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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOOK OF GUD ***

The Book of Gud

By Dan Spain and Harold Hersey

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CHAPTER I

One Sunday afternoon I was driving through a sparsely settled region on the southwest slope of the Catskills. It was growing late and I was anxious to get back to New York, but I had lost my way. In an attempt to cut across to the Hudson River road I turned up a poorly traveled lane, which, after ten miles of going, petered out into a mere abandoned trail.

I kept on this for perhaps three miles further without passing a house, and then came to a low rambling structure half hidden among a grove of ancient overhanging trees. It was near lamp-lighting time and I was puzzled to know whether the place was deserted or not. I turned my car in toward the house, bumped over loose rocks—and my engine died.

DIP INTO THIS NOVEL ANYWHERE.... It deals with a god in whom nobody believed, and of his adventures the day after eternity. For instance, try Chapter XVI.

A man appeared on the porch. He was lanky in build, a little stooped, apparently about forty years of age, and was dressed in a blue flannel shirt and a pair of corduroy trousers.

"Can you tell me how far it is to New York?" I asked.

"Yes."

"How far is it?"

"About a hundred miles as the crow flies."

"But how far is it by automobile?"

"I don't know," replied the man, who seemed to be better posted on crow flights than auto travel.

He offered no further remarks, but stood there indifferently eyeing the car.

Curbing my annoyance I inquired: "How do I get out to a good automobile road?"

"The way you came in."

Realizing that I could get no information from this uncivil being, I pushed the starter—not a sound. I got out and cranked the engine—not a kick. I looked into my gas tank—not a drop!

"Where is the nearest gas station?" I demanded.

"I don't know—I burn kerosene," was the terse reply; and the man turned and entered the house.

I tried to recall the last gas station I had passed, and realized it must have been all of fifteen miles behind. It was now growing dark. I climbed into the car to think of a way out of my awkward situation, but all I could think of was that there were sound reasons for abandoned farms. Then I got to wondering who this queer character was and why he was living here.

As I had slept but little the night before, I must have dozed off, for the next thing I knew, a voice was saying: "Supper is ready."

I got out of the car and followed the man through a dark hall into a large, low room, at one end of which a fire was burning briskly in a huge stone fireplace. In the center of the room was a table where we sat down to a dinner of delicious hot biscuits and a great pot of honey.

"These biscuits are fine," I said.

"They are."

I ate another in silence. "And the honey is exquisite."

"It is."

"Do you keep bees?"

"Yes, millions of them."

"Do you keep any other stock?" I asked, thinking a glass of milk would taste fine.

"Yes, a blind cat."

"Do you find the bees profitable?"

"No, I keep them for company."

"Why do you live in this lonesome place?"

"To avoid automobilists."

I ate three more biscuits, drowned in honey, then the silence became unbearable. "Do you do anything else besides keep bees?"

"I read."

"That is interesting. What do you read?"

"Books."

"Ah!" I said, "perhaps you write also."

"I do."

"What do you write?"

"Books."

We finished the meal in silence, then my host arose and cleared the table. Meanwhile I wandered about the big room and glanced at the titles on the bookshelves. I was amazed at the catholicity of his taste. Side by side, with Godesius was "In His Steps"; leaning against Schopenhauer's "*Die Welt Als Wille Und Vorstellung*," was a popular novel of the day.

Thus made to realize that my host was a person of some caliber, and aspiring to pursue his acquaintance upon an intellectual plane, I stepped forward, as he came through the door, and extended my hand, saying: "My name is Harold Hersey."

"What of it?" he said, and turned to adjust a kerosene lamp. Then he came forward and extended his hand. "I will not say I am glad to meet you until I find out that I am."

"Your name?" I inquired.

"Dan Spain."

"That sounds like a nom de plume," I ventured.

"It is."

Feeling that there was nothing further that I could say, I pulled out my pipe and seated myself before the fire.

Dan Spain settled into a chair nearby. "The fact that your name is Harold Hersey means nothing to me," he remarked, "but as I presume that you will spend the night here, I might be able to make it less disagreeable for you if I knew your trade or occupation."

I have always been a little sensitive about revealing my profession to strangers, because, unfortunately, some men do not regard it highly; so I replied: "What would you judge me to be from my appearance?"

"A cigar salesman."

I hastened to controvert him. "Looks are deceiving," I said, "I am a writer."

So I read him the following. There was a curious silence afterwards:

*When the limpid highbrows chatter
And their candlelights are low;
When their purple souls are bitter
From discussing thus and so,
And the Lucy Stoners twitter
In some frowsy studio;*

*When the fat-legged mantees mutter
And you see their eyeballs twitch;
When the parlor wobblies hover
Around the newly rich,
And the men of bread-and-butter
Get the "art-for-art's-sake" itch....*

*Then I don't regret the making
Of this idle verse of mine,
And my pickling by the Poohbahs
In their literary brine,
Nor the gesture of a Burdash
For not hewing to the line.*

*My humor is the laughter
From life's tickled ribs. It's rough,
For it's written from the raw
Where I like to get my stuff,
And it ought to rise in letters:
Goodness knows it's light enough.*

"It is nothing to be ashamed of," said Dan Spain, "I once worked in a slaughter house."

"What books have you had published?" I asked after a time.

"None."

Having had a number of books published myself, I felt that I might be of some service to this hermit scholar who had evidently not adjusted himself to the practical exigencies of the publishing business. "It is just possible," I suggested, "that my experiences and acquaintances might enable me to help you get some of your work in print—that is, if you would care to tell me what you are writing."

Dan Spain leaned over and attended the fire. After poking it to his satisfaction, he picked up a live coal and dropped it in the bowl of his pipe. Finally he spoke, and his words were startling enough. "Just at present," he said, "I am writing an autobiography of God."

There was a sudden rattle at the shutter.

"What was that?" I asked nervously.

Dan Spain laughed. "Wind," he replied, "wind through the trees. Lightning may strike us dead at any moment because of my blasphemous ambitions. That is why I live as a hermit—should God's lightning strike at me, there will be no complications through it hitting an innocent bystander. You are the first person who has spent a night under this roof with me. I am sorry to subject you to the danger, but you came without an invitation."

"But why," I asked, "do you want to write a blasphemous book? You are aware, I suppose, that it might be suppressed."

"In a country, the constitution of which guarantees freedom of speech and religious liberty, I grant the possibility."

"Then why," I persisted, "do you want to write it?"

"Because," said Spain, "I am tired of tempering the wind of truth to the lamb of stupidity. Must we so fear the anger of the childish mob, that we dare not deprive them of their fairy tales of ghosts and goblins, lest they kick out the props of civilizations? Must we, who no longer bend the knees of the mind in spook idolatry nor shake with the ague of hell fear, pretend that science and religion have been reconciled and mumble incantations to a metaphysical essence instead of saying to a maternal God to open the windows of the sky and spill rain out of heaven? I want to write a blasphemous book because the gods who throttle human intelligence and block human progress have revealed their vulnerable spot—for they are the gods who fear laughter."

"But surely?" I said, "all that is old stuff—Ingersoll has been dead twenty years. Present day thinkers only smile indulgently when some handsome faced bucolic clergyman invades a metropolitan pulpit and gets the forgotten monkey argument into the headlines of the daily press. Modern philosophy has reconciled religion and science and shown that they hail from the same

psychic origins."

"The dictionary has never been made a sacred book," returned Spain, "and I cannot try men for heresy who blaspheme it. If a man wishes to designate the emotions he experiences when gazing at the stars by the term 'religion' I cannot prevent him. My dictionary defines religion as 'a belief in binding the spirit of man to a supernatural being' and further includes the idea of duties and rites founded upon such belief. If that be religion the war between religion and science can never end. The particular battle ground may change from age to age; it may be concerned with the mobility of the sun, the origin of species or the immaculate conception...."

"Well what of it," I remarked, "those things are all relatively unimportant."

"True" said Spain, "they are, but science has a job in the future that is vastly important and religion stands in its way."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"It is the job of saving civilization from degenerating into a chaos besides which the dark ages, medievalism would seem Bericlean by comparison. As we are headed now we are on the road for a grand smash. The growing complexities of civilization can only be managed by a human breed of superior capacity, and instead of breeding a race of better men we are letting the inborn capacity of the human species regress and degenerate.

"Natural selection or the survival of the fittest raised us up from brutes, and civilization stops the operation of that law which made it possible. Blind charity preserves the rabbitries of stupidity—the differential birth rate snuffs out the flame of innate intelligence. The only visible salvation is systematic breeding of superior men; and against human breeding religion stands garbed in all her mummeries, shielding behind her wish fancies of immortality, the leering face of the ape man returned to prowl in the ruins of all we have builded.

"The little priests of religion play in sweet innocence with their hopes of heaven having not the least conception of the human drift. But the high priests of religion know very well on which side their bread is buttered. They know that spook worship thrives only in the soil of stupidity. They will fight to the last ditch against any serious effort to breed men for brains. Their creeds are smoothly schemed to block intelligence in its efforts at biological perpetuation. The fable of a ghostly paternity of the human species fits their purpose like a glove. By inoculating the newborn human animal with a fantasy called a soul they clothe the act of reproduction with a garb of sanctification and endow all sexual and parental functions with rites so skillfully ingrained into popular thought that men who renounce the more patent absurdities of theology are still soaked in the sacramental conception of reactionary morality whenever it touches the reproduction of the species. So they hope to maintain our present scheme of mongrel breeding which is fast blotting out the hard won grains of the tedious climb of human evolution and riding us for a smash of the fabric of civilization, because the children of the stupid cannot maintain the structure we have wrought."

"But surely," I said, "you do not intend to propound such ponderous biological and sociological doctrines in an autobiography of your god—if you do so I am sure it will be very dull. I had hoped you had in mind some readable piece of literary composition."

"So I had; I was not telling you what I intended to write. You asked me why I wanted to write it. The god who mustn't be laughed at could make himself very ridiculous by setting down the story of his life. He should not be a metaphysical concept. I should prefer a nice old man with robe and halo and whiskers—I am sure he should have whiskers."

"And just when," I asked, "would you have him born?"

"I don't know," replied Spain, "I have stalled on eternity. I find it quite an awkward span of life to cover in a manuscript."

"Why not dodge the difficulty," I suggested, "by having your story begin the day after eternity."

Spain turned his gaze upon me with a twinkling light in his eyes. "Young man," he said, "No wonder you tried to drive an automobile without gasoline—you are suffering from a touch of genius.

"I shall doubtless need aid," confessed Spain, more cordial, I felt, than he had previously seemed.

As I caught the flame of enthusiasm in this man's conviction, my heart warmed to him. I found myself interested in his proposed "Autobiography of God"—interested and critical. "It might amuse you," I said, "to know that somewhere among my own writing notes I have this item jotted down. 'A tale that should begin the day after eternity.'"

Dan Spain looked at me, his eyes twinkling, "Not half bad," he said.

And so began an exchange of suggestions, a mutual laying on the table of the most guarded treasures of one's over-reaching ambitions to write the impossible.

As the night wore on our wits sharpened each on the other, and before dawn broke, Dan Spain and I both realized that we had cast in outline form the skeleton of a most ambitious piece of writing. Then we awoke to the fact, that we, who were acquaintances of a single session had joined our wits to create something that could not be disentangled without its destruction.

"And now," I said, "who is going to write this tale of the adventures of the great god Gud?"

"We must write it together," replied Spain, "nothing else would be honest."

There followed a period of intermittent work that strung out through several seasons. We worked sometimes alone; at other times I spent week-ends at Spain's hermitage, and on a few occasions I dragged the hermit down to my quarters in Greenwich Village. As the manuscript gathered bulk, I arranged for its typing, having always a copy made for each of us.

During the summer of 1924, I spent most of the month of July at Spain's hermitage and we got the book completed, though there were still many parts of it on which we had serious differences of opinion. Taking my draft with me, I went back to New York, where I had to attend to some neglected editorial duties.

Spain had agreed to come down to my place on the week-end of August thirtieth for a final effort to see if we could reconcile our differences of opinion.

The intervening weather in the city was oppressive and I did no further work on the manuscript. When August thirtieth arrived Spain did not show up. I waited for him another week and then drove my car up to his hermitage in the Catskills.

I bumped over the stones of the miserable trail and brought my car to a halt in front of where Spain's house had stood. Before me I saw a yawning circle of trees with the inner sides scorched and withered, and the great gaunt stone chimney alone now rearing from a heap of ashes.

The combustion had been complete. Not a charred stick remained. All was white ash, and well packed down, for it had rained heavily a few nights before.

The evidence of that rain sent my mind hurtling back in review of the weather since Spain had left New York. I remembered that one night a few days before Spain was due to return I had found my apartment so oppressive that I had gone to Brighton Beach. As I lay on the sands, it must have been toward midnight, a squall had driven across the sky and there had been a bit of a blow and a magnificent electrical display, but only a few heavy drops of rain had fallen.

Brighton Beach was over a hundred miles from this spot in the Catskills, and the weather in the two locations might have been wholly dissimilar. Still it was suggestive of the worst possible fears.

I looked about for something with which I could prod into the debris. The only thing available was a great twisted steel lightning rod that reared up through the ashes. The result of my effort was a discovery from which I recoiled.

