in the country.

He then expressed a wish to see the case, and calling Mrs. Wilson, she led him to Joe's room. I returned to the library, as I had no wish to be present in the room. In a short time, he came into the hall, opened his trunk, and took out several instruments that looked like electric machinery. He called to Nora for hot water, and I overheard him talking with Mrs. Wilson about flannels. She came to the library and said:

"By the odor of your clothes, I judge you smoke. Cigar smoke is not offensive to me—in fact, rather agreeable; and if you feel like having a cigar for company while we are away, smoke to your heart's content."

They left me alone, and commenced the work of resuscitating Joe. I asked no questions. Through the open door I could hear most of the talk and see them moving about in the different rooms, so that I knew how matters were progressing. It was past midnight when I heard the doctor say:

"It is no use; the case is beyond me. I will not say positively that he is dead, for some of the signs of death are wanting, neither will I say he is alive; but the blood in his veins is not wholly coagulated, and there are no signs of decomposition, but that is all there is that belongs to life. He does not respond to any of the tests for life. I have used every means with which I am acquainted to resuscitate him, and my advice would be to leave matters as

they are for the present, until some change is apparent, one way or another. You might call other physicians, if you wish. Perhaps they might do what I cannot; but I can do no more. It is my opinion that this is a case of death. Some die suddenly, others are a long time in dying; and this looks to me a case where the life is an abnormally long time in leaving the body. The life current may turn in its course and reinhabit the body, but it is my opinion that it will eventually leave the body entirely. When that occurs, the signs of death that are now lacking will be developed. You can then bury your brother without fear. Mrs. Wilson, you may think me harsh to speak so plainly, but the truth is often harsh."

The doctor and Mrs. Wilson came into the library, and the doctor, who found me smoking, joined me in a cigar. She requested that we should not stop for her. She said to see others comfortable made her own trouble less; that she accepted the doctor's views in part, and while she had not lost Joe yet, for the first time she feared she should. On her face there was a look of sorrow I had never observed there before. It touched my sympathy, but I knew of nothing I could do.

As the doctor smoked he related his experiences with other similar cases; finally wandering into a metaphysical talk on life and death, and the different phenomena he had observed in those fields of research. Speaking in a matter-of-fact, scientific manner of both life and death, he spoke of his own recent experiments in the field of life in the way of hypnotism. As he mentioned this word Mrs. Wilson gave a start and listened attentively. When he

had finished, she spoke to him in something of her manner of yesterday.

She commenced by saying that it was a subject Joe was always much interested in. In fact, he was always interested in problems of life and the mind. He had practiced hypnotism some himself on others in a private way.

She said he used to claim that (mesmerism, hypnotism, and all the cases of mind or faith cure belonged to the same class, and all could be classed under the one word, psychology,) that in his quiet way he was quite a student of history and the Bible. He always said that the miracles recorded in the Bible, of raising the dead, were only cases of suspended animation; that the power Christ used to raise the dead was really applied to persons in a trance state, and that the power still exists in the world. Any one who knew enough to use it could perform the same miracles and produce the same results. She finished by saying: "Doctor, you have come here and done the best you could, and I feel grateful for it. You have tried your usual methods, now will you not try an unusual one? You say that you have experimented in hypnotism, and met with some success—that you know something of this power and these laws. Why not try it on Joe? It can do no harm, and I feel like taking every chance, no matter how small. Won't you try, Dr. Hamilton?"

He covered his mouth to hide a smile, and remarked that he had no ambition to make himself a laughing stock of the profession, or to shine as another worker of miracles; that while he tried to be a good citizen, he made no claims to divinity.

"But, doctor, that is not the point at issue," said Mrs. Wilson. "You need have no fear of becoming the laughing stock of the profession, for I will promise for myself the strictest secrecy, and," turning to me, "I can do the same for Mr. Wilson."

I nodded "yes," but my thoughts went back to that question of her sanity.

"Doctor, we know the spirit in which you will work to help us, and what objection can you have to making an experiment? You have now an opportunity that perhaps will not occur again in a lifetime, and while your first impulse is to laugh and refuse, if you do not improve the opportunity, when you think it over in the future you may always regret you did not try it when it would cost you so little effort. Now, won't you try, just to please me, if for no other reason? If you will, I shall feel that everything has been done that was possible. Now that it has been presented to my mind, I shall have some one try it, and would rather you would be the one than another, for I have more confidence in you, and if you fail, my mind will be put at rest in that direction."

He heard her through and said: "Well, Mrs. Wilson, if you feel so inclined, if the possibilities have taken such a hold on you, under a pledge of secrecy I will do as you request. But to me it seems like mummery."

They went to the room where Joe lay, leaving me again alone. What they had been talking about was beyond my comprehension. Hypnotism, mesmerism, and the rest of it was like Chinese to me, and the only thing I could comprehend was that my

legal wife had a mind of her own, and a way of making men do as she wished.

I had been alone for perhaps half an hour. There had been no sound of conversation in the other room, when I heard the voice of the doctor suddenly say in an earnest tone, Joe Whitney! A pause, and again, Joe Whitney! I listened intently, but heard nothing more for a few minutes, when the doctor spoke again, Joe Whitney!—and a pause. Then in a voice that was almost a scream in intensity, but not loud, JOE WHITNEY! There was a sigh. Rushing to the room, all my old prejudices gone in the excitement, I found Mrs. Wilson standing at the foot of the bed. I noticed nothing but her eyes, so intense was her gaze at Joe. The doctor stood at the side of the bed stroking Joe's forehead. I stepped to the side of Mrs. Wilson and looked at Joe. All the old ghastly appearance was gone; his mouth was closed, his eyes shut, the pinched look was gone from his face, and while he was still as white as marble, he looked more like one in a faint than like a dead person. My voice trembled as I asked, "what is it?"

Without taking her eyes from Joe, Mrs. Wilson whispered, "He is coming back." The doctor spoke again. What appeared to me like a flash of light left his eyes, and it seemed to me that I could see the words leave his mouth like a solid substance and strike Joe in the face as he said, "JOE WHITNEY, COME BACK!"

A tremor ran through his body, he turned on his side and commenced to breathe faintly but regularly, like one in a deep, exhausted sleep. The doctor went from the room and beckoned us to follow. We

went to the parlor. Just how my face looked I do not know, but that of the doctor and of Mrs. Wilson was as white as death itself. We dropped into seats; none of us could speak.

In a few minutes the doctor said: "This is beyond me. I did my best, and the results are better than I expected, they surpass my comprehension. That such possibilities lay in the human will-power was beyond my wildest dreams; for, although I do not consider that the man was wholly dead, I did think that he was beyond the reach of human skill, and was beyond the reach of any known law of science. It was an experiment on my part. The results are quite unknown to science in its present state of development. I shall have to pledge you again to silence until I can investigate further, and not throw the bare facts on the world without, at least, a theory, if no positive evidence to support the theory. I would like to gain what knowledge I can before making this case public, and shall improve every opportunity to do so. Now, let us look at our patient again."

As we rose to visit the now sick, not death room, we both assured him his wishes should be our law. We found Joe as we had left him a few minutes previous, sleeping calmly and peacefully. He was pale, and that was all. The doctor motioned to us to be silent and not wake him, and carefully taking Joe's wrist, felt of his pulse. After a few minutes he placed his hand on Joe's forehead, then turning, left the room. We followed. When in the parlor he said to us, "He is sleeping naturally; let him sleep until morning, or longer if he will." He then made inquiries about the hotels, and Mrs. Wilson

offered him a room. He said that he had private reasons why he wished to go to the hotel; but, instead of returning by the first train in the morning as he had expected, he should call again in the morning, and turned to go into the hall.

I also informed him that I would go to the hotel with him. He apologized for making so much trouble; but when I told him without thinking how it would sound to him, a stranger to our affairs, that I was also stopping at the hotel, he gave me a queer look, but said nothing. We bade Mrs. Wilson good night, or rather good morning, and left the house. If he was to come back and be with us for an indefinite time, it was best he should know the true state of affairs existing between Mrs. Wilson and myself to save embarrassing situations in the future. We had reached the hotel by the time I had finished telling him, and after agreeing to meet at ten o'clock to breakfast together, we went to our rooms.

I was too exhausted to lie awake, and my head had hardly touched the pillow before I was in a sound, dreamless sleep, from which I did not awaken until nearly ten the next morning.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN I went into the hotel office the next morning, I found the doctor waiting for me. We at once went to the dining-room and ordered breakfast. We both felt refreshed after a good night's sleep, had enough to talk about, so it was not a dull meal. Going to the office after breakfast, we found a reporter waiting to interview us. I introduced the gentlemen; and, when in reply to the reporter's question about the latest in the Whitney case, the doctor told him that he had left Joe Whitney at about 3 A. M., alive and sleeping soundly, the sound of a pin dropping could have been heard in that hotel office. There was quite a little gathering of all the people present to hear the latest news, and it was so unexpected that no one had a question ready; but this did not last long. The reporter knew his business. The questions came fast, and his pencil moved faster than his tongue.

In reply to the question as to what means he used to accomplish this wonderful result, the doctor told him that he did not feel at liberty to disclose any of the details, but would speak more fully in the future, and told him that we were both going to the Whitneys as soon as the carriage was ready that had been ordered, and he did not know just how long he should be in town. When the reporter asked me about my plans, I told him I had no

definite plans for the present, but should govern my actions in the future by the circumstances that might arise.

The carriage was announced, and we drove directly away. Mrs. Wilson met us at the door. In answer to Dr. Hamilton's inquiries about Joe, she said he had not awakened yet. The doctor said, "Well, it is time he had"; and we all went to Joe's room. The doctor told Mrs. Wilson to awaken him. She shook him gently, calling, "Joe! Joe!"

He opened his eyes with a vacant look, and said, "You here, May?" and the following dialogue passed between them:

"Why yes, Joe, where else should I be?"

"Where are father and mother?" asked Joe.

"Why, where do you think you are, Joe?" replied Mrs. Wilson.

"In spirit realms, I suppose, although it is hard to realize it."

"What are you talking about, Joe? You are here at home, in your own bed. I am standing beside you, and this is your old friend, George Wilson. You have been very sick, and this is Dr. Hamilton of New York."

He looked at her in the same vacant manner until she mentioned Dr. Hamilton's name, when there was a flash of intelligence in his eyes, and he said, "Dr. Hamilton, the specialist on nervous diseases, from New York? What brought him here?"

"We sent for him, Joe, because you have been very ill; and he has cured you."

He attempted to raise himself on his elbow, but was too weak, and fell back upon his pillow, saying:

“Well, this is too much for me. My father will come to me and tell me that I am with spirits, take me through strange scenes; I hear strange things, and see and talk with those that I know to be dead, and they seem as real and as natural as they did at any time before death. Then May comes and says, ‘Joe, you are not with spirits, but alive, in your own bed,’ and shows me my old friend George, introduces a big doctor to me; and one is no more real or tangible than the other. Now I am getting mixed up sadly. I want to stay and be in one kind of existence or the other. This continual changing is becoming monotonous.”

Turning to me, he said:

“If I am in the body, and not surrounded by spirits, come up to me and let me see you. Take hold of me, try to run your finger through me, and let me see if I have a material body that will resist material. Read my thoughts. Tell me of what I am thinking.”

Then he stopped a moment, and said:

“Strange! but I cannot see what you think. If you cannot poke your finger through me, I shall believe I am not dead and among spirits, after all. Try it.”

Without a word, I took his hand and shook it with a hearty grip. Then, with my left forefinger pressed hard on his breast, Joe said:

“Enough, George. I am here again, and hope to stay until my final departure.”

Dr. Hamilton said:

“Well, how do you feel this morning? Better, I hope. You show some signs of weakness. Have you any pain?”

“None whatever, doctor—only tired. I think I will rest a little while now, and then I shall feel stronger.”

While the doctor and I had been talking to Joe, his sister had left the room, and now returned with a tray, on which were a bowl of broth, some toast, and tea, that she had prepared to give him when he should awake. With her came Nora, who shook Joe by the hand, and, with the tears coursing down her cheeks, told him how glad she was to see him alive again. He ate his broth and toast with a relish, and appeared stronger with each mouthful, and when he had finished said to Nora,

“What did you mean by saying ‘alive again’? Did you think me dead?”

We all hesitated, and looked at the doctor. He frowned an answer to us, and spoke to Joe, telling him that, as he had had a good meal, we would leave him to sleep, and when he was able to sit up, we would tell him all about his sickness. Joe settled into the bed as for a good nap, and we left him to rest and recuperate his lost strength.

When we reached the parlor, Dr. Hamilton turned sharply to Mrs. Wilson and said, “As a physician I wish to prescribe for you. Mr. Wilson has told me of the mental strain you have been under for the last few days, and you yourself have told me that you have not been out the house since your brother was taken ill, and as your physician I prescribe a ride in this fine air. You are now more in need of a tonic than is your brother. My professional duties here are now ended, but this case is of deep interest to me, and I shall invite myself to spend a few days in Meriden, and cultivate the ac-

quaintance of your brother, as I wish to investigate as far as possible the strange phenomena which I have witnessed. When the telegram was handed to me calling me here, I was packing my trunk to take a short vacation. That was the reason why I could come on so short a notice. I shall take the vacation as I planned, only, instead of continuing on my journey to-day, as I had intended to do when I left New York, I shall spend a few days in Meriden, and call to see your brother after he is stronger and can talk, and perhaps, with his consent, shall try some experiments. And now about that ride. I have learned from a friend that there are some very fine drives in this vicinity, and I should like to see them, and I would like the company of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson. I ordered the carriage to wait for me, and it is standing at the door; and, Mrs. Wilson, as your physician, I will give you just five minutes to get your wraps, and Mr. Wilson will not need half that time."

The doctor had spoken in a half serious and half jesting tone, and I felt more inclined for a ride than anything just then, under those conditions. For it would be a good excuse for still keeping company with Mrs. Wilson, and at the same time avoid any references to our relations. I had come to dread the time when we should have to carry out the provision of the contract, or even have to allude to it. She felt so grateful to the doctor that any request he made she would gladly gratify. The doctor quieted the fears that Mrs. Wilson had expressed about leaving Joe alone, by telling her that he was better off alone than to have any one in the house who could not resist the temptation to go and see if he

was asleep every five minutes; and besides if he wanted anything, the maid would not let him suffer, if he could judge by a person's manner what they would do. We were soon driving toward the river and mountains.

It was a splendid spring day, nearly as warm as summer; the buds were ready to burst and put forth their leaves and blossoms; the air was balmy; it was one of those days that makes a man feel glad that he is alive. The doctor was the very best of companions, and entertained us by his conversation in such a delightful manner that we scarcely noted the passage of time. His fund of knowledge seemed to be inexhaustible; anecdotes and illustrations were plenty.

He had traveled much, had been a keen observer, gleaned and retained from all he had seen, and had a way of relating his observations, embellishing them with his own thoughts in a manner that made him the most entertaining person I had ever met. He told us, among other things, a short sketch of his life, and from it I learned that he had but few friends living; that his wife had died some years previous; and when he told us that I did not like him as well as I did before.

Whether he made any extra exertion to be entertaining I do not know; that he was one of the most interesting men I had ever met, was beyond a question of doubt.

Mrs. Wilson seemed to be charmed with his manner, scarcely speaking a word; she listened like one enraptured. We were driving nearly four hours, and when we stopped before the house she expressed her thanks to the doctor for his kindness

for the ride, by telling him that it was the most delightful drive she had ever taken in her life. Dr. Hamilton went in to see if Joe had awakened, while I sat in the carriage. There was nothing with which to find fault, but the last part of the drive had been in some way very unpleasant.

In a few minutes the doctor came to the carriage and we drove to the hotel. There was a wonderful change in him or me, for we were as glum as fishermen. We went to dinner together, and afterwards to the reading-room, where we wrote letters. I wrote to my Boston agent, telling him to keep me well informed in regard to my business in Boston, and that it might be some time before I returned to attend to my business, unless I was absolutely obliged to.

During dinner we had not talked much, so it had given me a chance to think, and for me to give a subject thought was to come to some conclusions, and the conclusions I had formed were these: That I did not care about being a make-shift husband—simply a convenience to use in case of an emergency. I had come to the conclusion that I wanted to be the real article, and wanted my legal wife for a genuine one without any qualifications, save what the one word wife implied, and I would have the matter arranged to that effect before I went back to Boston, if I could. If it took all summer or a year—all right. I would spend that time; but bring this about I would.

This other thought came: was the doctor in the field against me? I could have kicked myself for telling him all, as I had the night before. He might probably infer from what had been said that

we would be divorced in a short time ; but really, in my own mind, I could not find him guilty of being dishonorable, for had I not told him in a manner that would lead any one to think that we were only married to get ahead of the health authorities? While he might not, and probably would not, make any advances at present, he would feel it no hindrance to his suit if Mrs. Wilson did happen to be my legal wife or partner in a business transaction, as I had put it to him the night previous. If he was not in the field against me, and in a day or two would go quietly out of my way, I thought then there would be no difficulty ; but if he remained to dispute the carrying off of the prize, I felt my chances to be mighty slim, for in the drive that morning he had shown me what he could do if he wished, and for me to compete against him as a society man, for me to try to make myself as entertaining as he could be without an effort, was beyond me — out of my reach.

I did not know how, and did not possess the natural ability. I did not look upon myself as an inferior ; but our ability lay in different directions, and in this kind of a game, in playing the agreeable to ladies in the social game of life, his abilities would count for more than mine. He had evidently known many women, was used to their ways, and knew them. I had scarcely known a woman, only in a formal manner, in my whole life. I was at a disadvantage and knew it ; but perhaps, after all, it was only my imagination. Perhaps he had only been trying to do the proper thing under the circumstances, which I had to acknowledge to myself I did not know how to do as well, but decided to

keep my eyes on that doctor, and if my suspicions were correct, he would find me a rival that could not be bluffed.

Now that I had a definite plan of what I wanted to do, what I should do if I could, all the old sense of confusion was gone, and my old habit of setting about anything that I had to do immediately, came. Though I realized that this matter could not be conducted on strictly business principles, I felt at a loss just how to begin.

But I wanted to be doing something to further my wishes, and that, too, right away, and that something I decided was to go and see Mrs. Wilson. I could not go without telling the doctor, so proposed to him to go and see Mrs. Wilson and Joe. In the bottom of my heart I wished he would say "no," but did not expect he would, nor did he. Now that I had come to some understanding with myself, I did not feel as hard with him as I did before dinner. I could now regard him as a competitor in business, to be beaten if I could do it.

I stepped into the *Times* office and requested them to suppress any reference to Mrs. Wilson or myself as far as possible in giving an account to the public about the resuscitation of Joe, which they promised to do.

On arriving at the Whitneys, we found that Joe had awakened and called for a hearty meal of beef steak which he insisted on Mrs. Wilson giving him, in spite of her objections, without the doctor's consent; and as he heard us talking through the open door, he called to us that he was dressing and would be out in a few minutes. Dr. Hamilton smiled as

he said, "He is worth more than a regiment of dead men."

In a short time Joe came into the parlor. He was pale and looked weak, as if he had been sick, but that was all. As he took the easy chair which his sister had wheeled to the heater for him, these thoughts would come to my mind: What a change from when I first saw him lying there, as I supposed, dead. What a fool I had been to be so positive about life and death, — something I knew nothing about, except from hearsay — something I had hardly given a thought in my life, only accepted the evidence of others, and by slight observation on my own part, as positive facts to be applied in all cases. Then I thought how much better his sister understood the subject — how much more she understood about some of the peculiarities of life than those who professed to know all, myself included. And then, what a mind and will that woman had, to stand in the face of the public and defy all alone, without one to believe or think as she did, and the keen comprehension of the plan to rid herself of the interferences of the law, and no sign of weakness until the danger had passed.

As I thought, my respect and admiration increased, and I vowed she should be my wife in all for life if I could bring it about by any honorable means. These and many more thoughts flashed through my brain as Mrs. Wilson and the doctor were looking after Joe's comfort. After he was finally settled and comfortable, he said, "Now, I want to know about my sickness."

The doctor answered him by saying, "How much do you remember?" Joe was silent for a

minute, then said, "I remember I was not feeling very well, and I went to my bed early. I do not know how long I had slept when father came and I went with him. I do not know how long I was with him, but it must have been for some time; for I heard and saw more than I can tell in half a lifetime. What day is this, any way?"

We told him it was Thursday, the 17th of April. He counted two weeks and three days. "Well, I am not surprised. It seems longer than that to me as I think of it, and of what I have heard."

"I was in a hall hearing a lecture when I heard some one call me. Then I kept hearing them call, 'Joe Whitney.' At first I could not tell from whence the call came; then located it as coming from my old home. It seemed that some one was at my bedside, calling to me. They said, "Joe Whitney, come back!" They spoke as if I was in danger, as a person would to another that stood in front of an approaching train. The way that the voice called me made me give a start backward, as I would had I been standing on a railroad track, and then I remembered no more until my sister woke me. When she had wakened me, and George had shaken hands with me, I knew where I was and what was the matter with me. I had been having one of my old spells, only longer than usual. I shall have one of them some of these fine days, and shall not come back. I shall not be much sorry either only for May's sake, though I know from what I have seen and heard since I have been away, that it will be better for me in the long run to stay here as long as possible.) Now, tell me what you have to tell. Did

you think me dead? Is that the reason Dr. Hamilton was sent for? And that makes me think that it was Dr. Hamilton that I heard call, 'Come back!'"

The doctor then told him what had happened from the time he had received the telegram to the present. When he had finished, Joe questioned him as to how he had called him back. The doctor then explained as well as he could, but said he did not understand it himself. He was stroking his forehead, and gradually concentrated his mind as he would to hypnotize a subject; but never before had he felt the same degree of concentration of mind and will-power.

As he continued to exercise the power, it grew, or seemed to grow, in intensity and volume. He himself became oblivious to his surroundings, and for a few moments lost consciousness of where he was in the all-absorbing thought that he was searching for and calling Joe Whitney. He seemed to be floating away, lifted up. It seemed to him that he was looking out into space a great distance away from the earth, and yet retained all his consciousness; in fact, was more keenly alive to his conscious being. He seemed to possess his old faculties, but they were more active. The only feeling he could compare with it was taking a powerful stimulant, which deadened none of his senses, but made his power of comprehension more acute, and judgment more keen.

It appeared to him that he was on the track of the man he wanted, would find him, and had the power to command him and bend him to do his will, as a man would bend a dumb animal to do his bidding. He felt a conscious power over the spirit or

mind for which he was searching space, similar to the conscious power he would have felt over a restive horse which he was calling in an open lot; and not a doubt entered his mind that the man would eventually succumb to him and do his bidding as the horse would; in some way it would come about.

The doctor finished by saying that it was a new experience to him, and one which deeply interested him. He told Joe of his contemplated vacation, and of the plans he had formed of spending a few days in Meriden; and if it was agreeable to him to have him investigate and experiment with him in this field, he would like to, as he had understood from his sister, Mrs. Wilson, that he was interested in the same subject.

Joe interrupted him by saying, "What are you talking about, doctor? My sister's name is not Mrs. Wilson; George is only our friend; he is not my sister's husband."

We all saw that by the slip of the tongue it was all out, and Joe must be told the whole then. We were all nonplussed for a moment, and the doctor shrugged his shoulders like a Frenchman and waved his hand to Mrs. Wilson, without saying a word.

Mrs. Wilson commenced in a hesitating manner to speak, and Joe looked at her in astonishment. She did not at once deny or confirm the doctor's statement, but commenced by telling all that had happened from that first morning more than two weeks ago when he did not come to breakfast.

She told him that after she had called him, she went to his room and found him in one of his old trances, and of her anxiety as the whole day passed and he did not awaken. She told him that in the

evening she had become so frightened that she had called in Dr. Holmes, who had pronounced him dead; of her dispute with him, and her demand for a council of doctors; that they all pronounced him dead, and had reported it to the papers and to the public. Also about her friends calling to condole with her, and the verdict of them and of the public that she was insane. She told him of her final interview with the health officer, when he threatened to use the authority of the law to have him buried, and then of my coming.

She had been growing agitated as she talked, and at this point broke down, and with tears in her eyes, turned to me and said, "Mr. Wilson, please tell him the rest; I cannot."

I would have done anything to please that woman! To see her sit there in tears made every fiber in my body vibrate with sympathy, and as she had recounted the story to Joe, her agitation became infectious, and I was far from being in a judicial frame of mind when I commenced to talk.

I began by telling Joe of the notices I had first seen in the paper of his death; of the subsequent strange notices which had decided me to come to Meriden and see what I could do for them; of my first interview with his sister, and the shock I had received when I saw him lying on the bed dead, or, as I had supposed, dead; of my promises to his sister, all the time thinking her insane on that one subject, and that my motive was to help her by humoring her insane fancy.

I related to him the substance of my interview with Dr. Holmes, the health officer, and what the plans were to have his sister put into an asylum,

and to have him, as they termed it, "decently buried."

At this point Joe said, "Stop! I can hear no more now." He was trembling with excitement. The doctor stepped into the hall to where his trunk had stood up to the present, and returning with a glass of something for him to take, said, "This is enough of this matter for now; we will turn the conversation to something else for the present." He asked Joe to what political party he belonged. Joe looked at him like one dazed, and the doctor had to repeat his question before he could get an answer. Then Joe, in an absent manner, said he "had been a Republican until they had counted Hayes in; since then he had not taken much interest in politics." The doctor then commenced to talk in defence of the action, in order to make Joe answer questions, and if Joe expressed an opinion, the doctor would contradict him. He talked apparently to make himself disagreeable in a polite way, and succeeded, for after a time Joe became provoked, and called the whole commission that had counted Hayes in and Tilden out, anything but gentlemen; expressed not a very high opinion of anyone who would defend them, and finished by saying he did not care a fig for politics anyway. The doctor laughed, and said: "Well, Mr. Whitney, you have changed the current of your thoughts, and are excited in a different way from what you were a short time since."

Joe laughed, and said: "Doctor, your mental tonics are better than your drugs."

The old feeling of excitement was gone, and a feeling of harmony and good-nature restored; but

these thoughts came to me: What a man that doctor is! I shall stand no chance to win in a race against him, and I prayed in the depths of my heart that he and I did not want the same woman.

Mrs. Wilson left the room, and we talked in a desultory way about anything that presented itself to our minds. In a short time she returned, and invited us all to an early tea, saying she had planned, if nothing prevented, that we should all sit at the table and have one happy meal together, and the best way to be sure of it was to improve the first opportunity that presented itself, and then after we could have more, but she wanted to be sure of one.

We sat at the table a long time and conversed on any subject that happened to come up, except the one in which we felt the deepest interest. For my part, it was one of the most enjoyable little tea parties I had ever attended.

After tea Joe expressed a desire to take a short walk. The doctor advised him not to do so, but Joe always did have a mind of his own, and said we could stay in the house if we wished, but he was going to take a short walk if it killed him. So the doctor and I went out with him. Joe took cigars from his pocket and invited us to join him in a smoke, as well as in a walk.

We did not go far, only up and down the street in front of the house. We met but a few people, and none who were acquainted with Joe, but some evidently knew him by the way they stared at him, and some stopped and turned to look at us as we passed. Joe laughed as he said, "They seem to think me a lively corpse;" then seriously, "Well,

I am better off than in a grave, neither dead nor alive," then stopped in his walk, and holding out one hand to the doctor and the other to me, said, with the tears in his eyes, "George, Doctor, I am not good at talking gratitude, but I feel it. You have done more for me than I can tell you; I do not know how. But if in the future there is anything I can do for you, let me have the opportunity." He then continued his walk without another word, and when he did speak again, it was to remark what a beautiful day it had been and to call our attention to the sunset. We walked but a short time; then went into the house.

As we took our seats in the parlor, Joe said, "I feel like my old self again, and am ready for anything. I am on deck in life once more."

He took up the evening paper, and said, "Let's see what the world is doing. I have lost the run of events;" and began to read the headings.

Mrs. Wilson came into the room just as he was reading the heading of the Whitney case. He asked if he should read it aloud, remarking that it was a good chance for him to get the particulars of his own death. We told him if he would read it for us that it would save us the trouble. There were nearly three columns, and gave a history of the case from the time Joe was first taken with the trance, up to the interview we had had with the reporter in the morning, and included the way in which we had spent the day up to the time when the paper went to the press; but had done as I had requested and left out what was possible about the personal affairs of Mrs. Wilson and myself. It was

a substantially correct report, with only enough added to make it attractive and readable.

When Joe had finished reading the paper, he dropped it, and said, "I know all about myself now; but this matter of May marrying George, I do not understand all the details;" and then turning to me said, "George, finish what you were telling me when I stopped you to-day."

I would rather have told him when we were alone. The presence of Mrs. Wilson and the doctor embarrassed me. I did not want to bring out the strictly business relations so sharp in their presence again as I should have to, to make Joe understand the case. What I could tell the doctor yesterday without any hesitancy I did not want to say now that I had changed my mind; but there was no help for it. I went through with it the best I could, but I did bring out fully as clearly my friendship for Joe and his sister and the indignation I felt at the public as I did the legal relations existing between Mrs. Wilson and myself.

When I had finished, Joe came over to where I sat and said:

"Shake hands, George. I am pleased to have you for my legal brother-in-law, if nothing more; but I should be pleased if you were my brother in full."

The doctor now said:

"Mr. Whitney, your sister told me about the things you related when you awoke from these trances, about what you had seen and heard, or dreamed you did; and you spoke of being in a hall and hearing a lecture, when you heard me call you back. Now this is all strange and new to me. I

have, of course, heard of such things, but never gave them any credit; and, to be frank with you, don't now. But, at the same time, I would like to hear all sides, and form my opinion from the evidence, as it presents itself to my mind; and since the startling scenes of the last twenty-four hours, I am qualified to hear most anything, and I am prepared to hear that life holds some strange things in store for us; for, taken as a whole, it appears more and more of a puzzle to me the more I learn of it. There was a time when to me death was the great puzzling question; but the more I have studied the different phases of life, the more vast and incomprehensible it has become, until now I am all at sea in my opinions, and the fact that there is any such thing as life is to me more of a study, more of a wonder, than that there is death. In fact, I often ask myself, 'What is life? What is the nature of it? What is the philosophy and the science of it? Why and what is life?'

Joe turned to the doctor, and said:

"Do you know that when you called me I was hearing a lecture on that very subject? In fact, I had heard many lectures on the same subject, and, like you, I had often asked myself the same questions in regard to life; like you, I had a deeper interest in life than death. I always questioned the significance of life. Death appeared to me to be the absence of it, or nothing, and I did not care to know about nothing. But life appeared to me to be something, and it was a something of which I wished to know more. And when I was away in that trance I found many more who were, like me, trying to learn and understand the philosophy and

reason of life; and I found that among those who are called dead, yet popular belief says are not dead—that they did not all possess knowledge in the same degree, any more than among those who are called alive, and in a condition of society, or a state of existence, where some know more and others less. There is always something to be taught, and something to be learned, in this respect. I could not see that the process of death had changed people very much, as they mingled together. They were continually acquiring knowledge and disseminating it, or teaching and being taught.”

“But,” says the doctor, “we will confine ourselves for the present to a life I know something about, no matter what you have seen and know. What I want to know is,—what is a human life right here, in this age of the world—now, the 17th of April, 1889; something about its possibilities more than I now know, and what will be the probable outcome of it, substantiated by all the proof possible, and at least reasonable theories to be applied to the probabilities. (Bare assertions, supported by no visible authority, to prove impracticable and impossible theories, have no weight with me. I would rather keep my mind a blank on such a subject, and have it in a condition to grasp a truth when it is offered, than to have it lumbered up with a lot of beliefs which my reason and judgment tell me are erroneous and fanciful. Whether those beliefs are pleasant or hideous beliefs, I shall have to clear my mind of them, to make room for a truth.”)

Joe says, “Doctor, that is nearly the same question I asked my father, after hearing the first lecture. I told him I did not care so much for what

life had been in the past, or what it might be in the future, but I wanted to know the philosophy of it as I now know it." And then he was silent. In a minute the doctor said, "Well, Joe, what did your father say in reply?" Joe looked him in the face, and said, "Doctor, you don't believe I have seen father. You think I have been dreaming; and what is the use for me to waste my breath to tell you something you have condemned as being folly or dreams before you have heard me? If you could listen to me without prejudice; if it was possible for you to listen to me with a mind unbiased by previous teachings, either religious or scientific; if you could weigh the substance of what I might say on its merits, and accept or reject as it appealed to your own judgment, without comparing with some preconceived theories or beliefs,—I should be glad to tell you all that I have heard and seen. But for me to relate to you what I have heard, and what I know and have seen, and to have you try the truth of it by any system of religion or science, and reject it because it does not happen to fit some old dogma of either, would be a waste of time for you, and make me mad; for if I know it, I won't waste my time arguing against prejudice."

The doctor appeared nettled at the way Joe spoke, and told Joe he was far from being what is called a religious man; that he did not know anything about the past, only as he read it from history; and what looked to him as impossibilities in history, he rejected. (And as to the future, he thought he knew as much about it as any live man, and that was nothing.) And all the proof that could be

offered in regard to a future state of existence was founded on either ignorance or fraud.

Joe coolly remarked: "I see you are not a religious bigot, but a scientific bigot; an agnostic, who has taken the position of 'don't know,' and won't admit any evidence that might injure your side of the case. You have already prejudged, and decided on what I might say before you have heard me. You say you know as much as any man living about the future. What is the use of my telling you my side of the story, with the opinion you now have? The more I say, the bigger fool you will think me. I guess we will change the subject, doctor. What are your politics?"

The doctor was the one now who was excited and provoked. He arose and commenced to walk the floor; and jamming both hands deep into his pockets, commenced to talk. I thought I had heard him talk before, but now he was a cyclone. He offered all the arguments of a scientist to prove that the intelligence of a man was owing to the material structure of his brain. He showed the inconsistencies and absurdities of the different sacred writings, not confining himself to the Bible, but attacked the Koran, the Vedas, and touched on many others. He was certainly interesting, though most of the time he talked over my head. He talked nearly half an hour without interruption, and finished by saying the whole subject was a mass of contradictions and absurdities, with just enough morality and history mixed in to make it palatable to the masses and save it from oblivion.

When he stopped, Joe said, "Well, doctor, that is all right; but, as I said before, if you know it all

there is no use for me to talk. What are your politics, doctor?" The doctor stopped his walk in front of Joe, laughed, and said: "Mr. Whitney, you have me at a disadvantage. I was excited. But I should really like to hear what you have to say, for I am honestly in search of knowledge. I don't know it all, only a small part; and sometimes when I try to define just what I think or know, I become so confused by conflicting thoughts that I conclude that I don't know anything. And when others attempt to explain, they show evidence of as much confusion of ideas as I have. But your experience has certainly been remarkable, and perhaps you can give me some new thoughts on life, past, present, and future; and I will honestly try to hear, and judge of them without trying to reconcile them to opinions that I have previously formed. So proceed, and tell me what you know, or have heard from any source, about life, beginning right here with man as he is; let me get that one point firmly fixed in my mind, as a base line from which to make a survey; and after that is clear to me, perhaps I shall be able to go from it in either the direction of the past or the future. But begin by telling me what is a man — life as I now know and sense it, as I am now conscious of life."