For a moment I found it expedient to step away from the place. In doing so, I unconsciously dragged the piece of lightning rod along with me. Behind a screen of foliage I sat down weakly. Presently, my eyes followed along that lightning rod, and I noted that one end was freshly broken where I had bent it until it snapped in two. But the other end had been the tip that pointed skyward above the house. This I now saw was fused and melted in a way that no heat of a burning wood could have possibly accomplished.

I need write but little of the duties that followed. Suffice to say, that every paper that might have revealed more than my slight knowledge of Spain's origin or connections had been destroyed. The county records yielded nothing except the deed to his property purchased the year before I met him. There was nothing for me to do but turn matters over to the local authorities and let the law take its course.

I returned to New York and slept off the weariness the ordeal had engendered.

Then I went to my desk and produced my draft of "The Book of Gud" and turned slowly through it. It was all there, a complete manuscript, but including many things on which our differences of opinion had not been reconciled—and Dan Spain was dead!

Gradually the responsibilities of my position dawned upon me. I was joint author of "The Book of Gud." However, my "partner in crime" was dead. We had written much of the prose together although much of it was by Spain alone. The verse was mine.

How helpless I felt with this gigantic task staring me in the face!

Sensing keenly the sacred trust of fidelity to the intent of a dead author, I did not feel at liberty to make the changes in Spain's draft that I felt should be made. Yet, if my name were to be on the jacket of this book, I did not feel that I could possibly let some of the things in Spain's draft pass without registering my protest. Conversely I must, in all fairness, concede that he had felt the same about some of my lines.

My decision on going over the work the first time was that all I could do was to let the manuscript pass on to the world exactly as it was when God's lightning stilled forever the pen of Dan Spain.

However, upon going over the manuscript a second time, I found my instincts as an editor overwhelming this excellent resolution. For several months I was torn between my conscience as a writer with its full sense of duty to a dead author and my editorial conscience with its fuller sense of duty to the reading public—and I did nothing with the manuscript.

But at last a great compromising thought occurred to me. I could leave the manuscript stand intact, but I could write a preface in which I could explain the dreadful dilemma in which the death of my collaborator left me, and why I do not feel, under the distressing circumstances, that I should be held responsible for those parts of Spain's draft which do not meet my approval. My decision has made possible the publication of "The Book of Gud"; for otherwise I should have burned my copy also.

It is my hope that this explanation will mitigate the wrath of many readers, for it is a beautiful fact about human nature that it rarely holds the dead as responsible as it does the living.

I frankly confess that it has been a task to hold to this resolution, for I have been sorely tempted to delete as well as comment on some of Spain's text. As proof of my integrity in this matter, I have even left in the text of the book a note addressed to me by Spain in which he has expressed his contempt for my work in a most ungentlemanly manner.

I hold that the canons of literary ethics do not permit one to alter a dead man's manuscript. If they did, how quickly we could enrich the literary heritage of American children by expurgating the classics of Europe and rewriting them in a style acceptable to the American sense of decency.

To some very literally minded persons it may seem that the view just expressed is not consistent with my capacity as a joint author of "The Book of Gud." Let me therefore discount any such criticisms by explaining that the evil effects of literature all come from its realism. "The Book of Gud" is romantic and symbolic. There is true beauty in symbolism because of the variety of possible interpretations. Each reader can gain the meaning particularly adapted to himself.

The greatest art is that which can be interpreted in the most devious ways: Witness the character of Hamlet, the enigma of Mona Lisa, the riddle of the Book of Revelations. To me Hamlet is the personification of a weak will in a strong mind, due to the European habit of inbreeding royalty. Mona Lisa, I believe, reveals the patience of a great woman who knows that she will ultimately get what she wants. The Book of Revelation I deem to be a symbolic anticipation of the Darwinian theory of man's descent from prehistoric animals.

In "The Book of Gud" there is great symbolism, and in symbolism there can be nothing degrading, as each mind interprets it according to its own intellectual and moral plane. Hence there can never be degradation in symbolic literature, except for degraded minds.

Here then is "The Book of Gud"; and, with the exception of this preface, I bow to the principle that death should end an author's work and so it should remain, even as Sodom and Gomorrah, Pompeii and Herculaneum remained as they were when fire rained down on them from Heaven.

(Signed),

HAROLD HERSEY.

London, England,
April First, 1925.

CHAPTER II

From out the distant and neglected past,
The "is" or "isn'tness" of things remain
As ever still unsolved. Admitting this,
Outscepting every sceptic, we've indulged
Our wildest fancies ... where unknowables
Go chasing unattainables. We've spared
No god, religion, science, sex or art,
But laid about us with a heavy fist.
There are so many twists of humor
In Euclid's cubes and angles. Laughter hides
With playfulness behind philosophy
Like little monsters in an ancient's beard.
So many gods are out of work—they beg
For bread and sympathy to empty stalls
Where once delighted thousands paid them praise.
Religion simmers in the pot, or boils
Completely over as the housewives nod.
Strange trolls peek out from books of mathematics,
Grimace around cold scientific theories.
Dwarfs and goblins play at hide and seek
In empty attics of the homes of creeds;
While sex is swept with laughter like a gale
When we disturb the surface with an axe.
Have mercy on our hero, Gud the Great.
The clouds of history had cloaked his tomb
Like old Zumbissus, Mord and Red Torswaine,

Until we carefully unearthed the tale
Gud's wild adventures furnish to romance.
We took his crumbling bones and gave them life—
His human frailties and deeds of valor.
No doubt heroically he suffers thus
At our faint hands—but let the subject be.
The future cannot hide its heroes yet
To come beneath a cloud of silence ... hands
Other than ours—aliens and scornful, too,
Would some day come upon this untold tale
And lay it bare with scalpels cold and sharp.
At least we had regard for laws of prophesy,
The customs of a future time. Here stands
The Book of Gud upon the rocks of truth.
Yet when one goes to Rome, Dame Rumor says,
Burn Roman candles—this have we done.

CHAPTER III

There was once a god whose name was Gud.

Gud was not a real god such as men believe in. He was only Gud, whom no one believes in, and so does not exist, and will not unless some man who reads this Book of Gud should believe in him and so make him (for that is how gods are made). If there be sufficient faith in a god, all is well with that god, since he is made by faith alone, without works, and is dead. But a little faith is a dangerous thing.

Now Gud had had a universe, and had ordered it destroyed, and had ordained that eternity be over and done.

The morning after, Gud sat alone in space. All things else had been destroyed save Gud and space; and Gud was lonely, for creation had been done and undone and was no more, and eternity was over; and time was no more, for there were no more stars to mark the course of time.

Since this book is being written now, printed now, and read now and burned now; and since printing presses and reading eyes and consuming fires exist in an age of whirling worlds and beating hearts and ticking watches, which mark time and thus seem to make it, it is that this book is not. Those things that seem to happen herein, one after another, really happened instantaneously,—for this is a tale of a timeless time, and there will be, when these things are, no time at all, and no hope of any time, since this story begins, and is finished the day after eternity, which is after the ending of all that was and before the beginning of that which will never be.

Therefore, this story is really not a story, because it never could happen until after all things had happened. So what you now are reading has no meaning at all and no existence, real or unreal.

So Gud sat alone in space. The fact that Gud was sitting is very important. Gud sat down in haste at the very last moment of eternity, as all things were being destroyed; for he saw that the very next moment there would be nothing left on which to stand.

As Gud sat alone in space, he thought of everything that had been and remembered everything that was, and Gud saw that it was not good—for he had nothing at all to do. So Gud thought he would listen to his heart beat; but alas, he could not hear his heart beat for there was no time for his heart to beat to.

So Gud decided that he would do nothing, but alas he could do nothing for there was nothing to do; and Gud feared nothing, for it did not exist, and like all of us, Gud most feared that which does not exist.

So Gud repented him that he had ordained that eternity be over and done; and that he had destroyed the universe and all that was therein contained, save himself and space.

Then Gud said to himself, there being no one else to talk to: "I must find something to do, or I shall go mad."

Since Gud knew all things, and remembered all things, he recalled that men in whose image he was made, also frequently retired prematurely from business and were hard put for something to do. Gud remembered also that great men, even though they were not as great as he, when finding themselves in similar circumstances, sometimes wrote their autobiographies.

So Gud decided to write his autobiography. And Gud wrote it. He wrote it instantaneously, there being no time in which to write it. Gud did not write it upon tables of stone, as there was no stone out of which to make the tables; and besides there was no gravity and hence the stones would have floated away.

So Gud wrote his autobiography on nothing. But as Gud knew all things he saw no need of

writing them down, since there was no one else to read them, and so he really never wrote his autobiography on anything. However when he had finished the manuscript, he sent it to a publisher.

And waited....

Gud received but little satisfaction from writing his autobiography because it was never published. Had Gud been a true literary artist this would have made no difference, since to the true artist the plaudits and ducats of the multitude have no meaning whatever. But the ducats of the multitude are the only reason publishers ever publish books, as any honest publisher will tell you. The reason that you do not know this is because you have not been told, and the reason that you have not been told is because publishers hate publicity.

But, while Gud was not a true artist, as any critic who has looked at his work could tell you, yet he was a good artisan and had considerable experience in his craft, which was that of creating things. So now, receiving no satisfaction from having written his autobiography, Gud decided that there was nothing else to do but to go back to work at his old trade. So he arose and went to get his kit of well-beloved tools, which were the tools of creation.

As there was no light Gud was in the dark. So he walked in a circle, as one always does when he walks in the dark and does not know where he is going. The reason that Gud did not know where he was going is because he started out to get his tools of creation.

Then Gud recalled that he had destroyed everything, including the tools. And at the thought that he had made a perfect job of destruction, Gud decided that it was the end of a perfect day, and he fell asleep.

When Gud awoke it was as it was. He did not even feel rested, for he had not slept very well, having had a bad dream. This dream was so bad that one might have called it a nightmare, had it not been dreamed the day after eternity and perforce must have been a day dream.

Gud realized that he ought to have the dream interpreted, for a dream is meaningless until it is interpreted.

So he decided that he needed a psychoanalyst. All of these having been destroyed, Gud decided to create one. This decision brought him back to the painful realization that he possessed no tools of creation. So Gud decided to make a new set of tools of creation. But alas there was nothing out of which to make the tools of creation—nothing except Gud himself and space. So not wishing to dismember himself, Gud decided that space was the only raw material available out of which to fashion new tools of creation. There was plenty of space—probably no more than there had always been, but it seemed more because there was nothing in it.

As there was no light, Gud could not see the space, but he knew it was there because it had not been destroyed; moreover, he could feel it. In fact it was all about him and plenty more just like it everywhere else. So Gud reached out and felt of the space, and thereby discovered that the space was full of points.

Then Gud picked up two of the points and placed them, one on his right and the other on his left.

And Gud felt the two points, and lo, there was a straight line between them. As Gud felt of the straight line, he discovered that it was the shortest distance between two points. Now Gud remembered that all through eternity, which was finished and done, a straight line had always been the shortest distance between two points, and Gud remembered also that this was the truth.

And the truth that was in the straight line mocked Gud. So he took hold of the straight line and bent it until it was no longer straight. But as he bent the straight line another took its place, and truth was still in the straight line; for it was still the shortest distance between two points. So Gud struck off one of the points that was at one end of the straight line. But straightway another point came at the end of that which remained of the line, and truth was still in the line, for it was still the shortest distance between two points.

And Gud became heated with wrath. So he picked up a palm leaf fan and fanned himself. Then Gud said: "That which I cannot destroy I will change." And he set about to make a curved line between two points that should be shorter than a straight line.

Gud toiled diligently at the task for for what would have been a long time if there had been any time. After he had made an infinite number of curves between the two points, all of which were longer than the straight line, he chanced to make a curve which he fitted between the two points. When he felt it Gud was filled with pride—for the last curve which he had made was a shorter distance between two points than a straight line, and thus was truth destroyed.

But this curve which Gud had made was a changing curve, and it continued to change. And Gud became frightened so that his knees smote one against the other. The curve ceased not in its changing and presently it had changed so much that it became impossible, and Gud said: "This thing which I have made is impossible." So he took the impossible curve and swung it about his head with a mighty swing and hurled it out of space.

When Gud had hurled the impossible curve out of space he felt again between the two points and found that the straight line had returned, and was again the shortest distance between the two points. And Gud said: "Let it be so. Old truth is better than new fiction."

And the eyes of Gud were opened, and he knew that there was much truth all about him, and that all space was full of truths and that the truths of space were mathematics. And Gud said: "It is good, for lo, here is something out of which I can fashion me the tools of creation!"

So Gud took a circle and a square, and, with the square, Gud squared the circle. Then he took a plane and planed off the sides of the circle he had squared and so produced a diamond, which is an element. Then Gud transmuted the first element into many elements and so produced matter.

Now Gud was about to mix the matter with the mathematics to form the chemical life, but he was weary and sat down to rest by the heap of matter and mathematics and pondered himself whether life was worth the making. And Gud decided that if he made life he would have to make also many laws of nature to control life and that all of this would be much trouble, especially, if they were to be all hand-made.

As he sat debating what he should do, Gud picked up a circle, and, toying with it, he happened to turn it about so that it described a sphere. It was a thing of beauty and he tossed it up to see how it felt from a distance. When Gud tossed the sphere it began whirling; and as it whirled, it gave off a sweet sound. The sound pleased Gud and he turned other circles about and made more spheres and set them whirling; and they made a concord of sweet sounds which was the music of the spheres and like unto the sound made by dewdrops falling on the petals of pale poppies by the amber light of a low hung moon shining upon a moss-covered tomb.

CHAPTER IV

Shepherd and Son and little Bo-peep
Herd all the souls like frightened sheep.
Staff in hand, hair like snow
Does even He know where they go?

A swish as of a sudden wind...
An open window ... a candle thinned,
From broken bodies' spirits leap
To join the flock of frightened sheep.

So ever They drive them on and on
Down the night and over the dawn,
And when dusk comes through golden bars
They urge them onward up the stars.

CHAPTER V

When the music had done Gud picked up a curved line which was shaped like a scimitar and whacked at the whirling spheres. Each time Gud whacked, he whacked off a disk from a whirling sphere; and the disks continued to whirl and ceased not. Soon a corner of space was full of whirling wheels. And Gud wondered what made the wheels go round.

As he felt the wheels go round Gud remembered a far and distant world he had once visited before he had destroyed the universe. He remembered that this little world had been full of machines and that the machines had wheels going round, and could make things. And Gud remembered as far back as a god can remember, and yet he could not recall ever having made machines that made things. He saw that he had been unprogressive to have created with hand tools and never to have made machines nor the things that machines made.

So Gud resolved straightway to make a creating machine. He gathered the wheels together and filled them with substance from the heap of matter that he had made. And then he took squares and triangles and curves and cones and rhomboids and tetrahedrons and a great many other things that were in space; and he worked very fast and furiously, and presently he had made a machine which ground with a deafening roar, for it was a high-speed, self-acting, creating machine, the like of which had never been.

And the machine began to create and to grind out things. But there was nothing alive in the things which the creating machine ground out, for it had not in it the breath of life, but only the spirit of the machine. Those things which the machine made were other machines; and they came out of the creating machine endowed with the spirit of the machine, and straightway they began also to turn and grind with a great and discordant roar.

The machines of transportation began to distribute the other machines through space. They roared and shrieked and whistled as they hurtled thither and yon, and Gud fled before them.

Then came also great lighting machines and filled all the center of space with light, and drove the darkness into the outer edges of space, toward which Gud had fled.

There were many myriads of machines that Gud did not know, and he had no time in which to name them. But there were some machines that were very dreadful, and of these Gud knew the names and the uses, for he had seen the like of them in the little world of machines he had once visited, for these were killing machines.

But the killing machines could find nothing to kill for there was not any life, but only the machines that were fast filling all space. The spirit of the killing machines was not to create but to destroy and they boomed and shrieked mightily for their prey. Gud was sore afraid, and because of the great noise of the machines, he could not remember that he was immortal and need not fear even the killing machines.

So Gud reached the outer edges of space and stood there in the dark panting and trembling. And Gud regretted that he had made the creating machine which had made all of the other machines, and he wondered what he might do to undo what he had done. Then Gud bolstered his courage, and walked back into the midst of the roaring machines and bade the machines be still. But only hearing the machines, the talking machines and the printing machines obeyed, for they only understood the word of Gud. Then he commanded the talking machines and the printing machines to make words and news and gossip, and to proclaim to the other machines that they should cease to roar.

And the word machines obeyed Gud and made words, but the other machines harkened not unto the words of Gud.

Gud feared that if the machines did not cease to be made they might fill all space, so that nothing else could ever be. Then Gud, remembering that he was immortal, walked up to a great killing machine which gaped its terrible maw to swallow him. But Gud feared not and walked into the terrible maw and into the throat of the killing machine. And when Gud came out of the bowels of the killing machine he held in his hand a great sword that was as long as hope deferred and as broad as a liberal mind. Carrying the sword, Gud fled again from the midst of the machines and to the outer reaches of space.

And Gud swung the mighty sword and cut off the edges of space. He made haste, for the machines did fast approach and he feared that they might fill all space. So Gud ran about swinging his mighty sword, and shearing the edges of space.

The edges of space Gud trimmed off from the center of space where the machines were, so that the space occupied by the machines was bounded about by clean edges of space, beyond which no more space was and not anything at all.

And it came to pass that there was very little space for Gud to be in, and the machines came on. Gud stood against the clean edges of space and brandished his mighty sword and cried: "Come on, ye soulless machines, for I am Gud and I fear ye not."

As the machines came on, Gud swung his sword with might and valor, and the machines that fell before the sword of Gud were as many as there are ways to displease a woman. So great was the destruction of the machines that the calculating machines did call a halt and asked for a truce. But Gud would give no quarter. Then the calculating machines, leaving the others to receive the blows of Gud, hied themselves back to the center of space where the creating machine was.

As the result of their calculations, reinforcements came to the cause of the machines. These new recruits came on with whistlings and hummings and greater roaring than Gud had yet heard; and his courage was shaken so that his sword trembled in his hands, for the new recruits to the cause of the machines blew a great blast before them; for they were the fans and the blowers.

And Gud felt the blast in his face, and his sword swayed and shivered like a feather in the blast. And the blast became a mighty wind and the wind blew the sword of Gud from his hand and blew it over the edge of space, so that Gud was unarmed and cried aloud for quarter. But the howling of the blast drowned his cry, and the fans and blowers came on, blowing all before them. Gud turned and fled and ran around the narrow rim of the edge of space, but the fans and blowers followed after him and made a great cyclone that blew around the edges of space. Gud fled in the wind and was bruised and torn by the wind and the garments of Gud were shattered and torn ... and Gud was lifted out of space and hurled into an abysmal void where not even space was.

CHAPTER VI

But in that wind beyond all space
The blast howled fiercely in his face....
Suddenly, from out the sky
A mote of dust blew in his eye.

With pain he slowly rubbed it out,
Examined it with passing doubt,

Then burst into a tide of mirth:
It was the cinder of an earth!

CHAPTER VII

Gud was walking and as he walked he wondered wherein and whereon he was walking. But as he knew all things he realized that he was in the Nth dimension and that he was walking along the Impossible Curve which he had thrown out of space.

So Gud walked along the Impossible Curve in the Nth dimension until he came to a heap of discarded theories. It was a tangled heap and looked as if it might be a hiding place of ideas. So Gud caught up one of the sturdier theories and shook it, and the dried facts that the theory had borne rattled off like rotten fruit from a dead branch. Gud plucked the twigs of hypotheses from the heavier theory—and so made for himself a staff. This he rammed lustily into the tangled heap of theories, whereupon something ran out and leaped along the Impossible Curve.

When it stopped, Gud, with his staff in hand, walked after it and came up to it, and thought that it was the echo of a voice.

"What were you doing?" demanded Gud, "hiding in that heap of discarded theories?"

"Alas," said that which Gud thought was the echo of a voice, "I was not hiding. There was nothing left of me to hide, because I was an obedient man and gave myself away even as I was told to do."

"What did they tell you to do?" asked Gud.

"They told me to do what I did."

"What did you do?"

The nothing sighed, and then said faintly: "I gave my wealth to the poor, my mind to my work, my heart to my wife, my life to my country and my soul to my god."

Gud reached over and picked up the nothing which he had thought was the echo of a voice. He picked it up by the ears, which were very thin, and looked into its eyes, which were pale pink, and stroked its fur, which was soft and white. Then Gud tied the nothing's ears together and hung it over his staff, and proceeded on his way.

As Gud walked on along the Impossible Curve he saw himself approaching to meet him. This made Gud very angry at himself because himself insisted on walking in the opposite direction, which seemed to show Gud that he had a dual nature and could go two ways at once. So Gud charged ahead to meet himself, and as he approached himself he swung the staff, which was over his shoulder, with a vicious blow at himself.

In his anger, Gud had forgotten the nothing which was hanging by its ears on his staff. As he swung the staff, the Impossible Curve took a sudden turn in an unknown direction so that Gud missed himself at which he struck. But that which was hanging by the ears flew off the staff and went hurtling through the deceitful mirror.

In this new excitement Gud forgot himself and peered through the deceitful mirror to see what had become of nothing. Gud saw that nothing was being chased by something, which Gud recognized as the reflection of an Underdog.

The chase was exciting; the nothing ducked and the reflection of an Underdog leaped over it. Then the nothing turned and started back toward the deceitful mirror, through which Gud was peering. The reflection of the Underdog turned also, and when the quarry reached the mirror it came back through and its pursuer came after it.

Quickly Gud swung his staff again and broke the mirror into ten thousand pieces. Then he turned about and saw, by the contented look on the face of the Underdog, that nothing was no more. Gud was glad he had been engaged in breaking the mirror and so had not seen the finale of the chase, for thus he missed the suffering of the victim and yet could see the satisfaction of the victor.

Gud now looked at the staff in his hand and saw that it had borne a luscious fruit. He plucked the fruit and tasted it. At first it tasted very sweet but later the taste turned bitter in his mouth. Gud looked again at the staff which he had picked from the heap of discarded theories, and Gud saw that he held in his hand the theory of conquest. In horror he hurled it from him, and it struck the Underdog, who gave forth a great howl of pain.

Gud felt compassion for the Underdog and picked him up and nursed his wound, and the Underdog licked Gud's hands. Then he sat the Underdog down and started on his way, and the Underdog followed at Gud's heels along the Impossible Curve.

CHAPTER VIII

The Gogs are good, the Gogs are great,
They rule a realm of real estate.

Their greedy little eyes are slits
That vision beauty torn to bits,
And when the night's aglow with stars
They stagger through the lupinars.
The Gogs are good, the Gogs are great
We slave to rent their real estate;
We toil in their behalf like fools,
Obey their customs, creeds and rules,
Because each intellectual hog
Would like to be, and is a Gog!

CHAPTER IX

So they trudged along very happily until they met some one.

Gud was dumbfounded. "What can you be doing on this Impossible Curve?" he cried, "for I destroyed everything and my dog has eaten nothing. Speak up, sir, and tell me what you are before I annihilate you again."

"I am Cruickshank, the bookkeeper," replied the some one.

"Ah ha," exclaimed Gud, "and so you are another of those living things that evolved out of the ooze and slime of that little sphere that got the valences of its carbon atoms so dreadfully entangled!"

"I am a man," said Cruickshank, the bookkeeper.

"But," said Gud, quite exasperated, "I told you I destroyed everything."

"And so you did," agreed Cruickshank, the bookkeeper, "but do you not recall those that escaped and floated down on the star dust to wait for the day of judgment?"

"I certainly remember them very well," said Gud, "but I would have you to know that this is not the day of judgment but the day after eternity, and what is more, you did not escape on the star dust as you claim, for I chased after that bunch and destroyed them quite utterly."

"In a way," said Cruickshank, the bookkeeper, "you did, but we saved our souls by losing them."

"But," cried Gud, "you are not a soul, for see—" and Gud poked Cruickshank, the bookkeeper, gingerly in the ribs—"you are a material man with ribs and life and a liver and much orthodox and conventional stupidity. In fact, you seem very much like Cruickshank that you always were. How do you explain that?"

"The explanation is very simple," said Cruickshank, the bookkeeper, "and also very important; and you would do well not to forget it or tamper with it. I am Cruickshank the bookkeeper, just as I always have been, because you can not change human nature. And what is more, I tell you that if you divided all the wealth up equally it would be unequal again before sunset."

"Mere popular fallacies," said Gud. "And now I am going to show you who I really am. When my Underdog here barks at the moon you are going to change into a boiled lobster with one great claw—a very red lobster, on which your insufferable white collar will look quite ridiculous."

"But," cried Cruickshank, "you can not change human nature!"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Gud. "That is why I am doing it. Now bark," commanded Gud, addressing the Underdog, whose name was Fidu.

"But," said Fidu, "I do not see any moon to bark at."

"Imagine one, stupid," said Gud.

So Fidu imagined a moon to bark at, and barked at the moon he imagined; and then he and Gud went on their way, leaving a great, red, boiled lobster, wearing a white collar and crawling backward with one claw, along the Impossible Curve.

CHAPTER X

Now Cruickshank was a loyal worker
Who frowned upon the average shirker,
And in the place where Cruickshank toiled
The wheels of work were shrewdly oiled,
And profits had a way of rising
Which showed the firm as enterprising.
Through years that numbered thirty-one

Cruickshank hated the owner's son—
"Stool pigeon" was the name the boy
Had given him with whoops of joy.
In Cruickshank's breast ambition burned
And so he lived and worked and earned,
Robbed Paul and Peter, had no gout
And made his family go without.
Sly Cruickshank in his stealthy way
Bought shares in the firm for a rainy day,
Existing on a miser's dole
For the hour when he would have control,
Wander in and announce the doom
Of the President's son in the President's room....
So Cruickshank labored and did not shirk
Though his poor wife died from overwork.
But finally came the day of days....
Sly Cruickshank asked for a lordly raise.
When father and son had answered "No"
Expecting old Cruickshank to go
He shrieked the triumph of his soul:
"You are both discharged—I'm in control——"
The President looked at the President's son;
And the son looked at his father's son
In a mirror that hung on the wall nearby
And carefully straightened his yellow tie.
Old Cruickshank waited ill at ease
And felt a trembling in his knees—
The President spoke: "Why, we've just mailed
The notice that this firm has failed."