He took his chair, and, asking Mrs. Wilson's consent, passed his cigar case. She answered by saying, if she was a man she would probably have smoked; and as Joe had always smoked, we need never feel any hesitancy in smoking when we wanted to. We all lighted our cigars, and Joe commenced by saying:

"When I first went with father, he took me to see,

as you might say, the 'sights.' About what I saw, I will tell you later; but among the other places I went to with him was to hear a lecture. It was fine, and the subject was 'Life.' I cannot repeat it as it was given; neither the manner in which it was given, nor the words. I retained only some of the ideas that were put forth, and many of them father explained to me afterward. But about the first idea that caught my attention was expressed something like this: The *life of a human being is an identity of force*, and all animate bodies, before the transition of death, might be compared to a sponge saturated with a solution of salt water: the body represented by the sponge, the life force, or life principle, permeating every part of the body like the salt water, but not visible; the real true spirit of the man, or animal, the water in its pure state, the salt held in solution representing the matter in a fine state of division; in fact, in such a fine or atomic state that it had become invisible, but yet really matter as much as the sponge itself, which is visible owing to its crude condition. But the real life principle, the intelligent force, which is the man in all stages of existence, is no more matter than water is a sponge or a crystal of salt. When a man passes through the process of death, it might be compared, in a rough way, to squeezing the salt solution out of the sponge. The sponge retains its old form, and to all outward appearance is the same, except, perhaps, a slight change in the shade of color. But it has lost two of its component parts: the water that was in it, and the salt that went out with the water. The water is no more visible because it contains the salt in solution, than if it contained no salt.

The life force is no more visible because it carries with it matter in a high state of vibration, than if it did not have this material in connection with it, and eyes so constituted that they could not see the force itself, would be so constituted that they could not see the matter in connection with it. If a person was so near-sighted he could not tell whether a dish contained water or not, he could not tell any better if the water was salt, than if pure water."

The doctor interrupted by saying, "Accepting, for argument's sake, that your position is correct, how do you account for the fact that a dead body weighs no less than a live one? if matter and force have left it, it ought to weigh less. Please explain the discrepancy."

"True enough, doctor; but force is imponderable, and not subject to the law of gravity—is rather opposed to it. The weight of a body, or a given substance, is determined by the action of gravity; and whether the body contained force or not, would make no difference in its weight. A Leyden jar charged with electricity weighs no more than before it was charged, so that the withdrawing of the (force) would make no difference with the weight of the body. The body would weigh as much without the life force as with it. But the withdrawal of the invisible matter is another question. The weight or specific gravity of matter depends largely on the condition it is in; for example, mercury, one of the heaviest of metals, will float in the atmosphere in the form of vapor; water as water can be seen, and will obey the law of gravity and fall to the earth. But as vapor in its gaseous form it becomes invisible and will rise from the

earth. The action of the law of gravity on matter depends upon the condition of the matter. The matter that leaves a human body and accompanies the life force is not only commonly invisible, but matter in a more finely divided and disintegrated state than the most penetrating gases with which the human sense is acquainted. I know of no terms by which to express my meaning, but matter in its property of division and subdivision is infinite."

Joe was silent for a minute, and the doctor spoke, saying: "Well, Mr. Whitney, I promised to be fair, and I will try and help you, for I think I catch your meaning. Tyndall, in his researches on light, finally came to a point where he could not give proof,—only a theory, a hypothesis. He demonstrated by proof positive that light was propelled by the wave or undulating motion; but in order to propel a force by the wave motion, there must be something to wave; the wave could not advance on nothing. It had usually been accepted as a fact, that space outside of the atmosphere of the planetary bodies contained nothing, was a void. But either this could not be true, or the wave theory was not true. He had proved the wave theory to be true, and consequently the old theory that space contained nothing fails; for the space between the planets must contain something, or the light of the sun could not reach us. He also observed that a ray of light could be as well flashed through the most perfect vacuum he could produce, as through a glass tube containing any of the invisible gases. He advanced the theory that there was permeating all nature and space a substance on which light and heat traveled. He advanced the idea that all solid

and gaseous compounds or materials had interwoven with the atoms of their composition this substance, as the atmosphere surrounded the trees in a forest, and on this substance light and heat were propelled, and he named this substance or material luminiferous ether. And, Mr. Whitney, if a human body alive contained matter in this form, it would not add to the weight; and if it added nothing to the weight, would subtract nothing, if by any means it was withdrawn. Now, admitting you are theoretically correct thus far, have you any proof?"

Joe answered: "Yes; positive and negative proof. The negative proof consists in the fact that the man contains a force—is able to move inert matter by the use of the inert matter composing his body. The man dies; the inert matter of his body remains the same, but cannot even move itself, to say nothing of moving other inert matter; so that the part that left him is negatively proven to be the force in his composition. (The intelligence which he possessed as a man left at the same time the force left the body, proving by its absence that the intelligence of the man belonged to the force in his composition, and not to the material.) The positive proof consists in the fact that a force cannot manifest itself without matter upon which to act. An intelligent or a crude force cannot act upon another force, or upon material, unless it does so through some medium of communication. The medium of communication is material of some kind in some form. When a force is seen to exert an influence in any direction, it is proof that it has material under control, and is in connection with material; and though the senses may not be able to apprehend the presence of mate-

rial, it must be there, or the force could not make itself manifest."

At this point, Mrs. Wilson interrupted the discussion by saying, "I've heard enough of this, to me, dry subject for one evening," and, turning to me, asked if I would like a game of cards, and said if Joe and the doctor wanted to continue, they could; but we would entertain each other, as they seemed to be doing, or they could join us in a game of whist. They laughed, and said they thought whist would suit them, and if they should play against Mrs. Wilson and myself, they would give us no chance. Mrs. Wilson said that time would tell. We played the rubber, and Mrs. Wilson won. Joe and the doctor were the best players; but what we lacked in science, Mrs. Wilson more than made up in luck. She was a perfect mascot.

It was now quite late. The doctor and I arose to go to the hotel. I had wanted to have a private interview with Mrs. Wilson, but saw no chance; so there was nothing for me to do but wait for a better opportunity, realizing that I did not even appear as well as usual, while the doctor appeared to better advantage the longer one knew him; and the better he appeared the more I disliked him.

On the way to the hotel he was pleasant enough, but I was in a mood to use only monosyllables in conversation. Before I went to sleep that night I had resolved to talk the matter over with Joe, for I felt I could talk with Joe with more freedom than with his sister; for, while a day or two ago I felt no want for words in her presence, somehow, just at present, I could not find just the words to express my sentiments to her. With this resolve I fell

asleep; and, as I left no orders to be called in the morning, the result was, it was nearly noon when I came down to the office. They told me the doctor had gone out; and, as it was so near dinner-time, I thought I would see Mr. Dixon about business until dinner, and then go to see the Whitneys. I carried out this plan.

CHAPTER IV.

AS I came in to dinner at noon, I found Joe and the doctor in the hotel office. Joe said he met the doctor in the morning, and they had been around seeing the town, and he had been calling on his old friends, to let them know he was alive and well, and the number of times he had shaken hands that morning made him feel that he had more friends in town than he had known about.

The doctor and I invited Joe to take dinner with us. We had quite a jolly dinner, and after dinner a smoke in the reading-room, and then all strolled out to walk to Joe's home for the afternoon and evening. The weather was not so fine as yesterday, as the afternoon had come on cold and raw.

When we reached the gate, I asked Joe to take a short walk with me, I wished to speak with him on a matter of business. He shrugged his shoulders, and spoke about the weather being cold. We excused ourselves to the doctor, saying we would be back in a few minutes. He went into the house, and Joe said, "make it brief, George, the weather is cold." So I came to the point at once, and said, "Joe, I want your sister for my wife. I don't mean in the haphazard kind of a way we are now man and wife, but the real thing. What do you say, Joe?" Joe had stopped in his walk, and I turned to face him. He looked me square in the face a moment, and then said, "Well, this is a pretty kettle of fish." I was

astonished at his words and manner. All I could say was, "Why?" He took my arm, remarking, "We won't go in as quick as I thought. I've something to say to you."

He commenced by saying: "George, I had never thought of May's getting married. We were living along so quietly, I did not care to be married, and it never entered my mind to think whether May would care to be or not; and she never had any gentlemen company, so I just drifted along without thinking. Then this affair came up, and for the last few hours — since you have told me how matters stood between you and May — I have wished that it was all straight, and you and I were brothers; and I now wish you had been married by a minister instead of a justice of the peace. I wish, George, you might be May's husband for keeps, but up to a minute ago I had no hopes of it, for a new complication was added this morning. While the doctor and I were walking this morning he asked the privilege of paying his addresses to my sister when she had obtained her divorce from you. It struck me at the time as being a peculiar request, but this whole affair is a peculiar one from the beginning, and now you want to break the old contract and make a new one."

I could listen to no more without speaking. I was mad; so mad I could not speak plain. I called that Dr. Hamilton everything I could think of. I stopped and fairly danced, I was so mad. I believe if he had been there I would have killed him. I am not usually a profane man, but I swore, by every deity I had ever heard of, that he should not have her, and that I would. Joe let me rave until I was

tired, while he was as cool as spring water as he said, "George, do you want May?" I answered him by saying, "What do you suppose I've been talking about all this time?" and stood glowering at him. He coolly took a cigar and lit it, at the same time offering me one, without answering me, and then said, "Light up, and I will talk with you." He would not say anything, so there was nothing for me to do but light up, as he told me. We then commenced to walk. I started to speak, when he stopped me by saying: "Hold on, George; there is one thing I want to tell you, and I want you to always remember it. S The man that gets angry always loses the game. Now, if you want to win against the doctor don't begin by getting in a rage. I hope you will win, but if the first thing you are going to do is to lose your temper and rave, I give up now. If you will keep cool I will help you all I can, but don't be a fool and get mad. If you do not know my sister well enough to know that she can't be driven or frightened, I do. She won't marry and live with the doctor or you if she don't want to; and if she does want to live with either I shall not try to stop her, for it would be of no use. If you stop and look calmly at this subject for a minute, you can find no fault with the doctor. You told him yourself that you were to be divorced when I was well again, and explained all the circumstances to him, and this is the first time I have known of your having any other thoughts. You can't blame people for not knowing your wishes, before you have expressed them; and while I would rather have you for my brother than the doctor, I can't find any fault with the doctor. He has been honor-

able, and has done me a great service, and so have you; and I would like to help you both. If you would bring your reason to bear you would say the doctor had done nothing wrong. The position I shall take in this affair is that of a mutual friend—a hard position for a man, I know, but I will do the best I can.”

We walked and talked the situation of affairs over for more than an hour. I had to admit the correctness of Joe's argument. I promised him I would take his advice, and appear the best I could, and not make myself disagreeable by treating the doctor uncivilly; for, as Joe remarked, I had only shown my good side to his sister so far, and she had a good opinion of me, and I had better not spoil it by letting her see me disagreeable to the doctor, even if I did feel it. The last words he said before going into the house were, “George, don't get mad. (Any fool can get mad, and be disagreeable and say mean things, but it takes a smart man to hold his temper and smile when things go wrong.)”

We found the doctor and Mrs. Wilson talking about literature. He seemed to be able to talk on any subject. It made me boil inside, but I remembered what Joe had been saying to me, and tried to be as pleasant and social as any of them, but I could not help thinking; I felt as I did once when a school-boy, after the teacher had ferruled my hand. I went to my seat smiling, but kept swallowing to keep the tears down, I was so angry. I think Joe understood the situation, for he commenced on the doctor with another discussion about life, asking him if he thought there was any continuity of life after death, as an individualized conscious human

being; if he thought a human being retained his identity after death and the body was decomposed. This was enough to start the doctor off. I had envied men the money they possessed and their mental gifts, but I never envied any man's possession so much as I did the doctor's ability to talk. He not only possessed information drawn from many sources, but had the reasoning faculties to use that knowledge, and the language with which to express his thoughts. He could seem to give his whole attention to the subject in controversy, and not devote any time to finding words with which to express his meaning. He had the words ready, in stock, and all he had to do was to speak them out. I cannot give his reply as he gave it, only the ideas he advanced.

He said: "There may be a future state of existence. I hope there is. But with me it is only a hope — a wish. I hope there is a state of existence beyond the grave, where I will find and know all the friends I have lost; where I can complete the mental advancement I have commenced in this life; where I shall have the time, if it takes an eternity, to solve the puzzles and what appear to me now the inconsistencies of life; where I shall be able to comprehend the why and wherefore of this life. But I don't know that there is any such state of existence. I hope there is, but my reason and judgment tell me there is not. I don't want to believe this to be true, any more than I wish to have my friends convicted of wrong-doing; but if the evidence convicts them, I am forced then to believe them guilty. In this case, the weight of evidence, to my mind, is on the side of practical annihilation

at death, and against my own wishes in the matter. I am forced to believe that death ends all. You will notice I said 'practical annihilation,' for I am well enough acquainted with chemistry and physics to know that no matter or force can be lost. But I know that its form can, and does, change continually, that (it is impossible to prevent change.) I know that when a person dies and their body decomposes, the material is not lost to the vast reservoir of material in the universe; that it may be re-assembled again into a human animal or vegetable body, but its identity as a body is lost forever. The intelligence in me must go somewhere. I know it to be a force, for it acts on matter; but, from any evidence that has ever been offered me, I see no reason to doubt but that it follows the course of material, and goes back into the vast reservoir of force in nature, to be drawn from by other organisms, perhaps to be used in the animal or vegetable kingdom, and perhaps be used to run an electric battery. I know that a body, after death, will soon lose its identity, and I have no proof that the life force, or life principle, retains any identity apart from the physical organism. And my belief is from the evidence that has been offered to me, that when a man dies he loses his identity, and when a man loses that he is practically annihilated. I don't wish to believe this, but, reasoning from analogy, I must come to this conclusion. (It is my belief that the force in an organism of any kind comes from an inherent principle in the matter of which it is composed, that the intelligence or directing power of force is owing to the peculiar construction of that organism, and when, from any cause, the organism

is destroyed, the identity of the intelligence is annihilated, and the force, or life principle, follows the material, and, like the material, becomes thoroughly disorganized or annihilated as an identity of force.

“In contrast to this,—to offset this conclusion to which my reason and judgment have brought me,—I have offered me the contradiction of revelations of different schools and given to the human race at different times in the world’s history, the last principal one being Mohammedanism, back of which comes the Bible, the systems of mythology, Buddhism, the system of Confucius, ancient Egypt, until all become indistinct, and lost in time and tradition. Now, without criticising at present the substance of those revelations, let us look at the class of people to whom they were made, and their state of civilization. Would we consider to-day a revelation made to the same people, or a people no higher in degree of civilization than the people were to whom the last revelation of Mohammedanism was made, as competent to receive truths for us, which we were bound to admit and accept without a question, as being basic facts on which to build hopes of a future? Would we accept any other kind of information without question from a lot of Arabs, half civilized, that was given by a man subject to epilepsy, and the information given in the year 600? What was the condition of those people at that time; were they competent to cross-question and examine the genuineness of the evidence or revelation they received from their prophet and revelator? I think not. Were the people any better able to criticise at that time than they are now, in the same countries? I think not. Would the civilized world

accept any revelations from such a source, coming at the present time? No; they would laugh at it. The Mahda in Africa, a few years ago, was as good authority as Mohammed was in the sixth century, or as the revelations were from the first to the third century, or the prophets and Buddha were before Christ. The horde that we say are fanatics, who followed the Mahda in Africa, are now as well able to criticise, and sift the evidence for the truth of his revelations, as the people were to sift and cross-question the revelations of the elder prophets and leaders. (When I take into consideration to whom these revelations were made, the vicissitudes of the different conditions in which these records have been kept and handed down to us, they become to me valueless as a basis upon which to build any hope of the future.) When I come to place this evidence in contrast with the evidence of my own senses, all this mass of revelation, from every source, becomes to me worthless, and I have to return to the position from which I started, and say I don't know. But my judgment tells me death ends all. There may be a God; there may be many; I don't know. But I would like to live long enough somewhere, in some place, to receive such a revelation, and find out, if revelation in the past could be given by a God which satisfied the intelligence of the people of that time of his existence, of a future beyond the grave. Why don't He, She, or It give a revelation that will satisfy the intelligence of the people of this age of the world? I want the evidence, but I don't know where to obtain it. I have examined the different systems of religion, but none, to my mind, possess it. If there is no future beyond death,

then life is a farce. To live here for a few decades, obtaining knowledge, by oftentimes sad experience, of how to live, and then have it all come to naught, is an absurdity, as meaningless as the mumblings of an idiot. If death does end all, it is more than a farce: it is atrocious cruelty to live a life, forming associations and ties which are as dear as existence itself, and then to have all swept into oblivion by a relentless law of Nature; it is a scheme of which a devil might be proud; and yet, I believe it to be true."

The doctor was silent, and Joe commenced to speak. He could not talk as fluently as the doctor. He hesitated, and would seem to be searching for a word to use; but he spoke feelingly, and appeared to be very earnest. He said: "Doctor, I understand your position. I've been there myself. I never was able to describe my feelings as well, but I recognize every one of your arguments as an old companion, and probably should believe the same as you now do, were it not for these trance spells that have come upon me from time to time. But, as you say, I must believe the evidence of my own senses, and what I may tell you in the future may seem strange and unreal to you; to me it is a fact; I know it. I know that there is a future—a conscious existence after death. You can call it a revelation to me if you wish, and of no value to you; you may say, 'Whitney, I believe you are honest, but at the same time mistaken; and even if you are not mistaken, this is only hearsay evidence to me.' You may say, I have more confidence in you than in a lot of half-civilized Arabs or Jews, but the knowledge is second-hand at the best, and this is a matter where I want positive knowledge, by experience through my own

power and my own senses. If you want knowledge in this way, I can only advise you ; but I will advise you, and help you the best I can. If you want it second-hand, as my own experience, I will do the best I can to give it to you.'

The doctor replied : " I want both kinds of information. I want all I can gain from all sources. and while experience is better than hearsay evidence, there are many things that must be taken on the evidence of others, for there are many experiences a person cannot have in himself : he is not constituted so that he can have those experiences. Hearsay evidence is authority, provided the source from which it comes appears to the judgment as competent to testify. But a person would not consider the testimony of a half-civilized Arab as final and conclusive, as an expert on steam engines, while they might accept the testimony of a mechanical engineer. Neither can I take the testimony of an ancient Roman, or a lot of Jews, Hindoos, or Brahmins, as experts in the science of life, as conclusive and final ; admitting they were honest, judging them by their civilization they did not know enough to make a correct statement of the case ; they might make a correct statement as it appeared to them. And if you or I were to record the same events, the causes might have appeared to us to have come from a very different source than from what they attributed them to, and the results conveyed to our mind a very different meaning from what it did to them. Yes, Mr. Whitney, your testimony will have some weight with me ; and while I wish to experiment, and know what I can from my own sensations, I want your experience beside. And now I wish to know, did you

ever, at any other time except when you were in the trances, have any proof of a continuity of life? Don't say 'yes' by the aid of some spiritualist — a medium, for I regard the whole of them as humbugs or cranks."

Joe looked at the doctor some little time without speaking, and I could not understand what he was driving at when he said: "Doctor, would you think me now, at this moment, insane or cranky if I should make you a plain statement without any explanations of my thoughts; would you think me cranky if it should appear novel to you — if the only thing about the statement was my ability to make it?" The doctor answered, "Certainly not." "Well, then, doctor, I will give you one example of what, to me, is a proof of the continuity of life:

"There stands at your right shoulder a man who looks about as dense to me as a wreath of smoke from your cigar. He looks to be a man about 40 years of age; 41, I hear. He is smooth-shaven and quite bald, and has a scar that runs from the corner of his right eye to near the ear; he is a rather spare man, which makes him look uncommonly tall; and now he puts his left hand on your shoulder. He does not resemble you very much, but he says he is your Father. I hear him say it. I do not know whether he tells the truth, or lies. There is a woman with him; she stands just back of you. She is the opposite of the man in almost every respect; she is short and fair, with hair that is yellow, and she looks not to be over 25; 23, I hear. She says she is your mother, and that you were her baby boy before you grew to be a man; perhaps she lies, and perhaps you think I am lying, when I tell you I see

and hear this. There is another woman in the group; she is a tall, dark lady, about 30; 31, I hear. She is handsome—a noble looking lady. On her left cheek, near the throat, is a small, dark spot, which looks like a mole. She says she is your dead wife; perhaps she is, and perhaps this, too, is false; and there is a girl whom I can't see as distinctly; I can only just make her out; there does not seem to be as much material to her; the spirit or force organism is there, but not as much of the material organism; and the woman who says she is your mother says this to me: 'This indistinct person is a sister of yours who died previous to birth, that I found here after death.' On your knee at this time sits a child apparently about 3 years old, with black eyes, and long, dark curls; she calls you papa, and perhaps she is lying, too; I don't know. Perhaps they are all humbugs, and I am a crank; but if I can see you, if I am conscious of your presence, I can see them, and am conscious of their presence. They give me this message: 'They are glad the old house burned down.' I don't understand what it means. Does it convey any significance to you? This is one piece of hearsay evidence from me. I give it to you freely. Do you want more?"

The doctor's voice was husky as he said, "No more now; I want to think."

At this time Mrs. Wilson came into the room, which she had left a few minutes before, and invited us all in to tea. We accepted. Joe took the evening paper and read the headings to us while Mrs. Wilson dispensed the tea; and during the meal we discussed the news of the day. The doctor did not say much at this time. I flattered myself I ap-

peared as well as the doctor, socially, at the table. We also arranged for a trout-fishing party the next day. If it was very pleasant, Mrs. Wilson was to go with us, and sit in the carriage, or gather wild flowers, while the doctor and I fished in the brooks. The arrangement pleased me, for I thought that some time during the day I would get a chance to have a private talk with Mrs. Wilson, while the doctor and Joe were fishing. The plan looked so feasible to me that it made me good-natured. I thought, "Well, doctor, you had your first chance with Joe, but I will have the first talk with Mrs. Wilson." When we had all returned to the sitting-room, Mrs. Wilson opened the conversation by saying to the doctor, "You seemed disturbed by what Joe said to you before tea. You are not as used to such things as I, for Joe often says something of the kind to me. Sometimes he describes some of my friends, and gives their names; and sometimes it's some one I never heard of. The novelty of the thing has all gone for me, and I have come to look at it in a matter-of-fact way. Sometimes it interests me, and sometimes I am amused. Some of the things he repeats I know to be true, and some I know to be false; and others I don't know about. Now, doctor, tell us, was there any truth in what Joe said to you? I don't doubt that Joe saw and heard as he said he did, but was there any truth in what he saw or heard?" The doctor said, "It was essentially correct; there were some slight discrepancies in detail, but as a whole it was correct." Excepting about that sister of his, he would not say he never had such a sister, for he did not know; but if any such person existed, or ever did exist, he would use every means in his power to

find out, for that to him was an important bit of evidence, from the fact that he had never heard of it before in his life, from any source; but if he was able to prove it to be a truth, then it would prove to him that Joe must have received the information from some mind, somewhere in space, that did know of the fact. All the other facts related might be accounted for by telepathy, or mind reading, although he had never admitted mind reading to be a fact; to his mind it was a theory not proven. But this one test could not be accounted for in that manner, for at the present time he did not know himself if it was a fact or not. "But," continued the doctor, "admitting the whole to be correct, for argument's sake, what I want to know is, by what law in nature is it possible? For, understand me, I don't believe a miracle possible; I don't believe there ever was one; I don't believe there ever will or can be a miracle, in the common interpretation of the word. I will accept the definition of the word 'miracle' that makes it synonymous with 'wonderful,' but not that definition that makes it synonymous with supernatural; for I believe that Nature, and Nature's laws, fill the universe, and I can't comprehend how any events or phenomena can be super to, outside of, above and beyond Nature, when Nature fills the entire universe. To me it appears that an event must take place somewhere in space, somewhere in the realms of Nature, and an event taking place in the realms of Nature is under some natural law, though I may not understand the working of the law that brought it about. And it does not help a religious bigot to solve the problem, because he is too indolent to try, to charge it up to the caprice of

a God, nor help me solve the problem, because I am too bigoted in my pet scientific theories to refuse to believe the evidence of my own senses. I regard all events that have taken place, or ever will take place, as coming under natural law; and the reason some events are strange and wonderful is, the human mind is at fault, and not because Nature is full of quirks and freaks. Now, Joe, if you can tell me anything about the law that governs these phenomena, the way in which you were able to tell me these things, I want you to. If I can comprehend it, and it looks reasonable to me, I will accept it as the truth; if I cannot comprehend your explanation, and it does not look reasonable to me, I shall take the position of 'don't know,' and look for some reason that is not beyond my comprehension."

Joe replied by saying, "I have heard a lecture on that very subject. The ideas expressed were something like these: (All intelligent thought is the action of self-conscious will power, or force. Force can and does exist as a principle in nature, independent of material. It also can and does exist in nature in connection with matter. When an intelligent will force thinks, it exerts a force; all intelligent will forces which we know anything about are in connection with matter in a greater or less degree of rarefaction as compared with the more solid substances; and the matter in connection with the higher intelligence, the higher conscious intelligent will forces, is comparatively in a very rarefied condition, less dense than the most attenuated gases with which the human mind is acquainted; it only knows of it by abstract reasoning. This matter, which is under the control of the intelligent will force, is matter that is

so finely divided that it can act upon matter in its homogeneous state, or the luminiferous *etheria* upon which light and heat are conveyed. In fact, matter that has lost its homogeneous qualities, although in an atomic state differing from homogeneous matter as a precipitate, differs from a solution, as a jell would differ from the granules from which it was made. But any motion of the granular atomic condition of matter would convey to the homogeneous matter its own motion, as a fine wire screen would produce a wave in water, the motion or wave induced is conveyed upon the same material upon which light and heat are conveyed. Consequently, the laws that govern light and heat are applicable to the transference of any force through this same medium. Light and heat are conveyed by the wave motion, from the center where they originate. The thought force is conveyed in the same manner, from the center in which it originates, in the case of a human being; in a physical body the wave motion of material, in this homogeneous condition, appeals to but two of the human senses—the eyes, and in some cases the sense of smell; all the other senses have to be appealed to through the motion of matter in a more dense form; but all the human organs are limited in their power of comprehension, for the reason that they are composed principally of matter in its more crude condition, and but a small proportion of intelligent force; and one of the inherent principles of matter is, that it will not change its ratio of vibration, to but a limited extent, without changing its physical properties; as for example, ice cannot be increased above 32° without changing its entire physical aspect, and it becomes water. Water cannot

absorb force in the form of heat, beyond a certain point, without again changing and becoming steam. If more force is applied in the form of heat, and the ratio of vibration increased at a certain point, its vibrations have become so rapid that it causes another physical change, and the steam is divided into its gaseous constituents. Carbon can absorb only a certain amount of heat, in a free condition, without changing its physical condition; and in both cases the water and carbon, at a temperature of about 600, take on a permanent gaseous form and are said to be burned up, that is, thrown into their atomic or molecular condition; are material in a rarefied condition, and are, relatively, in a higher state of atomic vibration or motion.

“The principal constituents of a human body are water and carbon. If the mass of the material in a human body were raised to a condition to receive sensation on this higher plane of existence, it would have to be as attenuated as carbon and water in its atomic state; it would have to become a mass of living fire or light; but a human body cannot exist as a whole in this condition; it would cease to be physically a human body and would become spiritually a human body. But as the material in the body takes on a higher ratio of vibration, it occupies more space, as steam occupies more space than water; and if all the material in a living human organism were raised to this high condition, the whole would become unwieldy to the volume of force in the body; but, as in mechanics, an increase in the motion calls for a greater volume of power, or less material to be moved; the life principle in a human being takes the latter course, and as its ratio of vibration increases,

the smaller amount of material is increased, in motion or vibration, and the mass is left on its old plane of activity. Thus the spirit, or conscious life principle in man, is gradually saturated with material in an atomic state, like the water in the sponge gradually becoming silt, while the mass of the material in the living human body remains in its old comparatively inert condition; but it is in this, to physical eyes, invisible matter, that the life force or principle is seated, and this invisible material is the link which connects the life force or principle to the cruder material which makes up the mass of a human body which is visible to human senses; and at death this connecting link of rarefied matter goes with the force which has raised it to this condition and controlled it, while in connection with the crude physical body it is as invisible as live steam, and like live steam follows the force which threw it into that condition when it follows a given force, as it takes the path along the line of the least resistance. Now, doctor, if you have followed me closely, and comprehend the meaning I wish to convey, you will see that under natural laws it is possible for a human intelligence to exist in a condition and have a material body, which the ordinary human senses are not able to recognize; and you will also see that the rarefied, or spiritual body, is not dependent upon its continuity of existence, as a body, upon the continuity of the crude or what is commonly called the material or physical body, but is dependent upon the continuity of the life principle, or intelligent life force, that has raised the material, which it directly governs, to this high state of atomic division; and if it is possible for this life force to raise material to this condition, and hold it there

for a period of years, in spite of the environment of a mass of comparatively inert material, does it not appear logical to your mind that this intelligent force will be able to exert as much, if not more, force and directing power upon this spiritual body after it is freed from its surroundings of comparatively inert matter by the process of death?

“And, doctor, I will bring to your notice other points for consideration. If my position is right, and the life force carried with it all the intelligence, and all of its own force, then, as compared to the relative conditions before death, the person is not only vastly changed, in having much less matter in the composition of the body, but having less matter to move, and the same amount of force with which to move this body, he can do it vastly quicker. Let us suppose that you, in a spiritual body, have only one thousandth part as much material as you now have to control, and have the same amount of intelligent will force. Under these conditions, you could with a given exertion accomplish one thousand times as much. You now would, to walk a mile, exert a certain amount of intelligent will force to convey your body from one point to the other. In a spiritual body the same amount of exertion would carry you one thousand miles, or carry you one mile one thousand times quicker, or practically instantaneously. I have only used the one thousand as an illustration; perhaps one million would be nearer the correct proportion.

“Doctor, if you will grant me the position I have taken thus far, as being essentially correct, I will try to show you how, under natural laws, without going into the miraculous, that it is possible for me to see and hear what I tell you I see and hear. The human

what is that?

being in a physical body, before the change of death, is different from a human being in a spiritual body after death, in this one respect, and this one only: it has very much material that is not under the perfect control of the intelligent life force, while the human being in a spiritual body, after the change of death, has but very little material that is not under the control of the intelligent life force; the change has all been on the physical plane, and not on the plane of the intelligent force, and whatever mental attributes the person had before death, they will have after the change, for their mental attributes were seated in the intelligent force that has left the physical body, and not in the material of the body.

“Accepting the fact that the people standing back of you differed from me, they differed from me only in the respect of having less material to contend with, in their movement; and all the material in them was under control of their intelligent will force. We will try to see what the effect of a given act on their part would have on me. We will commence by the sense of hearing, although the language is misleading in the strict sense of the word. I did not hear what was said, I apprehended it; hearing belongs to the physical ear. The intelligence apprehends and interprets the sound that the physical ear conveys to it. They were standing back of you; an intelligent force, with some matter in their composition, as a force in motion, in the act of thinking, and in connection with homogeneous matter, they would move luminiferous etheria the same as a flash of light moves matter in its course from the sun to the earth. In my physical body was a spiritual body of a similar composition to

It is possible the material body is not an object lesson.

those standing back of your chair, only between myself and the body standing back of your chair was the cloud of dense material substance composing my physical body, to interfere with the passage of the thought as the clouds surrounding this earth interfere with the passing of the sunlight; and the only wonder is that so much force was felt by my spiritual body, coming from theirs, as I did feel, and not that I did not feel more; for, understand that the means by which the waves set in motion reached me was through this attenuated homogeneous material, more finely divided than the most penetrating gas, hydrogen, for example, and between two centers of energy, or disturbance, with only matter in this attenuated form, as a means of communication, and the sensitive activity of one of the centers bound down and limited in its capacity of recognition, by the refraction and deflection of the wave motion, by the surrounding grosser material, the same as the sunlight is refracted and deflected by the vapor and other material in the atmosphere. It is a difficult matter to pass a thought from one plane of existence to the other, and have it appear and register on the receiving spiritual body the same as it left the spiritual body, in which the motion was generated; as the stick appears to bend as it enters the water, so these thought-waves may be distorted in passing through different media. But to formulate the method by which I heard from those to you unseen what I repeated to you: They stood back of you and thought what I sensed as hearing. The act of thinking set homogeneous matter in motion; and the matter set in motion was contiguous to the matter in my spiritual body. The intelligent force in

my spiritual body was conscious of the motion of its own body, and sensed those motions as signifying to it a certain intelligence, which, being the directing force of my body as a whole, caused my brain to act, and formulate those sensations into words; my brain having direct control of my vocal organs, caused me to speak them.

“You will notice, doctor, that my physical brain did not at first receive the impression; the material of its composition is in too crude a condition to be moved by a force conveyed on so rarefied or delicate material. Its molecular structure is too coarse; the waves of force conveyed on etheria would flow around and through the molecules composing my brain, like the waves of the ocean flowing through and around coarse, rough pebbles. It is only the fine sand and silt that is moved by the wavelet, and they grind, scratch, and make an impression on the coarser pebbles, and the pebbles are indirectly affected by the waves. Now, how did I see? It is possible to see in two ways human beings that exist in a spiritual body: one by a direct appeal to the human organs of sight in the physical body, the eyes, and the other by appealing to, or giving to, the intelligent force in my spiritual body, the sensation of seeing.

“In regard to the first statement, doctor, we know the spectrum discloses that there are rays or waves both above and below the visible spectrum which the ordinary human vision cannot discern: those below we call heat rays, and those above chemical rays; the existence of both are known beyond a doubt. And another fact is, that all human eyes are not made alike: some are far-sighted; others near-

sighted ; some are color-blind, and others not ; and there are some who claim they can see in the spectrum above the violet, in what is to the ordinary eye the chemical field, a faint grayish light. These cases are not common, but perhaps would be more common if all men were given a thorough examination and a spectroscopic test. Color-blindness was thought to be rare until railroad companies ordered examination, and then such cases were found to be more common than supposed. By this law it is possible, and more than probable, that some are able to see indistinctly, and in some cases quite distinctly, human beings in a spiritual state of existence.

“ Now, as to the second case, where people see by sensing the sight of an object, and not actually seeing it, in the true sense of the word : in this case the thought is transferred the same as in the case of hearing. To carry this into effect, the originating center of disturbance, or, to word it differently, the person standing back of you would imagine he saw a certain thing, or would think to himself a description of a certain thing or event, perhaps, that had taken place in the long past ; or would picture to himself, by the aid of the memory, a scene that was gone, the same as human beings are prone to do in day-dreams. The matter set in motion by the active force in them would register on me sensations similar to those imparted, the same as the diaphragm of the telephone at my ear will register the quality of the voice speaking at the other end of the line. If the sensations conjured up at this inception of the waves were light, the sensations received by me would be light. In this case, as in hearing, I did not actually see in the usual acceptation of the

word ; but the intelligent force in me apprehended certain movements, the significance of which was sight, and, for want of better terms, I say I see certain things.

“ Doctor, you have said that you have been making research in the fields of hypnotism. If you will only admit the existence of the spiritual body that permeates the physical body,—both you and the subject upon which you act being possessed of a spiritual body essentially the same in composition,—you will see how it is possible for you to influence your subject. By admitting this to be a fact, you can account for thought transference from one person in a physical body to another in a physical body, without employing the usual method of speech or written characters; and the same law that governs the propulsion of light and heat governs the conveyance of thought, whether that thought originated in a body that is visible or invisible to the physical senses. Your first objection will probably be, that there is no physical proof of the theory, enough to make it a law. I will admit it, doctor; but you are a chemist, and accept the atomic theory as a law. Is there any physical proof of that law? None. It is a hypothesis, a theory proven to be correct and true by negative evidence, by the process of elimination. There are many facts for which the atomic theory will account, and all other theories, when applied, fail; it has been tried in so many different ways, and proven to be correct, that it has become an accepted fact: it asserts itself to be true, and must stand as a truth until proven false by its own inherent weakness. Doctor, have you caught the drift of my explanation?”

The doctor replied, " I think I have, some of it ; but I wish to think it over, and sleep on it, before giving a decisive opinion, and then perhaps I shall have some questions to ask. But one occurs to me just now, which I wish to ask before it slips from me ; that is, you spoke of day-dreams. Have you any explanation or theory of night or sleep dreams ? "

" Certainly, doctor, if one will reason from the basis that consciousness and intelligence are two distinct attributes of the human mind, the phenomena of dreams will have a different significance than if there is no distinction made between these different qualifications of a human life force .

" If one will consider an intelligent life force as one thing, and a conscious intelligent life force as quite another, it may be shown by the example of somnambulism and hypnotism what the nature of dreams are. If you will grant the premises that human beings are made up, so far as their life forces are concerned, of an indestructible aggregation of lower life force, in some respects parallel to the manner in which the physical body is built up from lower organisms of material bodies and aggregated into the one human body, with this difference in the parallelism, that the physical body in its function of organism is not constant, while the organism of the life force is continuous and never loses its identity except it be joined to another life force, and the aggregation constituting a third one which combines all the qualities of the two, plus the powers that it has gained in this united condition ; and will further grant that these lower life forces are under the permanent hypnotic control engrafted upon them

by the parentage of the mother, and this new experience binding them together as a new and complete identity, built from perhaps the aggregations of millions of lower life forces which never exercise independent control except in cases of insanity, somnambulism, or when under the hypnotic control of another;— if you will grant these premises, doctor, as a base line from which to survey this field of investigation, you will see that insanity, dreams, and hypnotism are all the workings of one or more of the intelligent life forces which have temporarily escaped the hypnotic control of consciousness that was engrafted upon the being by the mother at the time the aggregation of the forces took place in the embryo condition of the being; the normal condition being all these life forces under the control of the consciousness, either working or inactive in sleep as the conscious will power directs; but one or more of these life forces may for a time escape the control that was placed upon it, and become, as one might say, unruly, and cause insanity. The intelligence is there, but the connection between the intelligence and the consciousness is broken or overpowered, so that the person as a whole does not realize what he is doing. In a common dream, some one of the many forces may become alarmed without the rest of the forces being disturbed; and you are as well aware as I, doctor, that no person ever dreams when he is fully and soundly asleep; it is only when he is partially asleep, and when the conscious will force of a person is in a passive condition, that is, exerting no will of its own, that the current of wave motion will flow in from perhaps many sources, and the material composing the spir-

itual body receive motion and agitation from perhaps many sources, perhaps but one,— may be from one for a short time, and then the impressions will be confused by many more, and a part of the whole of the forces being conscious, or in other words, the real ego being partially conscious, receives many sensations, jumbled, confused, grotesque, or hideous — as meaningless as pied type, or the jumble that strikes the ear from a telephone when many are talking on the same wire at the same time, with induction interspersed. The first sensations may be induced by some physical cause connected with the physical body flowing in through the nervous system, when no other sensations are coming in from the same source. For example: my feet become cold during sleep; no other disturbing physical sensations are being received, and only a part of the life forces within me are disturbed, but these few that *are* disturbed become alarmed and for the time being are the only forces in me that are active; the others are in an inactive condition, and as no other forces are in action to balance these, these which are at work become abnormal in their action, and the sensation of being physically cold fills my entire being, and I for a time have a conscious perception of all the conditions of cold that these life forces have experienced at any time in the past, and I may imagine that I am out in a blinding snow-storm, wading through mountainous drifts of snow; or these disturbing sensations, flowing in from some outside source of intelligence, may convey a correct and truthful impression of what that intelligence senses, and the person be a prophet by dreams, or one who dreams a truth.

“But you will notice, doctor, all the life forces as a whole were not at work harmoniously together in the form of a conscious will power to repel these outside influences, by setting in motion all the material under their control as a whole. But when they do, or become awake, or cease to be insane or hypnotized, and all the life forces are in unison, each force is relegated to its proper place in the composite of forces, and all sensations are weighed up for their true value, and the abnormal ceases to rule; and you have probably observed, in your experiments on hypnotism, that the subject must at first be passive, or willingly accept the suggestion from you. It is the same with me if I wish to see who is present in the room besides us four, for if I exert my own will power and conscious intelligence to control the matter I can control, no other can force itself on me to the extent of making me unconscious, although an outside malignant conscious force may force itself on me, to the extent of making me very uncomfortable, and if I did not understand the nature of the force enough to guard against it, a foreign force might put me in a partially hypnotic condition, and make life for me a hideous dream, an unreal fantasy, like a delirium, or a complete trance condition. Do you catch my meaning, doctor?”

The doctor replied, “Partially. I think I comprehend some of the meaning you intended to convey, and perhaps by morning, after I have slept over the matter, I shall understand more clearly than now. But every time you attempt to explain one phenomenon to me, you hint at and suggest others, and I shall at some time in the future ask an explan-

ation, from your point of view, of the suggestion you made of outside and unseen influences exerting a hypnotic action on human beings we can see. But it is getting late, and I think I will now go to the hotel."

I looked at my watch, and was surprised at the lateness of the hour. I was tempted not to go with the doctor, and to have a private interview with Mrs. Wilson; but then, on a second thought, I saw how strange it would look to the doctor, and I arose to accompany him, thinking, "to-morrow I will have a better opportunity." As we arose to go, Mrs. Wilson said she had been making arrangements for the doctor and I to make them a visit while we remained in Meriden; that they had two rooms that had hardly been used in years. She had Nora air and make them ready for us, and had given orders for the table, in view of our coming; and when we left the hotel in the morning, she wanted us to bring our baggage and make their home ours while we stayed in Meriden. The invitation was not given in a half-hearted, formal way, but her manner indicated sincerity. She said, "Joe looks surprised." It was easy for me to see that in his mind this did not help the complication of matters much. But the doctor accepted, and then nothing but a kick would have deterred me from accepting; a hint would have had no effect on me at that time. After the doctor had decided to come and live under the same roof with Mrs. Wilson, I was determined to be there too; he should have no such advantage as that over me.

When the opportunity offered to speak, Joe seconded the invitation, saying it was all right, for his sister ruled that house, all except his little den

up-stairs, which we had never seen ; but as we were to be guests, we must make ourselves at home in his department, too. We bade them a good evening, and went to the hotel for the last time while we were to stay in Meriden. We were gentlemanly toward each other, but I could not act the part of unrestricted sociability.

CHAPTER V.

THE doctor and I made an early start the next morning. We went together and bought the fishing tackle and what was necessary for a good day's sport in the woods. We hired a good double team, with a driver, and ordered him to call at the "Winthrop" for us. We had a basket of catables and drinkables, made up for us at the hotel, and paying our bill ordered our effects sent to the Whitneys'. The carriage we had hired for the day called, the doctor and I took our departure from the "Winthrop," and both of us remarked that it almost seemed like leaving home, everything had been made so pleasant for us during our stay.

The trunks arrived at the Whitneys' at about the same time we did, and Joe ordered them taken up to our rooms, and asked the doctor and I to follow to our homes while we stayed in Meriden, telling us that he and his sister had, up to that time, lived rather secluded and retired lives on account of his being so sensitive about those trances he was subject to; but now that the ice was broken, and the secret out, they were determined to make up for lost time, and for the present have all the company they could get to stay with them. The rooms adjoined, and were large and airy, with a southern exposure. The sunlight came in at my window, making everything look cheerful and bright, and in different parts of the room were little nicknacks,

of no earthly use only to look at, which I suppose was use enough to a lady's eye; and while I liked them, I did laugh to myself at them. The furnishing was no better than that at the "Winthrop," but there was an air of home in the arrangement, and the little odd pieces of bric-a-brac gave a look of comfort that could not be crowded into a whole suite of rooms at the hotel.

Well, we were all started for the day, and what a day it was! Joe and the doctor had not yet decided, logically, whether there was a God, but it made no difference to me what decision they might come to; and in my own heart there was no doubt but that whatever had brought such a spring day into existence, and brought me into existence to enjoy it, was good. Whether it was a God, or chance, first causation, or Nature, that had produced this day, and me to enjoy it, had done well by me, and I felt thankful. Joe and the doctor might argue until they were tired, but I was satisfied to take life as I found it, and trust the Power that had used me so well in the past, and that was doing so much for me in the present. I was willing to rest my case here, and trust for the future that, to me, unknown power, be that power called God, man, chance, or Nature.

We were like a party of school children out for a holiday. We all talked, and much of the time together: what we said amounted to nothing, although we talked most of the time; and when we arrived in Cheshire, at the trout brook for which we had started, none of us could have told what had been said; we only knew we had enjoyed ourselves, as much as we were capable of feeling enjoyment.

We stopped beside the road, leaving the horses in charge of the driver. Mrs. Wilson saw a bed of wild flowers in the meadow, which she proposed to appropriate to herself. The doctor, Joe, and I made bets as to who would have the most fish in two hours, when we were to meet at the wagon and have lunch. There was meaning in the doctor's eye as he said, "Mrs. Wilson, mark me, if I don't come back in two hours and present you with the finest trout that can be caught in the brook;" and it was business with me, when I followed his speech and said, "Mark me, Mrs. Wilson, if I don't come back in two hours and present you with *several* of the finest trout that can be caught in the brook." At these speeches Joe laughed outright. His sister wanted to know what he was laughing at. Joe replied, "Nothing; the weather makes me feel that way." I looked the doctor in the eye, and between us there was a flash of intelligence that meant war. Joe mapped out the brook for us in three sections, and told us certain marks of fallen trees and stone fences that would divide the brook into about three equal sections of good fishing ground, and tossed up a cent for the doctor and I to take first chance, remarking that he would take what was left. The doctor won the first chance, and took the stream from the road where we were, to where it joined a river below. I took the central portion until I should come to Joe's territory; and Joe took the head of the stream, and we commenced fishing in earnest. And I was in earnest; I never wanted fish so badly in my life. I just prayed for fish; I prospected every swirl and eddy as carefully as a miner would a promising lead for gold. I had been

fishing over an hour, and had caught only two small ones; my heart had been gradually going down, until now it seemed to beat in my knees; and the way luck was going, by the time the two hours were up, it would probably be in my boots; when, as I turned a big rock, where I could see there must be a fine place for trout, I saw a boy fishing in that very hole that I had built so much hope on. Well, he was not much of a boy, and did not have much of a fishing tackle, but he had the fish. On the bank by his side were seven as fine trout as I ever saw. Vanderbilt's millions never created in me quite the same feeling that those seven trout did; but they were his, not mine. However, I was bound to possess them, if I could by any fair means. Perhaps it was not quite honorable, but I wanted those fish, and wanted them badly. I commenced by telling the boy what a nice day it was,—though only a few minutes before I was thinking it was one of the meanest days on record,—and what a fine fisherman he must be to have done so well, and what a nice fishing-pole he had, though it was only a witch-hazel stick, and crooked at that. The boy looked at me a moment, and said, "What are ye drivin' at, boss?" I took a second look at the boy, and came to the conclusion that he was more of a boy than I had first thought him, and made up my mind that I might be able to do some business with him, so I said: "How would you like to trade fishing outfits, fish and all?" He did not wait for me to say more, but said, "Boss, I'm your huckleberry; swap." I told him I would do it, on condition that he let me have the use of mine the rest of the day, and then I would leave it in Dixon's office in Meriden for him.

He knew where that was, but said: "You're givin' me guff; you will take my fish, and keep your pole, line, and basket." To convince him that I was honest, I agreed to give him two dollars if he would not fish any more that day in that stream, but would take leg bail up through the woods, and not let any one see him, or say anything about seeing me, and take his fish-pole with him. The money was a convincing argument that I was honest, and after assuring me that he would be at Dixon's the next day after that outfit, and make it hot for me if it was not there, he left me and the fish.

In my basket now was a fine lot of trout. The day had become vastly more pleasant. Perhaps I was taking a mean advantage of the doctor, but I reasoned "all is fair in love and war," and usually in fishing, and if the boy had not caught those fish, I probably should: and after this I did catch enough to make a baker's dozen. One that I caught was a beauty, so that when I came to the stone wall that Joe said was his boundary, I had a fine lot of trout for that section of the country. Joe appeared in a short time. He did not have as many as I, but one was bigger than my best. I did not care for that, so long as the doctor did not have it. As he looked at my basket he said: "George, I guess you have the doctor this time;" and we started for the wagon.

The doctor climbed the fence on one side of the road, as we did the other. Mrs. Wilson had gathered what flowers she wanted, and got out the lunch and spread it on a cloth on the grass. The driver had made a seat of some rails and a couple of big stones. Everything was in readiness for a lunch. The doctor said, in a confident manner,

that he would present that fish to Mrs. Wilson of which he had spoken, which he proceeded to do. It was a beauty, and no mistake; it was a better one than I had, but not so good as the one Joe had. I presented mine, saying, "My word, too, is as good as my bond; here are the fish I promised." Joe broke in, saying: "That's all right, gentlemen, but I am in this fishing party, and shall present my fish and insist on all the prizes, for I have the finest trout in the lot;" which assertion he made good by laying his beside those of the doctor and mine. The doctor looked nettled, but we all laughed and congratulated ourselves on having good luck; and it was true, for in all there were two dozen as nice trout as any one would wish to see; and barring accidents in the guise of a small boy, we had been lucky.

The lunch filled a want we were not conscious of until we saw it; but after seeing something to eat, the want became more real each minute. We were a jolly party, in spite of the fact that the doctor and I were only polite to each other in order to be companionable.

After the lunch, Mrs. Wilson proposed that we ride the rest of the day, saying we had fish enough and to give away, and it would be cruel for us to catch what we did not want, just for the sake of fishing. This did not meet with my wishes. If the doctor had proposed such an arrangement I should have objected; but coming from Mrs. Wilson, I agreed promptly that it was the right thing to do. We drove through the woods on the country roads the rest of the afternoon. As we were passing over a bridge we saw a boy fishing. The doctor asked

him, "What luck to-day?" "Good," he said. "But where are your fish?" asked the doctor. "Boss, don't you worry about my fish," replied the boy; and looking at me, he grinned and gave me a wink; and I meant every word when I said, "That boy will be able to take care of himself through life."

We had arrived home, and Joe was assisting Mrs. Wilson from the carriage, when the horses gave a start. Mrs. Wilson was obliged to jump, and by some ill luck sprained her foot. She gave a scream, and would have fallen had not Joe caught her. The doctor and I both rushed to help him, and managed to run into each other, and came near tumbling Joe over in our scramble to help. It was nothing but an accident, and why I was angry I don't know, or why I should show temper, unless it was that I was mad inside, and it showed through because I was off my guard. But I shook with passion as I uttered the one word "clown." The doctor was pale, as he returned the compliment with the word "fool." Joe brought us to our senses, saying "*stop*"; and as he took his sister in his arms to carry her into the house, said: "Get the traps out of the carriage, and bring them into the house, and then meet me in the house; I want to talk with you both."

The doctor and I obeyed Joe's orders without speaking, while Joe had taken Mrs. Wilson to her room and called Nora to help her. He then left her and came to us. He commenced by saying: "My sister, probably, has only sprained her foot slightly, but we will know more of that later. But there is a feeling between you gentlemen that must be attended to now. Please be seated, and don't inter-

rupt me until I am through ;” and then he gave us both the talking-to which I think we needed.

Joe said : “ There is one thing in life I never could quite understand, and that is why two men who are ordinarily good-natured and gentlemanly, two men who could associate together for a life-time without quarreling, will commence to call each other hard names the minute a woman appears on the scene. Now, you two have nothing in the world to be mad about. There is no reason why you should not both spend your vacation here and have a pleasant time, each in your own way ; but instead of that, you commence by calling each other hard names without cause. Now, I have something to say in this matter. This woman whom you have both told me you wanted my consent to address — and, if she was willing, marry — is my sister ; and although she is twenty-one and legally married, I consider her under my protection. I know George Wilson well enough, and have confidence enough in the doctor to believe that you will both keep any agreements you will make. Now, there is an agreement I want you both to make with me, and that is, that you will neither of you speak a word on this subject to her for one month. I want you both to stay here and visit with us in the house, so that you can become better acquainted with us, and we can become better acquainted with you, too. Personally I like you both, and as you are both so anxious to marry a sister of mine, I am sorry I’ve not two sisters instead of one. I know George is now legally her husband, but I know him well enough to know that he will keep his contract of the past, and practically that will make no difference. You can

both have an equal chance, and may the best man win." Turning to me, he said, "George, will you agree to this?" I felt Joe was right, and answered, "yes." The doctor, after I had promised, gave his promise. Then Joe said: "About this little difference between you a few minutes ago, I think honors are equal between you. I guess one pet name will about cancel the other, and from this time on I want you to be as good friends as possible; at least be gentlemen; and I wish you would begin now by shaking hands, and let the past go and begin anew."

I had been the first one to give way to bad language, and it was no more than right for me to make the first advances. I stepped up to the doctor and held out my hand. The doctor took it, but the manner in which he did it showed me there was no sincerity in his action; and from that day to this I have never felt the trust and confidence in him that I did before he gave me that half-hearted shake of the hand. We have been gentlemanly toward each other,—no more outbreaks of passion,—but the invisible tie of friendship is broken—lost—gone forever.

Nora came and said Mrs. Wilson's foot was swollen. The doctor was requested to look at it and prescribe. He and Joe went to her room, leaving me to walk the floor.

I reviewed the events of the last half hour and came to the conclusion I had made a fool of myself; that the doctor was not far from right. I did not care a snap of my finger what the doctor thought, but if Mrs. Wilson had noticed the little scene, what would she think? That was partially what was dis-

turbing my mind, and the rest was worry, to know how seriously Mrs. Wilson was hurt. I stood it as long as I could, and then went to the door of her room and rapped, and standing at the doorway made my inquiries. The doctor answered me that it was not very serious; there were no bones broken, only a muscular sprain that might cause inconvenience for a short time, and perhaps some pain, saying he had written a prescription for a liniment to be used, and probably in a few days all would be well again. That decided me, and while they were talking over the probabilities of the case, I had changed my fishing clothes and was ready to go down town. Before they realized that I was not standing there waiting for more news, I was asking the doctor for that prescription, saying it was necessary for me to go to see Dixon for a few minutes before tea, and I would take the prescription along, have it compounded, and bring it back with me.

Taking the prescription and my fishing tackle,—thanking my stars I had an opportunity to get it out of the house without observation,—I left the prescription in a drug store, and carried my fishing tackle to Dixon's office for the boy. I knew that boy would make his word good, and render it disagreeable for me if I did not keep my promise. In thirty minutes I was back at the Whitneys' with the liniment. Joe gave it to his sister, and I went to my room, but in a short time the bell rang for tea. We all met in the dining-room. Joe had helped his sister to the table. We were a social party, notwithstanding the accident to Mrs. Wilson, and the little difference between the doctor and myself. I honestly felt ashamed of the part I had taken, and

tried to do my best to erase it from my memory; and besides, if I could not it would not help my case any to act a sulky part, and so long as the doctor was polite and minded his own business, I was satisfied.

After tea we all took time to read the mail that had come to us during the day. The letter carrier had received orders to leave the doctor's and my mail at the Whitneys' until further orders. Among Mrs. Wilson's letters were two that she passed to Joe for him to read. The first thing that caught my attention was an exclamation from Joe to his sister, saying: "What does this mean, anyway? Who are these women?" Mrs. Wilson laughed as she said: "Two old school-mates who have always intended to make me a visit ever since I left school. I would never fix a definite time before; you know why. After we decided to have the doctor and Mr. Wilson here, I decided to have my friends, so I invited both,—thinking probably only one would come, but as you see both have accepted,—and both are coming to-morrow, and I am glad of it. With a lawyer, a doctor, and a dreamer in one house, and only one to look after and entertain them, and attend to the house, it is too much, when that one is me." Then addressing her conversation generally, she said in a jesting manner: "Gentlemen, to-morrow be prepared to make the acquaintance of two of the nicest and prettiest girls, or women, you have ever met."

The doctor seemed interested. If it had not been for Mrs. Wilson, and the object I had in view, I would have run; I certainly would have had important business in Boston. To be domiciled in the

same family with three women at once was a contingency in life that had never confronted me before : I would rather face a dozen disagreeable doctors. But Joe gave my thoughts language, and set us all laughing by saying, in a dry way, "Have your own sweet will, sister Eve."

We talked over the events of the ride and the weather. The doctor, Joe, and I each tried to outdo the other by telling fish stories. We had been having a good social time, when the doctor commenced on Joe by saying :

"Whitney, I concede the point you made last evening, that life is a force, because it takes a force to overcome gravity, and raise a body from the ground. It took a force to build a man upright ; it takes a force to sustain him in that position, when he takes a position where the force of gravity is not equal on all sides. If I bend forward, and do not exert muscular force to sustain me, I fall. It takes a force to raise the material of my body from this chair, or for me to raise my hand to my head. I will concede this life principle is a force. I will go further, and accept the assertion that the force has a greater or less amount of intelligence usually exhibited in a rational manner in the lower animals, or in the higher animal, man. If I understand you correctly, you intend to say that force, like material, aggregates itself into identities, as we know matter does. Your body is not mine, although built essentially the same, and coming from the same reservoir of matter, mother earth. Observation has taught me that, eventually, your body and mine will go back to the reservoir of mother earth, from which they were drawn, and lose their identity as material

bodies. Now, do I understand from your philosophy that there is permeating nature a principle distinct from matter, called force?"

"Yes, that is just what I wish to say. I wish to convey, as well as possible, the idea that there are in Nature two great principles, or primates, permeating all space and the universe as a whole, and these two distinct principles are matter and force, and only the force takes on the attribute of memory and intelligence," answered Joe.

"Well, Whitney, you go further, and say this force aggregates itself into identities of force, and takes on intelligence, and in the case of man retains its identity and intelligence after death, in connection with matter in a more rarefied form."

Joe answered with another "yes."

The doctor then said: "Has your philosophy ever contemplated the idea that force and matter might exist apart from each other? If force and matter are two distinct principles united in living organism, it follows logically that they might exist apart. If that be the case, what would be your idea of these two principles in their primitive condition, as pure force and pure matter?"

Joe was puzzled for a moment, and then replied: "Doctor, logically you are right, and what might or might not be would with me be only a speculation, a theory, or, as you expressed it, an idea. But let us draw our conclusions from what we know, and keep reason and logic inside of our observations. As far as the human eye can penetrate space by the aid of the most powerful telescope, we find matter; the most distant nebula and stars hint at others beyond; and as their light reaches us, there must be some-

thing — matter — between them and us on which the wave can travel, to tell us of their existence. The human mind can conceive of no space where it is not possible for matter to exist and where matter cannot penetrate, unless it be space that is under the control of an intelligent will force. You, as an intelligent will force, can expel matter from a small space, and make a vacuum to all your human senses; make a space in which no one of your five senses can detect any matter; and in order to grasp the fact that it does contain matter in some form, you have to appeal to your sixth sense; your ability to grasp a fact by induction; your ability to grasp a fact by the process of abstract reasoning; your ability to comprehend an idea without a material illustration; that mental attribute which allows you to comprehend the meaning of black marks on white paper, in the form of type, as conveying intelligence, other than a piece of paper with black marks on it. By this mental attribute you comprehend that the vacuum you have produced is not a perfect vacuum — that space is not a void. When this mental attribute has full scope of action, when this quality of the mind is not hampered by a physical body, it may be possible, under some conditions, for an intelligent will force to expel all matter from itself, and make for itself space unhampered by matter. I am told in my trance lectures that it is so — that it would be the Nirvana of the Buddhist; but I don't know from any experience of my own. But all this is speculation, and has no bearing on the question at issue. We will confine ourselves to the first two propositions.

“ In the first one, you ask if there are two distinct

principles in Nature — material and force — distinct from each other; emphatically, yes. In the second question, you ask if this force splits itself up into identities, and takes on intelligence. Again, yes; and I will go further, and say that it is this ability or capacity of force to take on intelligence which causes it to split into separate identities of force.”

“Please explain that assertion, Mr. Whitney,” said the doctor.

“A few moments ago you used the term ‘mother earth.’ It is the exact expression. We did come from the earth in more senses than one. You used it as applied to the material part of the human structure; I now use the same expression in speaking of that other part of the human structure, the intelligent force in the composition. (A human being is the result, primarily, of evolution, not involution. It was the result of force trying to leave the earth in the form of heat, which first caused crystalization, and then living organisms. In doing this it would, like force in any form, follow the line of the least resistance. To do this as a wave motion, it would follow the line of matter that was in the homogeneous condition; but this force is applied to matter that is in this equal state, in waves, in unequal proportions, at intervals of time. It is not in its action a constant equal current; but this force was received by this homogeneous mass in shocks or blows of force. Under this treatment the matter ceases to continue homogeneous, but becomes aggregated and attenuated. The direction of the force was outward from a center, as it meets with obstruction and is deflected from its original course to an angle from that course. The wave car-

ries matter with it, as the waves of the ocean will carry drift to the beach ; the matter that is drifted out from a common center aggregates around that common center, forming a cell, and organic life has commenced. But here is where the attribute of intelligence is first taken on in organic life. Up to this time the matter exerted no influence on the action of the force, except to offer uniform obstruction, but now that the action of the wave has changed this uniform condition of matter, it offers to force different phases of matter, different kinds and degrees of obstruction. Force, meeting and overcoming these different obstructions, has different experiences. Force having the quality of becoming intelligent, of learning by experience, retains these experiences, becomes individualized, as no two experiences are precisely the same. The crude force, like the crude material, forms different identities of force, as the crude material forms different material bodies. (All crude force which attempts to pass through crude matter meets with obstruction, and in overcoming that obstruction, gains intelligence ;) when such intelligence is gained, it becomes an identity of force. When any force has become an identity through the aid of material, it clings to all the material it can command, and when, from any cause, it loses control of a part of the material under its command, it will cling to all that it does command. A cell will carry into the realm of force all the material it can command ; a man will carry into the realms of force all the material he can command. The course of a force radiated from the earth is outward from a common center.

It is this direction of the line of force which makes a tree grow upward, and man stand upright."

"Whitney," says the doctor, "I comprehend what you are driving at so far, but there is one question I wish to ask you now, before we go further. You say that all organisms retain their identity as a force, after they have lost their identity as a material organism. If that is so, it is only fair to ask what becomes of them. Do the vegetable and animal kingdoms have a future state of existence? Is there a tree and a dog heaven? If not, what becomes of them?"

Joe laughed, as he said: "Doctor, I see you are after me sharp, but your question is a fair one, and I will try to answer you. The progress of evolution is by steps, not by jumps. Even in the same species, the up-building and refinement is slow and gradual. The survival of the fittest and natural selection do not account for this gradual improvement, for if each produced its kind without any other influences at work, while organic life might continue on the plane from which it started, viz., a single cell growth, if no other factors entered into the case, it would continue on that plane; if nothing but crude force and crude material entered into the problem, the product would be single cell organism. But you and I are above the single cell in organism; we are built better and grander; some force must have done it, and I will agree with you, it was not a miracle, but under some natural law. Now, starting with a single cell, what could have influenced it to become a double cell? It could not have been the crude force, for that did not know how to form a single cell until it had formed one, and then it held on to

it until its material organism was destroyed. Let us go back a little, and use an illustration. As the wave rolls in from the ocean it meets with an obstruction, and is deflected from its course. There is, at the same time, another action: the wave is broken into several smaller waves, or its ratio of vibration is increased; and while the force of the original wave spends itself in beating against the obstruction, it breaks into several waves; what is lost in volume is transferred into vibration. So it is with the crude force waves: they are broken in their volume, but their intensity or ratio of vibration is increased. They now move the material under their control faster. The matter which has now ceased to be atomic or homogeneous is molecular in its structure. The force has gained an intelligence; it has dealt with matter in a molecular condition; its ratio of vibration is increased; it cannot, or will not, go back and deal with crude matter, as it did before this experience, for this reason: it has under its control, as an intelligent force, some matter, although most of it was lost in its control when its organism was destroyed; and to come in contact with and control matter again, it must start from a point where matter and force are in as high a state of vibration as the single cell. To do this it must join its forces to a single cell that has not lost control of any of the matter of its composition by physical disorganization, and draw matter from this second cell; or, to speak roughly, become a sucker. The two forces aggregated together form not two single cell organisms, but one double cell organism, for the two forces combined have the experience of two single cells, plus the experience

gained by being a double cell organism. This experience binds them together as a life force or principle, and when they lose their physical organism in the double cell state, they do not return to a condition of two single cells, but retain their identity as a disembodied double-cell organized force. And if they have had their full play of force on matter, they gradually withdraw that action into a smaller space, controlling less matter, until the force is concentrated into the spore which, when again brought into contact with disorganized matter, gives to it its own ratio of vibration, losing its own identity as a force and material body, and becoming a new force and a new body. In this way, perpetuating itself as an intelligent force, and refining matter and itself by what might be called reincarnation of intelligent force, and producing new species by the uniting of two or more intelligent forces to produce a third. These laws have acted in the past, and are acting to-day."

"But wait a minute, Whitney," interrupted the doctor. "You used the word 'reincarnation.' Do you mean to assert that philosophy to be true; that you and I, that those whom you claimed to see standing behind me, will be reincarnated, will again enter and live in a physical body; to use the language of Nicodemus to Jesus, shall a man enter his mother's womb and be born again?"

"No, and yes," answered Joe. "What I mean to say is, the law of reincarnation is true and holds good up to man, and in some cases in man himself, although the language is not exact, for a man is never reincarnated. But then there may be cases in which the intelligent life force is a brute, and

belongs to the brute creation, while inhabiting a physical body human in its structure."

"But," said the doctor, "where shall we draw the line? If the intelligent force leaving the human body is not reincarnated in some instances, why are any reincarnated? Or, to put the question from an opposite point, if some are reincarnated, why not all? This statement of yours smacks of a miracle; it looks like a natural law working against itself to produce chaos." There was a trace of exultation in the doctor's voice as he finished by saying: "Now, Whitney, why are not all human intelligences reincarnated?"

Joe simply answered, "They don't wish to be."

"Explain," says the doctor.

"From the single cell, up to man," said Joe, "the life force has been gaining intelligence by its contact with and its control of matter; it has aggregated to itself many life forces to produce one higher; the one containing the life principle, the intelligence, the directing power of the many acting together, is the one higher. When the process is complete, the one, man, has attributes not possessed of any of the single life forces below, and is a complete man in every attribute up to this point. The forces have gained intelligence, and wield conscious power only in controlling masses of matter as compared to the force. Up to this point, it seeks to control all the matter possible. It has never been able to learn to gain intelligence without a material illustration; but man, as a complete man, has this new attribute, the ability to comprehend an abstract idea, to grasp a thought without a material illustration. The hu-

man intelligent force constructs an ideal mechanism in his intelligent force, not his brain, but his mind or spirit; (his brain is only the servant of this superior, and fashions material to fit the ideal.) There is nothing miraculous in this attribute, any more than that the double cell organism should possess properties not possessed by the single cell organism. Man, being a union of all the forces below him, develops this new attribute, and as this quality of his being is developed by a lifetime of experiences, he begins to seek knowledge. Intelligence on this plane brings him a realizing consciousness of his power over matter; he realizes that more power can be wielded, more knowledge gained in the realms of force than in the realms of material; becomes conscious that matter does not impart or retain intelligence; he learns that he can bend nature's laws and nature's matter to the force of his intelligent will; experience teaches him that masses of matter are rather a hindrance than a help to him in this plane of action; he comes to feel that his keenest enjoyments are obtained not by gratifying his animal or physical nature, but by gratifying this new attribute, this new intelligence the life force has developed by its aggregations; he aspires to a condition where these qualities of the life force shall not be hampered by masses of matter under imperfect control; desires to exist in a body free from the laws of gravity, that will allow perfect freedom of movement; and longs for a body where all the matter in the composition is under the conscious will of his own being; and if any portion don't suit him, but annoys his self-consciousness, by being only partly under his control, and gives aches and pains, he can

expel the offending matter and reconstruct it. No, doctor, as a rule, human intelligence don't want to come back and live this life over, and go through these old experiences again, any more than you will try to be a child and go through your school-days again, as another boy, commencing with his primer. He is conscious of the lessons they have taught, and don't care for the experience again. He is conscious of himself, — he is a self-conscious identity, — and don't care to lose that identity by uniting his forces to another, even though the two united should make a better than himself. You, doctor, would not care to lose yourself and become nothing, that a Cæsar might be born sometime in the future.

“As you said not long since, you hoped sometime, somewhere, to be able to gain this knowledge which you are now conscious of wanting; you hoped that in some place, at some time, you should find the friends you had lost; and, doctor, when that opportunity is offered, do you think you will throw all to one side to come back to be born as another, and lose your identity and the companionship of those friends of yours forever? Have life's experiences been so sweet to you that you would care to repeat them as another identity, living over the experiences in another physical body, when the very thing — the mental advancement you now seek — is offered on another plane of existence? No, doctor; I think when you are once out of this physical body, and realize the advantage you have over any one in a physical body, you will stay out if you can; and you can, if you will. In all your existence in a physical body you have been learning to bend what are called natural laws to your will, and if there was

a natural law that demanded it, you would use your self-conscious will-power to overcome the law. But there is not. If you ever are reincarnated, it will be because the intelligent force in you desires it. It will be a voluntary act on your part, as it is in every case."

"Whitney," said the doctor, "I understand you so far, but you have answered only half my question. If I admit the higher intelligent force, that man is not reincarnated for the reasons specified, why does it not apply to the lower intelligent forces?"

"Because," answered Joe, "they are reincarnated because they wish to be."

"But why should they wish it?" asked the doctor.

Joe's answer was, "They wish it for the reason that their intelligence has not developed to a plane where they can enjoy conscious existence away from a physical body, as well as they can in it; or, to put it differently, the highest and keenest pleasure they have ever known or experienced has been in connection with a physical body; they have not the mental attributes to comprehend distinctly an abstract idea, even in the highest animals; they rush to the highest plane of physical life of which they can conceive, which they have the mental ability to comprehend, and when they find matter in a higher animal form than that which they occupied before decarnation, that is vibrating with a ratio of vibration that they are capable of mingling with, they join their intelligent forces to that material body and lose their identity as an intelligent force. Suppose the case of a human embryo assailed by such a force: at first it might be the ruling or highest intelligent

force, but it loses its identity as a single life force by mingling its force with others, and as a rule ceases, or never has the controlling force, for that is under the control of the higher intelligence of the mother and the kind of life or species furnished by the father. This idea may seem repugnant to you, doctor, but if so, why should it be when you are glad to build up your physical body by eating the physical bodies of the lower animals. If you welcome the material organism of a lower animal, why not its mental organism or intelligent life force? But if the mother loses the hypnotic control, the life force will retain, if it can, its hold on the physical organism which it has entered, and the result would be a human monstrosity. Yes, doctor, the reason that the lower orders are reincarnated is, they desire to be. An organized force that has no mental aspirations beyond supplying its physical wants; that has never tasted enjoyment except through its physical senses; that has no conception of any other state of existence where it can find enjoyment,— would naturally seek that state of existence, and would embrace the first opportunity to return to a physical organism, whether during its last physical existence it had been classed as a man or a brute.”

“Well, Whitney, suppose after I am dead I should want to come back for some reason best known to myself, what do you think would be the result? Do you think it would be possible?” The doctor asked this in a laughing manner.

Joe laughed, and then looked more serious as he said: “It is a contingency that might arise, and what the result would be can only be a conjecture, a speculation, with me. But to suppose such a case:

suppose you had been in this freed state for a thousand or more years, gaining knowledge and wisdom, unhampered by a physical body, there would probably be many natural laws you would learn of; many things you would learn and know about of which you knew nothing at the time you left your physical body; you would probably learn by your vast experience many things no human being you would meet on the earth plane did know, or could comprehend after you had told them; and then suppose that you could catch the ratio of vibration in a human embryo, and join your forces to them, and you were reincarnated, what would be the result when you joined forces with this new embryo? You would lose none of the intelligence which your old force possessed, and while the intelligence possessed by this new identity might be hampered by the physical brain at its command to express itself, — might be limited in its power by a physical body, — the knowledge possessed would be vastly superior to that of other human beings with whom it was brought in contact. The Buddhists practically claim that this has been the life of Buddha. If this be so, it makes the preternatural birth and life of Christ possible, and substantiates the claim which He made when He said, 'Before Abram was, I am.' "

Here Mrs. Wilson interrupted, saying: "Gentlemen, I am tired, and my foot pains me, and I shall retire. You can sit here and discuss the question of life as much as you wish, but I will bid you good-night."