CHAPTER XI

After a long journey Gud came to a place where it looked as if it needed rain. So he sat down upon a cactus and took out his horoscope and consulted the stars. Then he made an elliptical ring around a new moon and hung the moon low in the sky. And Gud took a scarlet runner bean and put it in a pot and lit a fire of cactus thorns and set the pot to boil. When the thorns began to crackle, an arrogant savor arose from the pot, and the vapors of it filled the sky, and through the vapors the new-made moon shown red as the blood of saints torn by lions because of their faith.

Gud blew his breath on the fire and it waxed hot as anger and the pot boiled over and quenched the fire. Gud reached his hand into the pot and drew out the bean and cut it into three halves. And the left half of the bean he ate, and the right half of the bean he cast into Hell, but the other half of the bean Gud planted beneath a flat stone that bore the footprint of a hero who had passed that way when the stone was but a drifting sand on a lonely shore.

Presently the bean half sprouted, and the sprout split the stone athwart and rent the footprint of the hero. Gud watered the bean with tears, because there was no rain in that place. So the bean grew and on its stem were the leaves of the maiden-hair tree, and the tendrils by which the bean clambered were the tendrils of the snake-feeder vine, and the flowers that sprang from the nodules of the bean stalk were the flowers of the wormwood tree, but they gave forth the odor of liverworts and were of the color of faded hopes or of stale music.

Gud cut marks on the bean pole to observe the rate of growth of the bean vine, and he found that it grew much faster than grief dies but not so fast as jealousy is born.

And when the bean reached the top of the pole and could grow no more, it conceived and bore a fruit that was like a ripe gourd. Four eyes grew in the face of the fruit and a dim light shone out of the eyes. And Gud heard the patter of tiny feet within, and presently the ghosts of three blind mice came out of the four eyes of the fruit, one out of each of the four eyes, for the third one came out twice.

Oh, under the stars are things to see that fold
Their shining webs around the hidden sun....
When the flesh is faint and the heart grows limp and old,
Surely the work of living is not done.

There was a breathless stillness and the crowd
Leaned forward, looking on and barely stirred.
The surgeon, knife in hand, with spotted shroud,
Cut close around the heart and said no word.

They saw his patient die, and whispered one
Unto another in the clinic there.

But yet the surgeon saw strange actions done
That streaked his head with strands of snow-white hair.

From out the dead man's open chest there crept
A shaggy spider shining in the light,
That shook itself like one who having slept
Puts vainly back the shadows of the night.

The surgeon clutched his throat. Within his breast
He felt a living thing twist here and there;
A thing that stirred from out a deep unrest
Like something moving through a drowned man's hair.

The students only saw his hair turn white....
But he heard tiny pulses throb and beat,
He felt slim fingers clawing out of sight
And hearkened to the patter of tiny feet.

Then shrieking fell across the clinic floor
The students pouring from their seats. Stark dead
He must have been for he said nothing more;
His fingers twitched and once he moved his head.

They did not see that from his mouth there crept
A shaggy spider shining in the light,
That shook itself like one who having slept
Puts vainly back the shadows of the night.

Then sideways moved it, trembling as though cold,
Following where the other spider ran....
Oh, hidden away there are things that are strange and old,
And weave strange webs in the very breast of man.

CHAPTER XII

And the ghosts of the three blind mice sang to Gud as if their hearts would break. They sang of brave deeds, for they had been field mice and they had died upon the field of honor.

And when the song was done, Gud wept again; for now he understood why it had never rained in that place.

So he arose and stamped out the smouldering embers of the fire he had builded, and whistled for the Underdog. And when the Underdog came he devoured the ghosts of the three blind mice, the one after the other and the third which came out twice, after the one. Then the Underdog licked his chops and Gud sighed, and together they departed from that place, very sorrowful that they had come.

CHAPTER XIII

"What are you eating?" asked Fidu, the Underdog, returning from a fruitless chase.

"I am eating leopard's spots," replied Gud; "will you have some?"

"No thanks," returned Fidu, "for they look to me like apples of Sodom or Dead Sea fruit."

"That is what they are."

"But," retorted Fidu, "you just now said they were leopard's spots."

"So they were," said Gud, "but I changed them."

CHAPTER XIV

Then Fidu pricked up his ears and listened. And Gud listened also and he heard a far-off wailing sound, as of a soul in torment. So he bade Fidu to remain where he was, and he cast down his staff for the Underdog to watch, for he was a watchdog also.

Then Gud went on alone to find the cause of the wailing. When he found it, behold, it was a soul in pain, and Gud said: "What can I do to stop your wailing?"

The tormented soul replied: "Oh, comrade, I wail because of the memory of injustice and inequality."

"Then your case is simple. I do not know what these things were, the memory of which distresses you, but I have a tube of oblivion here that I can assure you will destroy any memory."

At this the soul shrank from Gud and wailed the louder. "But, I do not want to forget, for that would be unfaithful to the cause."

"Then, what do you want?" asked Gud impatiently.

"I want to see the revolution come."

"What is that?" asked Gud, his curiosity now thoroughly aroused.

"The revolution," said the soul, "would make a world where all are equal, and perfect justice reigns."

"I never heard of a world like that, but I think I can make one. If I do so, will that stop your wailing?"

"Alas, it cannot be, for the world of equality must be made by the workers themselves."

"But I do not see any workers."

"True, they were all destroyed in the rebellion against their masters."

"Then, where are the masters?"

"They were all destroyed in suppressing the rebellion of the workers."

"That must have been quite a fight," remarked Gud. "On which side were you?"

"My heart was with the workers," said the soul, "but my training and inhibitions were with the masters. Therefore, I was torn between opposing forces and was transfixed with horror and remained neutral, which is why I alone escaped destruction."

"Just what were you?" asked Gud, a little puzzled.

"I was a parlor sociologist," said the soul, straightening up proudly.

"I am sorry that you weren't either a master or a worker," said Gud, "for your wailing annoys me and it annoyed my dog. I think I had better destroy you now."

At this the soul cringed cowardly, and Gud was annoyed and turned to go, whereupon the soul started wailing more dismally than ever.

Gud turned back again and said: "Whatever it was you wanted, I see I will have to make it for you, because I cannot stand that wailing—it sounds like a hell that a friend of mine was experimenting with, and I do not like it."

"I wail," said the soul, "because I remember the injustice and inequality, and because the workers are all destroyed and revolution can never be."

"Nonsense! Nothing can never be. Let us make this thing and be done with it. What was it you said you wanted?"

"The world of equality."

"But just a moment ago you said it was a revolution."

"True. But that was but a means to the end."

"Shall I make the means or the end?"

"Alas, neither can ever be, for the workers are destroyed."

"You said that before. You talk in circles like a philosopher, and I don't like philosophers; they are all talk; I believe in action. I don't know what you want, but I heard you say something about a world. I understand that and can make it—I have made myriads of them just to pass the time away. Wait a second."

When he had spoken thus, Gud took out his pocket handkerchief and held it up by two corners. "Now, you see," said Gud, as he exhibited first one side and then the other; "the handkerchief is perfectly empty."

The soul looked at the handkerchief and saw that Gud spoke the truth.

"Now watch!" said Gud, determined to do this thing as impressionably as possible. Then, as the soul watched, Gud caught up the other corners of the handkerchief; then he rolled it into a ball and tossed it up and caught it and made magic passes and said: "Doramialfalfalasio" and did several other perfectly useless and unnecessary things, as all magicians and miracle workers do. Then he caught the handkerchief by the center and shook it out vociferously, and there was a nice virgin world spinning round and round, with its axis wobbling a bit so as to give it a change of climate.

The soul was duly impressed when it saw a real sky-covered dirt-bottomed world spinning from east to west; and the soul said: "I beg your pardon, comrade, I did not recognize you as a worker, but I see that you are, for you have created something—pardon me, but have you a card?"

Gud was puzzled for a moment. Then he remembered the cards he had printed when he entered celestial society, and he drew one out and handed it to the soul. The soul could not read the language in which it was printed, and not wanting to admit his ignorance, assumed that it was O.K.

"Now are you satisfied?" asked Gud.

"The world pleases me, but there is no one in it."

So Gud took the soul by the hand and they leaped across the void and found themselves in the world Gud had made, and standing in a beautiful garden full of luscious fruit and nice tame animals.

The soul sighed a little sigh of delight, and sat down on an ant hill and began eating alligator pears. Gud strolled around for a few centuries and counted the animals to see if they were all there, and being satisfied on that point, he went back to the soul, who was still sitting on the ant hill eating avacadoes. So Gud went out again and counted the sands of the seashore. He had to count five times to make the count come out twice alike, but in the middle of the fifth count he succeeded and so he went back and found the soul had eaten all the fruit in the garden and was beginning to whimper.

"Oh, bother," said Gud, "are you going to start that wailing again? What's the matter now?"

"I have not the patience," the soul cried, "to wait for the tedious and materialistic process of evolution to make rational beings; and besides if I had, in the struggle for existence they would all become unequal and the revolution would still have to be—it might be sanguinary, and the sight of blood makes me sick at my stomach."

"I never said anything about evolution," replied Gud. "As a matter of fact, I do not take much stock in it, and many of my friends do not believe in it at all; besides, it is liable to get out of hand and produce something entirely different from one's designs. So if you will tell me what more you want I will make it outright, like I did this world."

"I only want," said the soul, "to see this beautiful place inhabited by happy, rational beings among whom there will be no inequality."

"That means that they must all be exactly alike as atoms of hydrogen."

"Well—yes," admitted the soul rather grudgingly. "I suppose it does, if you put it that way, but it sounds much nicer merely to speak of equality."

"Put it any way you like, I want to get the job done and get back to my dog. He is faithful enough, but I don't like to put too much strain on fidelity. Now, as I get it, you want this world peopled with rational beings that are all alike. I am ready to make them, only what kind do you want—something like yourself?"

"No! no! not like me, for I am a weak and selfish fence-straddler. Moreover, I am too modest to be used as a prototype for the members of a perfect world."

"Worse than that, you are a ghost and immaterial and invisible to animal eyes. If I filled the world with creatures like you, the animals might walk right through them—No, we want material beings."

"Then materialize me," cried the soul in sudden eagerness.

"Hold on, if I materialize you in your present immaterial likeness, then all the beings I am to make for this world would have to be like you or you would be the exception and spoil the equality."

"That is so," admitted the soul.

"We are standing here talking like metaphysicians. If there is anything I hate worse than philosophers, it is metaphysicians which are philosophers bereft of what commonsense they did have. I have made this world scientifically," continued Gud, "but the work you want done now is a work of art, and I shall need a model. Since you refuse to be used as a model, I will have to resort to an old trick of my profession."

Gud paused significantly and walked over to a nearby pool of water that, having sought its level in a quiet nook, was very placid. He bent over the pool for a moment and smiled in a pleased fashion at what he saw. But the position was unpleasant and the ground at the edge of the pool was damp and stained his robe where it stretched over his knees. So Gud picked up the pool and propped it up against a rock in a nearly vertical position.

His reflection in the propped-up pool was still more pleasing and Gud called the soul over to him:

"I am going to use my reflection for a model," said Gud, "to fashion the creatures you want to people this world. To try the idea out first, I am going to re-do you in my own image."

The soul was mute with embarrassment and suffered Gud to place it upon a hastily constructed

easel. Then, glancing at his own reflection in the propped-up pool, Gud, with a few deft strokes, redid the soul into an image of himself.

Gud lifted the re-done soul down from the easel and set it over beside the propped-up pool, and then stood back and looked at his own reflection and then at the soul which he had re-made in his own image: and the only way he could tell them apart was by the background.

"That's one of the best pieces of copying I ever did," cried Gud. "I am delighted with my craftsmanship. But before I make the rest of the crowd, I think we had better materialize ourselves, otherwise there would not be equality in the world, because we would be immaterial and hence be different from the others."

"Quite right, you are, comrade," said the soul, who was now the image of Gud and so had to agree with him.

Gud looked around for some clever trick by which he could make this materialization impressive—and the soul also looked around, being Gud's double and having identical thoughts. When Gud saw that his thoughts were the soul's thoughts, he was annoyed, because he saw he could not do anything now to astonish or impress the soul. So Gud decided to materialize without any hocus pocus, and the soul thought what Gud thought; so they materialized themselves without more ado.

"Well," said Gud, "let's make the rest of us."

"That's what I was thinking," agreed the soul.

"And shall we be savage or civilized?"

"Civilized," said the soul; "of course, it will be a lot of bother to make all the appurtenances of civilization, but one can't have equality as long as there is savagery and poverty in the world."

"That's just what I was thinking," agreed Gud, annoyed to find himself thinking the soul's thoughts.

So Gud, and his image that had been the soul, made a world full of civilized beings and all the appurtenances of civilization, and they did it very quickly, for they were both impatient to find themselves thinking the other's thoughts, and were desirous to get the job done and get away from that world and get back to the Underdog.

And when they had done this thing they found themselves in a great convention hall that had arisen where the garden had been. The hall was full of creatures made in the exact image of Gud and in the image of the soul that Gud had re-made in his own image.

As Gud glanced around, marveling at the myriads of creatures that were exactly alike, he suddenly realized that he could no longer identify the soul for which he had done all this—and for a brief moment he was very much relieved for that particular creature had annoyed him grievously.

But Gud's relief was of short duration, for it was dawning upon his consciousness that he had done a terrible thing, because all these myriads of creatures about him looked just like himself. And Gud saw that he had no longer the one Gud but one of a myriad of Guds; and that he had lost his distinction and position and superiority, and all the other satisfying attributes that attach to the office and function of being Gud.

How it would all have ended, not even Gud knew, but just then they all saw a stream of smoke in one of the galleries and they all shouted: "Fire." There was a wild scramble. And when the Guds nearest the fire had stamped out the flames, the real Gud had been lost in the turmoil and confusion, and did not know which one of the myriads of Guds was himself and which were the other Guds made in the image of himself.

It was very distressing.

For three days and seven nights Gud went around that world of equality, wondering who he was and whether he was Gud or one of the imitation Guds; and all the imitation Guds went around wondering whether they were Gud or one of the imitation Guds.

And then a joyful event happened! The Underdog had become worried over his master's long absence and had trailed him with his unerring canine scent. Coming into the confusion of this world of equality, the Underdog walked right up to the honest-to-God Gud, leaped up and sat himself upon his own true master's shoulder and barked with delight, and licked the cheek of his master.

When he saw the action of his dog, Gud knew again for a surety that he was himself. With a mighty cry of deliverance from this torture and terror of pure democracy and achieved equality, Gud called down lightning from on high and earthquakes from below and winds from abroad and floods from the seas, and destroyed the world of equality once and for all and forever, and all that was therein contained, and all the myriads of fraudulent Guds he had so foolishly made in his own image to please the longing for equality in the soul of the parlor sociologist, and thereby stop its wailing.

And when the fire and flood and the winds and the earthquakes had done their work with neatness and dispatch, Gud and the Underdog went on their way rejoicing, and Gud made three

cats for the Underdog to chase. They were all alike because they were copycats, and the Underdog would chase one and then the other and then all three at once.

Gud sat down and laughed at the troubles of the Underdog, because the poor beast, despite his canine instinct, could not tell one cat from the other two, and could not catch any of them because they were always crossing each other's paths, so that the Underdog would chase the others and give the one a chance to rest.

But being cats, they were not friendly, even though they were copycats; and finally they ran into each other and began to fight among themselves and to chase each other around in a circle.

Now the Underdog was wise, and he stopped running and sat down on the edge of the circle and got the one and then the other, which left only the third. Then Gud called off his dog, and also called up the last copycat for a bowl of cream; and the Underdog and the copycat drank cream together out of the same bowl. Which proves, dear children, the importance of a good example and demonstrates the power of kindness.

So Gud, and the Underdog, and the copycat all started walking along the Impossible Curve, all of them wondering what the next adventure would be. But I think we had better go to bed, for too much of this kind of stuff is likely to make us talk indiscreetly in our sleep.

CHAPTER XV

A great storm of the far-flung astronomical elements arose without cause. The like of it had never been before nor since and it disobeyed all laws, both known and unknown, natural and unnatural. Gud was sore puzzled because the storm was without cause but not without effect. He ran hither and here and darted thither and yon, and in the turmoil he was separated from Fidus, his faithful Underdog.

The impalpable ether that fills all space became palpable and vibrated and palpated with incommensurate waves; and the non-popitent nether which is beyond all space became popitent and gyrated and popitated with calculatious ostentulations.

Throughout the abysmal reaches of indefinite dimension the far-flung, flaming suns were exploding with blinding flashes and deafening roars, and their molten fragments were spewing and spilling this way and that, knocking constellations asunder and painting cold, dead worlds with liquid fire and blazing splendor.

Comets fell, dragging their tails behind them, twisting and writhing as if in pain. And the stars were falling, too. Meteors pattered as rain upon the roof of heaven. Broken nebulae whipped along as snow-flakes driven of the northwest wind. Pleiades smashed like hail through the windows of space. Vile smelling gasses blew about all the interstellar void and vastness. Tornados and mighty cyclones and vortices torned and cycled vorted.

All this frightened Gud, so that he sought for shelter from the storm. Just then a little world came rolling by, and it wobbled as it rolled. It did not look very safe, but it was solid underfoot. Gud boarded it and found himself before a tiny cabin on the wobbling world. The cabin was built of old cracker boxes and looked frail as a ten-cent toy; but there was no other cover at hand, so Gud knocked on the cabin door to ask for shelter.

When no one answered, Gud entered and closed the door behind him. There before him sat a dear little widow knitting a bellyband for someone else's baby. She was so deaf she could not hear quinine, and so blind she could not see a house afire, and had catarrh so badly that she could not smell a herring; but for all that she was a very good cook.

Gud addressed her in telepathy, saying: "I wonder if you would make me a cake?"

And the woman replied by thought transference and answered: "Alas, I cannot make you a cake today, for I have but one hen and she has already laid her one egg this morning, and I have eaten it for my breakfast."

Then Gud said: "If you will show me the hen, perhaps I can persuade her to lay another egg."

So the woman called to the hen in the language of beasts and birds, and the hen came out from under the bed where she had been looking for insects. Gud saw that the hen had false teeth and was getting old, for her comb was pale as roses in the night. So he flattered the vanity of the hen by commenting on the beauty of her scarlet comb. Whereupon she laid another egg, whilst without the cottage the astronomical storm raged on.

The widow picked up the egg and found that it was as fresh as home grown lettuce. She made a curtsy to Gud and said: "I perceive that you are a wise magician, for who ever heard of a stupid one that could make a hen lay two fresh eggs in one day? And now I will make a little cake, which will be big enough for one to eat."

"Make it for two," said Gud, "for I would not like to eat alone."

"But," said the widow, "how can I unless I have another egg, and the hen has already laid two

eggs in one day. How can she lay another?"

"I do not know," said Gud, "but I will find out."

So he called to the little hen again and gave her a homily on the evils of race suicide. The hen became as moral as a tombstone and grievously wrought up over the way her sisters were neglecting their duty, so that she laid yet another egg.

The widow picked up this egg and shook it also, and saw that it was even fresher than the other one, and she made another curtsy to Gud and said: "I perceive that you are a great fakir, but you are very clever, and so I will make a cake for two and we shall eat it together, and perhaps have a cup of tea, if there is any sugar in the house."

At last the cake was put into the oven. The fire of the oven waxed hot and the cake began to rise nicely. And when it had risen above the top of the pan and almost to the top of the oven, the dear little widow opened the oven door ever so softly. As she peeked in, a nearby constellation broke asunder; the crash of the breaking shook the wobbling world like a great earthquake, the cottage jarred as with a blow from the hand of wrath, and the cake fell and was ruined utterly.

Then the dear little widow began to weep because her cake had fallen, and she was very angry through her tears and said: "What is the matter and what happened and what ruined my cake?"

"I fear me, it is the storm outside," replied Gud.

"Then I think you ought to go out and stop it."

"I will," agreed Gud.

And he went out and stopped the storm, and while he was out he destroyed the major portion of the local law of gravitation.

When he came back into the cottage, the moral little hen was all a-cackling and the dear little widow was all a-smiling, for behold, the hen was looking at the widow, who in her hand held the lightest cake she had ever lifted.

After he had had his cake and eaten it, too, Gud returned to the Impossible Curve, and as he reached it, Fidu came romping forth to meet him.

CHAPTER XVI

As Gud passed on along the way he saw a white-haired man sitting in a window of the sky and writing with a tattered goose quill pen, which he dipped into a pool of blood.

He was a sad old man with gloomy eye,
Who wrote with slow and studied inference,
Heaving the while some long and doleful sigh,
Or staring about with bored indifference.

Around his body there were ragged clothes
As hung upon a scarecrow in the corn,
And on his coat was pinned a withered rose,
From which he slowly plucked each barbed thorn.

Gud stopped upon his way and questioned him.
"I am a lonely soul," the old man said,
"Within this rose I find that life is grim,
Without its thorns, why even beauty's dead!"

Gud wondered, yet it would not be polite
To break the old man's tale of woe.
"I'd like to know," the ancient said, "the candle-light—
When we have blown it out where does it go?"

"I do not know," said Gud, "do you?"
"Ah yes," replied the old man, "I know very well,
For I remember as if it were but yesterday how
Half dead and famished, the desert in my eyes
And hunger written on my lips
I stood there like a captain on a hill
Dreaming of his broken ships.

"I kicked aside a stone that crushed a skull;
When from that mouth that mouldered there,
There came as if it were the voice of doom,
A haunting cry that chilled the air.

"Then suddenly I laughed and turned my heel

In that dead face; and laughing still
I danced along the sands, played hide and seek
And chased my shadow up a hill."

And when the old man had done with these foolish words he suddenly seized the rose upon his coat and tore it off and cast it from him. Then he picked up his tattered goose quill pen and dipped it in a pool and began to write furiously.

When the old man paused and stared up vacantly, Gud spoke to him and asked: "What are you writing?"

Thereupon the old man made answer and said to Gud: "I am writing a cook book for cannibals."

Being a vegetarian in theory if not in practice, Gud was not interested, and he passed on, walking rapidly, so that he presently overtook a man who was following stealthily after yet another man.

He who followed stooped frequently and, with a two-pronged instrument, picked up objects from the pavement. These he cast into a brazier that he carried, wherein that which he picked up sizzled and burned and made a stench in its burning.

Gud wot not what the man did and would know, so he plucked at the sleeve of yet another citizen of that place and asked of him: "Who be these two, the one that walks alone with his face aloft, and the other that follows after, stooping and searching for filth?"

Said the citizen: "These be our Genius and our Critic."

"And what do they?" asked Gud.

To this the citizen replied: "The Genius talks words, and the Critic follows after, and, as the words fall from the lips of Genius, the Critic picks them up with the tongs of contempt and burns them in the brazier of public opinion."

"But why," asked Gud, "do the words of the Genius make a stench in their burning?"

"Because," said the citizen, "they are vile."

Gud doubted that which the citizen told him, and he quickened his steps and made bold to pass close to the Critic. Whereupon Gud, who could see all things, saw that the words of the Genius which the Critic picked up were not vile but beautiful; and that, when the Critic made a pass toward the brazier, he put the word not therein but dropped it instead into a wallet which he carried beneath his mantle.

Gud was angered and he grasped the fellow by his egotism and shook him until his conceit rattled and made inferential allegations of hypocrisy.

"What is it to you," demanded the Critic, "if I spit into the brazier to make a stench to please the people?"

"But what do you with the words of Genius?"

"By the holy name of Public Opinion! Why should a man do the work of a street cleaner on the salary of a critic?"

"I have been a public official myself," replied Gud sympathetically, "and I know how ill such service is paid."

This pleased the Critic and he turned and looked into Gud's face and saw there the satisfied look of self-sufficient authority which he recognized as akin to his own. Plucking confidentially at Gud's sleeve he said: "As you appreciate that I must live by subtle ways, then perhaps I can interest you in a few choice verbal gems."

Gud realized that purchasing these words was probably illegal in this world. But it wasn't his world, so he said: "I should like to look at them."

The Critic led Gud into the rear room of a perfectly respectable place and opened up his wallet. Here, in a secluded corner, he emptied the contents upon a table.

Gud began fingering over the verbal gems.

"Look at this," the Critic cried, picking up a brilliant one.

"Too scintillating for the quiet setting I have in mind," replied Gud. Then after examining a few more, he asked: "What will you take for the lot?"

"My price for the lot," said the Critic, "is the gift of power to speak myself such words of genius as I have been defaming to please the people, for I am weary of being a mere word picker and moral scavenger."

Gud answered: "I can give a Critic the power to walk down the street and spill words but I can not make a Genius pick them up."

"Sold!" said the Critic, pushing the verbal gems across the table—and immediately he began to babble words. But Gud noted that they were only words of great talent.

As he looked over the verbal gems he had purchased, Gud decided that he had no use for them, and so he called to the departing Critic: "Where can I sell these words?"

"Go to Hell," shouted the Critic over his shoulder.

So Gud went to Hell, and reaching the gate thereof he knocked and cried: "Is this the place where one brings the words of Genius?"

As Gud knew all things he knew the answer to his question before he asked it, but he thought it best to ask anyway in order to verify his omniscience. In this case it was wrong.

"No," said the gate keeper, and he gave Gud the correct address.

The way took Gud past seven more hells, for the people of this sphere, being a righteous people, were amply helled.

Reaching at last the bottom-most vault beneath the deepest hell, Gud came upon a junk shop.

As he entered, the proprietor, who looked both old and young, asked; "Comest thou to buy or to sell?"

"I have a few words which I might sell," said Gud.

"I am not much interested in words," replied the proprietor, who looked both old and young, "for I am a dealer in sin, and the sinfulness of words is much over-rated."

"But the words I have are the words of Genius."