We all thought that we would do the same, the doctor remarking that he had some letters to write: one was to an aunt of his who had made her home

with his mother when he was a child, saying he wanted to find out about that sister of his of whom Joe had been telling him, but whom he had never seen.

The day's outing must have done me good, for I do not remember anything distinctly after touching my pillow until the first bell rang in the morning.

CHAPTER VI.

AT the breakfast table we all met, and were in the best of spirits; even the doctor and I managed to unbend a little from our dignity toward each other. The men walked down town; I to attend to some business and Joe and the doctor to amuse themselves, strolling about and looking at some of the industries of the town. At noon I arrived home, or what I now called home, at the Whitneys', for it really seemed more like a home than any place I had known since childhood, though I had only known them intimately for a few days, and had stayed in the house only one night. Joe and the doctor were there before me, and the two lady friends of Mrs. Wilson had arrived. We were introduced, and went out to lunch, or dinner as they called it.

It was not exactly a new experience to be in the company of so many ladies at once, but not a common one for me; in fact, so uncommon for me that I did not feel free. I left the burden of conversation to Joe and the doctor. Joe did not seem to be any more at ease than I, so the doctor had to do most of the talking, and he seemed to be equal to the occasion.

I suppose I ought to describe what these ladies looked like, and how they were dressed, but I did not notice just what their toilets were. It could not have been anything very loud, or uncommonly

plain; if it had been, I should be able to describe it; but I did notice their faces and manners.

Miss Slocumb was tall and dark. She looked, and every word and gesture would indicate that she was, patrician by birth. Mentally I compared her with Miss Frisbee, the other new-comer, and liked Miss Slocumb better. In no detail was Miss Frisbee her inferior. She was a tall, well-formed blonde, with polished manners, but on the whole she did not have that look of truthfulness and kind-heartedness that Miss Slocumb seemed unconsciously to express in every word and act; and then I compared them with Mrs. Wilson. Certainly at the first look both were more striking in appearance, and would be called handsome, but there was a certain way in which Mrs. Wilson's face would change as she talked, that made it light up or grow somber as the different moods of feeling were expressed in words, and after one had had half an hour's earnest conversation with her, it would be difficult to tell whether her eyes were black or gray, whether she was tall or short; and it was hardly necessary to take account of her words to catch her exact meaning as she talked. With Miss Frisbee it was the exact opposite: she was as fair as the moon, and about as distant and cold; while Miss Slocumb, though she was evidently proud and imperious, apparently did sometimes have an impulse and say and do things that were not based on cool calculation.

There were too many ladies in the house to allow of our smoking in the parlor. Probably Miss Frisbee would have extinguished us,— match, cigar and all with a look,— at such a suggestion.

So after lunch Joe invited us up to his den for a quiet smoke. The more I saw of Joe, the more I became convinced I never knew but one side of him; for his den, as he called it, looked like the picture of an old alchemist's laboratory: it consisted of two rooms, one a wing of the house. In the reception room, so-called, were a few chairs, a sofa, etc. The floor was covered with an oil-cloth; a square table in the center of the room contained books, a smoking set, with pipes, cigars, and tobacco. Under the table were cuspidores, while on two sides of the room were books; some of the titles I recognized, and some were not familiar in meaning after I had read them. There were fiction, scientific works, and religious works, and I noticed among the collection three or four bibles. In the back room were rows of shelves, on which were bottles; others held scales for weighing, glass rods, gradulators, and funnels. In one corner of the room was a sink with water, and next the chimney was a furnace. The other side of the room was occupied by a bench, on which were several electrical machines of different kinds, and some things of which I did not know the use. Taking it altogether it was, as he said, a "den."

We took seats in Joe's reception room for a pleasant chat and smoke. Joe and the doctor at once commenced to wander over the field of science, touching points here and there on chemistry, electricity, and physics. It appeared to be an interesting conversation for them, but not very for me, until they commenced to talk on the legal aspect of electricity, as used and generated for commercial purposes. When they struck into this field, they were

talking of something with which I was acquainted, and which interested me. Just then Mrs. Wilson called from the foot of the stairs, and asked if we had not smoked enough for once. We threw away our cigars, and went down to visit with the ladies. We had been talking small talk for an hour or more, when some one spoke of a recent death in New York from electricity. This brought to the front again the discussion that Joe and the doctor had left off in the den. After a time Miss Slocumb turned to me and asked my opinion, as a lawyer and a man, of the rights of the state to take life by electricity or in any other manner. Being appealed to directly, I was obliged to do my best as a leader in the conversation. I attempted to evade the opportunity by saying, I thought the state had as good right to take the life of a criminal by electricity as in any other way; that I did not see how it could be construed as extreme cruelty, or torture; and if the state had the right, which legally it undoubtedly had, to take life as a capital punishment, it also had the right to decide the means by which that life should be taken.

Miss Slocumb flashed up in a minute. She spoke straight through her reserve of dignity, and I liked her better for it. She said, "Mr. Wilson, you evade my question by telling me what the state has a legal right to do. You know full well that is not the question I asked you, but rather for your views, as a lawyer and a man, on a question of right and wrong. Will you please give it me?"

I saw evasion would not do with this woman. I had better talk what I thought, and talk honestly, or keep still, and she would not let me do that. I

answered her by saying, "I once had an opportunity of being prosecuting attorney, and after mature deliberation refused the chance, for fear that there might be a murder case offered for me to prosecute, knowing that I should make a failure if I ever tried to hound a man to his death, in upholding what in my inmost soul I believed to be unjust and unwarrantable law; and as I preferred not to disgrace myself, I would not put myself in a position where I knew I should, if the necessity ever arose for me to prosecute a murderer."

"Now," said she, "Mr. Wilson, you talk like a man and not like a lawyer, and I can understand you. I don't believe it is right either to hang or kill people in cold blood. I know it's wrong. You may ask me how I know, if you wish, and I will give you what you may call a woman's reason; I know it is wrong, and that is reason enough for me. I do wish you would give me your reason. You have probably arrived at the same conclusion I have by some process of reasoning, and I would like to know what that process was."

I saw that I was in for it, and must show my hand, and I answered her in this way: "Before civilization, when every man's protection was his own prowess, the one dependence man had to protect himself and prolong life was his own ability to kill all that crossed his path in life. The first dawn of civilization changed this, to make a capital crime against one a crime against the whole tribe or community, and the same spirit of revenge, murder, or self-protection that actuated the one before any communities were formed, was now formulated into a law, and became the motive which moved the tribe

or community. But as civilization advanced, it came to be clearly seen that there were different degrees and kinds of murder; that a man in self-defense might commit a murder and be really guilty of no wrong against the community as a whole; that there was such a thing as a justifiable homicide, constituting murder in the fourth degree. Then it was seen that a man might, by gross carelessness, take one or perhaps many lives, and while there was no malice aforethought and no harm or wrong had been intended, wrong and harm had been done the community, and the old idea of revenge had been handed down from semi-civilization which called for revenge — an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But some glimmering of reason had been brought to bear to offset this senseless idea of revenge against no malice intended, and they created the next degree of murder, murder in the third degree. But it was soon seen, as civilization advanced, that even this did not cover all the mitigating circumstances that might be offered in defense of the remaining cases, for society came to understand that one man might kill another outright, and yet there were circumstances to be taken into consideration which would make still another division. A man might, where no weapon was used, or in the heat of passion with no premeditation, strike a blow that would cause the death of his fellow man, and society makes still another division, and creates murder in the second degree, still clinging to the old idea of revenge. And lastly comes murder in the first degree; and we come now to society that has not advanced beyond its old tribal relations, where a few took up the quarrels of the one and decided that

where premeditation was proven, the many should have revenge, and execute the one disclaiming revenge, but claiming the moral right to execute because there were many in favor; but in doing the act, urging premeditation as the crime and not the killing — here is where to me the illogical position of society is shown. If they come out boldly and claim revenge was the motive, as it is in a lynching party, the argument would be confined to the question as to whether in a civilized state lynching for revenge was right or wrong. But no, society dodges the issue by claiming that murder is a means of moral reform; claims that society as a whole can do a certain act to promote morality, and yet it is a crime for the individual to copy the act of society as a whole. They also decide that the crime does not lay so much in the mere act of killing as in the premeditation which is proven; but to my mind (no more ghastly case of premeditation can be shown than twelve men, a judge, attorney, and sheriff discussing, perhaps for weeks, the quibbles and quirks of law, and finally deciding to shuffle a human being into eternity, regardless of the preparation of their victim; and then to have them pose as moral reformers, nauseates me with disgust.) Conspiracy to murder is one of the highest of crimes, but if a greater den of conspiracy can be found than a prosecuting attorney's office when a man's life is at stake, where is it? And yet that is only the focal point of the conspiracy, which reaches in its ramifications every citizen in the state who upholds such a law. How can it be right for a million people to take a life, when it is wrong for one? Does might

make right? If it does then civilization is a farce, and we have lessons to learn from the savage."

"But," said the doctor, "would you abolish capital punishment; how then could society protect itself?"

"Shut them up, and keep them shut up," I answered. "By constitutional amendments make it impossible for them to get out as free men. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and if a man is dangerous to society, society has the right to demand he shall be removed to a safe place. You confine lunatics because they have lost their reason, and are dangerous. If a man has so lost his reasoning powers that he does not value the life of his fellow man, he is like the lunatic, dangerous, and should be confined; but what right have the many to take the life of the one, when it can never remedy a mistake?"

"Very true, Mr. Wilson," said the doctor, "but society makes many mistakes, and punishes sometimes for other crimes falsely."

"Doctor," I asked, "do two wrongs make one right; because society convicts and imprisons a man falsely for theft, does it make it right that it should kill another on false reasoning? Would it not be better, when society sees that such a mistake has been made, to compensate as far as possible the one wronged, rather than make two in order to form a precedent?"

Miss Slocumb said: "Mr. Wilson, I am with you on this question, if we never agree on another," and turning to Joe asked, "What do you think, Mr. Whitney?" His answer was, "I would abolish capital punishment."

"But why?" persisted Miss Slocumb; "do you come to the conclusion from a woman's point of reasoning, or a lawyer's?"

"Neither," answered Joe; and I was wondering what reason he would give; and when asked to explain his answer, he appeared uneasy, but finally said he would perhaps sometime in the future, but would beg to be excused just at present, for he could not quite define what he wanted to say.

Miss Frisbee, who had been standing by the window, remarked what a pleasant day it was, and expressed the wish to go for a walk, if Mrs. Wilson was only well. Mrs. Wilson would not listen to her staying in after that, and as the doctor begged the privilege of accompanying her, Mrs. Wilson turned to the rest of us and told us we had best go too, as she had some household duties to attend to; so we all concluded to walk; but just as we were ready to start, Joe begged to be excused, saying he had some experiments in the works that needed his attention, and went up to his den, leaving Miss Slocumb and me alone, the doctor and Miss Frisbee having reached the walk. I did not like the turn of affairs, but there was nothing for me to do but to make the best of it.

After talking of the weather a few moments, Miss Slocumb said, "Mr. Wilson, May told Annie and myself when we came this morning, all about you and she being married in that strange way. It is a queer situation, as good as a romance, but I thank you for being May's friend, and think it a noble act in you."

She talked to me in this strain, while I did not know what to reply. I was as stupid as a school-

boy, until a sudden idea struck me to make her my confidant. The doctor and Miss Frisbee were so far ahead they were out of ear-shot, so I turned to her and said:

“Miss Slocumb, I wish you would be my friend.”

She looked at me in astonishment, and said: “Why, I am. Haven’t I been trying to tell you for the last few moments that I am?”

“Yes,” I answered, “that is all right, but that is not what I mean.”

“Well, what on earth do you mean, Mr. Wilson?”

“Hang it, Miss Slocumb, I don’t know how to talk to ladies, anyway. What I mean is, I am sick of my bargain with Mrs. Wilson, and want it changed.”

“Why, of course,” she says. “I understand you are in a hurry for that divorce, so you can pay your attentions to another. But let me tell you, you will go quite a way before you ever find a better wife than the one you now have.”

At this moment the doctor and Miss Frisbee came up, and any further conversation on this subject was cut short. We made a party of four as we walked back to the house. I was mad inside, to think that my conversation had been broken in upon in this manner, by the two whom I called interlopers. But I determined to resume it at the first opportunity, and make Miss Slocumb my friend and confidant. After this, for some reason, Miss Slocumb appeared to avoid me, and although I connived to have an interview with her, I could not get it.

Tea was ready in a short time after our arrival from our walk, and we spent the evening in listen-

ing to some music. I was not surprised to know that the others could sing and play, but it was a surprise to me to hear Mrs. Wilson play in the manner she did. To my uncritical ear, her playing was perfect; while Joe surprised us by showing he had a splendid bass voice; and with the doctor for tenor, and Miss Slocumb and Miss Frisbee for soprano and alto, there was as fine a quartette as I had ever heard; and as I could do nothing but listen, they had an audience of one. After the music, they made up a card party for the remainder of the evening, and there were no more discussions that day. The social experience was new to me, and I enjoyed it, and should have been perfectly happy had I not worried about my suit with Mrs. Wilson.

The next morning, as I lay in my bed thinking, there was one thing I could not understand. That was, why did Miss Slocumb avoid me after claiming to be my friend? I resolved to have another talk, and finish that interview at the first opportunity, and enlist her in my case against the doctor.

When we assembled after breakfast, Joe and the doctor commenced another discussion. They had been talking but a few moments, when the ladies took a part in it. Joe and the doctor were talking about the origin of man and life, when Miss Frisbee interrupted by saying: "Doctor, don't you believe the Bible? Don't you believe that Adam was the first man?"

Evidently the doctor was like the man between the devil and the deep sea. I knew from what he had said in the past that he regarded the whole biblical account of the creation of man, from a literal point of view, as a myth; and yet he wanted to please

the ladies, so he evaded replying by asking her what she thought. She evidently was not as good in debate as Miss Slocumb, for she took the bait and told what her beliefs were. She told him that she had been a church member since she was nine years of age, and that she believed the Bible implicitly, in every detail; that she thought it was the revealed word of God, and that all seeming mysteries should be taken and accepted by faith; that it was a sin for any one to doubt the literal truthfulness of the Bible. The rest of the company were silent, and awaited the doctor's answer. He did not know what to say. We were all looking at him, and for the first time since I had made his acquaintance he looked flustered; but he finally straightened up and said that the question of the Bible and theological discussion had not interested him much in the past, and did not have much interest for him at present; that he was more interested in scientific matters. To me it looked as if the doctor had more brains than moral courage, and for the first time since that ride I was thoroughly pleased with his conduct, for, as I glanced at Mrs. Wilson, I could see by the expression of her face that she was disappointed in him, for she could not but remember the way he broke out on Joe that first night. At that time he had shown knowledge of the Bible, and several bibles, and seemed to take an interest in the subject; but then, that was before he had met Miss Frisbee. Evidently the position he took did not please Joe, for he entered into the argument with more spirit than I had seen him evince before, as he said:

“Miss Frisbee, do I understand you to say you

believe literally in all the recorded miracles,— that Jonah was swallowed by a whale; that the sun stood still, or in other words, the earth stopped on its axis; that the universe was made in six days; that a dead man was ever raised to life?"

"Certainly I do," she replied. "Don't you, Mr. Whitney?"

"Most assuredly I don't," answered Joe, "believe anything of the kind. I think it is all nonsense, designed by a lot of priests and rulers to gain power over an ignorant people, whom they did not have the physical power to rob, so they concocted this scheme of jugglery and traditional miracles to dupe their ignorance and rob them through their superstitious fears; and the same priestly class that originated this false teaching in the past is to-day keeping up the fallacy for the same purpose—to rob the superstitious of the present, who will accept any statement, no matter how ridiculous, through blind faith. There may have been some honest but mistaken men in the past who taught these absurd teachings as literal truths; there may be some to-day, but as a class their motives are based on self-interest; they, as a class, demand higher pay for a less amount of work than any other class of men in the community. (Occasionally one may be found who will breast public opinion and teach a right because it is right) but as a class they teach only dogmas of the past, and are on the popular side, and teach that which will bring them the most money and the most power. As a proof of this, look at the course of the church on the slavery question. The church in the North believed slavery right, and proved it by the Bible, until it

had grown unpopular to the public; in the South they taught it as right until war showed them they were wrong. They have never led in any great moral reform, but followed after the masses have demanded it. As a class they have opposed every advance in science until it became an established fact, and then tried to patch their dogmas to meet the emergency; and to prove that this is not the opinion of one, but of a majority of the inhabitants of this miscalled Christian country, I will cite you the fact that in New York City alone two-thirds of the inhabitants owe allegiance to no church, and the ratio holds good throughout the rest of the country; while in my circle of acquaintance I know from observation that a large share of those who do attend and support the church, do so *not* because they believe their teachings right, but in some cases the motive is policy,— as a means to an end. The advantage to be gained is perhaps respectability, position in society, making the church a kind of genteel club-house for both sexes; and others may be actuated by higher motives, and really want to do good in some way, and support the church because they don't know of anything better, while in their hearts they don't believe one statement in ten the priest or minister makes to them, or the dogmas and articles of faith to which they subscribe. The masses that do own affiliation to the different church organizations, as a whole, are head and shoulders above and beyond the teachings of the church to which they belong, and are good people, not because they belong to the church, but in spite of the fact that they are church members; and while there is much that is beautiful, grand, and good in the

Bible, the same can be said of any of the sacred writings of different nations. But where can the beautiful and good be found in the dogmas and teachings of the churches which teach an everlasting torture, or a sacrifice of blood? How is it possible for anything but violence, contention, and robbery of human rights, to come from the murder of an innocent man; the very vitalizing center of the whole scheme of vicarious atonement is founded on the idea of a sacrifice, a murder of the innocent that the guilty may escape the results of their own acts. The same line of reasoning, carried to its logical conclusion, justifies all the persecutions and all the murders of the past which have been done to sustain the dogmas taught by the church. This idea teaches, if a man stands in the way of the church, murder him, sacrifice him for the good of the church; and reduced to a practical application to your life and mine, means, if a man stands in our way kill him for our own good; which is barbarism pure and simple."

"But, Mr. Whitney, to quote your own words, you say many are church members through pure motives to do good, and support the church because they don't know anything better. Now, do you know anything better?" asked Miss Frisbee.

"Yes," replied Joe. "From my standpoint I know many institutions that are better than a church. I consider a public school, or a public hospital, better than a church. I consider a church a blessing to a community, so far as it is a benevolent institution; but so far as it is a temple of fetich worship, a curse; so far as it helps the unfortunate and ignorant, and inculcates lessons of morality and

charity of man for man, it is good. But I consider its influence bad just so far as it suppresses the reason and intelligence of a community; just so far I consider it a curse; and just so far as a minister or priest helps mankind in their physical welfare, and teaches men to be kind and good to their fellow men in this life, they are good men for the community; but just so much as they teach church dogmas and crush out thought, and teach vicarious atonement as a means of escape from all the wickedness man does, they are a curse to the community. I consider a help to my fellow man a tangible good, energies directed in a good cause; but I consider all time, money, and ability used in the adoration and blind worship of a mythical something, as a waste of energy, producing no good, but promoting ignorance; means which had better be applied to the uplifting of mankind from within, and not in attempting to help him from without by means we know nothing about. No, Miss Frisbee, I do not believe a personal God ever wrote a book, any more than he made a printing press to print it. I don't believe he ever ordained a lot of priests, ministers, or dervishes to stand between him and the people of the earth; and they can show no authority for their position, except what they have conferred upon each other in some mutual admiration convention; and, understand me, I am not making this charge simply against the so-called Christian religion, but against all the religions, for they all support a priestly class and prevent free thought and advancement of the human race, so far as lies in their power. If you claim that the length of time a tradition or teaching has been taught makes

the claim valid, then Buddhism must be nearer right than Christianity; and if might makes right, and numbers are to decide the question of what is right or wrong, then Mohammedanism or Confucianism must decide the question; but if good common sense is to be the touchstone, then they are all composed of some true philosophy, all present some moral truth, mixed with a mass of rubbish and error; and I do believe (they all contain some truth and good, and principally in the morality which is taught;) but in that line the Koran is better than the Bible, excepting on the one question pertaining to polygamy."

I was surprised to hear Joe talk so vehemently. There was certainly no mistaking his sentiments in regard to all the sacred writings, the Bible included. I felt a curiosity to know Miss Slocumb's views, but she preserved a silence.

Miss Frisbee then answered him by saying, "Very well, Mr. Whitney, if you are an infidel there can be no common ground on which we can meet, for I firmly believe without any question in the teachings of the Bible, and in no other book or writings. I believe in the prophesies, and in Christ as the Son of God; that he was born of the Virgin Mary, to save fallen mankind from everlasting punishment by fire, and all those who do not believe in him will be everlastingly punished,—if not by actual fire, by something which can only be typified by fire. I believe in all the miracles, in the second coming of Christ, the judgment, and the resurrection of the body; and what is more, I don't want to believe or think anything different, no matter how logical it may appear."

She was not apparently excited, but said it in a cold, determined way, that could not be shaken by any argument. When she had finished giving us a synopsis of her fundamental religious beliefs, Joe said: "Miss Frisbee, if I understand rightly, you believe in an orthodox hell of endless torment, for a person who dies without having professed a faith in the saving power of Christ from what is called the fall of man through Adam?"

She answered in a cool, decided manner, "Yes, I believe every word to be true."

"Very well," said Joe, "I have only one more question to ask you, and that is this: did you ever lose a friend, or a brother, or perhaps a father, who did not profess such a faith?"

She did not answer this question as readily as the others, but hesitated. Joe did not press the question, but observed, "I have noticed that as a rule an orthodox hell is always made for the dead friend of some stranger;" and turning to me proposed that we should walk down town; and I readily accepted, for I wished to have a talk with him by myself. We invited the doctor to accompany us, but he claimed he preferred the company of the ladies to a stroll in the rain, so I had Joe to myself once more.

CHAPTER VII.

I was getting tired of the promise I had made him, and began to think I should be a thousand years old before that month was up.

We had hardly reached the sidewalk before Joe opened on me by saying: "George, I always thought you a constant man — a man who when you once got an idea into your head, would not let it go until you had either succeeded or utterly failed."

I interrupted him with, "Well, what is the matter now?"

"Nothing much," said he, "only what can be fixed in a short time. But Miss Slocumb told May this morning that you were anxious for that divorce."

"She is a falsifier!" I exclaimed. "What ever made her make up such a lie as that? Why, it was only last night I was trying to get her to be my friend and help me out, as I could not say anything to Mrs. Wilson without breaking my promise to you. I was going to get her to speak for me, and now she tells this out-and-out falsehood. Why, Joe, that woman must be thoroughly bad, and yet I thought her so good. What kind of things are women anyway, Joe; do you know anything about them?"

"Not much, George. But tell me what you said last night; perhaps she is not so bad as you think."

I then told him what I had said, as near as I

could remember. When I had finished, Joe said: "Well, I understand now. I see where you made your mistake. You told a woman one-half of a story, and she surmised the rest. I don't know much about women, George, but I have learned one thing: if you tell a woman one-half a story, she will jump at a conclusion for the rest, and nine times out of ten come to the wrong one. And, George, I will give you one bit of advice gratis: if you are going to tell a woman a story, begin in the middle and talk both ways, so they won't get an idea of what you are driving at until you get through."

"That's all very well for talk, but how am I going to get out of this scrape? You must help me."

"All right," he said, "I will straighten that out for you." And then I told him what I wanted, and that was to be released from that promise; that I could not wait a month. He laughed at me again, and said, "George, do you think the same rules will govern a matter of this kind that govern a stock speculation? No, George, it can't be done. You just wait a little, and take time, and if you don't need any time to know what you want, don't think that others do not. I want to see you win, and don't want you to spoil it all by rushing things through. You came near upsetting the dish last night. You are not satisfied with that, but want to begin again to-day. You keep cool, George; just keep cool and wait."

"But I can't wait, Joe. I want it all settled now."

"But how do you know, George, that May wants you? Do you want to risk all on such a short acquaintance?"

I could not tell him of that interview we had in the hall that noon just after we were married; there was nothing to tell; there was an expression in her eyes I remembered, but I could not define it. So we changed the subject, and strolled around the town until dinner time. After dinner, I made up my mind that if I could not talk with Mrs. Wilson, I would talk with Miss Slocumb, and get her set right in this matter.

She was standing by the window alone, as I stepped up to her, and in so low a tone the rest in the room could not hear, said to her, "Miss Slocumb, you made a sad mistake last night in not hearing me through. I don't want any divorce, and I want you to take another walk with me now, so I can explain the whole situation to you, and then I want you to help me."

There was a look of amazement on her face as she said, "Is it possible? I will go," and at once went for her wraps. The day had become pleasant. The rest of the company asked us why we were going out on the wet walks; why not wait until they were dry. Miss Slocumb, laughing, told them she preferred the water to the dust.

I will give her credit for not interrupting me in my talk. I told my story through; about my change of motives, and what I now wanted; of the rivalry with the doctor, and my promise to Joe, and the conversation I had with him that morning. When I finished, she stopped in her walk, was silent a moment, and then broke into a laugh. It irritated me, and if I spoke as I felt, it must have been impatiently, as I said, "Well, what are you laughing at?" At this she laughed the more. As I stood looking

at her the thought came into my mind, "I wonder if any man ever yet knew how to interpret the actions of a woman." If such a man existed, I would like to meet him and have a short talk with him, for my limited experience had given me no knowledge. In fact, I did not know as much about them as I did when a boy; but the more I saw and mingled with women, the less I knew about them.

She stopped laughing after a time, and said: "Well, this is good. You and the doctor fighting over your own wife, and you making silly promises to her brother not to tell her you want her for a wife, after you have married her, and at the same time do want her. Really, Mr. Wilson, I think men are the queerest things imaginable, and have no more sense in some things than a lot of geese. If you want May for your wife, why in the world don't you go and tell her, and not come and tell me, though I do thank you for your confidence; the next most interesting thing in the world to receiving a proposal yourself is to receive one for your friend;" and then she broke into another laugh at my expense.

This was no laughing matter to me, if it was to her; it was business; and then to be laughed at! I was growing mad with the whole sex. To have my serious talk met with ridicule nonplussed me. I did not know what to say, so I stood there like a wooden post, and looked at her. When she had laughed to her heart's content, she said: "Well, Mr. Wilson, I will do all I can for you, but don't you know you can have more influence with May by one look than I can have in a week's talk?"

"Great Scott! Miss Slocumb," said I, "how shall

I look?" And then she laughed at me again and said, "I see, Mr. Wilson, you are incorrigible, but I will help you all I can;" and with another laugh said, "I think you need it."

There was but one part of her speech I understood, but that was sufficient; she would help me, and that was all I cared for. I was satisfied thus far.

On the way back I asked her pardon for the hard things I had said to Joe about her in the morning. I felt penitent. I did not tell her all I said; only that under the impulse of the moment, I did not speak very kindly of her. She said she guessed there was nothing to pardon, for she ought not to have decided so quickly; but it never entered her mind that a man could act so foolishly, and when I spoke of being sick of the bargain, she supposed of course that I meant I wanted to be legally free again, and finished with the inconsistency, that I ought to have told her the whole, not taking into consideration that she had interrupted me every time after I had fairly commenced, and then the doctor and Miss Frisbee made it impossible for me to finish.

We had music and general conversation until tea, and after tea the men of the party took a stroll to have their evening smoke. The doctor and I had about buried our little differences; that is, we were social in a half-hearted way. I admired him as a brilliant and learned man, of good character, but there was a certain confidence that he did not inspire in me. While he seemed to be thorough in scientific matters, and in pursuit of knowledge in

this direction, in other respects there was a trace of the superficial; he did not seem to take anything seriously but for a short time, and although he would appear deeply in earnest while discussing a subject, it would after a time seem as if the truth of what he had said applied to some one else, rather than to himself. But to investigate and gain knowledge seemed to be a mania with him; not to make any personal application of the knowledge after gaining it, but to get it, as a miser might hoard gold that he would never use.

After the walk was done, and we were all assembled in the house for the evening, the doctor turned to Joe and said, "Whitney, there are some things you have said, or hinted at, once or twice in the last few days, of which I want you to explain to me the meaning from your standpoint. I want to learn your side of this whole question of life."

"Very well," said Joe. "What is your wish? I will state my views as clearly as I can."

"Well, Whitney, what I now refer to are those two instances; the first one, when we were speaking of dreams, you told how an influence might be thrown upon you from an invisible source, that would cause you misery. Answer me that, or rather explain. And the other is, you did not answer Miss Slocumb when she asked your views on capital punishment, or only partially answered her. Now I want you to elucidate."

Joe was silent a moment, and we all looked at him curiously. He began in his old hesitating way by saying: "Nearly all the older traditions and writings, including the Bible, speak of evil and good spirits, sometimes as demons and fairies, or as

devils and angels. Attributes and power are ascribed to them, but underlying all these writings, stories, and traditions, is the one central idea that somewhere are invisible intelligent beings, exerting upon the lives of people a greater or less amount of influence, for good or evil; and while science laughs at the idea of any beings existing in an invisible form, all religious doctrines teach it to be a fact that such beings exist somewhere, in some shape, the ones we are best acquainted with in this country being the angels and one devil, as taught by the orthodox religions. Many people have discarded the devil, but still cling to the angel theory, and that at death their friends become angels. And those who profess no religious beliefs of any kind, will often claim that they believe a dead father, mother, or perhaps a little child who was very dear to them, still lingers near and is their guardian angel, and exerts an influence for good over their lives; and I know this to be true, from my own experience. But then, doctor, of course because I know it, it is not a scientific fact to you."

"But," continued Joe, "these same people who are perfectly willing to believe in angels for good because they want it so, refuse to believe that bad angels, devils, or in other words, disembodied and invisible human beings with malicious dispositions, can exist; and the only reason they will not believe it to be possible, is because they do not want it to be true. But if a good man lives after the process of death, a bad man lives after death. If there are natural laws that will allow a good person in a future state of existence to influence the lives of persons here for good, then the same natural laws

will allow a bad and malignant man in an invisible form to influence a person for evil; and if a person will accept one conclusion, he must accept the other. This may not be as pleasing a view to take of a being in a future state of existence, but (if a man is good, it is his mental structure, his intelligent life force that is good, not his physical organism.) The same can be said of a bad man: if he is vicious, it is his intelligent life force that is vicious, not his physical structure, for some of the most depraved persons the world has ever known were, so far as physical structure went, magnificent; while some of the best and noblest of mankind have been housed in physical structures that were total wrecks. If, doctor, you admit that it is the intelligent life force that is bad, you will have to admit that if he retains his identity in a future state of existence, he will have to commence where he left off here; and if he was bad here, when he commences in a new state of existence,—in order to retain his identity and be the same person—he will have to commence as bad as he was when he was here. It would be miraculous, and against the natural law of progression, for a bad man, by simply going out of an old house into the open air, to become a saint, or a fool to become a wise man; not that the bad man may not grow in time to be good, and the fool to become wise.”

Here Miss Frisbee interrupted by saying, “Mr. Whitney, don’t you think all things are possible with God?”

There was a trace of impatience in Joe’s voice as he said, “All things may or may not be possible with God; I don’t know. But I do know all things

are not possible with men, and it is men we are talking about, not an orthodox God; and I also know that a fool cannot become Daniel Webster, and be a fool. And if, by any hocus-pocus snap-of-the-finger nonsense, the fool is changed into a Webster, he ceases to be a fool, and the fool is blotted out of existence to become some one else, and is annihilated. Such a clap-trap arrangement as this would be as apt to work one way as another, and Daniel Webster might be hoodooed into a fool, and Webster become annihilated. No, Miss Frisbee, what a God might do I don't know; but what a man does after death is to wake up and come to his mental existence in about the same condition he left here; and if he was bad, he goes into the other world bad; and if good and well disposed, he goes into the other world with a disposition to help his fellow men." "But," said the doctor, "how does this affect those who are not dead? how can that possibly affect you and me?"

"Doctor," said Joe, "when you hypnotize or mesmerize a subject, do you use psychic force or a lance? do you try to do it with a club, or with some mental process? did you ever control a subject in your life without using more or less mental effort?"

"I suppose not," the doctor answered.

"Then," said Joe, "if you used your mental effort and produced so much result, when hampered by a physical body, don't it appear plausible that with every mental attribute you now possess, and much more knowledge gained in a new condition, and unhampered by a physical body, it would be possible for you to exert as much influence as now, or even more?"

"Perhaps it might be so," said the doctor. "But let me understand you perfectly. You intend to say that disembodied human beings are the angels and devils of the present beliefs, and that decarnated human beings were the demons or fairies of the older beliefs, and that they can exert a greater or less amount of influence on human beings who are living in a physical body, by what is practically a hypnotic influence."

"You have stated my meaning exactly," said Joe.

"Very well," resumed the doctor; "can you give me any illustration of how such an influence would work — any clue by which I could, as one might say, diagnose a case of this kind, and determine the exact desire or kind of devil that was troubling?" The doctor said this in a supercilious, sarcastic manner, that evidently irritated Joe, for he answered:

"I might give you my idea, but from your manner I judge your opinion is already formed, and I should only be talking against a prejudiced opinion; so I don't think I will."

It was the doctor who was provoked now, as he showed by his manner. "Well, Whitney, I would like to hear what you have to say, but, really, you can't expect me to believe you in this theory, for I have made this subject a study for years, and know something about mental influences myself."

"Very well," says Joe, "I have no wish to crowd my knowledge or opinions on you; so, as I said a moment ago, we will not talk any more about it."

"But, Whitney, my dear fellow," said the doctor, "I do want to hear what you have to say, only I wanted to tell you that I did not think I could

believe any such radical ideas; but go ahead, and tell me what you think, and perhaps I may think differently in time."

"All right, doctor," said Joe. "But there is one thing I want you to distinctly understand, and that is this: that my future happiness does not depend upon what you may, or may not, think or believe. You want my idea of how such an outside influence might affect a person in a physical body. Doctor, did you ever have a kleptomaniac for a patient? I don't mean a thief who had a motive in stealing, one who would steal what he wanted, but one who would steal what he had no use for—a person who stole a thing for the sake of stealing, when he had every motive and inducement not to steal."

"Yes," replied the doctor, "I have had such a patient in a young girl of wealthy parents, and the best of home influences. The parents considered it a mental disease, and brought her to me to be treated."

"Well," said Joe, "did you treat her?"

"Why, how could I treat her?" said the doctor. "There was nothing the matter with her, only she would steal. I could not give nerve tonics for that. Her nerves were all right."

"But, doctor, did you ever try a hypnotic treatment on a patient of that kind?" questioned Joe.

"Certainly not," said the doctor. "And if I should, and succeeded in a cure, how can you show that that had anything to do with an outside and unseen influence?"

"In just this way," replied Joe. "If you succeeded in a cure by the use of an outside mental influence, it logically follows that the person is sus-

ceptible to outside mental influences; the person has no motive to steal, but does steal; is cured by an outside mental influence directing him not to steal. Two quantities in this problem are now known, from which we draw the third; the person was caused to steal by a similar outside unseen influence, by using the same power which you use to prevent him from stealing."

"Very well, Whitney, I understand what you mean, and if another case is ever brought me, I will give the treatment a trial for experiment's sake. But what is your philosophy; how do you think the law works? Give me your theory."

"In this way," said Joe. "The person who is so influenced by outside influences has in his composite of forces some forces that are not under complete control of the whole; that is, in the aggregate of forces in his body there are some that are not under complete control of their higher attributes, and can be controlled by the higher attributes of another for good or bad purposes. Every human being is to a greater or less extent in this condition, especially in their younger years. The same law of nature that makes a child more easily influenced than an adult, by persons who are visible to physical eyes, makes them more susceptible to unseen influences. If a child, in its younger years, is assailed by an outside influence, some hold gained, and that outside influence is persistent, in time it becomes more and more pliable to that influence. If it does not exert its own will, or the will of another is not exerted in opposition, the result will be that in time the child almost becomes the creature of another's will, and that other an unseen person; or, in other words, the

brain comes under the control, not of its own intelligent force or spirit, but the intelligent force or spirit of another; and after a time the brain becomes as used to obeying the orders of an outside force as an order from its own natural ruler. You, doctor, have probably observed that the oftener you hypnotize a subject the more easily you can do so, and the more completely he becomes a creature of your will.

“To illustrate: suppose two lagoons or ponds, side by side, with a strip of beach between them, and there comes a storm in one direction and makes a slight breach in the sands of the beach, and each successive storm is in the same direction, and widens and deepens the breach until the wave of one flows through into the other without interruption, and the lake that ought to be disturbed only by its own internal agitation, is now disturbed by every agitation, by every pulsation of the other. So your outside influence breaks through the barriers that your hypnotic subject has built up around himself, and the waves and pulsations of your intelligent force flow through, and the matter of his brain not only obeys the waves and pulsations of his own intelligent force, but obeys the waves and motion imparted by your outside intelligent force which controls your brain. The matter of that brain is now like a lily-pad floating on a pond, which vibrates not only to the waves and ripples belonging to itself, but to the waves that flow in through the breach of its barriers; and your hypnotic subject becomes, to a greater or less extent, the creature of your will.”

“That is very well, Whitney, for you to explain

how a subject to my influence can receive an influence from me. But how am I to prevent the same subject from continuing to receive these deleterious influences from a bad source?"

"By offering an equally violent storm from an opposite direction. The waves coming together will soon construct another barrier, which will soon protect the second lagoon from the outside influences of the first; and considering the water in the second lagoon like the intelligent life force in a man, his spirit will, if he understands the source of his danger, exert its own mental force to build up and strengthen the barrier; and while you could not keep out for all time all encroaching, malignant influences, by building up the barrier once, you could for the time being; and after that the true life force in the person assailed could assert itself; but before you built the barrier it might have been so under the power of the outside influence that it could not exert, as a will force, its own desire. Understand me, I have used the barrier of the sand beach only as an illustration. I do not intend to say this barrier is matter of any kind, but is the vibrations of the individual will force of the subject, and the reason you can hypnotize some subjects and not others is, that every individual intelligent force has its own distinct ratio of vibration, and those you can hypnotize have a ratio of vibration that harmonizes as a multiple of your own; and the reason that you cannot hypnotize others is, because there is no harmony or common ground between you through which you can reach them. But because you cannot hypnotize a certain person, it does not follow that another cannot; and the only person who can-

not be hypnotized is the person who cannot be influenced by any one; and the only person who cannot use this power is the person who can influence no one."

"Very well, Whitney," said the doctor, "so far, so good. But what other symptoms are shown that you would ascribe to these outside influences; are there any besides kleptomania?"

"Many," said Joe. "In fact, in every case where the person that is doing the wrong and is penitent, and in his better moments honestly wants to do different, but has no will power of his own when temptation comes,—persons you would call weak; they are weak; they are assailed by an unseen influence that overpowers them, sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another, but in all cases where there is no motive, and especially if the inducements of life ought to produce another line of action. Take, for example, a periodical drunkard, or perhaps a sot, who will tell you with tears in his eyes—who will mean, and honestly mean, every word he says—that he don't wish to drink; who has every motive and inducement in the world not to drink, and yet at times these spells will come upon him, and it seems as if he would barter his soul for a stimulant, and becomes practically insane on the question of drink. Such persons, doctor, I think are under a hypnotic condition from an unseen influence, and can best be reached and cured by a hypnotic treatment from some one who can bring as strong or stronger influence to bear upon them in an opposite direction."

At this point Miss Slocumb, for the first time, took a part in the conversation, and said, "Mr.

Whitney, do you think it was this class of beings to whom Christ referred when he cast out devils?"

"Certainly," said Joe. "And I don't understand how a person who accepts the account of Christ's work, and believes in miracles, or is, in other words, a good church-member, can come to any other conclusion; for the chronicler spoke in some places of persons being possessed of a devil, and in other places of their being possessed of devils, and of being lunatics — the same as we might say a person has the pneumonia and gout, making two distinct troubles from which he was suffering. How can any one who can accept the Bible literally ignore the devil part of the story and accept the crazy part of it; for if the language means anything, it means that there were two distinct troubles. And how can a person who believes the Bible means just what it says, subscribe to a belief in one devil only, when Christ speaks of seven in one instance, and the aggregate of all of whom he speaks runs into the scores; and the language used would imply there were legions."

"But," said Miss Slocumb, "do you think the power He possessed still exists, and can be used by others to-day? You would imply as much, only you define the power and give it a new name, and call it hypnotism or mesmerism."

"Certainly I do," replied Joe. "If we are to believe his teachings, his followers should do greater works, and he placed no limit of time to the statement, and said nothing about a priestcraft; and if you don't do these things, it is because you don't wish to, or don't know enough, or else you don't believe the teaching you profess; and if Christ alone

possessed the power, how was it that his disciples exercised the power, as, according to the story, they did? And if that power existed in nature, so that a lot of fishermen could make use of it, it must have existed before. And will you tell me, or has any one else the authority to tell me, just when it ceased to exist since that time? Miss Slocumb, it is my opinion that the natural laws of the universe have not changed, neither have any of nature's laws been abrogated in a period of eighteen hundred years; and as many forces exist in nature now as existed then. If mind cure, faith cure, and Christian science were a fact in those days, if it was possible in the first century, it is in the nineteenth; and under the same conditions, it is possible now. If devils, or malignant or evil spirits could be cast out then, they can now, by any one who has the power and knows enough to use it."

"But," said Miss Slocumb, "do you know of any one who is doing this work now?"

"If you will read the works of Charcot and other experimenters in the field of hypnotism, you will see that some of the recorded cases bear a marked resemblance to some of the cases the Bible says were presented to Christ, and also that some of the results were very similar."

The doctor forgot himself evidently, and said: "That is true, only I never believed in the cases recorded in the Bible, and thought them to be myths." As he said this, Miss Frisbee looked at him in astonishment, and Joe evidently appreciated the situation, for he gave one of those short laughs in the way he did that day when we were on the fishing party.

*This is a
depression*

Mrs. Wilson here proposed that we should have some music, saying that the Whitney family had said enough for one evening, and if Joe advanced any more of his wild ideas, without giving them a chance to recover, they would all think them heathen; that for her part, the present duty was enough for her, and she found enough to do to attend to the visible duties that were offered, without going into the future and anticipating duties or work to be performed, and bother her head about what had been done in the past. She had voiced my ideas perfectly, and when she finished I crossed the room, and holding out my hand, said: "Shake hands on that, Mrs. Wilson. You and I agree perfectly on that point." She laughed and blushed as she took my hands, and, without raising her eyes, said: "Thank you, I know where to find a friend in an emergency;" and Miss Slocumb said: "Ah, Mr. Wilson, I don't think I can teach you much about looking," and for the first time since my boyhood I blushed; but to this day, I don't know what at; but I could feel the blood rush to the tips of my ears, and then they all laughed at me, except the doctor. I felt sheepish enough, but did not know what I had done. The doctor was as dumb as an oyster.

Mrs. Wilson took her seat at the piano, while I wandered around the room and looked at the pictures. After the music, they formed a whist party. As I was an indifferent player, I insisted on Joe's playing with Miss Slocumb, and the doctor had spoken for Mrs. Wilson for his partner, at the first mention of cards, so I decided that I did not care to take part in the game. Miss Frisbee and I had nothing to do, and as I wanted to appear agreeable,

I tried to enter into conversation with her; but every time I attempted a new subject it would fall flat in about a minute; so a new idea came to me, and as soon as the thought came I acted on the impulse and proposed that I get another pack of cards and we play some game, casino, or euchre,—not that I cared to play cards, but I wanted to do something. I had noticed she had not played on the previous evening, but supposed that it just happened so, the same as it had with me. But I was not prepared for her answer, or the manner in which she gave it, as she said, “I trust I am a Christian, and I do not approve of cards.” Well, that settled me. I made no more effort to entertain that night. I had managed to get along in the world for thirty-five years without being brought into very close social contact with Christians; no doubt I had met them, and many whom I really thought were Christians, but none of this stamp before; and down in the bottom of my heart, I hoped another thirty-five years would go by before I saw another, if she was a fair sample. It was not what she said that squelched me, but the I-am-superior-to-thou way in which she said it. It made me think that I would rather take my chances for future happiness in some other place than heaven, if all in heaven were to be like her.

Before retiring that night, we planned for a picnic in the woods, if the weather should be fair and warm. This pleased me, for I thought that I might have a chance to have Mrs. Wilson to myself sometime during the day. After breakfast the next morning, Joe and I went down town and engaged a carryall that would take the party of six. It was

Mrs. Wilson this time who furnished the lunch, and Joe furnished the drink from some unknown quarter when wanted.

The day was everything that could be wished. The doctor and Joe took their fishing tackle with them, and wondered when I told them that I had left mine with Dixon. I did not care to fish that day, for if the doctor finished as he began, there would be no chance for a fishing match between us, for through accident or design he occupied the seat with Miss Frisbee, Joe and Miss Slocumb occupied another, and Mrs. Wilson and myself occupied the third seat. It was all right, just as I wanted it; but now that a good opportunity was offered to make myself agreeable, I could not say anything. I sat there and inwardly cursed myself for my stupidity. Of course I could say something, but as I wished to be unusually agreeable, I could not come up to an average.

That day we drove to Spruce Glen, as Joe called it. He showed us the most pleasant places, and where late arbutus and wintergreen could be found, and in the meadow were wild flowers in abundance. After wandering together as a party for a while, we had lunch; and then Joe and the doctor proposed to fish the brook while I looked after the ladies. But Miss Frisbee said she had never seen any one fish for trout, and she would dearly love to. The doctor expressed himself as more than willing to initiate her into the mysteries, and they started off together in one direction, and Joe took another, but before he went he turned to us and said slyly, "I wonder who will do the most fishing this afternoon, the doctor or Miss Frisbee?" Miss Slocumb answered

him in a quizzical manner by saying, "Who do you think will be the most successful?"

This left Mrs. Wilson, Miss Slocumb, and myself together. We soon wandered away from the brook, and I spent one of the pleasantest hours of my life. As I had made Miss Slocumb my confidant, it rather helped than hindered my wishes, for while she professed to be with us, she would keep just far enough away so that Mrs. Wilson and I were alone; and when we were together she would slip away a short distance, before Mrs. Wilson realized that she was gone. There was only one thing that I was provoked about now, and that was what Miss Slocumb styled my "silly promise to Joe."

We had a pleasant stroll; what we said could not be repeated if one should try. After a time we came back to the team, and while we were wondering where the doctor and Miss Frisbee were, the conversation gradually turned to discussing Miss Frisbee. Mrs. Wilson and Miss Slocumb talked over their old companionship together at school, and what had transpired in the lives of each since those days. From their remarks I learned that Miss Frisbee was very wealthy in her own right, though not over-generous in some things; was great on the subscription list of the church to which she belonged, and at one time had thought of being a missionary to the heathen, but compromised matters by sending a substitute and supporting another in the heathen missionary field while she remained at home; which was certainly very good of her, and, from what I could judge, was good for the heathen, too. I also gathered from what Miss Slocumb said of herself, she was not worth a dollar, except what she

earned by teaching something or other — whether music or books, I could not find out.

Mrs. Wilson went to meet Joe, whom we saw coming down the brook, and I had a chance to ask Miss Slocumb what she had done for me — if she had been trying to help me as yet.

She answered, “Why, have n’t I been doing all I could this afternoon, by keeping out of your way?”

“Yes,” I answered, “I know that, but I don’t mean in that way. Have you said anything to her about what I want?”

She looked at me, and then laughed, as she said, “Mr. Wilson, I believe you are the greatest booby living. You don’t seem to know enough about love-making to know a good thing when you have it. What kind of a man are you, anyway? Where were you brought up, and where are your eyes? Can’t you see; or are you blind? Can’t you see that Mrs. Wilson cares as much for you as you do for her? You are the most unsophisticated man I ever saw. Really, I did not suppose there were any such as you appear to be, and if you were not so sensible in business matters, I should think you almost a fool, and not deserving of the woman you want.”

This provoked me to saying, “That is the way it may appear to you, but from what I can learn, women have been the greatest puzzles the philosophers of the world have tried to solve, and how should I know anything about them? I have had neither mother nor sister since I was a boy, and I do not profess to be a philosopher.”

Her manner changed, and her voice had an honest ring as she said, “Well, you are more to be pitied than blamed, and ought to be praised for

growing to be so good a man as you are without a woman's influence to help you, and I will help you to win May all I can; but, truly, I don't think you need any help, or to put it in strict business terms, which seems to be the only language you are acquainted with, I honestly believe your legal wife is as much in love with you as you are with her; and I think when you tell her you want her to be a real, true wife, and live with you all your days, she will say 'yes,' and be as glad to be your wife as you can be to have her. Now, Mr. Wilson, can you understand me?"

"Perfectly," was my reply. "But have you taken the doctor into consideration? She treats him as well as she does me."

"And why shouldn't she?" replied Miss Slocomb. "Has n't the doctor been a friend to her? Why should she be rude to him? Neither of you have ever said anything to her, that you contemplated the possibility of being anything more than a friend to her, and it is not for her to take the initiative; but if you want to rush this matter so fast, why don't you tell her?"

"But I cannot," I replied. "I promised Joe and the doctor I would not for a month; and —"

"Promised Joe and the doctor fiddlesticks!" she interrupted. "What does Joe know about such matters? He is a nice man to advise any one in a love matter. Why, he is as blind as a bat himself, and for him to advise is like the blind leading the blind."

"But what woman cares for Joe; where does he show his blindness?" I asked, as I looked at her in astonishment.

She turned her eyes away, and I noticed a blush gradually creep over her face, as she said, "Come, let's go and find the doctor and Miss Frisbee, or May." I gave a low whistle, for I was not so blind in her case as in my own, and it flashed on me that there might be some personal feeling, in the way she had spoken about Joe.

We had been ready to start for home nearly half an hour before the doctor and Miss Frisbee came to the wagon. They had no fish, and she only a few wild flowers, and there was a certain bashful way in the manner in which they begged our pardon for keeping us waiting so long after the time agreed upon to start, which made us all smile, and neither of them had much to say when Miss Slocumb remarked, "Did you both have success at fishing?" The doctor simply said, "Only a few small ones, which I threw back;" and Miss Frisbee said, "I did not try it."

It was late when we had finished tea that evening, and after a desultory conversation, we retired for the night. The next day being a Sunday, we did not start very early for our pursuits of the day. When at home, in Boston, I had usually spent my Sundays at the club, sometimes going to a lecture or concert in the evening, but was not much of a church-goer; not that I had any objections to a church, but did not care for them in any way; and while others who liked them could do as much church-going as they pleased, it did not please me to go unless there was some special attraction.

At the breakfast table, the question was asked by Mrs. Wilson, "Who are going to church?" Miss Frisbee said she should, if one could be found (which

I thought a neat way of telling us she considered herself among heathen). Mrs. Wilson offered to accompany her to any church she should select, and she made her selection by going to the Presbyterian. The trio of men went to Joe's den for a smoke. We had a quiet smoke, while Joe and the doctor talked upon all kinds of questions, from fishing to theology. The doctor turned to me and asked what my religious views were. (There was no chance for a debate between us, for I told him I had no opinion on the subject; I was simply drifting, letting the world move as it would; that I did not know anything about any of the doctrines. The only thing I did know positively, was that churches usually appeared to be in some kind of a row most of the time; and while nothing could move without friction, there seemed to be an immense amount of friction for the advance that was made.)

We finished our smoke, and went down to the parlor. I noticed the doctor went to his room, but was surprised to hear him say he thought he would go to church with the ladies. Miss Slocumb was in the parlor, and remarked she would not go in the morning, but stay at home and keep Mr. Wilson and Mr. Whitney company.

The doctor, Miss Frisbee, and Mrs. Wilson left us for the church. They had hardly gone, when Miss Slocumb turned to Joe, and said, "This is just what I wanted. I have wished for a chance to talk to you alone, when Miss Frisbee was not here. I want to ask you more about your opinions on religious questions, but did not wish to do so when Annie was here, for, from the way you spoke the other evening, I knew you would hurt her feelings; and

while I know she is bigoted, she is sincere, and is good in her way. And, really, (I don't think it is best to pass too hasty a judgment on another's way, just because they happen to differ from ours.) But you can't hurt my feelings by saying hard things against the church, for while I am a church member and nominally a Christian, privately I have so many secret doubts about the authority of the church, and the creeds taught, that I don't know just what I believe or think; but as I have a good opportunity, I would like to catechise you on what you believe."

"Very well," said Joe, "proceed."

"Well, answer my question then, Mr. Whitney. What do you believe?"

"That is a very broad question. Please specify some particular. You ask too much at once. Ask a question on one particular point, and I will try to define my position."

"Well, to begin with," asked she, "do you believe in a God?"

Joe hesitated and said, (I might ask which God, or what kind of a God. I might ask you if you meant Buddha, Jehovah, or Jupiter; but I will not evade you in that way. As you say, you are a member of a Christian church. I will take it, you mean the Christian God, or Jewish Jehovah, and a personal God. Well, to be honest, I don't know anything about it, and I can't believe or disbelieve anything I can't comprehend or don't know about; neither can anyone else. They can repeat a certain formula of words, but it conveys no meaning or sense if the person talking knows nothing about it. Suppose you teach a parrot the whole creed of the Episcopal church, or the Lord's Prayer, and the parrot repeats

it to his mate in the cage. Does the parrot when he repeats the creed, or the mate when he hears it repeated, comprehend the significance of the words? Certainly not; for it is beyond their comprehension. Now it seems to me that the human family are in about the position of the two parrots. Some priests, in times past, have formulated a set of words about a God, who they say themselves is beyond their comprehension; or, to use their own language, "whose ways are past finding out"; and then proceed to tell these other human parrots all about this God whom they profess they know nothing about; and they have to take this ground, for if this God of theirs is one who could be comprehended, He would be only a superior person.")

"But," said Miss Slocumb, "there is the Bible, which is His word. What is to be done with that?"

"Why, simply (read it for what it is worth to your reasoning powers, and no more); for if you take any of it for fact that does not appeal to your reason, it is like the parrot repeating the creed—it has no meaning to you; and how can you believe anything you don't know, either from observation or on reliable testimony?"

"But, Mr. Whitney, while I did not see this Book written, I have reliable testimony that God did write it."

"Have you, indeed!" replied Joe. "That is what I've been looking for for years. What is this testimony?"

"Why, the word of the inspired writers themselves, and the testimony of the church."

"Is that all?"

"Is not that enough?" she asked in reply.

“Not for me,” Joe replied.

“Why not, Mr. Whitney?” asked Miss Slocumb.

“Let me try to give you an illustration from the scenes of to-day, and then if you will tell me what course you would pursue in this supposed case, perhaps I should be better prepared to answer you. Suppose, Miss Slocumb, that a land company should be formed here in the United States to sell corner lots at the North Pole, and the board of directors should elect some one of the company to be president and director in chief, and he in turn should appoint deputy directors throughout the country: the duties of these deputy directors were to sell all the stock they could; the prospectus of this company, as formulated by the originators, claimed that at the North Pole there was a fine country — in fact, one so fine that the most exalted mind could not comprehend its beauties; that this country was ruled by a king, who would give every stockholder a palace, and a job of telling through all time how good he was; but if you did not have faith in this land company, you and the dearest friends you had ever known would be by this king condemned to everlasting torment, as a proof of his goodness; and while the prospectus was mostly devoted to telling what this king had been doing, and was intending to do, the by-laws of the company said that a man could never pay for this stock by money or good deeds, but must keep paying in both as long as he lived, and the good deeds consisted principally in paying in the money, and those who paid the most were entitled to the best seats in the company’s offices, located in different sections of the country; the money paid in was to support the company’s office and the

deputies officiating, a certain per cent. to be applied to the support of the central office, and the extension of the system and power of the land company; that this system was perpetual, and was to be perpetuated by fair means or foul, but was to be perpetuated and extended at any cost. No one had ever been to the North Pole, and seen these corner lots, and come back to tell us, except some mythical persons whose testimony was very shady from the length of time elapsed and the known character of the people who had taken it; and while any one of these deputy directors would tell you all that this king had done, and were profuse in their explaining what he intended to do, they all pointed to their prospectus, and said no man had at any time seen this king, and that he was to all men incomprehensible. The deeds of conveyance were in some cases signed by the deputy to whom you paid your money, but must be countersigned by this mythical king of whom you knew nothing save what was told you in the company's prospectus, and the land was to be delivered after death. They also told several stories in this prospectus that sounded decidedly 'fishy'—something about a man being swallowed by a whale, and three days afterward being thrown up, and then telling us all about his little cruise. Then there was what might be called a hot story, about three men having a kind of picnic or convention in a fiery furnace, several times hotter than usual; and then it told in another place about making bread and fish enough for about one good square meal for one answer for several thousand people, and having more left than when they commenced to eat; and the by-laws of the company said if you doubted any part of this prospectus, you

must take into consideration that all things were possible with this king, and if you kept on doubting and could not honestly believe all the prospectus claimed was true, this king would torment you forever; no matter how many good deeds you had done, how much money you paid the company, if you did not believe, you would be tormented forever by this good king. At some of the branch offices the deputies went so far as to say that the king made it impossible for some, in fact, the majority, to believe, so that this good king could get the chance to torture them." Joe finished this, to me, strange supposition by saying, "Now, Miss Slocumb, how much of the stock of this land company would you buy with your hard-earned money?"

She replied, "I am not buying lots at the North Pole to-day, and I don't want any stock in your mythical land company, at such a price."

"And neither am I taking any stock in an orthodox heaven, or supporting a lot of deputies who are the chief beneficiaries who are benefited by this company."

"But, Mr. Whitney," said Miss Slocumb, "will you tell me what you do believe? I will ask you again, do you believe there is a God who rules the universe?"

"And, Miss Slocumb, I will reply again, I don't know; but you probably want my opinion or speculations in regard to this subject, and I will try to be honest and frank with you; when I say I don't know, I mean just what I say. There may be, away off in space, such a being, or millions of them, who rule the universe; they may be right here, invisible to my senses; one, or a million, I don't know.

For a man to say a thing is possible or impossible in regard to a subject, implies that the man knows all the possibilities. Now I can't say that there is a God permeating all nature, for I can't see all nature, and don't know all nature; and for me to say there is no God in that part of nature that I can see and do know, implies that I know all of the possibilities of the nature which I do see and know about to some extent. While the facts of the case are, I suspect, and realize that in the nature I can see and do know something about, there are many possibilities beyond the grasp of my physical senses, and of which my mental abilities have no comprehension. But my speculations in the matter are something like these: The highest wisdom I know anything about is placed in the human family. The human family is ruled in part sometimes by one man, like the Czar of Russia, and sometimes by a number of men, like our own Congress. Now, reasoning from analogy of what I actually do know about government, I should say the ruling intelligence of the universe is about as likely to be vested in one as the other system of government; that is, it is just as plausible to suppose that the universe is ruled by a congress of gods, as it is to suppose that it is ruled by one czar God, and to my mind a trifle more plausible, for we do not find any one man who knows it all, even though he be a czar; and we do find many superior men. Again, the government that is directed by the many in human affairs has been proven to be the best for the many, and taking everything into consideration, is the most harmonious government. Now, we know the rain and sunshine are for the just and the unjust, and not for the favored few near the throne, which

would look as if the appointing power and tenure of office was not vested in one family, but applied to the many, and on the question of harmony. Why, what we know of nature's laws are perfect harmony, and if numbers of rulers promote harmony, then nature's rulers must be infinite in number. And if ancient writings are to be the test, then Jupiter and mythology are as reasonable and humane as Jehovah and Christianity, and both show their human origin."

"Then, Mr. Whitney, if you do not know whether there is a God or not, of course you don't believe He ever inspired men to write a Bible; and it follows that you don't believe in inspiration, or in a future state of existence beyond the grave."

"Not so fast," interrupted Joe. "You jump at conclusions. I don't believe that any God ever inspired men to write a Bible, in the usual acceptance of the term; but because I do not believe this, because it does not look reasonable to me, it does not follow that I do not believe in inspiration in any sense of the word; neither does it follow that I do not believe in a continuity of life, for I not only believe but know that in one sense of the word inspiration is true; and I also not only believe, but know, that there is a conscious state of existence beyond the grave."

"But," said Miss Slocumb, "how can you know this?"

"By my own experience. The strongest evidence that can be offered any man is the evidence of his own senses; and by the evidence of my own senses I know these two facts to be true."

"But," said Miss Slocumb, "do you intend to say you have been inspired? How do you know this to

be true, by the evidence of your own senses, if you have not been?"

"Very well," said Joe, "I see I must start from the beginning and define the meaning of my words in the sense that I use them, and I will begin on this word 'inspiration.' Now, I do believe in inspiration in one way, and that is: All thought is an action of the mind, the intelligent life force in a being, and not the result of his material structure. The material structure only governs the way the thought is expressed. A dumb man expresses his thoughts by signs, an orator by words, but an intelligent life force, or in other words a spirit, that has no physical body, has no physical means of its own with which to express a thought, and if such a being wishes to express a thought by physical means, — that is, to write a sign or speak a word, — it has to borrow the use of some other physical organism. When this happens, as it often does, the person who furnished the organism is inspired. The person furnishing the organism may be aware of the fact that another is working through him, or he may not be aware of it; but he knows he has the thought, and expresses it as clearly as possible. When a person jostles against you with his physical body, you can detect the fact by your physical senses, but when a spiritual or intelligent force jostles against your spiritual or intelligent force, you must detect it with your spiritual senses. You may detect it, and the significance of the motion imparted, and you have a new thought, and think it originated in your own spirit, when, perhaps, the facts are, it did not originate in your own spirit, any more than the talk of the phonograph originated in the phonograph.

“Persons by noting carefully their own minds and opinions on a given subject will come after a time to note these flashes of thought that come unawares on the same subject, which are perhaps diametrically opposite. Thoughts of this kind may not come from an outside source, but they are very liable to come from some other than their own inherent force. A human mind might be compared to the string of a musical instrument, that, when it was not in use and under the control of its own master force, was very liable to catch the vibration from some other mind, and start to vibrate in unison with this other intelligent force; and when it was vibrating by the impulse furnished by some other mind, it would be inspired. All human beings possess this attribute of the mind to a greater or less extent. While some persons are so obtuse that they need words, signs, and perhaps blows to assist them to comprehend a thought, others will catch the idea from the flash of an eye, and some can catch a thought without even the aid of the physical eye, but can catch the thought from an unseen human being, — a spirit, to use the common phrase. In the olden times, all things that could not be attributed to a visible physical cause, were attributed to a God, or to the gods, meaning a good, unseen, intelligent force; and all bad phenomena that could not be assigned to some visible agent, were laid at the door of some bad unseen intelligent force, — a demon or devil; when, in my opinion, they could both be assigned, as far as mental phenomena were concerned, to the same cause, viz., disembodied human beings, or spirits, good or bad. These spirits might have been the product of this earth, or the product

of some other planetary system. If I were to offer a speculation, I should say it was as liable to be one as the other, for the spectroscope and the aërolite tell us that all planetary bodies are composed of essentially the same material. Astronomy shows us they are all governed by the same laws. Like causes produce like results. Now, if throughout space any planets have passed through the same process that this earth has, being composed of the same material, they would probably throw off organized spiritual beings like ourselves. As this process of world-building has been going on from an infinite past, it makes room for beings who were once practically like us, but have had an infinite past in which to learn and perfect their knowledge; and the only word which we could use to describe their knowledge, would be infinite, as in an infinite future from now. Perhaps the only word by which your knowledge and mine can be described would be, infinite. Or perhaps the intelligences originated here on this planet, — and as a matter of opinion, I should say all the demons or devils did originate here; for a spirit to know enough to get from one planet to another would imply that they had a vast amount of knowledge, and would know enough to behave themselves after they get here, while the devils would simply be a native product; for we do know that this world produces this class, to a greater or less extent; in fact, all the devils I know anything about are human devils, and all the gods are good human beings. But bear this in mind, however good or bad these outside influences were, they could do or express only what the men they influenced were naturally able to do or express.

Ole Bull could not play much on a violin with only one string, and if they had influenced a person to express the vast knowledge they possessed, the savage, bloodthirsty hordes of that time could not have understood them; or if they did catch a glimpse of the meaning, would have murdered the teacher as they did a Christ.

“Granting, for argument’s sake, that the Vedas, the Bible, and mythology were all written by inspired writers, it is only saying that they wrote what they clearly comprehended did not originate in their own mind; that it came from an outside intelligent force of some kind, and they ascribed it to a God. Perhaps the force that was controlling them claimed to be a God; but then, we have only the word of the intelligence that it was a God, or a good, and we must be the judge of that matter. And when we see these gods, or goods, getting mad, angry, and not only could not control the world, but could not control their own tempers, we see they were not very powerful gods, and not very good, if judged by some of their actions, as recorded. Why, Miss Slocumb,” said Joe, “we meet men on the street every day who can control their tempers better, and are vastly more humane, than the Jewish Jehovah is pictured; and if a person must worship something, it would be more sensible to worship their fellow men. But to come back to the question of inspiration. I know I have received thoughts from some unseen forces, and recognized them as such when I received them; and according to my idea of the meaning of the word, I have been inspired, or, to use another word, I have had thoughts that originated in another being infused into my mind, but I

do not think they came from a God, unless my fellow human beings are gods.”

“Mr. Whitney, I understand what you mean by your view of inspiration. But about this other question that you claim to know, and concerning which you seem so positive, this future beyond the grave. Why do you come to such a positive conclusion? I believe there is such a state of existence, but I don't know it. Now, what evidence has ever been offered to your own senses; and if you can have such evidence, why can't I?”

“You can,” replied Joe.

“But how?” insisted Miss Slocumb.

Joe answered: “By discarding every prejudice you have formed, whether religious or scientific, and not look for evidence to confirm some pet theory, or old idea, that you have simply believed for years, and not rejecting at once as useless a bit of evidence because you can't make it fit into some old theory that you always thought to be true; but take every evidence that is offered, no matter how absurd it may appear at first, and store it away in your memory, or note book, for future use. Just try this for a year, and then compare notes, and argue with yourself; and if you have not in that time come to a positive knowledge, try it another year, and if you don't then have what to your mind is positive proof, you will at least have had much entertainment, and can fall back on your old beliefs. But remember this, if you are looking for evidence to prove some old theory, the probabilities are that you will be worse off than when you started; you will never be quite the same unthinking believer that you were before, and if the theories you are trying to prove

are some that another has formulated, you will not prove them, for your own experience can never be just like the experience of another, any more than the circumstances and routine of your life are like a friend's."

"Mr. Whitney, are you a spiritualist?" asked Miss Slocumb.

This question came sharp and distinct; it was like the bang of a gun. Joe laughed as he said: "Well, Miss Slocumb, if you will tell me just what a spiritualist is, I will tell you whether I am or not, but you must define your question; it is too broad. What do you mean by a spiritualist?"

"Why, I mean a spiritualist. You know what I mean; you are only quizzing me. Can't you answer me yes or no?" She was excited, as I could see by the flash of her eye, and the heightened color of her face.

"Well," replied Joe, "I can't give you a decided answer to so broad a question, without more definition; but I would like to ask you if you are one?"

"No, sir," she replied, "for if there are any set of people in this world which I think are cranks, they are spiritualists. The most impracticable dreamers, outlandish, unrefined, blasphemous set of men and women in the world, that I know anything about, are spiritualists; and I would rather be a heathen and be done with it, than be a spiritualist."

We all laughed at her vehement way of describing them, and it was very evident that she was no spiritualist. I opened my eyes in astonishment when Joe said, "I think, Miss Slocumb, you are a spiritualist."

"Do you intend to insult me, Mr. Whitney?"

She was so angry she was pale, and I did not blame her much, for Joe certainly was provoking, while she was not a person to take offense meekly, whether it was intended or not.

Joe evidently realized he had gone too far, and hastened to set matters right by explaining, and said: "Miss Slocumb, not for the world would I offer an intentional insult; but you said you were a church member, and that implies to my mind that you are a spiritualist, although I by no means intended to apply the language to you that you applied to the spiritualist a moment ago, for really I don't think it would apply. I also think that there are some who admit that they are spiritualists to whom it would not apply, and some who do not claim to be spiritualists to whom it does apply."

"Very well, then, Mr. Whitney, please explain your language," interrupted Miss Slocumb.

Joe's reply was: "Miss Slocumb, it appears to me that in the matter of human beliefs and opinions, in regard to this question of a future state of existence after death, the human family must be divided into three general classes, and this classification will fit all the members of the human race, whether they belong to one sect or another, and it makes no difference what particular teachings they follow. These three classes could be named materialist, agnostic, and spiritualist, and in a rough way they can be distinguished from each other by saying, the materialist is one who believes that the intelligence and life in a human being come from the peculiar construction of the material which constitutes his body, and when the structure is destroyed, the man is practically annihilated. The agnostic is a person who

knows the arguments, or at least some of them, that are offered by both the materialist and the spiritualist, and after weighing the evidence that he has received from both, comes to the conclusion that he don't know. The agnostic will admit that while the materialist has many facts on his side to support his view, there are some things, some phenomena, for which his views will not account; and, in fact, he fails to account for life itself, and a solution of a problem that leaves a residuum unaccounted for is no solution at all, and he rejects the evidence of the materialist as being conclusive, and suspends judgment, waiting for more evidence. The agnostic now turns to the spiritualist and examines the evidence that is offered from this side of the question, and he has usually had offered him the evidence of a revelation to another, some one else, and as a rule the evidence he examines, the revelations that are offered, were made and recorded from two to four or five thousand years ago, and are manifestly full of errors that he knows are errors, or worse, downright falsehoods; and he turns to the spiritualist and says, 'you may be right, there may be a future beyond the grave. I don't know; but this much I know, it is not made clear to my mind; it is not proven from any evidence you have offered me from these revelations that have taken place in the past; and while there may or may not be a future existence, to my mind it is not proven, and I await more evidence before coming to a conclusion, and casting my opinion with either.'

"Agnosticism is the neutral field in the center of the magnet, and is neither a north nor south pole, while spiritualism is one of the poles, or the extreme

opposite from materialism. The spiritualist believes that the material body has no power in itself, but is built up by, and is the mechanism controlled by, the force and intelligence of a spirit that makes the body its home; and that when, from any cause, the body becomes untenable as a home for the spirit, the spirit leaves the body and exists somewhere as a spirit, while the body it has built up and occupied for a time goes back to the material from which it was separated, and out of which it was built by this intelligent life force or spirit. Now, in the sense of the word that I wish to convey by this explanation, I am a spiritualist; and if you are a church member, and believe in a future state of existence, you must also be a spiritualist, Miss Slocumb. In fact, if you have ever given the subject any thought, you must be one of the three. I do not think that you are an agnostic or a materialist, so consequently you must be a spiritualist."

"Well, Mr. Whitney, in that sense of the word I will admit that I am a spiritualist, and if that is what you meant, I beg your pardon for being so quick in taking offense; but by my question, you must be aware I meant, are you one of these modern spiritualists?"

"Miss Slocumb," replied Joe, "I do not wish to evade you, but before I give you a definite answer, what do you mean by a 'modern spiritualist'? Do you intend to infer that there are two kinds of spiritualism, a modern and an ancient kind?"

"Yes, that is it exactly. And now will you give me a straight answer?"

"I will try," replied Joe. "But before I can, I

shall have to ask one or two questions if you will answer them."

"Very well," said Miss Slocumb, "I will try."

"What is a spiritualist, in your view, Miss Slocumb?"

"Take your own definition, Mr. Whitney; one who believes in a future after death."

"But," said Joe, "that was only half of my definition."

"Excuse me, Mr. Whitney, but I did not catch any other."

"If I remember rightly," said Joe, "I said something about the building up of the body."