"Is the genius dead?" asked the dealer.

"Not yet, but he is being hounded by a critic."

"I'll take them in trade," suggested the dealer.

"What do you offer?" asked Gud.

"Anything you wish. I have a very complete catalog on crimes."

"I am interested in sin in a sort of professional way," admitted Gud, "let me see your goods."

Very graciously the dealer escorted Gud through the chambers where his stock of sins was stored.

It was a magnificent collection. There were huge piles of thefts of property and of honor and virtue and of good name, and great bales of untold lies. There were infinite infidelities and even a greater number of credulities. There were a few ragged ends not justified by the means, and many tyrannical prohibitions and faded blue laws, and a carefully locked cabinet, labeled "Old Maids' Wishes."

There were easy sins for beginners and more difficult sins for hardened criminals. There were sins with which children might please their fathers and sins for fathers to visit upon their children and their children's children. There were sins against men which are often forgiven and sins against women which are never forgiven. There were sins for the rich and sins for the poor, and a few rare sins suitable for both.

The old dealer sighed as they passed the murder counter. "Some of this stock moves very slowly," he confessed. "Indeed it keeps me busy now-a-days finding enough fresh stock to supply the demand."

Gud was a little puzzled over the nature of this business. "Your trade," he remarked, "is, I suppose, with the inhabitants of these neighboring hells, supplying them with new kinds of sins?"

"No indeed," replied the dealer, who seemed a little insulted. "The dwellers in hells are fed up on sin. I never deal with branded sinners. I cater only to the best of righteous trade."

"Oh, I see, you bootleg sin in the heavens."

"No, no, I trade with mortals, and I sell only to the conscientious and the righteous."

"And yet, you are stocked with every sin in the calendar; where is the value to the righteous in such stock?"

"Merely a matter of time and place," explained the dealer, "and the prevailing ethical ideas of my clients. You see my business is to buy up the moral offal of one place or time and sell it at another time or place when or where it has high value as virtue."

"Do you sell for cash or credit?"

"As I do not deal with hardened sinners who would admit the value of my wares, but only with the righteous, I dare not give credit. But as for cash, that is not practical either, as there can be no universal medium of exchange between people whose fundamental ideas of morality differ—so I am obliged to trade by barter."

"That must be troublesome."

"Yes," agreed the dealer, "relative values differ so—in some spheres a murder is considered more

than equal to a life time of dishonesty—in other realms murder is considered an equitable payment for the mere accusation of untruthfulness. But the exchange values of different kinds of thefts bother me most, they are so illogical. I have one group of clients who place a value on thievery in an inverse ratio to the size of the theft. Only last week one of them who had robbed a nation swept by winter winds of all its fuel resources wished to exchange his deed for the idea of pilfering a lock of hair from the head of his neighbor's wife. Indeed the difficulty of finding a logical ratio between the immoral value of a theft and the value of the property stolen is one of the most baffling problems in the mathematics of sin."

"A very interesting business you have," commented Gud, "and pray, how came you to be in it?"

"It was my father's idea, for he was a great student of morals, and noting how they changed from age to age, he saw that if the discarded crimes and abominations of one time or place could be transplanted to other times and places, they would have great value as virtues. It was only necessary to achieve immortality to make the venture practical. My father did not achieve that for himself, as his arteries had started to calcify before he discovered the immortality vitamin. But I fell heir to his efforts and ideas, and I have little fault to find with the outcome.

"But of late business has not been so good. There is too much intercommunication: the moral values of murders, for instance, were once the main profit of the house, and we could not get enough to satisfy the various moral ends for which murder was justified. But now times have changed and privately initiated murder hardly classes as moral anywhere."

"Then why do you not quit retailing, and trade in wholesale murders?"

The dealer shook his head sadly. "Impractical," he sighed. "I can not deal with states, since being without conscience they have no awareness of sin, no sense of repentance and hence have nothing to offer in exchange."

In payment for the words of genius, which he left with the dealer, Gud selected a little sin that he had been wishing to commit all his life, and so he departed greatly pleased with his possession.

CHAPTER XVII

As Gud was passing up through hell he saw two souls which were not being properly punished, but were strolling about as trustees of the place. Gud approached them and asked: "Why are you two not being properly punished?"

The first soul made answer and said to Gud: "We need none of these grosser punishments such as increased temperature and breathing SO₂, which the ancients, who imagined hell, were able, in the limits of their scientific knowledge, to imagine. The reason that we need no such crude material punishments is because our spiritual suffering is quite enough."

And Gud saw that the soul spake the truth, for the face of both of these trusty souls were lined with seamy sorrow. As Gud looked upon their sufferings he wondered why it was they suffered so, and he asked: "In what did you two sin one by one that you should be punished two by two?"

And the second suffering soul replied, "I sinned because I believed too vehemently that there was no god, and my companion here, because he believed over confidently that there was a god."

"But is it not strange," asked Gud, "that you two, who held such opposite doctrines, should now suffer similar punishment? How do you explain that?"

The first soul now took up the conversation with his mouth and made answer in this wise: "We suffer now with equal suffering, I because, believing that there was no god, found, when I died, that there was one, and he sent me to hell. But my companion here, who believed that there was a god, found when he died that there was none; and so he came to hell also, as there was no place else for him to go."

For a moment Gud looked upon these suffering souls with puzzlement and wonder, and then suddenly he began to laugh.

"Why do you laugh at our sufferings?" demanded the souls angrily.

"I am laughing at you two," said Gud, "because when you died you both came to hell—whereas if neither of you had believed in immortality you would not have needed to have gone anywhere."

As Gud was passing through a dismal swamp, he came to a certain cypress tree and sat down on a knee thereof. And presently she came also and sat down upon the other knee of the cypress tree, and they talked about the meeting of parallel lines.

But they could not agree so Gud proposed that they cut their initials on the bark of the cypress tree.

They did so, after which they parted. And Gud went on his way and so did she.

But when Gud had vanished into the depths of the dismal swamp, she turned and went back to the cypress tree and looked at the initials that they had carved thereon. Taking the knife that Gud

had left sticking in the tree, she carved a word below the initials. Having finished the carving, she looked up into the branches above her and behold the foliage of the tree had withered. Then she repented for what she had done, and in great haste, took the knife and carved yet another word. Whereupon the tree put out fresh buds and grew again—for such is the power of words for good or evil.

And she smiled contentedly, for hers was the last word.

CHAPTER XVIII

Lo, the north wind trembled and the sea of sorrow froze into beauteous frost forms that shimmered all lacy and green like ferns waving in an ancient breeze. And frozen frogs came out of the frost ferns, croaking and bellowing like mad, green bulls.

The Underdog whimpered because he was afraid. So Gud bade the frogs be quiet, and they were quiet with a great quietude, and peace reigned for a spell or two.

After which Gud traveled on until he met a rich merchant who was riding across an ice floe on a camel that was gaily caparisoned and had trappings of gold and was shod with silver shoes. And the rich merchant hailed Gud and said: "Whither goest thou on this sleek, icy desert?"

And Gud said: "I go my way rejoicing. But why is your eye so troubled?"

The merchant replied: "I go in search of a strawstack."

When his master said that, the camel stomped on the ice with his silver shod foot and cut a round hole in the ice and kneeled down and drank his fill of ice water.

While the camel was kneeling, the rich merchant invited Gud to mount upon the camel. Gud did so and the camel arose and lumbered on his slippery way.

The merchant and Gud sat in the howdah and smoked a hooka and told tales of barter and of gain. This is one of the tales they told, and it matters not which one told it, for it is a lie anyway.

CHAPTER XIX

It was a great occasion—every seat
Was filled and jewels sparkled rich and bright—
One almost heard each throbbing heart that beat
As the orchestra filed in that gala night.
The music flared in one triumphal blast,
The leader swung his baton: the curtain rose:
Then the soprano sang of bright skies overcast,
And silence fell upon the watching rows.

Just at that moment, some one in the crowd
Saw wisps of black smoke curl around a board.
He shouted "fire!" It was as though a shroud
Was flung around them by a righteous Lord.

The crowd surged forth like streams that over-flow—
And ran amuck, insane with fear and rage....
Just then an unknown player of the piccolo
Upclambered o'er the footlights to the stage:

"Hold! Hold!" he cried, and waved his piccolo;
"Be calm! There is no danger, if you're quiet!"
Then through the Opera House there echoed low
Such music as would calm the greatest riot.

They faltered, then they heeded his desire,
Then paused to hearken with suspended breath,
And spellbound listened through that awful fire
Till every one of them was burned to death.

CHAPTER XX

And now the rich merchant pointed out upon the horizon a small speck which was no larger than a woman's honesty. As the camel journeyed on toward the horizon the speck grew in size until it

was as large as the hope of inheritance. And when they finally came up to it, behold it was a strawstack!

The camel started to eat the straw, but the merchant jumped down and belabored the beast over the head with a marlin pin—whatever that is—and cried: "Cease, thou gluttonous, stupid beast; knowest thou not that thou wilt impale thy parched throat?"

"Why belaborest thou the camel?" asked Gud, solicitously.

"Because, there is a needle in this strawstack, and I came from the four corners of the earth to find it. Do you think I am going to let this fool beast devour it?"

So Gud offered to hold the camel's halter while the rich merchant searched the strawstack for the needle.

After the merchant had looked in all the straws but one he gave up in despair, for he had not found the needle.

"Perseverance, dear, my lord, keeps honor bright," quoth Gud.

Greatly encouraged, the rich merchant looked into the last straw and found the needle. In glee he shouted and held up the needle in one hand and the last straw in the other.

"I perceive," said Gud, "that you are a prince of industry. But you are also in a dilemma. If you try the last straw first and break the camel's back, then how can the poor beast go through the eye of the needle?"

CHAPTER XXI

"Who was that fellow," asked Fidu, "who passed me just now with such a wild, wild look in his eye?"

"That fellow," replied Gud, "was an author who just spent a week-end with me."

"And what did you do to him?" asked Fidu. "He was as crazy as the nebular hypothesis."

"Upon his request I criticized his book, which he insisted on reading to me."

"But what did you say about it?" demanded Fidu, "he looked as locoed as a lop-eared logarithm."

"I made several criticisms. I told him that his plot was choppy, and that most of it was stale; that the work lacked sadly in originality and there was considerable repetition. I said it was very melodramatic in spots and that it had entirely too many murders, and that many of the biggest murderers seemed to escape without punishment. I also told him that it was full of sordid realism and most unhappy endings, that it was overloaded with action, and worst of all, it utterly lacked any evidence of a distinct moral purpose."

"Well no wonder," said Fidu, "that the poor fellow was raving; you made, if I may say so, quite a severe criticism."

"I grant that, but his book deserved it—everything I said about it was absolutely true."

"What did he call his book?" asked Fidu.

"He called it," replied Gud, "'An Outline of History.'"

CHAPTER XXII

Presently Gud ran dead against an ivory wall; but being versed in aviation, he flew over it. Having done so he went on walking. Gud perceived that he was walking in a kingdom, and he walked warily, for he was doubtful whether monarchy was an ideal form of government.

His doubts increased as he noted the subjects of the kingdom, for they appeared to be full of guile. So when he became tired and sleepy, he durst not enter into an abode, but lay down beneath a friendly tree and fell asleep.

When Gud awoke he found that his sandals had been stolen from off his feet. This made him very sorrowful, for his sandals had been well broken to fit his own feet but he was worried lest they might hurt the feet of the thief. So he made a hue and cry. When a subject of the kingdom appeared, Gud demanded to be taken at once to the king.

The king, being self-made, was not very wise and did not perceive that Gud was his equal; therefore Gud was obliged to kneel on the little mat that the king kept before his throne so that visitors would not bruise their knees on the agate floor.

When Gud had done kneeling and salaaming, the king offered him a cigarette and selected a

cigar for himself. Then he asked how the crops were where Gud came from.

"They are very good," said Gud, "but the morals in your kingdom are not."

To Gud's astonishment, the king replied meekly: "I know it."

Gud now related to the king how the very sandals had been stolen from off his feet as he slept beneath the tree.

"Oh, wise stranger," cried the king, "it grieves me much to have you, who come from a distant realm, discover that I have thus failed in the first duty of government which is the protection of property. Therefore let me make restitution for the injury done you in my kingdom."

The king now sent a lackey to his treasure vault, and he fetched Gud a pair of jeweled sandals which fitted his feet perfectly.

Gud's grief being assuaged and his anger abated, he was genuinely sorry for this stupid king, and said to him: "I have knocked about a bit and picked up a few ideas in practical politics, so perhaps I can help you."

"It is my shame and sorrow," confessed the king, "to admit to you that I rule over a realm of thieves. We were formerly proud of our talents in that direction, for at one time this kingdom was surrounded by rich neighbors and our prosperity was based on the capturing of bounteous booty from our enemies. Alas, our enemies combined and built a great ivory wall and walled us in. And now my people steal from each other. I have issued countless edicts against stealing, and even crucified a few thieves, but it avails me nothing. My people steal and are proud of it. Yet there is honor among my thieves. They are at heart law-abiding and truth-telling citizens."

"How do you know they are?" asked Gud.