"Well, well, Mr. Whitney, what is your definition of spiritualism? Don't beat about the bush, but tell me."

"Very well, Miss Slocumb," said Joe, "I should define spiritualism as the SCIENCE OF LIFE. To me it embodies all the known facts of life, and all the theories respecting life as manifested in or out of organized material bodies, of whatever description or class, the same as all our knowledge in regard to the heavens; all the known facts and laws, and all the theories, are assigned to astronomy. Astronomy not only teaches about the motion and composition of other planets, but it also applies to the planet upon which we live. It not only relates to the present, but to the past and future of planets. So with spiritualism; it not only applies to the future, but to the present and the past manifestations of life; and the duty of a true spiritualist is to weed out the errors, and classify this knowledge of spiritualism, the same as the astronomer of to-day weeds out the errors of the past; and while he accepts the facts

and data given by the old astrologer, and gives him the credit of what observations he made, and confirms many by the test of his own observations, he does not accept all of the conclusions of the old astrologer as being final; and while the astronomer is willing and glad to take the observations of the astrologer as substantially true, he rejects the reasoning and application he made of those observations, and the inferences which he drew. So should the spiritualist of to-day be glad that there were those in the past who made note of the different phenomena of life, and recorded them; and, like some of the events in astronomy, there may be events in the psychic forces of lives which are of rare occurrence, and instead of the record of these events in themselves, as recorded, exciting superstitious awe, they should be confirmed by careful, honest investigation, or proven to be error; but to accept these events, and this superstitious awe, by faith in some miraculous power outside of, above, and beyond nature, is to ask a man to accept the truthfulness of a recorded event by the use of the lowest qualities of his mind. To deprive a man of the right to reason and question the authority of the record, is to make him mentally a slave; and for a man to willingly accept these dogmatic facts without a question, shows the man to be a *willing* slave; and mental slavery is no more conducive to a man's mental welfare and happiness, than physical slavery is conducive to a man's physical welfare or comfort."

"But," interrupted Miss Slocumb, "do you not regard spiritualism as a religion?"

"Not by any means," replied Joe. "Why should I?"

"I don't know why you should," replied Miss Slocumb, "only most people regard in it that way; in fact, make it a kind of substitute for religion."

"And why should people want a religion?" asked Joe.

"To make them happy and better in this life, and prepare them for another. That, I believe, is the central claim made for religion," said Miss Slocumb.

"But does the claim hold good?" asked Joe.

"Don't you think it does?" replied Miss Slocumb.

"No," said Joe. "It is almost impossible to find a murderer, or any other person of a bad moral character, who does not accept some kind of religion and fully believe in it. (The greater number of mean men in business are religious; by that I don't intend to say that all religious men are mean; but mean men, as a rule, are religious. All religious persons are not unhappy, but the most unhappy persons on the face of the earth are, as a rule, very pious and devout, and have an unlimited faith in a God that is to save them from trouble some time in the future; but they appear to have it just the same in the present. While, on the other hand, those most liberal in their views are, as a rule, the most moral and apparently the most happy in the community. No, Miss Slocumb, I don't think a blind, superstitious faith in a being we can't comprehend, or a set of theological rules, made by persons with no more authority than you and I possess, are necessary for the present well-being or the future happiness of mankind, any more than I think the belief in Santa Claus, or the rules governing the games of

our childhood, are necessary to the adult human race."

"But why should the older writers have written as they did, if they had no authority?" asked Miss Slocumb.

"I might ask you why did the old astrologers write as they did," replied Joe. "The facts of the case are, in those days they made a religion out of everything; every event had to them a religious significance, whether it was a comet in the heavens or a high tide in the Red Sea; and while we can accept the facts as recorded if we wish, are we under any obligations to accept the inferences drawn from those events, any more than an astronomer is bound to accept the whole of astrology, because some of the observations they made and recorded are known to be facts?"

"But, Mr. Whitney, would you discard the Bible and all other sacred writings?" asked Miss Slocumb.

"Not by any means," replied Joe, "for in the future of spiritualism, or the science of life, the records and data recorded in the sacred writings will give many hints that will be of invaluable service; and to have them destroyed, or even altered, would be a great loss. But for each new generation to interpret the significance of those events, and make a personal application of them, will not injure the records, and will improve and expand the intelligence of the generation making them; in other words, promote a kind of mental and spiritual evolution from the parent of religion."

"Do you mean to say that the different religions

of the world will finally evolve spiritualism?" asked Miss Slocumb.

"No," replied Joe, "not exactly that. But I do intend to say that in my opinion the religions of the past and present will be involved into the spiritualism of the future, and the religions of the world will become to the science of life, or spiritualism, what astrology is to the astronomer of to-day, or alchemy is to the chemistry of to-day; and as we now smile at, but at the same time feel a charity and pity for, the mental condition of the astrologer or alchemist who made a religion out of his knowledge, so some future generation will smile and pity the stupidity of the past generations that made a religion out of what little knowledge they had of the phenomena of life.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT this stage of the argument, the church-goers returned. Mrs. Wilson left us to attend to some household duties, and the ladies went to their rooms, while we three men went up to Joe's room to have a smoke and chat.

I began to think the doctor was taking more interest in Miss Frisbee than in Mrs. Wilson, and as his interest in her apparently decreased, my liking for him increased. I did not believe he went to church that morning for any reason in the world but to please Miss Frisbee.

While we smoked, Joe showed us some experiments he was making to produce by a mechanical contrivance motion from a magnet,—some kind of a magnetic motor. He claimed that the magnetic force was only an absence of the life force; that while electricity was life, magnetism was the absence of it, or death. He illustrated it by comparing the electric current passing around the earth to a stream of water, and that while most substances allow the current to flow through them, the molecules so arranging themselves that the waves of the current *can* flow through them, are so porous and flexible in their molecular structure that they offer no resistance to those waves of force, but arrange themselves to fit the direction of the current; like a weather vane adjusting itself to a current of wind from any direction, or the direction of the vane would re-

main constant if the direction of the wind remained constant, no matter how much the spindle on which the vane revolved was turned. He claimed that it was this current that made the needle point to the north pole, which, inasmuch as it did continue to point to the pole, proved the existence of the electric current, which was an old fact that I had learned at school.

But his molecular and non-obstruction theory I did not remember having seen before, so I asked him why there should be any exceptions to the rule, or why we had any magnets at all; and why a piece of soft iron should become magnetic in a helix with a current of electricity flowing around it, when a piece of steel would become magnetic and remain in that condition until heated. Joe claimed "that there were only a few substances that were so rigid in their molecular structure that they could offer a permanent resistance. The softer metals and substances would, in their molecular structure, fly around like the weather vane, while the harder crystals that were rigid in their composition were formed in their act of crystalization in conformity to, and on a line with, these waves of force; and, in fact, it was these waves of force that caused them to crystalize, and caused their polarity and line of cleavage. But with iron, and some of the other metals of the same chemical group, it was different; while they would in a perfectly free condition conform to this wave force and arrange their molecular structure in the line of the least resistance, they were pliable enough, as their molecular structure was not so rigid but that it could be arranged differently by a force without destroying the whole

structure ; and when the force was taken from it, in the case of the soft iron, it would regain its old molecular structure and arrange itself in accordance with the line of the least resistance. But with the steel it was different ; that was an alloy of carbon and iron, and while an electric force would disarrange its molecular structure, the same as the soft iron, the carbon in the steel was too rigid to accommodate itself to sudden changes, or the application of slighter forces ; but when the magnet was heated, and the old conditions all destroyed, and it was allowed to arrange its molecular structure in conformity with the electric currents of the earth, it lost its magnetic properties."

"But," I asked, "why should the soft iron in the electric coil become magnetic?"

"Because," replied Joe, "it is a dead center ; the waves of earth force are shut out by waves of a similar force circulating around it, and the waves of earth's electric force flow in at the end of the coils to the dead center, caused by the protection of the circulating force of the coils, the same as the steel magnet causes a dead center field, by the molecular structure resisting the penetrating force of the earth's electric force, causing, in the substance of the magnet, a field that is not subject to this wave or vibratory motion. Such a space, that is not in motion, is to force what a vacuum is to matter ; its force is trying to fill it with motion, and as the molecules of the steel and carbon have been turned so that they offer a line of resistance, the wave is deflected toward this dead center, where there is less motion and the least resistance, and as this wave is the stronger where it first comes in contact with

the resisting material of the magnet, its effect on a piece of iron is greatest at the ends or the poles of the magnet, while the intensity decreases as we go from the pole to the dead center; and when that point is reached, and the two opposite waves have naturalized each other, the force of the wave is gone and the magnetism is lost."

I did not dispute Joe, for I did not know enough about such matters to know whether it was right or wrong. But the doctor said: "Whitney, you would make gravity and magnetism the same thing, by giving them a dead center, because the center of the earth must have such a point as the center of gravity to the earth."

"True," replied Joe, "so far as gravity is concerned; a magnet is a little world in itself."

"But what is this machine?" said the doctor, pointing to a little machine arranged with a circular alphabet and a pointer.

"That," replied Joe, "is a machine I built for the intelligent unseen forces to work."

"Did it work?" asked the doctor.

"No," replied Joe. "That one would not move a peg; I could get nothing; but there are others that I have made that do."

"Show them to me," said the doctor.

Just then Mrs. Wilson summoned us and we went down to dinner, Joe promising the doctor to show him the machines afterward. At the table the conversation turned to the preaching the churchgoers had heard in the morning. Miss Frisbee did not approve of all that was said; I judged the preacher had been too liberal in his views to suit her. She thought that a minister of the gospel who

regarded a large portion of the Bible as an allegory and poetry, to be interpreted by reason, was a traitor to his calling and did not understand his mission. For her part, she believed in taking it literally, word for word, for she believed all things possible with God.

Miss Slocumb asked her where the minister had offended her; to what portion of the scriptures he had alluded in this manner.

Miss Frisbee said: "He made a statement to the effect that he did not believe that the universe was created in six days, and I do; not that I can give any reason why God should have been six days, six minutes, or six years in creating it, only he is all-powerful, and if it pleased Him to do it in six days it is not for me to question His wisdom."

"But," said Miss Slocumb, "I, too, believe the Bible to be true, but I don't think that is just what it means. I think it meant six great divisions of time, or epochs;" and turning to Joe said, "Mr. Whitney, what do you think about it?"

"In my opinion," said Joe, "Miss Frisbee is right in the position she takes, and while I do not believe as she does, I don't see how you can believe the Bible, and accept that it was written by a God all wise and all powerful, who never could, and never did make a mistake, and yet doubt a part of it. I think Miss Frisbee's position logically correct, and yours, as a believer in the Bible as a direct revelation from God, all wrong; for if you believe one part is a mistake, another has equally as good a right to believe two parts a mistake; another has the same right as you, and claims three parts are a mistake, until finally some say it is all a mistake, on

the part of the men who wrote it, and God did not write it at all, only men wrote it—good and great men, but men for all that. And, lastly, some say all we know of a personal or any other kind of a God comes from the Bible, or some other sacred writing; and if the Bible is a mistake on the part of the writers, it is no authority on which to base the existence of a God. The agnostic says: ‘there may be one, I don’t know, but the Bible does not prove it,’ and his position is the logical sequence of your first doubt, and he is just as honest in, and has just as much right to, his position as you have to yours; he can be just as honest in his doubt of the whole as you are in your doubt of a part. It is my opinion, Miss Slocumb, that the Bible, as an inspired book, coming from an all-wise God, must stand or fall on its merits,—upon the literal interpretation of the contents,—for it either came from this God, or it did not. There can be no middle ground to this part of the question; it is either a truth or a lie, perhaps an unintentional lie, but a lie all the same,—for a mistake persisted in becomes a lie; and if you doubt one part, don’t condemn a man because he doubts two parts, or the whole, for he is, like you, a doubter, only in a greater degree. You are both in the same boat, and while you have only just come aboard, and are on the lower deck, your fellow-man, whom you condemn, has probably walked the same gang-plank, and stood just where you now stand in these questions of belief, only he has climbed the stairs ahead of you, and lived in the saloon of believing what suited his fancy, and rejecting what he did not like. But after a time his thirst for knowledge leads him to climb more stairs and mount to the hurricane

deck; he is now far above the main deck where he first came aboard, but still on the same boat, and while the winds blow and buffet him, there is a sense of freedom, an exhilaration of the life forces within him, that he never felt or found in the old freight-house of blind superstitious beliefs in dogmas. He realizes that there is a keener sense of living to be had, in this free and exposed position, than can possibly be obtained on the main deck, or even in the saloon. Space is above and around him; the old boat of doubt is under his feet carrying him onward, and he wonders how he could have been contented so long in the old freight-house of blind belief, or linger in the luxurious saloon of doubt, when the enjoyment, the life, was so much more intense here on the hurricane deck of doubt, with the horizon and heavens for companions, and the friends gone before the beacon lights for which he is sailing."

"But," said Miss Slocumb, "suppose he can't see the beacon lights of his friends gone before?"

"He can if he will look for them," replied Joe, "and if he does not see them, he is as well off as the rest of the passengers, for when the boat lands the passengers, they will all arrive at the same destination and come to the same country; and as he was on the upper deck, and noted the course of the boat, when he does land he is not turned around and has not lost his bearings, but realizes from whence he came and where he has arrived, and is better off than one who has been confined in the cabin, and has to wander around a long time to come to a realizing sense of where he is — who, perhaps, it takes years to learn that he has not been landed back in the same

country from which he came, but is in a new country. The man who has taken the position where he could note the progress of this voyage of life, even though he had to stand on the hurricane deck of doubt, is better off than the cabin passenger in the saloon, or the passenger who was shipped as freight from the storehouse of some church or sect, be it Christian, Mohammedan, or Buddhist, and tagged with blind, unreasoning belief. The man who has sailed the voyage in this position, when he does arrive is not lost, but realizes where he is, and is not perplexed by his new surroundings, but knows he is dead physically, and has come into a new sphere, and is now living under new conditions."

The doctor interrupted Joe, and asked: "Do you intend to say, Whitney, that a person can die and pass into another state of existence, and not realize that he is dead, and be so confused that he is lost to a sense of his condition?"

"Yes," replied Joe.

"Well," said the doctor, "I don't believe it."

"You are under no obligations to believe it," replied Joe; "and what you may or may not believe will not alter the facts in the case."

"I admit that," said the doctor; "but you claimed that between a dead man and a live man there was only the difference of a physical body. Now, can you give me some analogy in the experience of a live man, so that I can get some comprehension of your meaning?"

"Certainly, doctor. Did you ever awake in the night, with no light in the room, and for a moment be lost to your locality? If you have ever had this experience, you will probably remember that you

had a conscious realizing sense of existing, but just where you were, or how you came there, was a blank to your mind. And you will also remember that while you were suffering no pain physically, it was a very uncomfortable state or frame of mind to be in ; and you will recollect, too, that the first effort you made was to collect your senses and realize your surroundings, and when it came to you what they were, and in what way your bed stood in the room, there was an immense sense of relief, like the sudden stopping of an ache, although there had been no physical pain, only a mental bewilderment. A lost spirit is in this same sense lost ; it cannot realize its surroundings ; it knows it is somewhere and does exist, but it has lost its bearings, and there is no starting point which it recognizes, from which it can take up the thread of existence to go on and gain new experiences, or from which it can look back and disconnectedly review the old experiences. A spirit after death may remain in this condition a few minutes or years, but the more thinking he has done, the more observations he has made in physical life, the sooner he will come to a realizing sense of where and what he is. Suppose, doctor, that you had never been in Philadelphia, and all the stories and teachings, all the descriptions you had heard, led you to believe that it was a city where the buildings were made of stone, and the door-steps were painted black ; and then sometime you do go there, and you find a city built of brick, with white doorsteps to each house ; you would say ' I am somewhere, but this is not the Philadelphia that I have heard about. It is evidently some place, but I am looking for my ideal Philadelphia ; ' and the probabilities are, you

will never find it, for it only existed in your mind as an idea, and never did exist as a fact. The trouble was, you had gained a wrong impression from the description given you; and a spirit that goes into another state of existence, and looking for a heaven between four walls made of gold and precious stones, will be as much lost as you would be in Philadelphia with stone houses and black doorsteps. Such a heaven never did exist, except as an ideal. The trouble with lost spirits is, they have gained a wrong impression from the description given; they have interpreted a poetical description literally, or have allowed others to do it for them, and accepted the conclusions that others have formed, without exercising their own talents. If they had come to these conclusions by their own thinking, and had found they were wrong in their conclusions, they would be able to see where they made their mistakes, and soon rectify them. But if they buried their own talent and exercised no thought for themselves, and accepted the conclusions of another as correct, without trying to verify them, they are worse off than if they had simply made a mistake to start from. It is much easier for the boy who has worked a mistake into his problem to comprehend where the mistake is, than for one to find it who has simply copied from another's slate; and it is much easier for a man who has reasoned out the problems of life for himself, to correct his mistakes, than it is for one who has simply copied and followed a given formula of blind beliefs, without exercising reason."

We had been at the table more than an hour, and as we arose to go Mrs. Wilson caught my eye and motioned me to remain after the others had gone.

As soon as they had left the room, she said to me in a low tone, "Ask me out for a walk when I come into the parlor. I want a private talk with you, and don't see how it is to come about, unless we can be by ourselves outside, for we shall never get the chance in the house;" and then she left me.

With my mental condition in a whirl, I wondered what was coming now. All my old fears of the doctor were aroused. I had been thinking that he had been paying more attention to Miss Frisbee, but now the question came to me, "What had the doctor been saying that morning?" I knew that Miss Frisbee was with them, but my reason was gone. The doctor had been to church with Mrs. Wilson that morning, and that was enough; and if I had been told the doctor knelt down on the sidewalk to her, I should have believed it. No fancy that I could conjure up looked too absurd to me, at that time, to appear improbable.

The doctor and Joe went up to the den to smoke, but I would not accept when they invited me. I told them I was not feeling well, and I did not care to smoke when I was not well. I honestly believe if I had been obliged to remain in the same room with the doctor, with no ladies present, for ten minutes, I should have had a knock-down fight with him.

The moment Mrs. Wilson came into the room, and before she could take a seat, I asked her point blank to go for a walk with me. She blushed and laughed as she assented, but whether it was at the manner in which I asked her, or because she was pleased, I could not tell.

Miss Slocumb said, in a significant manner, "I

hope you will both have a pleasant walk," and turning to me said, "Mr. Wilson, I hope it will improve your looks, for you look as savage as a meat-axe."

We had hardly reached the sidewalk when she commenced by saying: "Mr. Wilson, you know how kindly I feel toward you for what you have done for me, but I think the time has come when I must speak; and while feeling thankful to you as I do, I think it is time that we carried out the rest of the contract we made, and become released from each other legally. Appreciating your kindness, I thought it was for me to broach the subject first; as I was the one who proposed marriage, I ought to be the one to propose the divorce." She finished her remarks by saying, "Mr. Wilson, I shall expect to have divorce papers served on me at any time."

I replied, "Very well, Mrs. Wilson, I will do as you wish."

She gave me a queer look, but said nothing, and we walked on slowly, both of us silent. I could not speak; I had nothing to say. She had told me to get that divorce, and I had given her my word of honor, before we were married, that I would do so; and now she had asked for it, and there was nothing for me to do but to take the proper legal steps to obtain it. But, O heavens! I wished I could have died there, as I walked. I do not remember having shed a tear since I was a boy, but I had to swallow to keep them back. It was all gone, lost; the only hope I had ever built on woman was blasted. I had lost money in business, and friends by death, and came up smiling to meet the world and fate for another struggle, but this blow somehow seemed to age me, appeared to numb my sensibilities, and killed the courage in me. There was nothing left

to build upon. I did not then think of my future; I was too dazed. I realized I had received a crushing blow, and that it had taken the beauty and pleasure out of life; that it had destroyed the old force in me; that what spirit there ever was in me was subdued, or destroyed; there was not life or energy enough left in me to even care to strike back, or overcome this decree of fate. If I had been informed that I had inherited a vast fortune, or had high political honors conferred upon me, it would not have moved me; and if I had been told that I was to be shot, I don't think I should have cared. I had for the time being become paralyzed to every sensation except the mental anguish caused by this one death-blow to my cherished wish,—to have this woman for my wife; and now that the hope was gone there was nothing left.

I remember she said, "I think we had better go back;" and I recall that we turned and walked toward home, but we did not speak, and when we entered the house, I did not go into the parlor or the den, but to my room, and sat down. I did not take off my hat or overcoat, but sat and gazed vacantly out of the window. I know that I felt cold, and was shivering, and went to the register to turn on the heat, and finding it open, wondered what made the room so chilly; and taking my old seat to gaze vacantly out of the window, I remember that an English sparrow lighted on a bough just outside the window, and looked saucily at me; and I remember wondering what made my hands look so white and shrunken; my memory became confused, and it seemed as if I was in a long nightmare of bad dreams, oppressed and troubled, and was gradually sinking, sinking, down, *down*, DOWN.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN I regained consciousness I was in bed, and it was night. A dim light was burning in the room, and someone sat by my side; and when I tried to turn my head to see who it was, I could not; it seemed strange to me not to be able to turn my head when I wanted to. I recognized the room, and knew where I was, but could not turn my eyes far enough to see who sat at my bedside, but I knew that it was a woman, for I could see the dress. I tried to raise my hand to my head, but failed to do so, and the effort so exhausted me that I sighed. The figure beside me arose and bent over me. It was Mrs. Wilson. I attempted to speak to her, but could only whisper, "where am I?" and I heard her say, "George, do you know me?" As I whispered a faint "yes," she said in a low tone, as the tears filled her eyes, "Thank God;" and taking a cup and spoon, fed me some brandy and water. I commenced to feel drowsy, and the old sinking sensation began to creep over me, and at times I would be in a half conscious condition, and it would appear as if many were in the room, and then I would seem to be alone.

The next I remembered distinctly was opening my eyes, and I could tell by the slant of the sunlight through the slats of the blinds that it was near sunset. Mrs. Wilson stood at my bedside, and at the foot of the bed stood Joe and Miss Slocumb. I

looked around the room, and then my eyes came back to the face of Mrs. Wilson, and I tried to speak to her, but could only whisper; and as she bent over me, I whispered, "Where am I? what is the matter?" She spoke to me, saying: "You have been very sick, and we feared you would die, but you are better now, and will soon be well again," and brushing the hair back from my forehead, she leaned over and kissed me twice, and burying her face in the pillow at my side, I could feel the bed tremble as she sobbed.

Joe and Miss Slocumb came to her, and lifting her, told her she should not give way to her feelings, now that the crisis had passed; that it would excite, and might be dangerous for me. She said: "Joe, I know I am weak, but I thought he was lost, and now that he has come back, the joy unnerved me; but I will control myself, it shall not occur again." Miss Slocumb seemed nearly as much agitated as Mrs. Wilson, for the tears were running down her face, and even Joe had a moist look in his eyes. He told Mrs. Wilson to go away, and he would sit with me; but she refused, saying she would not give way to her feelings again, that she wanted to sit by me. I whispered "Yes, let her." I noticed that Joe and Miss Slocumb smiled, and Miss Slocumb said, "He will get well now;" and they left me alone with Mrs. Wilson. She took a chair by my side, and I was content to lie there and look at her, and she would occasionally give me a spoonful of brandy and broth. I don't remember a time in my life before when I was so weak, or sick; and neither do I remember a time when I felt more contented and happy, as I lay there and gradually lost

consciousness, and slept a deep dreamless sleep; it must have been for hours, for the next time I awoke to full consciousness, it was morning, and Joe sat by my side. He gave me brandy and broth, and as I took it, I commenced to feel ravenously hungry, and took all he would give me, and then called for more, which he refused to give me without consulting the doctor. Then I asked him what physician had been attending me. He laughed as he said, "Several."

"Well, who were they?" I asked.

Said Joe, "Dr. Hamilton for one. He has been here since you were taken sick, and been the resident physician, and Dr. Edson has been called, and been in attendance with him; and out of deference to May's wishes, Mrs. Hartland, a mind-cure woman, has been here much of the time. So you see there have been doctors enough to either kill or cure you, and they have evidently managed to cure you, for you are coming out all right. They all pronounced you well, so far as disease was concerned, only weak; but that is something you will come out of quickly, now that you can eat."

"What has been the matter with me?" I asked.

"They called it brain fever at first, and then typhoid. The facts are, George, you had been going at too fast a pace, and you gave out, and came near going out; and if you had not been as tough as leather you would have gone, but you have held on through the worst, and now in a short time you will be all right again."

While he had been speaking, all my old trouble came to me. I remembered what I was thinking of when I was taken sick; that I must get that divorce. It had not come to me before, but now I saw it all,

and I groaned as I thought of it, and thought I must live and endure it. I did not care to live, but would rather die.

As I groaned, Joe bent over me, and asked, in a startled way, "What is the matter?"

I was as weak as a child, and cried like one, when I told him I did not wish to live; that if I did, I should have to do as I had promised, and get that divorce, and I did not want to live and see May marry another. I did not want a divorce.

"Divorce be blowed!" said Joe. "Why, old man, if you were not so sick and weak, I should blow you sky high for a fool, and May too, for neither of you have sense enough to come in out of the rain. Why, I believe it would kill May if you did not marry her, and you say you don't want to live if you can't, and yet you don't either of you know enough to talk just what you think and feel, and fix the matter up between you. Why don't you use your tongue, and common sense, and come to some understanding, and get married to-morrow if you wish; and not let this bugbear pull you back any more?"

"But, Joe, I promised you I would not speak to her on the subject for a month."

"Well, suppose you did. I was a fool to ask it, and you were another to promise it. Do as you have a mind to, for all of me; it is the last time I shall attempt to run the love affairs of another. "Heavens!" he said, "I don't know enough to run my own." And as it flashed across my mind what Miss Slocumb said that day of the picnic, I laughed for the first time, and said, "That is what Miss Slocumb told me." Joe blushed like a school girl, but made no answer.

Just at this time, Mrs. Wilson came into the room, and said, "Awake, and talking? You must be stronger and better. I will call the doctor, and see what you can eat."

Joe turned to her and said, "He has eaten all there is in the room to eat, and I will go and see the doctor about his appetite. You stay here with him, and if either of you know what you want, just tell each other in plain English and finish up these misunderstandings. For the last two weeks you have been mourning, for fear he would die, and you have not had a chance to explain; now you have a chance, explain; for only a few moments ago he was wishing he might die, rather than get a divorce. Now I will leave you two alone, and see if you can straighten matters out between you. If you don't, I will take another hand in this game, for I certainly can't do any worse than I have done."

We were alone, and she came and sat on the side of my bed, and bending over me said, "George, do you want to get a divorce from me?"

I answered by putting my arms about her neck, and pulling her face down to mine, said, "I would rather die, but I will if you want me to."

With her face nestled against mine she whispered, "I would rather die than have you get the divorce, but I will stand by my contract if it kills me."

We were silent a few moments, and then I said, "Let's make a new contract. We will live together, and be man and wife."

She answered, "Yes, but you must hurry up and get well, and we will be married over again, by a minister."

What we said or did for the next few moments I

do not remember distinctly, except that I was never so happy in my life, and as for dying, they would have had to murder me to have killed me; no disease could have killed me, for I would not die. I wanted to live, and I would live now, in spite of fate.

We heard some one coming; it was the two doctors and Joe. Dr. Hamilton took my hand and said, "Well, my dear fellow, you seem to be coming out of this all right, you are not dead yet by any means," and introduced me to the other doctor, Dr. Edson, remarking that he guessed he knew me better than I knew him, and then they both examined my pulse and tongue, and felt of my skin, saying that there was no fever, and that I would be all right if I did not have a relapse.

"Relapse," I said, "you don't know me. Now that I have got hold of myself, and know where I am, and what is wanted, I will pull out of this bed like a race horse. If I can only get enough to eat I will be out fishing in a week."

Mrs. Wilson laughed, and said, "I will see that you have enough to eat, or all that is good for you, and I will see that you don't go fishing in a week, too." The doctor then told her what food to allow me to eat, and how often, and then ordered the others to keep out of my room, for a day at least, and give me a chance to rest and build up, and directed me not to talk, but eat and sleep, saying I needed no medicine, but nourishment and tonics.

Nora came in with some broth. The doctor left orders as to how much I could have, and it did not take me long to dispose of it and ask for more, which Mrs. Wilson refused to give me; and when I tried to talk with her, she told me she would not answer

me until I had had a long sleep, so there was nothing left for me to do but obey her; in fact, I rather enjoyed being ordered by her, for it was a novel experience.

I awoke several times during the day, to take nourishment, but no one would talk with me, so I was obliged to sleep or like awake, and I slept most of the time. Joe and the doctor had been in once or twice to see me, but would not talk with me. It was in the evening when I awoke to my full senses and called for food, and when I had finished eating I told Mrs. Wilson I should not sleep again until I had seen some one, and had a little visit, and if she did not humor me I would not go to sleep again that night. She laughed at me, and said, "A sure sign you are better, you are growing exacting," and asked whom I wished to see.

"You," I said. "I want to talk over the situation between us. When are we to be married?"

"Not to-night," she said, "but when you are well and strong. Just as soon as I can get some dresses made, I will be ready if you are, but we had better not make any arrangements to-night. In fact, I am half afraid if we ever are married, you will drive me to death. Why can't you take life easy? There is time enough, and I will tell you now, that I shall not drive through life at a break-neck speed to please you or any one else. This world was not made in a minute, though you always did act—from what I knew of you—as if you had a week's work to do, and was to die the next day, and you were trying to do an hour's work in a minute. Now I have you under my control, and you must go slow, for I am not going to hurry."

“But, Mrs. Wilson, I — ”

“Now stop right where you are,” she said. “To begin with, if you wish to be dignified, you can call me Mrs. Wilson, but between ourselves May is good enough for me, and suits me better, and as we are more than half married now, I intend to use some of the privileges that my position gives me the right to use, and you are George to me, and if I want to use any pet names, I consider it my privilege, and shall do so.”

“Very well, May, begin now.”

“Ah, you are too anxious. You wait until I think you deserve them for good conduct. It was only a few moments ago that you were threatening not to sleep to-night, out of spite.”

“Well, if I will promise to sleep to-night, what then?”

“Well, then we will see about it. And now do you know how long you have been sick?” she asked.

“Two weeks, Joe told me.”

“And do you know what has happened since?”

“No. What? Has anything special?”

“Enough,” she said. “You have been very sick, and none of us expected you would live, except Mrs. Hartland, and while I don’t know as she did you any good, she kept my courage up. Joe told you about the doctors, did he not? he said he did.”

“Yes,” I replied, “he told me some, but did not tell me when I was taken sick. The last I remember I was sitting by the window that afternoon, after you had told me you did not want me for a husband.”

“I never told you any such thing in my life. You stumbled to that conclusion, without the least

reason in the world. I only wanted to do as I had agreed to do, and release you. After the necessity for our legal marriage was past, it nearly broke my heart, but what else could I do? And besides, I thought you appeared to be quite interested in Miss Slocumb, and it seemed to me that right and justice demanded I should set you at liberty to do as you wished, and not have you feel under restraint; and while, if it had been a matter of dollars and cents, you would have, with your characteristics of business, approached this subject at once, and stated just what you did want in this case, I thought, perhaps, a feeling of gallantry might hold you back from introducing the subject, so I imagined it my duty to speak to you first about it, which, as you know, I did; hoping in every fiber of my being that you would say you did not want a divorce; but you were simply silent, and there was nothing more for me to say, and really I did not know what to make of you. I could not make up my mind whether you were pleased, sorry, or indifferent; and all the rest of the afternoon, when you did not join us, I could not but wonder at your looks and manner, after I had told you I should be expecting a divorce. Miss Slocumb made several pointed remarks to me during the afternoon, rather inviting my confidence, but from the inward feeling I entertained toward her at that time, she would be about the last person of whom I would make a confidant; and when the rest wondered where you were, Joe excused your absence by saying you were probably writing letters and did not care to be disturbed. But when tea time came, and you did not appear when the bell rang, Joe went up to your room and rapped. You

did not answer, and he opened the door and stepped in. I was at the foot of the stairs, and heard him speak to you calling you 'George!' and I could not hear you answer. He spoke the second time, saying, 'George, what is the matter?' and you did not answer. I heard him cross the room, and say, 'George! *George!*' and still there was no answer; and then he came to the head of the stairs, and seeing me, told me to ask the doctor to come up stairs, that something ailed you. I called the doctor, and went up myself. Perhaps it was not the proper thing to do, but I went into the room with the doctor. You sat by the window with your overcoat and hat on, staring vacantly out of the window, and looked so sick and strange I thought I should faint. Joe, in his worst spells, never looked so sick and bad to me as you did at that time, and when Joe took hold of you and asked what was the matter, you turned to him and commenced to talk gibberish about a little bird, and my killing you with a blow. I thought I should die of terror. The doctor looked in your eye, and felt your pulse, and told us to get your clothes off, and get you in bed as soon as possible, and called for hot water. While I was gone you commenced to rave, and it was all that Joe and the doctor could do to get you undressed. The doctor gave you a powerful opiate, which quieted you after a time, and from that time until yesterday morning, when you woke up and knew me, — your fever had run two weeks, — and you had been delirious and knew no one, and would rave when not under the effect of opiates. Joe and I have taken most of the care of you, and the doctor has stayed and advised us all he could, and has been as kind as a man

could be to you and all of us, and I shall always consider him as one of the best and kindest of friends, — and nothing more.”

As she said this, she bent over and kissed me, and said, “You understand me, don’t you, George? It was you who stood between me and trouble, and it is you I want to stand between me and the world, although the doctor has been a friend to both of us, and I want you to be friendly from now. You were both two big ninnies to quarrel; you had nothing to quarrel over.”

“You perhaps think so, May, but if you had been in my place you would have thought differently. But it is all right now. Where is the doctor? I’ve seen him only once.”

“Oh, he is probably busy entertaining Miss Frisbee,” replied May.

“Has he given up all claim to you?” I asked.

“He never pretended to have any, to my knowledge,” she answered.

“But Joe said —”

“No matter what Joe said. If you want to ask Joe anything, you can. But I tell you I never gave the doctor one thought in my life in that way, and never intended to, and I wish you would never speak of it again to me, for I don’t want any husband but the one I have, except I want him more. Now are you satisfied?”

I answered her by pulling her face down to mine.

Joe now came into the room, and said, “Well, old man, you seem to be doing well. You are gaining ground fast.” As he shook my hand he said:

"In a week we will have you up out of this bed, and living with us once more."

"In a week, Joe! You must be crazy if you think I shall lie here a week. I shall get up to-morrow, and sit up until I am tired."

"We will see what the doctor has to say," replied Joe; and just then the doctor came in. He felt of my pulse, and looked me over, saying, "Well, you are recovering faster than any man I ever saw."

I replied, "I am well now, only a little weak, and I want you to order a generous amount of eatables, for I am nearly starved."

He laughed, and said, "What would you like? Name your bill of fare, and I will correct it to suit the case."

"A broiled chicken, with vegetables, bread and butter, and a bottle of Bass."

"Well, you will do, Wilson," he says. "But we will drop the potatoes, and a part of the chicken, and make more than one meal of it. You can have the chicken, with the meat stewed to a mince, with the bread and butter in the broth, and a glass of Bass. It is all cooked for you now; you see your wants have been anticipated," and turning to Joe, asked him to go to the kitchen for it.

In a few moments Joe returned with my supper on a tray. They bolstered me up in the bed, and I ate all they would give me, but wanted more. It seemed as if I had only had a taste, a sample, and now I wanted a square meal; but they would not listen to me, and made me lie down. The doctor told them all to leave me except Joe, who was to stay with me that night.