"I know, because I had a census taken in which I asked each and every one if he were a thief, and all the thieves answered most truthfully that they were thieves."

"How do you know they answered truthfully?" questioned Gud, as he flecked his ash. "And if they are thieves, how can they be law-abiding citizens?"

"That explanation is easy. You see, my people do not consider my edicts against stealing as law because they maintain that it conflicts with their established habits."

"Did you say all of your citizens were thieves?"

"No, not all; sixty per cent., to be specific. If you do not understand percentage, that means that there are three thieves for every two honest men."

When the king said this Gud's eyes brightened and a satisfied smile beamed on his courtly countenance. "The trouble," said he, "is that your system of government is wrong."

"What?" exclaimed the king. "I am the government. Am I wrong?"

"Yes, you should have another government."

"You mean that I should hire an assassin to kill me, so that my son should be the government?"

"No," replied Gud, "I mean that you should have a different form of government."

"I never heard of a different form of government!" declared the king, throwing his cigar on the rug in his excitement.

"Then I will explain it to you. What you need is a democracy. Your people want it for they have an innate sense of it already. They believe in the majority rule. Because the majority of them are thieves they want stealing legalized. In fact, to make law against stealing is, under the circumstances, very demoralizing, for it breeds contempt for law."

"By my crown!" exclaimed the king, slapping his knee. "You are right. If you will just show me how, we will make this democracy."

So Gud showed the king how to write a declaration of independence and frame a democratic constitution, and then they staged abdication and the king placed his crown in the historical museum.

When the king had done that, Gud said: "Now have a bill passed making stealing legal so that the law will agree with the habits and customs of the majority."

When the king had done that also Gud said: "You are more popular than ever, so start a secret society to be called 'The Ancient Order of Honest Thieves.' Write the constitution and by-laws yourself and make every citizen of your democracy eligible to membership, providing he can show proof that he has stolen something; but make it a first principle of honor that a thief shall not steal from a fellow thief."

The king was delighted, and straightway did all which Gud demanded.

The society was so popular that not only the thieves joined, but the honest men became thieves and joined also. Everything went well until all the citizens of the democracy but one had become members of the "Ancient Order of Honest Thieves." Everything that this man had possessed had

been stolen, and he was naked and hungry, so finally he decided to join the society. There being no one else left to steal from, the last honest man stole the jeweled slippers that the king had given unto Gud.

At this Gud became so angry that he declared himself emperor, and hanged the king on a rainy day.

CHAPTER XXIII

When Gud came upon the stupid girl she was sitting under an apple tree and weeping bitterly.

"Why do you weep?" asked Gud.

"I weep," replied the girl, "because I am in disgrace."

"Oh, I see, you are a fallen woman. Why don't you commit suicide?"

"But I am too young to die," moaned the girl, "and besides I haven't fallen yet. I am weeping because they tell me I am immodest."

"But why do they say you are immodest?" asked Gud, as he picked up a green apple and tasted it to see if it were ripe.

"Because," explained the girl, "I made me a bathing petticoat and went bathing in the pool. Someone had told me how to make it and how to sew lead sinkers in the hem of it. But I could only remember that it was something about fishing tackle, and I sewed corks in the hem instead of sinkers, and so when I went bathing, the skirt floated on the top of the water."

Gud stroked his beard thoughtfully. "I can put out the eyes of the fishes," he suggested.

"But they would still remember."

"I can kill the fishes," offered Gud.

"But the fishes might have souls, and besides, it wasn't so much what the fishes saw or even what the people thought the fishes saw."

"What was it?" asked Gud.

"The trouble was that my bathing suit was not in style."

"Oh, if that is all I will change the style.... There, go to the drug store and watch the clerks marking up the price of corks."

"Wonderful," cried the girl, "me to be the leader of styles—But I wore this week's styles last week—they will say I was too forward and therefore immodest."

Gud reached in a pocket of his robe and took out a patent calendar. This he turned back two weeks. "You should worry," he said, "I have made it week before last. You did not appear in the new-style bathing suit until next week. Does that fix everything?"

"Y-e-s," stuttered the girl doubtfully. "But what about the fishes?"

"I turned them back too," explained Gud. "But in all fairness, I ought to warn you about the lobsters. You see they go backwards naturally, and when I reversed the order of things just now I noticed that the lobsters went ahead two weeks—it is all a matter of relativity, you see."

"No, I don't see," blubbered the girl, "for I am very stupid," and she began to weep again.

"Why are you weeping again?" demanded Gud.

"Because I failed in my examination. I got everything wrong-wise and upse-turvy."

"Don't worry," said Gud, "I have changed all things, so that what you answered in your examination is the truth and has always been the truth and all contrary belief are false and always have been false."

"Thank you so kindly," smiled the girl, "but there is just one thing more. I can't understand the difference between an equilateral triangle and an isosceles triangle—and I just hate all triangles."

"Forget them," consoled Gud, "for I have destroyed all triangles."

Just then the girl noticed in alarm that the apples which had been on the ground were dropping up and alighting on the tree.

"Be not alarmed," said Gud, "I only changed the law of gravitation as it applies to apples."

And now they saw a procession coming through the orchard headed by the President of the Academy to proclaim the stupid girl as a virgin prophetess who had revealed to that world many great truths that had been hidden from the minds of the old masters. And when the old masters saw the apples that lay about the girl dropping up, one by one, to the tree above her, they

became filled with holy zeal and abject worship and bowed down humbly before her and cried:

"Hail, hail, prophetess, for the end of the world cometh, and thou, in thy holy wisdom, must tell us what we should do to be saved."

"Oh, forget it till next week," said the girl, "and then you will see me in my new-style bathing suit."

And Gud departed from that place in great sorrow, for once again he saw a world confounded and worshipping a fool.

CHAPTER XXIV

About a decade later, Fidu came running up to Gud. For a moment he was too excited to speak and could only bark, but when he again found his articulation the Underdog said: "Oh master, come quick, for there is a poor beggar sitting over there on the steps of the almshouse and holding out his hat for alms; but few give to him and he is weak and starving."

Gud followed Fidu and came to the beggar who was poor and wretched indeed. And Gud said to him: "I will not reveal my lack of intelligence by dropping coins into your hat, for I know as well as you do that indiscriminate charity does not alleviate poverty. So throw your coppers into the gutter and put your hat on your head, while we discuss the cause of your impecunity."

The beggar discarded his few coins and placed his hat on his head.

"Now," began Gud, "let us consider your situation intelligently. There is usually some relation between cause and effect. The effect in your case is poverty complicated by charity. I could destroy the effect by a miracle and make you rich, but I have tried tampering with the law of cause and effect, and I find it dangerous business. It is best to change the cause and let the law change the effect."

"Quite right you are, kind sir," agreed the beggar.

"What was the cause of your poverty?" asked Gud. "Was it indolence, or drink, or—"

"No, no," interrupted the beggar, "none of those common things. My poverty was caused by the ruin of my profession."

"What was your profession?" demanded Gud.

The beggar straightened up as proudly as he could and said: "I was a novelist!"

"Yes," said Gud, "Go on."

"And my profession has been blasted and ruined utterly."

"And how did that happen?"

"I do not know how it happened," replied the beggar, a baffled look coming into his eyes; "worse yet not even the critics know—but it happened—it happened—the impossible happened."

"Come, come," called Gud, shaking him by the shoulder, "you are babbling, speak up, what happened?"

The beggar looked up at Gud, a glint of horror in his eyes, and murmured slowly: "Someone destroyed the eternal triangle.... There can never be any more novels, ... nor plays ... nor movies ... nor realism ... nor romance ... nor royalties ... nor dinners at the Alhambra with Gwendolyn ... nor.... Please sir, just a copper, I am old and lame."

"Cheer up," encouraged Gud, "I feel it my duty to help you. Was this triangle that seemed to have been the life of your business equilateral or isosceles?"

"Neither," replied the beggar, now with the bearing of a true novelist, "it was the eternal triangle which is a plot of a certain very literary relation of the sexes, in which three individuals form the angles."

"Why just three?" asked Gud.

"It seems that three sell best," said the novelist. "Two do not interest the reader, and four, five or more tire him; three characters sell best, which is why such a triangle is called eternal."

"I understand that three elements make the best triangle—and one shouldn't fool too much with mathematics. But what about these sexes?"

"It makes no difference," replied the beggar, "how the sexes are arranged, just so both sexes are represented on the triangle."

"Both sexes," repeated Gud—"then you only have two sexes?"

"Certainly, three characters of two sexes form the eternal triangle, any way you arrange them; isn't that perfectly simple?"

"It is simple, more simple than perfect. Now, pick up the coins you cast into the gutter and buy yourself a pencil and a pad and start to work. You will find eternal triangles have become as plentiful as lies, and what is more important, perfectly moral."

"You speak," replied the novelist, "with authority, and my understanding will come, no doubt, with inspiration. I thank you sir, especially for your hopeful words about the possibilities of fiction becoming moral. You can not realize how the necessity of dealing with immorality wears on the conscience of a novelist; nor how those hypocritical critics revile us by insinuating that we write of immorality because we live it. We write of it, sir, because the editors and the public demand it, and for no other reason. If immorality in fiction were not profitable we would not write at all. Again I thank you sir, and good day to you."

CHAPTER XXV

As Gud and the Underdog walked on their way, they passed through a dark valley where they could hardly see in the murkiness to keep their feet on the Impossible Curve, and so they proceeded slowly with eyes and ears alert.

Presently Fidu stopped and cocked his ear, for his sense of hearing was more acute than his master's. When Gud refused to stop, Fidu ran on for a time, and then he stopped again and listened, and this time Gud stopped and listened also, whereupon he heard from afar, the sound as of a heavy clanking chain.

As they traveled on again the sound grew louder and was mingled with mumbling and smothered curses. It was Fidu, as usual, who ran ahead and found the object from whence came the mumblings of smothered curses.

When Gud drew near he saw a poor being chained to a great rock. Gud tapped the rock with his staff and discovered from its adamant nature that it was the Rock of Conservatism. But he could not identify the being who was so securely chained, thereto.

"Who are you," demanded Gud, "and why are you chained up here in this brutal fashion?"

The being only answered with more mumbled cursings.

"If he cannot state his case," said Gud, "why should he expect me to free him?"

"But master, there is a smaller chain across his mouth."

"So there is," observed Gud, and he reached over and severed that smaller chain.

"I thank you," said the prisoner, "but there is little more that I can say, for I am still chained to the Rock of Conservatism."

"Oh, very well," replied Gud, as he severed the great chain also. "And now please tell me who you are and why you are bound here?"

The creature arose and stretched his aching bones. "I am Free Speech," said he, "and who are you?"

And Gud replied: "I am Gud."

"I never heard of you and what is your business?"

"I am retired. What is your business?"

"My business was talking too much until they bound me. But now that I am again free, I intend to go on talking and saying just what I please. For one thing I do not like that ridiculous old bath robe you wear. If you don't care for pants, why wear anything?"

"Have you always been in the business of talking too much?" inquired Gud.

"No," replied Free Speech, "I was once a school master but I got into difficulty. I had a private school and both the Just and the Unjust sent their children to my school. The Just believed that the world was flat and the Unjust believed that the world was round—"

"Which was it?" asked Gud.

"Keep still and let me talk. The Just wanted me to teach their children that the world was flat and the Unjust wanted me to teach their children that the world was round. So I organized two classes in geography and taught the children of the Just that the world was flat and the children of the Unjust that the world was round. The Just had me arrested, but I escaped and went into the business of talking too much and saying what I pleased and asking all the questions I wanted to; and while I am grateful to you for your releasing me, all you did was your duty, and I don't feel there is any privilege of back talk coming to you; and yet you look like you were pretty wise, and there are one or two things that I don't know yet. For instance, has a ghost a soul or is he a soul? Well, I see you don't know, but maybe you can tell me whether sins are washed away by death-bed repentance, though I really don't care, for it is not important. But I would like to know if faith will remove mountains. I don't believe it will for when I was a small lad I went to live with

my grandmother. There was an ugly mountain back of her house and grandmother decided to remove it by faith and she prayed all one evening that the mountain be moved that night. The next morning she woke up and looked out the kitchen window and said: 'I knew that old mountain would still be there.' Which reminds me of a fellow I knew who was a faith healer by profession, and mighty successful, too, and went all up and down the land healing by faith and getting paid handsomely for it. But his wife at home was an invalid: I asked her why her husband did not heal her and she said, 'I lack faith in him.'

"Do you know why they call sleep innocent, considering the kind of dreams people have? Or why blood is thicker than water? Or what there is about a sphinx that makes people think it knows the answer to riddles? Or why a greased egg won't hatch? Or whether a man in hot water is more uncomfortable than a round peg in a square hole?"

"No," replied Gud, "I do not know any of these things and I am sorry I unbound you."

"I knew you would be," cried Free Speech, "I could tell by your old gray gown and those antiquated whiskers that you were a conservative and a hide-bound Puritan, but I tell you right now that you can't stop me talking by tying me up, and that it won't do you any good if you do. And that Underdog of yours is no better than you are. The Underdog must be educated by me, though he is usually so stupid that he chases after the copycat instead of listening to me talk, and so I don't really care as much what becomes of him as I pretend I do—and did you ever hear the story about—"

But Gud clapped his hand over the mouth of Free Speech and called: "Quick, Fidu, fetch me the chain."