Accordingly all went out but Joe, who said:

"Now go to sleep, and don't ask me any questions, for I won't answer them until to-morrow morning. You must sleep now;" and, as there was nothing else to be done, I did sleep, only waking once or twice in the night for some drink and nourishment. It was quite late when I awoke in the morning, and I did not have an ache or a pain. I never felt better in my life, except that I was weak. After a breakfast of all they would give me, I insisted upon sitting up. They all tried to talk me out of it, but I told them I could get out of that bed, and I was going to if it killed me; so to keep me quiet, they wheeled a big chair to the bed-side, and wrapping me in blankets, I stood on my feet long enough to get into the chair. I was shaky on my feet, but as soon as I was seated I felt good; and when they wheeled me so that I could look out of the window, I felt quite like myself again. This being petted and taken care of was a new experience for me, and they made more fuss over me than they would over a baby.

When I was once comfortably seated, I called for my mail. They all demurred, but I insisted I was alive and on deck for business, if not for hard work, and I wanted to see how my affairs had progressed for two weeks past, for it was a longer time than I had ever lost control of them before in my life. There was not much of importance. Joe had kept my agent in Boston and Dixon informed of my condition, and when I came to look the matters over, I concluded that I was not of so much importance, even in my own affairs, as I had thought. Others had done for me what I could not do for myself, and done it about as well. The world appeared to jog along about the same, even if I had dropped out for

two weeks, and if my coming back to business did not create more excitement than my dropping out did, there would not be much of a flurry, even in my own affairs.

I learned a lesson from this two weeks' experience that will last me the rest of my life, and that was, to take life easy and not fret; that the world could get along just as well without me as with me; and that when I had the enlarged cranium, and thought a large share of the world's business depended on me, I was giving myself unnecessary trouble, and taking a thankless task.

Miss Slocumb and Miss Frisbee had come into the room to visit me. The doctor was already there. As Joe put it, the "big six were together once more." Miss Frisbee congratulated me on my rapid recovery, and showed more real feeling of friendship than I supposed she was capable of toward me. I asked the doctor if he and Joe had had any discussions lately. He replied, "Not many, they had been too busy." Joe winked at me, and glanced toward Miss Frisbee and then back at the doctor, as much as to say, "they have been too busy."

"Well, doctor," I replied, "you must, by this time, have heard from that letter you wrote your aunt about that unknown sister. How did that come out; was it truth or fiction?"

"Yes," broke in Joe, "I had forgotten that. Have you heard whether that was truth or not?"

"My aunt says it was true," replied the doctor, "and to me it is the strangest piece of evidence that has ever been offered me, for it is almost an impossibility that Joe could have known it, even supposing him to be dishonest, which I don't intend to

insinuate by any means; and it is not fair or a logical supposition to suppose that he could have known more of my own family affairs than I knew myself, on a matter of that kind, and I certainly did not know it. In my mind it settles the question I have decided for myself, that he did not gain the knowledge through any of the ordinary channels of gaining knowledge. That point decided, through what extraordinary channel of gaining knowledge did he gain this information? The rest that he gave me at that time might have been read from my mind, if mind-reading is possible, which is to-day a disputed question; but even granting that mind-reading is possible, and that all the knowledge and experience of a man's life are registered on his brain, and it is possible that a psychological condition can exist between one brain and another, so that what is registered in the memory of the one is transferred to, and acts upon, the other, how can a condition that never existed in my brain act upon Joe's brain; or, in other words, how can an effect be produced without a cause? That, to the human mind, is a logical impossibility, and becomes a miracle, and is granting Joe the power to work miracles." Turning to Joe, he said, "I will bear testimony to your being a pretty good fellow, and quite a man; but I am not ready to testify that you can set nature's laws aside, and work miracles.

"Setting aside the rest of Joe's story, and admitting that it is possible that he read it from my mind, we will confine ourselves to this one test of this, to me, unknown sister.

"He did have the knowledge, and told me, that is a fact. Now, where did he get this knowledge?"

First, not from my mind, because I did not know it; so that line of investigation is eliminated from the problem. It was no unconscious cerebration of my own mind affecting his; it must have been the cerebration of some other mind affecting his, or it was a miracle. To my mind, miracles are logically impossible; and for me, the miracle solution of the problem does not answer. According to my philosophy, some mind must have told him, or in some way conveyed the intelligence to his mind: whatever or whoever this mind was, it was invisible at that time to me; but it must have come from some one who was knowing to the facts. Now, the only persons knowing the facts were some who were dead, and some who were living and in a distant city at the time, and Joe must either have received the information from the dead or the living; and to me the theory that he could have received it from the dead is just as reasonable and plausible as to suppose that the unconscious cerebrations of an unknown person, in a distant city, would have affected him in that way. This explanation of the known fact is no more unreasonable and far-fetched than the other; and, to me, the weight of evidence is in favor of the hypothesis that it was the dead who gave the intelligence, for there were some things said that the living did not know of,—like the mole on the face of my wife, for the parties living had never seen my wife, and that would have to be accounted for by mind-reading. But the assumption that it came from the dead would account for all phases of the phenomena. If I accept this conclusion, I must reject all the others I have formed on the subject, and come to believe that there is such a thing as an

existence after death, or 'if a man die, he shall live again'; for the same natural law that would cause one to continue after death, as a living, conscious, sentient being, would cause all; and if I accept this as a fact, I must also accept the logical deductions that he is a progressive being, capable of learning, for a sentient being must learn by experience, whether he wants to or not; he cannot help it. I must also acknowledge the probabilities that this life will be continued indefinitely in point of time, for, if a man can undergo so great a transition in his physical attributes as to become invisible to the five senses, and still retain his identity as a man, it is beyond my comprehension to conceive of any transition or change that will destroy his identity. I don't know all the possibilities of men that I can see and take cognizance of with my five senses, and if conscious beings do exist in this to me invisible condition, it would be dogmatic nonsense for me to limit their power or possibilities; and when it is claimed that under certain conditions they can exert an influence on people in a physical body, or transmit their intelligence to others in a physical body, it is not for me to say impossible, for until I know all the possibilities, I cannot point out all the impossibilities.

"But I have not decided yet in my own mind. The change is too great; it is no light or easy matter to throw away the habits of thought and conclusions of a lifetime, and make so radical a change in a few weeks; but I have started on this line of thought and investigation, and shall continue until I know more. I shall continue, if I live so long, until a future beyond the grave becomes to me a

positive known fact, not a belief; or until I know it to be a fallacy, and know that death means annihilation."

"And, doctor," said Joe, "if you continue to investigate in this honest, earnest manner, it will become a known fact,— not an assumption, a blind, longing belief, a consummation to be devoutly hoped for, but a positive knowledge to you that there is a future beyond the grave."

"I hope so," replied the doctor; and continued: "You remember, Joe, you made the remark that you heard those whom you saw say to you they were glad the old house had burned down. I will explain that to you. I have two aunts living now. While they are the best of friends apart, they can't get along well together. When they are a thousand miles apart, and they are corresponding, everything is harmonious between them, but when they live together it is a kind of parrot and monkey life with them. Now these two sisters owned the old homestead together, equally, and would live there together, more out of spite toward each other than because they were obliged to. They were good and kind to every one in the world but each other, and ought to have lived apart, but they would not. Things had been going on in this way for a number of years, when one night the old house took fire and burned to the ground, with all the contents, and they barely escaped with their lives, having nothing left from the contents of the house but the night-clothes which they wore. They divided up the insurance, and the proceeds from the sale of the land, and went to live with relatives, away from each other, and became the most affectionate sisters in the world, on paper ;

and I really think they did care for each other in their way, but it was a mighty *qucer* way. Thinking of this matter, since Joe told me what he had seen and heard, it has occurred to me that if they did have invisible friends present, who could witness those family jars, and now could witness their lives, they would be glad that the old house had burned, and driven them apart."

Turning to me, the doctor said: "Mr. Wilson, I can tell by your looks that you have had visiting and company enough for once, and I want you to get into your bed and have a sleep, after you have had something to eat, if you want it."

I had not thought of it before, but now that he mentioned it, I was tired and hungry. They gave me some beef tea and ale, and Joe helped me to bed. The rest had left me, and I turned on my side and slept till near tea time.

I felt stronger, and nearly well, when the doctor came to visit me. He said the rapidity of my recovery was a surprise to him, and he had come to think if a man wanted to die he had better keep away from that house; judging from the way he had seen two cases recover there, he did not believe a man could commit suicide successfully under that roof. I wanted to dress, and go down stairs, but he laughed at me, consenting, however, to my having all the company I wanted for a time; so, after tea, they all came up and sat in my room to keep me company. I dreaded to be alone when not asleep. May was there, and looking after every imaginary comfort, while Joe would make remarks with a double meaning to them, to poke fun at her, which she would take good-naturedly, and laugh as heartily

at a joke at her own expense as at one that was on another. In this way we spent the whole evening. The doctor promised to let me have my clothes on and go down stairs the next day, if I improved as fast during the night as I had during the day. I would not listen to any one staying with me that night, if they would only leave food and drink where I could get it if I wanted it.

It was morning, bright, warm, and balmy. I could hear the people stirring around the house. I arose, found my clothes, and dressed, determined not to be a sick man any longer. I was well, but weak; and happy, for now it was settled that as soon as I was recovered, I should be married. I proposed to get well. I was just going to make a business of getting well, and when that was done, I could attend to the marrying part.

I was weaker than I thought, for before I could get dressed I had to lie down on the bed and take a rest. When rested, I stepped to the glass to arrange my tie, and the man who looked at me nearly scared me. It was the first time that I fairly realized I had been very sick. Before it seemed as if they were making much ado about nothing, but now I knew I had been sick, and very sick; but as I stood looking at my picture in the glass, I thought, "well, what of it? You have been sick, but are not now. You look like a white scarecrow, but a plenty to eat will rectify that. You need shaving, and a razor will soon improve your personal appearance;" and with this last idea in my head, opened my dressing case, preparatory to a shave, but soon found myself unequal to the task, and calling upon Joe was assisted out of the dilemma by him.

When I had finished my toilet, I did not look so badly, but I felt so shaky that I drank all the ale there was in my room before attempting to go down to breakfast. However, I was determined to give them a surprise that morning, and a surprise it was, when with Joe's help I went down stairs and entered the parlor. They scolded and congratulated me at the same time, and when the bell rang for breakfast, and we had all taken our seats at the table, it seemed like living again. As May sat there doing the honors of the table, I knew that before long she would be doing the same in my house. I decided then and there that we would not do much boarding, but would have a home of our own as soon as I could make one. No more boarding for me. I had boarded all my life, and this experience at the Whitneys' was the first taste of home life I had had since I became a man; and when I was married, I would have more of it.

They governed my eating, and governed my stay at the table; made me leave and go into the parlor, and wheeling the sofa out of the draft, fixed it up with blankets, and made me lie down and wait for them. I must have been weak, for I fell asleep, and it was nearly noon before I awoke.

Joe and the doctor had gone down town. Miss Frisbee had gone to the post-office with them, leaving May and Miss Slocumb to keep me company. When I was fairly awake, Miss Slocumb said: "Mr. Wilson, you made me your confidant before you were sick; now I want to know if you have finished making blunders, and you and May have come to a thorough understanding with each other; if not, I want to know the reason why?"

"I think we have," I replied, "for we shall be married over again, as soon as I am well enough. And now I want to ask you a question: have you and Joe finished making blunders, and come to a thorough understanding with each other; and if not, I want to know the reason why?"

She blushed as she said, "You deserve to have your ears boxed for your impertinence, and I would do it if you were not sick."

May and I laughed at her confusion. It was easy to see the shot had told, and that she was more pleased than hurt at the broad insinuation.

"Now, Miss Slocumb, I confided in you, and you were very kind, and did all you could for me, and I would like to repay the debt of gratitude. How does this matter stand? Come, tell us all about it."

"There is nothing to tell," she replied in a half jesting and half serious manner.

I went no further with the badinage, but resolved that if I ever got a good chance at Joe, there would be something to tell, or it would not be my fault. He had taken it on himself to advise me, and I would return the compliment, and give him a little advice in plain English, at the first opportunity.

After a little time, the others came in from down town; Joe came first. When we asked him about the doctor and Miss Frisbee, he said he had not seen them since leaving them at the post-office; that it appeared as if they could get along without his escort, so he had left them to follow their own devices. They soon came in together; and shortly after the bell rang for dinner. I was allowed a little of all that I wanted to eat, but the doctor still

held a tight rein on my appetite. After dinner they made me take my old position on the sofa. Joe and the doctor went up to the den for a smoke. The ladies were talking dress goods and fashion, which acted like an opiate with me, for I soon fell asleep, and when I awoke the doctor and Joe were in the room and in the midst of one of their old discussions. When these two men were together, they would argue about some subject of a philosophical nature like two children at play; they could not be together five minutes without getting into a discussion of some kind.

The first I heard was the doctor saying, "Joe, what do you mean by a 'physical test?'"

"I mean this," replied Joe. "When a material, ponderable object, of which I can take cognizance with one or more of my five physical senses, moves or assumes positions in opposition to the known laws of Nature, like gravity or cohesion, and by this movement, or the assumed position, exhibits intelligence, it shows to me that some intelligent force is working in opposition to the blind, unintelligent forces of Nature, and the degree and kind of intelligence shown indicates to me the degree or kind of intelligent force at work, or in control of the material ponderable object, whatever the object may be that is moved. For example, if that table (pointing to the center table, which is a material object), which I can see and feel, moves, I know some force is moving it; some force is acting upon it besides gravity, to hold it to the floor. If you have hold of it at the time, I say the force in the doctor moves it; but if no physical being is in contact with it, I say some invisible force is moving it.

But thus far nothing is proven, only that some invisible or disembodied force is moving the table; but there is nothing to indicate whether it is an unthinking force, like a flash of lightning; an animal force, like a horse; or a human force, like a man. Now I go on one step further, and direct the force to move in a certain direction, and the table, without the visible contact of any material body, does as directed. I am now satisfied that whatever the force is, it is able to understand human language and thought, and is an intelligent force; something above the flash of lightning, for a flash of lightning will not follow a direction in accordance with my expressed wishes. The only forces which I am acquainted with, that will follow an instruction given by me in language, is a force in connection with an animal body. But up to this point, there is nothing to decide whether it is a horse or a man.

“I have only proved that an intelligent force, capable of understanding thoughts and language, has moved the table as directed, but have not proven that it is an intelligent human force, because a horse or dog might have done as much at my command.

“But now I apply another test, and appeal to a kind of intelligence that is an attribute of human intelligence only, and if this intelligent force responds intelligently to this appeal, it must be human, because there is no other kind of intelligence, of which I know anything, that comprehends intelligence of this kind; and to assign it to any but a human intelligence is to make dogmatic assertions for which no proof can be given. But the fact that it does respond to all the tests of a human

intelligence proves it to be a human intelligent force, and not a brute intelligent force, for a brute intelligent force could not respond to those intended for a human intelligent force.

“I now say, if you are a human intelligent force moving that table, I want you to give me some proof of it. I will call the alphabet, and as I come to the letters composing your name, I want you to move the table once, and I will call the alphabet from A downward, for each movement of the table, until the name is complete. I proceed with the test, and a movement of the table interrupts me, at different letters, until a complete name is formed; and perhaps I carry the test further, until a complete sentence is given, in a language that I can understand. I now know that it is a human intelligent force that controls the movement, for no dog or horse can spell out a proper name and intelligent messages from the letters of the alphabet. But the question arises here, was it not the unconscious cerebrations of my own mind, such stuff as dreams are made of, which affected the force controlling the table? So I apply another test. I ask the table to combine letters to make a sentence in a foreign language, and I will have the sentence interpreted by one who understands the language. The table does as directed, and gives me a sentence in French, for example, a language of which I know nothing. That proves to my mind that it is not the unconscious working of my own mind which controlled the action of the table, for I never yet dreamed anything in French. If in my dreams I ever held any conversation, it was in straight English; and it is just as fair to assign the phenomenon to a disem-

bodied human intelligent force controlling the table, as to suppose a mind in France would disembody itself enough to control the movements of a table in America, and to me a more probable conclusion."

"Very true," said the doctor, "but you are supposing the table moved. Suppose, now, that the table did not move. I have never seen anything of the kind as you describe it, and I do not believe it can be done. Have you ever seen anything of the kind, Whitney?"

"Yes, I have," replied Joe; "and now I want to ask you a question; as you asked me one, it is only fair."

"Drive on, Whitney," said the doctor.

"Very well, then, doctor; did you ever try to have a table move in this manner? did you ever, continuously, for a term of weeks or months, honestly make the experiment to see if it could be done?"

"No," replied the doctor, "I never did."

"Now, doctor, if I understand your position, of your own personal knowledge you know nothing in regard to this matter, and yet you say you do not believe it is possible for a table to be moved, as I described to you. If you don't know anything about it, on what authority, by what process of reasoning, do you arrive at the conclusion that it cannot be done?"

The doctor was a little nettled, I could see by the manner in which he answered, as he said, "By no process of reasoning have I come to this conclusion. It is too nonsensical a supposition to devote a thought to. My common sense tells me that it was

the result of jugglery of some kind, and all nonsense to ascribe it to any other cause."

If the doctor was excited, Joe was not, for he smiled provokingly as he said, "Doctor, if I have caught the drift of your conversation for the last few weeks, you do not have a very high opinion of dogmatic assertions with no facts or proof to back them; and to my way of thinking your assertions are as dogmatic, and innocent of proof, as any that were ever put forth by a theologian of any school. You confess that you know nothing of a certain subject, and in the same breath make the assertion that it is all nonsense and jugglery. Now, I don't understand how you can know nothing of a subject, and at the same time make such positive assertions, and have such positive opinions."

The doctor was silent a moment, and then said: "Perhaps I was hasty; but to get down to business: you say you have seen such physical demonstrations as these, but so strange an occurrence must be verified, and have been observed by more than one, to become scientific facts. Now who, besides yourself, has ever seen any such physical demonstration, and what steps shall I take to verify the testimony you have given?"

"Now you talk more like the Dr. Hamilton of yore," said Joe. "Your questions are fair and honest. To begin with, who has seen anything of this kind beside me? Well, if you will look for it, and really try to get it, you can have the testimony of thousands of credible witnesses, scattered throughout this and other countries, who will testify to these or similar facts, and they are witnesses whose evidence on any other subject would be taken by any court in the civil-

ized world. I would dislike to have any two of them swear that I had committed a murder; and if I could not prove an alibi, I should consider my case very desperate; but that is only a general direction. I will now point you to specific directions. Probably, doctor, you know of Crookes and Wallace of England, and any facts they would give you as scientists, on any other subject, you would, probably, accept as facts and data from which to reason and calculate, in any branch of investigation which you might be pursuing. Now their testimony is emphatic and decided in regard to phenomena of this kind, and it will only be necessary for you to procure and read their works on spiritualism to get other testimony on this subject.

“And now, what steps shall we take to verify these statements made by others? Why, let’s say four or five persons who are honestly trying to gain what truth they can, and want to verify these statements, sit at a table together, when convenient, for a month or two, and the chances are ten to one that they will have seen enough by that time to prove to them that all is not fraud, and they will positively know that there is truth in some of the statements testified to by Crookes, Wallace, and Zöllner.”

“Have you ever made any such tests?” said the doctor.

“Many,” replied Joe.

“Whom did you have with you?”

“May and two or three of our intimate acquaintances experimented at home here one winter, until I saw enough to convince me that what was written was probably all true, for I found by my own experience that a large part of it was. After I had become

convinced that a point in the progress of the investigation was true, I did not waste any more time with it, but tried to prove some other phase of the subject that was brought to my view to be true or false, and in this way tried to advance and gain a knowledge of the subject; and every step I did take would show me two more that I wanted to take; so that really I feel more ignorant than I did when I commenced to look into this science of life, for where I was at first only anxious to have the fact of continuity of individual life beyond the grave proved to me, I now wish to know all that I can of that life beyond, and its effects on me here, and what effect my life here will have upon it, not as a belief, but as a knowledge."

The doctor interrupted him with, "You say, Whitney, there were two or three beside yourself and Mrs. Wilson. Why can't you do it now? You and Mrs. Wilson are here, and the rest will probably help. I certainly would like to see the experiment tried, and will do all I can for a fair trial."

"Perhaps it would amount to nothing," said Joe, "and might be objectionable to some, but I will do as the rest say."

The doctor was growing enthusiastic. As he moved up to the center table he said: "No one can object to a scientific experiment. Come up here, Joe, and tell us what to do first;" and turning to the rest of the company he said, "Come up, all of you except Wilson; you stay there on the sofa. Let us try, and see what we can get out of this thing anyway."

They all moved up to the table. Not any of them were very serious. The others did not seem to

notice it, but Miss Frisbee was rather reluctant and hesitating, but after a time she was seated with them at the table. They all put their hands on it, and talked and laughed for about five minutes, when there was a bang in the center of the table. This startled them all; they ceased laughing and began to wonder what caused it. Their hands were on top of the table, plainly seen, and they could not have kicked it if they had tried; there was not room. They sat wondering for a few moments, when the table commenced to move, and then they all accused each other of moving it, which they all denied; but the table kept swaying; first one side would rise and fall, and then the other. This sort of thing was becoming as good as a show to me. They were each declaring they were not moving the table, when Joe said, "The quickest way to decide who is moving the table is for all of us to move back from it and take our hands off." They all did so, but the table kept up a swaying motion. Joe now said to the doctor, "Ask it to spell a name, while you repeat the alphabet. Ask it to drop suddenly to the floor when you name a letter it wishes to indicate."

The doctor did as Joe suggested, and as he came to the letter "J" it dropped suddenly to the floor. He continued this until it spelled the name, Janet Frisbee. We all turned and looked inquiringly at Miss Frisbee. She was evidently agitated, for she rose and fairly trembled, as she said, "Janet Frisbee was my aunt, who died seven years ago. I believe this to be the work of the devil, and I will have nothing more to do with it;" and leaving us, went to her room.

Well, this broke up the experimenting for that day. The table stopped moving. May and Joe expressed sorrow that they had been led to assist in the experiment, considering the way Miss Frisbee had taken the demonstration. They said that it was nothing to them, that they had seen the same thing many times, and had forgotten that some might be prejudiced. The doctor and Miss Slocumb expressed a desire to see the thing through, and were not scared by the dancing of the table; but Joe and May would not try it again, but promised to sometime when a good opportunity offered. The ladies went up to Miss Frisbee's room to fix the matter up with her the best they could, and Joe and the doctor went up to the den to smoke. I thought to myself, "Well, if the doctor wants such a bigoted blue-stocking he can have her. I would not want her if she was built of diamond dust;" and as I lay there thinking the matter over, I fell asleep, and it was tea time when I awoke, being recalled to my senses by the ringing of the bell.

At the tea table we were all rather quiet. There appeared to be a kind of restraint on the whole party, and by the doctor's order I went to my room to retire, leaving the others for the evening. Joe came to my room, and sat with me a few moments, to see if I wanted anything for the night, and we spoke of the incident of the afternoon. He expressed himself as being sorry that the scene had occurred, but he did not know how he was personally responsible. If it had happened under another roof than theirs, he would not have cared, but he did not wish to offend Miss Frisbee, even if she did think he was in league with the devil; and laughed

as he said, "though it was a little rough on the aunt to have the niece call her the prince of darkness, or to insinuate that they were so well acquainted."

"But how do you suppose Miss Slocumb took it?" I asked.

"She is more sensible," he said with enthusiasm. "She has a pretty level head, and knows about what she is doing every time, and can see a brick block before she stumbles against it."

"Well, Joe, that is more than she would say of you, for she told me you were as blind as a bat, not long ago."

Joe was all attention now, and I had never seen him so excited in my life as he asked, "When did she say that? what made her say it?"

That pleased me. Misery loves company, and although I was out of misery, it did me good to see Joe on the anxious seat, and his manner confirmed my previous surmise, that he was more interested in Miss Slocumb than he had told me; but I could not resist the temptation to tease him a little, so I told him that it was not fair for me to betray a confidence just for the sake of gossip, and as Miss Slocumb was nothing to him, I did not feel called upon to repeat all I had heard.

"Who said she was nothing to me?" he asked, hotly.

"Oh, no one," I replied, "only I supposed she was not. Why, is she?" I asked quizzically.

"Blast your nonsense. I believe you are only chaffing, to get me on a string. I don't believe she ever said a word to you about me, one way or the other. But come, George, what did she say, if she said anything?"—and the fellow was so in earnest

that I thought it time to talk business; so I told him about our little talk at the picnic, and what my suspicions were, and finished by telling him that if he had the moral courage of a mouse, and Miss Slocumb was anything to him, he would tell her so, and not let matters drift on in this manner. If he did, any regard she might have for him would turn to contempt, for the lack of manliness in his character."

Joe rose to go, and said, "We will see about that. She will never have the chance to call me a faint-hearted man, whatever else she may say; and now, good night, old man; sleep soundly."

I did sleep soundly, and did not wake until the bell rang for rising in the morning. As we assembled together, Joe proposed to Miss Slocumb that she take a ride with him, as the weather was so fine, and the doctor said to Miss Frisbee, "Why can't we have a ride, too?" Both ladies seemed to be willing. May looked at me significantly, and the men went down town to get the teams. The ladies went to their rooms, leaving May and I alone.

May turned to me and said, "What in the world has come over Joe? I never knew him to invite a lady to ride or go anywhere with him before in my life. I believe everything is being turned upside down in this house."

"He has probably only come to the conclusion that what is good for one Whitney is good for the other," I replied.

"George, do you mean to insinuate that Joe has any love or special regard for Miss Slocumb? Why, I can't believe it."

"Why not? Joe is only human. Would you object to Miss Slocumb for a sister?"

“No, I would like to have it so, but I had thought Joe would never marry, and would live with us.”

“Well, perhaps he will not,” I said. “Perhaps she won’t have him if he wants her.”

May was vexed in a minute. “Why not? I should like to know if he is not as good as she is, any day. He is one of the best and kindest men living, and is as smart and intelligent as any man she will be likely to get to marry her; and as for money, his income for a year is more than her’s for a lifetime, and why should she not marry him, I want to know?”

It was plain to be seen that it would not do for any one to say anything against Joe to her, even in joke, so I replied, “Well, if I am any judge of human nature, or anything of a prophet, when they return from this ride Joe will present to you a prospective sister.”

The ladies now came down from their rooms, and in a few moments the gentlemen drove up in the carriages. May and I went to the door to see them off, and when they had gone she said, “What made you speak as you did? I have thought lately that Miss Slocumb rather liked Joe, but what makes you think he cares anything for her?” I told her of the little talk I had with him the night before. She was pleased at the idea, and all the time they were away could hardly talk of anything else. When I tried to get her to talk of our affairs, she would listen to me for a few moments, and then begin to wonder how Joe’s suit was coming on about that time.

It was dinner time when they came back. The ladies and the doctor went up to their respective

rooms, but Joe came in to May and me, and crossing over to the sofa, put out his hand to me and said, "Shake, George, it is all right, the thing is settled. I don't know what to say, but think I shall go out into the back yard and dance."

May caught him by the arm, and said, "Joe, Joe, do you really mean it? George told me while you were away what you were thinking of. Why did you keep it from me? Why did you not tell me before?"

"There was nothing to tell," replied Joe.

Miss Slocumb here made her appearance, in a shy, diffident way. I had never seen her with so little dignity about her. She stopped just inside the door, blushing like a school-girl. May went up to her, and putting both arms around her kissed her, as she said, "You need not say a word, I know all about it. I am so glad that you are to be my sister;" and then Miss Slocumb returned May's caresses with interest.

Joe said, "Hold up there, I am part of the Whitney family, and it is not fair to show partiality in the same family."

May answered him with, "You be still, you shall not tease my sister."

We all talked and laughed together until the doctor and Miss Frisbee came down. May did not wait a minute, but told them the news as soon as they entered the room. As they congratulated the happy couple, I noticed Miss Frisbee look significantly at the doctor, and he, after aheming once or twice, said, "Well, I don't know but I ought to call for congratulations, as that is the order of the day. Allow me to present my fiancée," turning to Miss

Frisbee. Of course we were all very profuse in our congratulations. Miss Frisbee took it very coolly; there did not appear to be much diffidence on her part, but the doctor showed more embarrassment than I ever had seen him manifest before.

We were a jolly party at dinner that day, and as I look back and think it over I usually excuse my part of the gushing nonsense by thinking, "Well, men make fools of themselves sometime in their life, and if a man doesn't do so more than once in a lifetime, he is getting along fairly well."

I went to the den with the doctor and Joe, when they took their after-dinner smoke, and insisted on having my cigar with them. They watched me a few moments, and then the doctor asked me how it seemed to be smoking again. "As well as ever," I replied.

"You are all right, then," he replied. "If you have come back to a smoking basis there is nothing the matter with you."

The conversation soon turned to the new prospects before us, and the new relations we had assumed since meeting here a few weeks before. Joe gave us a synopsis of his life up to that time, touching on his old sensitiveness about the trances he was subject to, but that now the secret was out the sensitiveness was all gone; that it was like the first plunge into water — after you were once in, it made no difference how wet you became; and now that the public knew of his trouble, he did not care a snap of his finger who knew or what was said; the first plunge was over, and while he would never have been made the subject of comment and gossip by any act that could be avoided,

now that he was in the swim he proposed to swim it through, and said, "If I had not been found out, I probably should never have married, for I—from my old standpoint of sensitiveness—would never have asked any woman to marry me, for that would have necessitated my telling her all about my life. But after my misfortune became public property, there was nothing to lose by marrying, and everything to gain, as I did want a home of my own; and while I don't wish to talk nonsense, I will say that Miss Slocumb just suits me, and in my private affairs I will never try to please any one else."

I gave my little experience by saying that up to the time May asked me to marry her I had never thought of being married, and then it was such quick work that it nearly took my breath; but after I had once struck in and got fairly under way in this new course of life, I was bound to see the thing through, or die in the attempt. I wanted all the rights, titles, and privileges of a married man, or nothing, and was bound to have them, and be a full fledged Benedict.

The doctor said: "Well, gentlemen, I always took rather a philosophical view of life, especially of marriage, and having had some experience in that line, I know a home is preferable to club or hotel life; and now that we are talking on the subject, I will speak of our private relations with each other.

"When Wilson told me about the relationship existing between Mrs. Wilson and himself, I naturally supposed that it was only a temporary arrangement, and would have no influence on their future lives; and I then regarded, and do now regard, Mrs. Wilson as one of the most interesting persons I ever

met. I don't think any man would find life a burden with her for a companion ;" and turning to me he said, "Wilson, I think you are a lucky fellow." (For which I thanked him, thinking the same myself ; he had told me no news.) "But after a little, I could see, what neither of them appeared to appreciate themselves, especially Mrs. Wilson, that the relationship which they bore to each other would eventually affect the lives of both more than they realized, and that there was not the ghost of a chance for me ; so in my mind I had withdrawn before the other ladies appeared on the scene. Since then — well, gentlemen, you know the rest, so there is nothing more for me to say."

This dismissed the subject as a topic for conversation, and in a few moments we went down to the ladies. A shower had come up, so that there was no getting out of doors.

We were surprised by Miss Frisbee's alluding to the incident of the day previous. She said she regretted her hasty action and language, and while her opinions had not changed, she was sorry that her action had disturbed the rest of the party. Joe took the duty of answering her upon himself, and replied that he thought there was no ill-feeling entertained by any one ; that, for his part, he was sorry that he had allowed himself to be caught in a position which had given offense to a guest ; that he honestly begged her pardon, for no offense had been intended by him, or any of the others ; and as for what the table had done, certainly none of them were responsible for that.

"Very well," replied Miss Frisbee, "I have no feeling against any of you, so we will consider the

whole matter amicably settled. But I would like to know how it was done."

Joe smiled, as he replied: "From the standpoint you take to view such matters, I suppose it must be called a miracle: something occurred; and as the why and wherefore could not be fully explained, it must be charged up to the credit of miracles."

"But that is absurd," replied Miss Frisbee. "There are no miracles at the present time."

"Why not, Miss Frisbee?"

"Because the new order or dispensation is established, and there is no need of them."

"Who says so?" asked Joe.

"Why, the church teaches it."

"And can you tell me at just what date they ceased to take place? If I read the Bible aright, these miracles were performed long after the death of Christ, and were supposed to be one of the powers conferred upon Christians. Now will you tell me at what time the working of what are termed miracles ceased, and why they ceased? And will you point out to me any teaching of the Bible which shows that they ever should cease?"

"I don't exactly know just now," replied Miss Frisbee, "but the church teaches it."

"And are you willing to substitute, or in other words embrace, theology for the Bible?"

"But theology is founded on the Bible, Mr. Whitney, and must be true."

"Very well," answered Joe, "you say that the Bible is a direct revelation from a God that works miracles, and is infallible. Now if this is a fact, what use or room is there for theology?"

"Why, to interpret the meaning of the word, and

give the true teaching that God meant to impart by the Bible."

"But suppose, Miss Frisbee, that these men who wrote the interpretations made mistakes, and did not give the true meaning," persisted Joe.

"But they did not. Their interpretation was true," replied Miss Frisbee. "I believe them to be true, and that makes them truth to me."

"Then, if I understand you rightly, you not only believe in the infallibility of the Bible, as a direct revelation from a God, but you also believe in the infallibility of men — that they can and do interpret the meaning of the Bible, and make no mistakes. But you also believe yourself to be infallible, and think you can detect the exact and the whole truth, after listening to only one side of a story. You are a Protestant, Miss Frisbee, and sneer at the Catholic when he pronounces the Pope infallible, but you carry the idea much farther; in fact, you carry this doctrine of infallibility to its logical conclusion: if one man can be infallible, all men can, and you declare that all men are infallible, and can make no mistakes in these matters so long as it is truth to them, and thus you show the absurdity of the whole; for out of a million different opinions, on a given subject, there can only be one right one; the rest must be wrong; or they may all be wrong. In my opinion," said Joe, "there is some truth underlying all these doctrines, on which men have built vast superstructures of error, and the church complains, not because all men will not accept the central ideas of truth, but because they will not accept the superstructure of error they have built, the really non-essentials. All men will readily admit that there are

superior intellects and minds in the universe ; it is a self-evident truth, from which none will dissent, for we see them every day of our lives ; minds that are superior in intellectual force. But the history of the Jews and the Christian church is a history (of the Jews and the church) to foist the idea of one supreme intelligent mind force on mankind, and that they were the chosen people and especial care of this one supreme mind, and consequently entitled to certain privileges and perquisites, and have used every means, both fair and foul, to promulgate that idea ; and apparently, to an unbiased observer, more for the sake of the perquisites than a care for the idea as an abstract question of truth ; and while there would have been no chance for a dispute in regard to the central idea, that superior minds did exist, they did get into a dispute when they tried to make the mythologist believe there was only one superior mind, for he had what to him was better evidence, that there were many instead of one ; and like the beliefs in a God, or gods, this belief of a future beyond the grave was spontaneous, in nearly all nations and tribes, no matter how degraded, and each pictured to himself a future he could enjoy, or a torment which he feared ; and there was no chance for dispute in the central idea of truth, that there was a future ; but the differences and troubles arose when one commenced to force on the other just what that future consisted in ; there was no difference between the missionary and the wild Indian in regard to the fact that there was a future beyond death, but a difference arose as soon as the missionary wanted the Indian to discard the happy hunting-ground for a walled city, made of gold and

precious stones — a place that would be a perfect hell to the Indian.) In regard to this intercommunion of intelligences from one sphere of existence to the other, the central thought and truth is about the same in all. Nearly every nation and tribe in the present or in the past have and do believe in it, and accept it to be a fact, to a greater or less extent; but the trouble commenced as soon as one sect, tribe, or nation, claimed to be the only and true channel of communication for these invisible intelligences, and the followers of one attempted to discredit and class all others as spurious and wrong. The history of the Jews shows, that while there was no question that such communications were not possible, it laid the hand of power on the means, and attempted to suppress the ways, by which the communications were given, and expelled what might be called the mediums of that day; and yet Saul consulted one in disguise."

"But," interrupted Miss Frisbee, "she was a witch."

"Who says so?" asked Joe.

"The Bible," replied Miss Frisbee.

"I beg pardon, Miss Frisbee, but it says nothing of the kind. It says the woman of Endor, and the narrative does not tell whether the woman was good, bad, or indifferent; only she furnished the visitors something to eat. The word 'witch' was put in by the men who printed the book, thousands of years afterward; it was interpolated, and has no bearing on the story one way or the other; and let me say another thing, too, right here, Miss Frisbee: the next time you wish to read the Bible, you take one book of it and write it off for yourself, without

punctuation marks of any kind, with nothing to distinguish one sentence from another, leaving out all the words printed in italics, and see how it appears to you, as a whole. Perhaps you would gain a different meaning from it than the one you now hold, for this part is the work of men, who have no more right to tamper with the records than have you.

“But to come back to the subject under discussion: the phenomena recorded as having happened at that time, such phenomena as seeing those who had been long dead, of raising those who were apparently dead, and having communications from unseen and invisible intelligences, and apparent miracles, are recorded long before and long subsequent to the time of Christ in the Bible; they are recorded also in all the sacred writings of other nations, and each claims theirs to be the only true phenomena.

“Now these claims are the claims of men—human beings, like you and me, and have no more bearing on the facts than any claim or assertion you or I might make in regard to the meaning or significance of the event, for a truth carries in itself the internal evidence of its truthfulness. A truth spoken by Christ is not more of a truth because spoken by him: a truth spoken by any good man is not more of a truth, or a better truth, because uttered by a good man, but the man is better for having spoken it. Those human beings, like you and me, recorded certain phenomena which they witnessed, and they also attached their philosophy to these events. If we discard the philosophy which they attached, it still leaves the events to be accounted for. If the events cannot be verified, if no part of the phenomena can be duplicated in kind,

then the entire record must be discarded as false, for the same natural laws exist now that existed at that time. The sun rose in the east at that time; the law of gravity was in force; they recorded lightnings on Sinai, so there must have been electricity at that time. Franklin only showed what lightning was—he did not create it. The Chinese were acquainted with magnetism; the laws of chemistry were in operation at that time, for they had fire; and grape juice made alcohol, not a mild kind of wine, that would not intoxicate, but men got drunk then the same as now, and were evidently the same kind of men we meet on the streets to-day, — perhaps wiser in a few things, but ignorant of many things with which we are acquainted;—and anything they could do or see we ought to be able to do or see; if they actually did do and see the things recorded at that age in history, then we can do and see the same; and if it is an impossibility for us, it was for them, and the whole thing is a lie, not only their philosophy and teachings, but the phenomena, the facts on which their philosophy was based. If inspirational speaking or writing, speaking in divers tongues, healing the sick, raising the apparent dead, were possible then, they are possible now. The same natural laws are in existence; men of the same kind are on the face of the earth; men are born and die in the same manner as they did two or four thousand years ago. If it was possible for a man to do a certain act then, the same kind of a man can do the same act now; and while no two men are alike, there is but very little difference; and while a man may be born to-day who is inferior to some of those of the past, the chances are equally as good, if not

better, that a man can be born at this age of the world who will be the superior of any in the past; but such a superior man in existence to-day would be at a terrible disadvantage, as compared to the same man two or three thousand years ago. At that time everything that could not be explained was credited to a God. Now, what can't be explained becomes common property, and if any one attempts to lay hold of any of the mysteries of nature, and assign them to any cause, he must show good cause for his actions, and stand ready to defend his course against all comers, or the world will not allow the claim, and he will be laughed at as an imposter.

“This training has been carried so far that many refuse to believe the evidence of their own senses, and instead of giving a miracle-working God the credit of everything they can't explain, go to the other extreme and deny that their senses ever received any such impression; and if they can't explain a certain phenomenon, will declare their senses deceived them, and it only apparently took place; while still others cling to the miracle-working God theory; but because a phenomenon they observe, if traced out and investigated, might lead to a denial of some of the dogmas of the theology in which they believe, dogmas that were made by men, they turn around and charge it up to the devil, — a being who must, according to the testimony of the theologian, be much keener than their God at his best, for they assign to his government by far the largest share of the human race; and between the philosophies of the different schools of theology, the devil will have the whole, for what one school don't condemn the other does, and they all send each other

to perdition; and then they claim that their God permeates all space, is omnipresent; and if that be the case, and this devil story be true, then this God must have a little devil, more or less, mixed in with him somewhere; or to put it the other way, the devil must be a part of God, and God must be a part of the devil; but that can't be, because that would make him fallible in some of his parts, because the devil is not quite all-powerful, and this God is. And so the absurdity of these claims is apparent; all show on their faces that these theological Gods and devils were made by men, either through chicanery, design, or ignorance, and that their existence cannot be sustained; and to charge anything that can't be explained to a theological devil, or archeological God, is only an attempt to explain a mystery by the use of an absurdity, landing us deeper in confusion than we were before an explanation was offered.

“And now, Miss Frisbee,” said Joe, “I will beg your pardon for speaking so plainly, as I do not wish to hurt your feelings; but by what process of reasoning do you come to the conclusion that the table was moved yesterday by the devil? An axe was made to float, in the Old Testament times, through the power of God. The principal difference I can see between the two occurrences, was a point of time, a question of a few thousand years, but both were two objects composed of inert matter, moving in opposition to the law of gravity, and moved by some unseen force, at the request of a human being. Now, the one that was moved some thousands of years ago you claim to have been moved by the agency of the Jewish God, Jehovah; and the one that was

moved yesterday to have been moved by a theological devil; and, honestly, I can't see any practical difference between the two cases; and if like causes produce like results, then like results come from like causes; and these results were practically the same, except that your Bible says it was a God, and you say it was the devil. And —"

"And what do you say it was, Mr. Whitney?" asked Miss Frisbee.

"Do you wish my opinion, Miss Frisbee?"

"Certainly."

"Understand me, Miss Frisbee, this is my opinion, not a dogmatic assertion, but it is my opinion that it is just what it claimed to be, a disembodied human being."

"Do you think it was my aunt?" she asked.

"Really, I don't know. I have no means of knowing, as up to that time I had never known that you had an aunt. Your family history was a blank to me. I knew nothing about it."

"But what do you think?" persisted Miss Frisbee.

"I think it might have been your aunt who raised the table; it might have been some one else who raised the table for her, and spelled her name; or it might have been some one who forged her name, and it might be that your aunt knew nothing about it."

"Do you intend to say that a spirit would lie and forge another's name, Mr. Whitney?"

"Why should they not? They are only human beings, like you and I. If they were better than we when they went out from a physical body, they are probably better now. If they were worse morally

than you or I, they must have reformed since, or they are worse now. The liars don't all live; occasionally one dies, and then he is nothing more or less than a dead liar—a liar without a physical body; and if you could not believe him before he left the physical body, I see no reason for believing him after. To be sure, a liar might change and reform; they could do so in a physical body, and there is no reason why they could not out of it; but we know for a fact that the process of reformation is a slow process; it is a mental' growth, and takes time. Nature makes no sudden jumps of progress. Men cannot learn without experience and time, and a lifetime seems to be too short for many men to learn that 'honesty is the best policy'; and if they went into the future with the idea that dishonesty paid, they would carry that idea with them, and retain it until they had learned better, and just how long a time it would take for them to learn this would depend largely upon the man; and when you ask me if I think a spirit can lie, I say it looks just as reasonable to me that a spirit should lie to you, if the opportunity is offered, as that he should tell the truth, and whether a communication is a falsehood or a truth will have to be decided by your own judgment, the same as any other statement your fellow-men make to you. It is my opinion that a spirit could be honestly mistaken; tell a downright falsehood, or an absolute truth; and it devolves upon the reason of the recipient to classify the communication."

"But, Mr. Whitney, why are lying spirits allowed to deceive?"

"I will answer that question by asking another.

Why are lying men allowed to deceive? Men in a physical body deceive, and make mistakes, and why should not men out of a physical body do the same? The same natural laws that would allow one to tell a truth, would allow the other to tell a falsehood, or express a mistaken idea. The law that would allow Moses and Elias to appear centuries after they were dead, would allow other men to do the same. The same natural law that would aid Samuel and the woman of Endor, could be used by the John Smiths and Mary Joneses of to-day. But familiarity breeds contempt, and while you will ridicule the evidence of the John Smith of to-day, you accept the testimony of a licentious old despot because it is thousands of years old, preferring to trust the evidence of the senses of another, because it is old, rather than your own or your neighbor's, and cling to the idea that death, in some miraculous way, changes a person's mental attributes, when there is no analogy in nature to warrant the assumption or assertion."

"But, Mr. Whitney, don't you think a belief in Christ the Saviour can take away all sin, and change the liar to a truth-telling person or spirit?"

"No, I don't," replied Joe, "for the biggest liars that I ever have met with believed in that doctrine implicitly, and as a rule,—of course there are exceptions,—but as a rule, the more untruthful and immoral a person is, in the Christian countries of the world, the more firmly he believes in this doctrine of vicarious atonement; but however firmly a person might believe that another could pay his moral debts to society, I have yet to learn of a case where this belief has settled an account with society; for no matter what a person may believe, at this age of the

world, in civilized countries, if the person is a criminal he is tried as a criminal. Society weighs the man up for what he is, and not for what he believes in regard to vicarious atonement, and if a person is morally bad, he is marked, and considered by society as bad, although he may subscribe to, and believe, every dogma that his church will present to him; and if he leads a life of dissipation, a belief in the fact that an innocent man was murdered nearly 1900 years ago, by a lot of half-civilized Jews, does not prevent him from reaping the fruits of an ill-spent life. If a man will not think, and study for himself, he cannot, in a physical body, become wise; and if a firm belief in the tradition that the Jewish Jehovah had a son does not affect the life of a person here in a physical body, a person whom we can see and do know about, what right have we to believe that such a belief will after death work a miraculous change and make a good man out of a bad man, or a wise man out of a fool? It apparently was an assertion of the priestly class, made for the purpose of satisfying the masses. This whole doctrine of vicarious atonement reached its logical conclusion in the time of Luther, in the sale of indulgences; for if a man can pay another's moral debts, he certainly can anticipate or discount those debts; but if a man filches from me my rights, no amount of adoration, offered to a Jewish Jehovah, will restore those rights to me; and I fail to see how the murder of an innocent man, centuries ago, by semi-barbarians, will add to my present comfort, or repay me for what my fellowmen have stolen, be it life, liberty, character, or property. It is my firm belief and opinion that I shall have to pay the debts that I owe, or receive

forgiveness from those against whom I have trespassed in this life, and it is also my firm belief and opinion that the rule holds good for me at least after death. After I have left this physical body, I don't wish to trespass on the rights of my fellowman, for I believe that I shall, at some time, have to repay. It is my firm conviction that the law of retribution is as exact and relentless as the law of gravity."

"Whitney," said the doctor, "there in one question I wish to ask you right here. You refer to the Jewish nation at that age of the world as half-civilized, semi-barbarians. Now by what rule do you gauge civilization?"

Joe replied: "I gauge the civilization of a nation, as a people, by their ability to recognize individual human rights, especially the right of all men to life. A nation or people that holds human life cheaply is low in the scale of civilization; a nation or people that holds human life dear, is above them in the scale of civilization. The knowledge of the arts and sciences does not constitute a scale by which civilization can be measured. To quote from our own declaration of principles, the nation that grants the greatest liberty to life and pursuit of happiness to the individual, is nearest the goal of civilization; and the nation which does all this, but goes one step farther and not only grants, but guarantees, these individual inherent birthrights of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, and enforces these guarantees, controlling none, only those that would trample upon and control the rights of others, has reached the acme of civilization. And, doctor, the reason I call the Jews at that time only half-civilized, is because they did rob an innocent man of his life in the effort

to rob him of the birthright to express his honest opinion that happened to disagree with the dogmas of their established religion."

"Then, Whitney," said the doctor, "you would not call us, as a nation, civilized, because we execute criminals, as you do not believe in hanging?"

"Certainly not," replied Joe. "We Americans, as a nation, are a long way from being civilized. The majority get together and make laws and rules which rob men of life with impunity, by legalized murder; and when the best men of the nation will calmly make laws that in their execution will rob men of the birthright of life, for revenge, how can they expect the weak and passionate to set them an example? The weak and passionate should be controlled, but not robbed. Civilized, doctor? Not by any means! Even in the question of protecting the weak from the aggressions of the strong, we are only half-civilized. If a physically stronger man should attempt to rob you on the highway, our civilization would step in and protect you, and that is all our boasted nineteenth century civilization amounts to, for if a giant in intellect conspires to rob you, as an individual, or the whole nation, society applauds—says the man is smart, and calls it business; and as a nation we shall never be civilized until society devises means to protect the mentally weak from the mentally strong, as well as to protect the physically weak from the physically strong; and society must first pluck the beam from its own eye, before expecting the vicious and weak to pluck the mote from theirs. So long as society as a whole robs the individual, so long will the individual rob; so long as society as a whole murders and robs men of the

birthright of life, just so long will individuals rob their fellowmen of life, and commit murder."

"By the by, Joe," said the doctor, "you have never told us the reason why you objected to capital punishment, that you promised some weeks ago. Are the reasons you just gave the ones?"

"Some of them, doctor, but not all. One great reason is this: If a man is dangerous to the community, and is infringing on the rights of others, even to the extent of robbing them of the boon of life, society has a right to protect itself, as it would from a maniac, and control him or shut him up. Now, if such a man is shut up, you know where he is, and just how much harm he can do, but when you break his neck, and set him free again, it appears to me to be the most foolish thing that could be done, for you have not only liberated him, but placed it out of your power to restrain him, and for a nation of people that believes in a future beyond the grave,—in a life after death,—to set a known bad man free to do his worst, to put him in a position where they can have no restraint over him whatever, appears to me to be about the most illogical position they could take. If the nation, as a whole, believed in annihilation, and that when they killed a man that was the end of him, there would be some sense in the proceeding; but for a nation that believes there is a future after death,—for such a nation to set a man free,—looks to me like an absurdity, and I can't see what protection society gains by losing all control of a man."

CHAPTER X.

THE weather now cleared, and the two couples proposed walking out before tea. That left May and myself together for a short time. Every hour I felt more and more of my old vigor, and I began to feel restless to be attending to my business, I had been away from it so long. I did not mind while there was an object for me to stay in Meriden, but now that matters had been settled to my satisfaction, I wanted to be back in Boston once more, and at the same time be preparing a home for May and myself ; so as soon as we were alone, I asked May to tell me just how soon she would marry me and go to Boston, telling her that I felt I must go and attend to business very soon, and now that I had enjoyed a home for a few weeks, to go back to my old quarters and manner of life would be a trial, and one which I did not wish to endure any longer than possible.

May answered, "George, if you had asked me this morning, I should not have known what to answer ; but now I can say that just as soon as Joe is married, and he has a wife here to take care of him, I will be ready to go with you."

"Very well, then, May, I shall take it upon myself to urge Joe and Miss Slocumb to hurry up their plans if they have any, and if they have not, I shall use all my power of persuasion that they make some plans immediately."

"That is your lookout, George."

Then I told her the plans I had thought of for us after we were married; that in the list of property that was in my hands for sale was a house that had made me almost wish I was married, when I had looked it over at the time the owner had placed it in my care, thinking at that time if I was married I would buy it for myself; and now the first thing I shall do when I get back—the first piece of business I attend to—will be to buy that home for you and me; and clasping her to me, I said, "May, I wish it was ours now, and we were in our new home."

"Always in a hurry, George! You must not rush through life at such a high speed. Why, you have been here only a few weeks, and yet wish you were married now; but there will be time enough, and we can be married by next winter."

"Next winter! May, you must be crazy. Life is too short to fritter away six months in that manner. Why, I want to be married next month at the farthest."

"And, George, you must be insane to think of such a thing; you talk nonsense!"

"We shall see whether I do or not. I have your word that as soon as Joe is provided for, you will come and take care of me. Now I shall not do any more talking to you about this until after I have seen Joe, but shall try to induce him to hurry up, and then you will have to keep your word good to me."

The others now came back from their walk, and we all went to tea. After tea, I asked Joe up to my room, and laid the case before him, telling him that I was very anxious to have the wedding the next

month. Joe said, for his part he would not care if it was the next day, but he had not consulted Miss Slocumb, and did not know any of her plans; in fact, did not know much about her, but was satisfied to take her as he found her, and glad of the chance. He knew that she had a nominal home with an uncle in Albany, and had been, up to this season, teaching for a living, and that was about all he did know, and he did not care the snap of his finger to know more. He saw no reason why they could not be married next month, as well as at any time, if it was to make any difference to me, and he would speak to Miss Slocumb about it.

“And, Joe, you might make the case just as strong as the law will allow, by saying it may make quite a difference to me financially.”

“How can that be?” asked Joe, looking at me with surprise.

“Why, I shall not have my mind distracted from my business. All the engaged men that I ever saw were not worth their salt for business until they were married and settled down, and I don’t suppose that I am very much more level-headed than the rest of mankind. But, joking aside, Joe, it won’t do any harm to tell Miss Slocumb the yarn, and she is too good-natured to discommode any one to gratify a whim, and she may consent; it is as much for your interest as mine.”

“All right, George, I will do what I can, and now that you have put the notion in my head, I begin to think that it is just what I do want.”

This satisfied me, for Joe had the tenacity of a bull-dog when he was once started, and I knew there

would be no peace for Miss Slocumb until she had consented to his plans.

We had been together but a few moments, when I noticed Joe talking to Miss Slocumb privately, and they quietly slipped out on the front porch, and commenced a moonlight promenade on the veranda by themselves, — perhaps not just the proper thing, but under the circumstances, as a newly-engaged couple, they were excusable, and the rest of us had a pleasant evening chat.

It was nearly time for retiring when they came in, and after a little conversation the party broke up. I went into Joe's room with him, and asked him how he had progressed, or if he had talked with Miss Slocumb about the message.

“Yes,” he replied. “At first she laughed at me, but when I pictured, in as doleful a manner as possible, your situation, she promised to consider the matter and be influenced by May's wishes. So, George, you keep quiet and say nothing, and let me run this little affair. I made a blunder in the other, and I want a chance to redeem myself. I could always coax May into anything, and to-morrow I will coax May into consenting, by telling her it is I who wish to be married next month, more than you, and Miss Slocumb looks to her for an example, and if she wants to do one more sisterly act, she will consent to be married next month. Oh, you just keep quiet, and we will fix things to suit us. And,” continued Joe, as the talk between us became serious business, “the plot grew in my mind, and I conceived it would be a great scheme to have us both married at the same time, and break the Whitney family all up at once. So I asked her about her

home at her uncle's, saying I supposed I should have to see him for his consent, and told her I wanted to know about all of her relatives, and, George, what she told me made me mad. The way of it was, Fannie, that is, Miss Slocumb, was brought up in this uncle's family. Her parents died when she was quite young, leaving just about money enough to educate her, and while her uncle had been a father to her, his wife and Fannie did not get along well; so just as soon as she had completed her education, she pulled out into the world, and has earned her own living ever since; and matters have come to such a pass that Fannie declared she would not go home to her uncle's house to be married, and says I must marry her at some hotel, but that will not do. I told her so, and I told her she must allow May to make a wedding for her. She objected, but you see if May don't talk her out of that. And let's see; this is the 10th of May, and you just have your business arranged so that you can leave it anywhere from the 5th to the 15th of June, and you see if I don't have these two women talked over to our plans, and the 1st of July don't find us two old married men, settled down for life. They will probably object at first, — women always do, they are objectors on principle, — but, then, they are just as good yielders as objectors."

I went to my room in high spirits. Joe's confidence had made me confident it would all come out right. The next morning the doctor and Miss Frisbee went down town, and Joe followed May and Miss Slocumb to the sewing-room, and in a few minutes he came and called me, and he and I together used every argument we could think of to

arrange to have the wedding about the 10th of June, and it was nearly noon before we could get them to agree to our terms ; but they finally did, and consented that about the 12th they would be ready, but made us promise to keep out of their way, and not call for their company, for they would have to work night and day to get their outfit ready. We promised all they asked, but Joe asked them if they never intended to have any more clothes made after they were married ; or did they think the dress-makers would all die the day they were married, and it would be impossible for them to have any work done after ?

May told him it was no affair of his what they thought, that they probably knew as much about what they wanted as any man could tell them, and they proposed to have their own way in regard to the trousseau ; they had consented to enough for the sake of pleasing two obstinate men, and after that day we must keep out of that room, unless admitted by special invitation.

Miss Slocumb had gone to her room for some dry-goods of some description, and Joe seized the opportunity to say to May, " Fannie is not overburdened with money, as near as I can learn, and I don't know how to approach the subject, but I would as soon make some of my wedding presents now as at any other time, and probably she could use money now with more gratification to herself than a year from now ; and, May, I want you to see that she don't use one dollar less than you do, and more if she wants it ; so I have signed a check here, and you fill in the amount, and see that she gets it without hurting her feelings. Tell her anything you please,

but just see that she has the money. Don't tell her it came from me; call it your present to your sister and old friend."

"Joe, you old darling, that is just what I had planned to do for myself, and now I will do it for you. I will make her take it, and you look out, for the check may astonish you if I fill it in."

The bell rang for dinner. The doctor and Miss Frisbee had come in. After dinner we told them of our plans, and invited them to be present, which they promised to do. It was Saturday, and I announced my intention of going to Boston on Monday morning, and call my visit done for the present. The doctor said he would also depart at the same time, but Miss Frisbee would stay for a short time longer. I telephoned for a carriage to take me down town to see Dixon, and attend to some business that afternoon, as there would be no time on Monday. Joe went with me, and it took nearly the whole afternoon to attend to all my affairs, and I was quite tired from the exertion, so much so that after tea I went at once to my room, to rest for the night.

Sunday, the last day of my visit in Meriden, where a few weeks had so changed the whole current of my life, as I lay awake before rising that morning, and thought it over, I could hardly realize that so great a change could come to me in so short a time. As I contemplated it, and contrasted my present views and aspirations in life, as compared to what they were when I had first come to do what I could for my friends, the Whitneys, it appeared as if I had been born into a new state of existence—as Joe would say, into a new sphere of life. I had done business before, as I supposed, for the sake of the

money and excitement, but as I looked at my past life, I saw that I had been rushing through and driving business because I must do something. The energy that was born in me would not let me be idle, and I had simply driven business because I did not know what else to do. I had taken good care of my affairs, because it had never entered my mind that there was anything else to care for. But now I was to have a wife and home, and while I had not taken much part in the discussions between Joe and the others, I could see that, imperceptibly to me, it had had an influence on me, for as I lay thinking of my future, and my mind ran along the course of years until I came to old age, the question kept coming to my mind, what next? what after old age? There was but one answer: death, of course; but, again, what next after death? Was the doctor right, and after death nothing? Or was Joe right, and after death another life to be lived with the friends and associates we had formed here? Was death the portal, the passage to a new life, or was it the door of entrance to nothing? I could echo the sentiments expressed by the doctor, that if death leads to annihilation, to nothing, then life is worse than a farce; it is a plot, a scheme, worthy of the worst devil that the imagination can invent. Better never to have lived than to have death, the ruthless executioner of an immutable law, blot out all.

But if Joe was right, and life was really only the school of experience in the youth of our existence, and the bitter experiences of life were like the knotty problems of our school days, and death was only the graduation into the real manhood of our existence,—the means by which we should enter a

larger and more active life, where the best there was in a man could have a greater scope,— then there was a design in life that could be seen and appreciated; a design worthy of the power that had brought us into existence, and showed us some of the bright spots of existence, and given us the minds to aspire for more and better.

The bell rang, and stopped my thinking. As I descended the stairs, and stepped out on the porch, the morning was simply grand. While I stood there drinking in the beauty of that May morning, May came and stood beside me. We were, after the first greeting, silent for a few moments, and I told May of my thoughts of the morning. As I finished speaking, she answered me :

“ I don't know positively about the future. (To live one life at a time well, and help my fellows, is enough for me.) But I feel and believe that there is a future beyond this life; and this belief and feeling is so strong with me that it becomes a positive knowledge, and I anticipate and speculate on that time with as much assurance as I do on living in Boston with you, although I have never seen that city. When you tell me of it I believe you, and know what you tell me is true, and there is that within me which tells me as surely there is a future, as you tell me there is a Boston; and this something appeals to me as strongly as your testimony, although it speaks in no language which I can define. What this something is I do not know, I can give no description of it, but it is enough for me. I offer it as no evidence to convince others, but it convinces me, and makes heaven a reality; not the heaven I learned of in my Sunday-school, but a heaven where

we shall see and know our friends as we knew them here. I don't want to meet them with all their human passions and aspirations gone, the mere machine of some omnipotent power, sunk to the dead level of an automaton, but I want to find them with the possibilities of all their old faults and failings; perhaps with those faults and failings under control, but not lost and gone; for all my friends, like myself, have some faults, and I would not know how to enjoy myself with a faultless person. George, she said, I would not like you half so well if you could not get mad. I like you now because you can be passionate, but can control your passions; or when you don't, you can try again; but to meet you in a future, with all your personality gone, and you become a mere singing machine,— when I know you cannot sing a note,— is something I do not want, and I do not anticipate or desire any such a heaven as that. I love you now, faults and all, and when we meet in the future life, I want you all, not a part. And as for a hell, or future punishment, we shall probably get what we deserve. We usually do here in this life, though sometimes the full measure is not meted out to us; but in the future I think it will be, whether it is good or bad; in the total of existence I think we shall get what we deserve, no more and no less. And I regard the hell taught to me in my childhood as worse than a myth. I think it a libel on the creator of the universe. Others can, if they wish, traduce the good power that gave them existence, by preaching and believing these vile calumnies, but I know for myself that this power is good, whatever it is, and I will not vilify this; to me,

incomprehensible power by ascribing any such base motives, acts, or laws.

"Look at this beautiful world, on this lovely morning, George, and tell me how any one can be so ungrateful as to say the author, no matter whether it be a God, first cause, or blind energy, is more unfeeling and inhuman than man? I cannot and will not believe it. I will not so calumniate the causes that gave me existence."

"May," I replied, "I can't tell you anything about it, but your religion fits me exactly, and between us there will be no chance for that anomaly, a religious quarrel."

The bell rang for breakfast. The others had come down to the dining-room. At the table we all planned to go to church that morning, and decided to go together. We went to the Universalist church, Joe saying he liked them the best, for they made the fewest dogmatic claims and assertions. The service was interesting, more of a lecture on the history of the times in which the text was written, than a sermon, and with the music made a very fine entertainment.

After dinner, we telephoned for carriages, and all went riding. Miss Frisbee objected at first, but finally yielded to the persuasions of the doctor, and accompanied him. It was Sunday evening, and probably the last night that we should all be together for some time to come, if ever, and do the best I could to forget it, the thought would intrude itself upon me, and produce a gloomy feeling, for I had enjoyed life more in the last few weeks than ever before in the same length of time. Evidently the doctor and the others had something of the same

feeling, for we all expressed the same sentiment. The doctor said: "I am sorry my visit is so nearly ended. It was made without any planning, and has been one of the most care-free and enjoyable vacations I have ever known," and laughed as he said, "Wilson and Joe have given me just enough to do, so that life has not grown monotonous."

"Yes," replied Joe, "I guess that several of us have given you something to think about since you have been here," turning to look at Miss Frisbee. And then we talked of our meeting next month, the doctor and Miss Frisbee promising to be present. It had been definitely decided that the weddings should take place Tuesday, the 12th of June, in the morning, and the two bridal couples should take a trip together, the destination to be decided upon later. After some music, we parted for the night; and it proved to be the last evening we all ever spent together. There was only a month before it was expected we should all meet again, but plans made for a month as often come to naught as completion.

Monday morning found the doctor and I eating an early breakfast, for he was to go with me as far as Springfield, on his way to Albany for a visit to one of those aunts spoken of, while I went to Boston. The others were up to see us off, and with many kind wishes given and received, we entered the carriage and drove to the depot together. As the doctor and I parted in Springfield, he promised that nothing but sickness or death would keep him from meeting me on the 12th of June at the Whitneys', and if he was a skeptic in religious matters, his word was as good as his bond.

The rush of business I found waiting for me,

when I was once fairly settled in the harness, kept time from hanging heavily on my hands, though I did find time to spend the second Sunday in Meriden. May was there, but the doctor and Miss Frisbee had gone. It was one happy day for me, but one day goes by so quickly that, as we look back, it appears to the memory but a moment.

Monday, the 11th of June, had come before I hardly realized it, and yet I was ready, and glad that only one more day stood between me and the consummation of the plans that had taken the strongest hold of me of any of the projects of my life. I had completed all my business, and when searching in my mind for a present to my wife, had come to the conclusion that a house was as good a present as I could make her, so when I bought the house we were to live in, the deeds were made out in her name. I was free from debt, and whatever befell me in the future my wife would have a home. I knew that she had means of her own, but let her keep it; it was her I wanted, not her property.

I arrived in Meriden on a late train, and the next day I was to be married again, and by a minister. I found all the arrangements had been made. It was to be a very quiet wedding. Miss Slocumb was the only one who had any relatives nearer than cousins, and she had only the one uncle and aunt. They had been invited, and had arrived. They and the doctor and Miss Frisbee, who had not yet come, were to be the only guests. All but Joe and May had retired when I arrived, and we did the same as soon as I had lunch.

It was my wedding morning — a period in my life that I had never contemplated before my first trip

to Meriden, to help my friends; and now one who at that time I supposed was dead, was to stand up and be married with me, and the sister was to be my wife. The day was beautiful. The garden and house were filled with flowers; the scent of roses was everywhere, and I was as happy and as proud as a king. I even tried to sing, but stopped, for fear of arrest. There was music in my soul, but it stuck somewhere in my throat. But in every fiber of my being was a thankfulness that I was alive, and as I looked out of the window I caught myself saying, "Thank God, I am alive!"

The doctor came on an early train, and took a light breakfast with us, and when we questioned him about Miss Frisbee, and expressed wonder that she had not come, he told us to wait and he would tell us the whole story, which he did by reading a letter he had received from her, in answer to the one he had written to know her plans for being there that day. It ran something like this:

"DEAR FRIEND,—It is with feelings of both regret and pleasure that I write what I think is my duty. I regret that I could ever have so forgotten my religious principles as to enter into an engagement with one, however admirable in other respects, who does not accept the teachings of the church, and is not a professing Christian; for, as spotless as your life may be in other respects, for you to reject Christianity and the church is to me a greater sin and degradation than any crime that you could commit. I believe such to be the teaching of the church, which to me is infallible truth; and, doctor, I pray you, do not risk your future on good works, or an upright life, but cling to the cross and saving blood of Jesus; nothing else is of any avail. If you do not I feel you will spend a future in eternal punishment; and for fear that such may be the case, I do not wish to link my future to one who holds beliefs that may damn him forever.

"The pleasure I experience comes from thanksgiving to God that He has opened my eyes in time, and saved me from the fate of being yoked with an unbeliever, and knowing that my husband was doomed to the everlasting punishment of one who does not believe in the true church.

"I shall not attend the wedding at the Whitneys' on the 12th, neither shall I make any presents; for, while they are generous, kind, and live noble lives toward their fellowmen, they are all unbelievers, and completely without the pale of salvation, and unless they change, are doomed to eternal torment and destruction, and I do not care to jeopardize my own soul's salvation by such associations. I consider them as faultless as it is possible for unregenerate mankind to be, but they are unbelievers; and this fault lowers them below the vilest sinner that clings to the cross. If you attend the wedding, you can tell them my reasons for not coming, and tell them that my prayer shall ever be that they may have their eyes opened to the perilous position in which they stand, that they may be folded to the bosom of the church before it is everlastingly too late. The prayer that I offer for them will be the prayer that I shall offer for you, and so long as we both live, I shall never cease praying for your soul's salvation.

From your prayerful friend,

ANNIE M. FRISBEE."

Well, we were all so speechless with amazement at this letter that there was nothing to be said. It was certainly a queer benediction to be pronounced over two couples on their wedding morning, and, as Joe put it when he found his speech, "We were all going to hell together, from her standpoint."

"So be it," replied the doctor, "I would sooner be in hell with the present company, than in heaven with Christians of that ilk."

For myself, I did not care the snap of my finger what she said; but May was hurt, and Miss Slocumb was angry, while Joe said: "Poor little fool, I am sorry for her." We were discussing the letter,

when I looked at my watch, and told them it was nearly nine o'clock, and we were to be married at eleven, and I had heard enough of that religious crank for a lifetime, and proposed that we make ready for business; and we went to our rooms to prepare for the event which should change and affect the whole of our lives.

At noon we were married. The Episcopal clergyman had pronounced May and myself man and wife; Miss Slocumb had become Mrs. Whitney, in the house which was to be her future home. The uncle had given her away, and Joe had given his sister to me. It was very quiet, the doctor and Mrs. Whitney's uncle and aunt being the only guests beside the clergyman who sat down to the table with us to partake of the wedding breakfast. We were not a noisy gathering; I think we each realized the importance of the step we had taken, and were in more of a reflective mood than a mood of gayety. We were by no means sad; to me it was the happiest hour of my life, but it was a happiness which I felt was solid and enduring, and would last as long as life should last.

The doctor spoke of the quietness, by remarking he had never attended so pleasant a wedding, or one where there were so few guests.

Joe smiled, as he said: "Perhaps, doctor, there are more than you can see: invisible men and women are here surrounding us; they are those who are interested in every act of our lives; kind friends of us all are present to-day in greater numbers than ever before. If they all had bodies as material as ours, there would not be room for them."

"Joe," said the doctor, "I want just one more argument with you. How is it possible for these invisible persons to come in here, and be here, without our seeing them? How can they come into a house or room through solid material?"

Joe replied: "The more solid the material, the easier their entrance; and that is one of the reasons why they are so bewildered at their condition. After the process of death, they are an intelligent force, not an intelligent material. You know, doctor, that the more dense a material, the easier it will transmit force. Now don't lose sight of the fact that these invisible friends are a force, and any law that will apply to a force will apply to them. Suppose a boy throws a stone against the house; the force leaves the hand of the boy and enters the stone, and carries it to the house. When the stone strikes, the force leaves the stone and is communicated to the wood, and through it to the air in the room, and through the air to your ear, and through your ear to your brain, producing in your brain a certain movement which the intelligent force resident in you senses as sound; but all that has really taken place is, that a force which has left the boy in the street has come in contact with the intelligent force within you. The stone was no hindrance, the wall of the house was no hindrance, the atmosphere was no hindrance, and if an iron bar had been continuous from your brain to the boy, your brain would have received the shock with far greater force, from the same energy exerted by the boy. The dense iron bar would have been a help instead of a hindrance in transmitting the force; so with these friends of ours, they are living identities of intelli-

gent force; they can go through material, and only a perfect vacuum would offer obstruction to their progress."

"But how about the material in their bodies?" asked the doctor. "How does that get through other material?"

"On the same principle that electricity will deposit metal from a solution, taking it from one pole and depositing it at the other through a solid body of water. When they were in connection with a physical body, the predominating primate in the dual composition of force and matter which makes up a physical man was matter, and he is subject to the laws governing matter; but as a spirit out of a physical body, the predominating primate is force, and the laws that govern him now are the laws that govern force, and he is also an intelligent force, and an identity of force."

"I understand you," replied the doctor, "but you make a man, by your philosophy, a queer composition. I wonder what your invisible friends would say to the correctness of this, if they could speak and tell us."

Joe held up his finger, and said: "Wait, I hear what they say. Shall I tell you what they say of him?"

"Certainly," we all replied.

After a moment's silence Joe spoke slowly, like one repeating from dictation, and said:

"The universe rolls on
From time that is past to everlasting.
Man springs from chaos
An identity full-fledged, eternal.
Alone, yet of many;

Each for himself, none for another.
With charity for his fellow-man
Conceived in the same womb of nature.
Growing onward, upward ever,
Controlling destiny like the god which he is,—
Being made in his image;—
Hope impels, adversity disciplines,
But does not conquer;
Rising above strife, destined
To control the universe, he stands alone.
The ultimate, the final,
With powers unfolded, and germs
Of greatness inherent,
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