As Fidu and Gud marched on their way it was to the sound of muttering and mumbled curses and the clanking of a heavy chain.

CHAPTER XXVI

"Master," remarked Fidu, "I have long suspected that in following this Impossible Curve we are not getting anywhere."

"What difference does it make?" replied Gud, "we are only walking for recreation."

"Oh, yes, I know all that, but still, I do not like to walk in a circle, because it makes me dizzy."

"But we can't be walking in a circle," argued Gud, "because a circle is quite probable and this curve is impossible."

"That may also be true, Master, but nevertheless we just passed that world again where you made a virgin prophetess out of a stupid girl, and I know that building ahead of us is the almshouse on the steps of which we found the poor old beggar whom you made so happy."

Gud looked ahead. "Yes, Fidu," he agreed, "you are right; and perhaps we shall meet him again, for he will not be a beggar now but a rich and prosperous novelist."

But alas! when they came up to the almshouse they found the same old beggar looking more disreputable than before.

Gud reached over and shook him, but he did not stir nor answer. Gud turned quickly away and called Fidu, and they passed on.

"Why did he not speak?" asked Fidu.

"Because," answered Gud, "the poor old fellow was dead, apparently of starvation."

"And you thought that he would be rich and prosperous."

"Yes, yes, so I did. I gave him the chance of his life, too, by making triangles with three sexes and therefore perfectly moral—it just goes to show how useless it is to attempt to salvage these mendicants."

CHAPTER XXVII

As Gud was knocking about among the stars he saw yet another world spinning idly on its axis as it floated aimlessly in the nebulous ether. Prompted by curiosity he drew nearer and observed that the ether was full of ghosts. Most of them seemed to be observing the conduct of the beings in the material world below, and Gud rightly judged them to be demised of that reality and amusing themselves by watching the doings of their descendants.

But there was one ghost of an old woman that seemed sore troubled and full of yearning for the beings of the world below, as if she would communicate to them some message and could find not the means of communication. Filled with compassion, Gud approached the ghost of the old

woman and asked if he might be of service to her. But she merely gazed up at him out of troubled eyes and did not speak. Again Gud addressed her and again she answered not; and Gud concluded that she was a very dumb ghost.

Thereupon Gud imagined a powerful medicine and poured it out in a make-believe goblet and gave to the dumb ghost to drink thereof. She accepted it gratefully and drank copiously; and immediately her mouth opened so that she spake volubly.

When she had done with her thanks for the miracle, Gud asked her why she was troubled and why she looked upon the world below with such distress.

"It is quite a long story," she began, as she seated herself upon the Rock of Ages.

This being the only rock in the neighborhood, Gud was obliged to create another rock so that he could be seated also, for the story promised well.

When Gud was comfortably seated, the old ghost of the old woman resumed: "I was the first lady of the land, that you see below us, and the mother of the first family on that poor deluded world. I had a very dear husband who was the father of my children—of that there was no doubt, for he was never jealous. But I was not his first wife, for he had been married before to a most loquacious creature who had talked herself into hysterics and died.

"My husband loved me greatly and in order to escape the sound of women's voices, he brought me to this world which you now see so full of our descendants.

"Then it was only inhabited by savage beasts and we were the first people who trod its wild shores. We settled down in a beautiful cave and made a happy home there and numerous children came to bless our union.

"My husband loved these children and made many toys to amuse them, for he was clever with his jack-knife. One day he came home with a great chunk of dry, soft wood and began to whittle on it, while all the children stood about and wondered what he was making.

"Day by day they watched him as he shaped and carved the wood until he had made a most comical and grotesque object with grinning teeth, and eyes which he blackened with charcoal. The children were afraid of this ugly, carved wooden creature, and yet they loved it because their father had made it for them. So when it was all finished, he perched it up on the mantle over the horsehair sofa and told the children not to touch it.

"When they asked him what it was he said that it was Bahgung; and he told them that while they slept Bahgung stole out of the cave and went on long expeditions and had great adventures. The children loved these tales of the doings of Bahgung, and so my husband made many tales of Bahgung and his adventures.

"I wanted to warn him that the children could not discriminate between fact and fiction and might believe these tales, but I was dumb and could say nothing.

"When my dear husband saw the worry in my eyes he guessed the cause and said: 'When they get older, I will explain to them that these are only fairy tales and they will forget them.'

"But he did not explain, and went on making up more and yet more tales of the might and prowess of the wooden carved Bahgung. If the children were naughty, he told them that Bahgung would punish them, and when they were good he told them that Bahgung would award them.

"One day when I came quietly into the cave I saw my little girl kneeling before Bahgung, and she was talking to him and beseeching him to cause her brother give back a pretty shell which he had taken from her. I was worried at all this, but being dumb I could say nothing.

"It was a few days later that my dear husband was eaten by a crocodile while he was fishing. There being no remains we had a modest private funeral, none but the family being present; and I took up as best I could the duties of providing for my children.

"After their father's death the children talked still more to Bahgung and told him all their troubles. They seemed to love the idol and yet to fear him, and to believe he was alive though they could see him before them as only a carved wooden thing.

"So much they worshiped Bahgung that I feared to destroy him, and I therefore allowed the wooden idol to stand on the mantle over the old horsehair sofa that we had brought with us from another world.

"I still supposed that when the children grew up they would forget this miserable idol of carven wood. But alas! they did not. I did not dare destroy the idol, for the children adored it more than they did me who had brought them into the world of my own flesh and blood. I wanted also to explain to them that Bahgung was only a wooden idol and as dead and worthless as any rotten stick, but being dumb I could say nothing.

"When my children left home, they would come back on pilgrimages, and to me it seemed that they came back more to worship Bahgung than to see their old mother. So in my desire to see my children the more I permitted Bahgung to stand on the mantle above the horsehair sofa in the cave.

"One day my oldest son and oldest daughter came at the same time to visit me and to worship

Bahgung. It was then that my son proposed that he take Bahgung to his own cave. Being dumb I could say nothing, but my daughter objected.

"Very well,' said my son, 'leave the old thing here. I will make a better one of my own.'

"The next time I visited my son, I found that he, too, had made a creature, which he modeled out of clay, even more cleverly than his father had carved. And this creature was sitting on a little pedestal in a small cave of its own and my son was teaching my grandchildren to bring it offerings and make worship and prayers to it—all of which I thought most silly.

"Finally I died and my numerous descendants gave me a grand funeral and paraded Bahgung at the head of the procession and all their lesser idols after him. But being dumb and dead also, I could say nothing.

"So that was how it all started, the idol worship, in that world you see below us, and for thousands on thousands of generations those poor deluded descendants of mine made and worshiped idols of wood and clay and stone and metal, while I hovered over them, knowing all the while how the delusion started in my own dear husband's innocent desire to amuse our children with a home-made toy."

"That is a very interesting account of the origin of idol worship," commented Gud, "I never heard so plausible a theory."

"Theory!" repeated the old ghost, "but it isn't theory, I would have you know. It is plain fact—did I not see the whole beginning of this folly with my own eyes, and did I not heft that old carcass of rotten wood with my own hands?"

"Perhaps," admitted Gud, "still—" and he peered searchingly through the haze at the world below—"still, I do not see them worshipping idols down there now? The only idols I can see are in the museums along with the stuffed mermaids and two-headed serpents."

"Of course," replied the old ghost, "they have long since grown too sophisticated to worship material idols of wood and stone, but they have idols just the same, which they call 'gods not made with hands'."

Gud felt a little uncomfortable at this remark, but before he could think of anything to say the ghost of the first woman of that land which lay below them, continued. "I will tell you how that came about, too, for I was hovering near at the time. There was a lazy philosopher. He had no idol except a worm-eaten old wooden one which some one had given him, and which he kept in a hovel. One day the shanty caught fire from a defective flue and his idol was burned and there was no insurance. The philosopher was too lazy to make another and too poor to buy one, for the idol makers by that time were charging high prices. So the lazy fool sat out on a stump and dreamed how to get another idol without working to pay for it.

"His thoughts, as I read them at that time, ran something like this: 'An idol is a material creature of wood or stone or metal, which is used by the worshiper as a material nucleus to concentrate the attention and stimulate the imagination. The imagination constructs an immaterial being or god to dwell within the material idol. As this imagined god is the creature that answers supplications and heaps curses on one's enemies, therefore the benefits to the worshiper must come from the use of his own imagination. Now it would be more difficult to imagine a god without having the idol to start from, hence if one could achieve it he would use his imagination more and thereby get a better god.'

"So the philosopher set his imagination to work and imagined himself a god without going to the expense of buying an idol. He was so well pleased with his wholly imagined god that he went out and proclaimed to others, and soon he had a host of lazy chaps who agreed to pay him for the privilege of worshipping his imagined god and thus saving the cost of idols.

"The scheme was so lucrative that other philosophers set up other psychic idols, and that is what they have down there now. If you doubt me, look over there in the left corner of the nearer hemisphere and you can see the smoke of a war. Those people are fighting, trying to make each other accept their particular psychic idols."

Gud looked and saw the war, that it was great and that there was much smoke; and even a faint stench was wafted up to him of the flesh of unbelievers being burned by the faithful.

Gud looked also toward another quarter and saw other smoke. "And what is that war?" he asked, pointing it out.

"That," replied the old ghost, "is a war between two groups who both want to worship the same psychic idol, but one group wishes to worship it in silence and meditation and the other wishes to worship it with drums and cymbals."

Gud sniffed the ether from that direction and found that it also smelled of burning flesh. He did not like the odor and he arose as if to go toward the unhappy world.

"Where are you going?" asked the old ghost.

"I was just wondering, whether, if those unhappy people had a real god would they not quit all this war and devote their time to harmonious worship?"

"Don't be a fool," laughed the old ghost, "if you go down there as a stranger preaching some new

god they will pour oil on you and set you up to light the town for a night."

Gud sighed and sat down on the stone again. "I suppose they would," he admitted, "and I suppose now that I have given you back your power of communication, you will be wanting to go down there and find a good medium and preach atheism through spirit messages, since you know what a fraud all their gods are."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," declared the old ghost. "Of course, if I could have had a great doctor like you to have restored my speech while I was yet alive, then I could have explained to my children just how it all started, and this folly would have never been. But it is too late now."

"What are you going to do?" asked Gud, for he saw that the old ghost had arisen with a very determined look on her face as if she surely meant to do something.

"I am going down there," she asserted; "but I shall not bother with any silly mediums. I am going to materialize as a woman of great wealth and beauty, and I am going to captivate and hire the best sculptors and architects in the land, and under my direction they will build an enormous fine temple and set up a great idol, the splendor of which that miserable world has never seen—"

"Just what kind of an idol?" interrupted Gud.

"An image of Bahgung, of course," cried the old ghost. "What else would you suppose? Wasn't he the first of all their idols, and the best of all them?"

"But—" said the astonished Gud, "I thought that you did not believe in that idol and disliked to see your children worship him."

"So I did, in a way, because it was only a crude, wooden carving that my silly husband had made with his jack-knife—but Bahgung was a great god for all of that. Why, didn't he heal my youngest child of that terrible fever when I prayed to him that fearful night? And didn't he tear the great stone from the cliff that rolled down and killed the tiger? And didn't he—"

But Gud heard no more, for he was racing madly through the ether and pinching himself to see if he were real.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Having come a long way and being footsore and weary Gud felt that it was time to retire. But he possessed no sleeping garments. So he caused a deep sleep to fall upon the Underdog and then Gud lay down and slept in his waking garments.

But the Underdog dreamed a dream and when Gud heard what the Underdog was dreaming, he arose and drew his long knife and cut off the Underdog's ear so that the beast could not hear what he was dreaming—for it was the kind of dream that Underdogs should never hear, and, if it is not deleted by the censor, this is what it was:

CHAPTER XXIX

Thirteen respectable spinsters
Of the respectable town of Murch,
Gave a very respectable party
For their eminent orthodox church.

On a green and grassy pasture
By the side of the River Runch
They sat with the Reverend Quondam
And partook of a dainty lunch.

None could have said they were pretty,
Not even those in the "know,"
Yet no one denied in the city
That their names were as white as the snow.

And just at the moment of eating
The breast of a tender chicken,
The Reverend Quondam observed
The grey skies overhead thicken.

Within a neighboring farmhouse
He betook his respectable form,
Accompanied by all of the ladies
In deadly fear of the storm.

Then lightning came and the thunder
Like the crashing of seventeen earths,
And in that respectable party
Occurred three premature births.

CHAPTER XXX

The next morning when the Underdog awoke he had an imagination that a fly had alighted on the ear which Gud had cut off. The Underdog grieved because he could not flop the ear which he no longer possessed and so dislodge the fly that he imagined had alighted thereon.

This made bad blood at the breakfast table so that the Underdog growled ungratefully over the bone of contention which Gud threw him.

All that day they walked with their eyes averted and said nothing until they came to the place where the birds of faith roosted on the waves of the wireless; and then they both rejoiced, for here was good game, easily ensnared because it had faith and trust.

So Gud spoke comradely to the Underdog and the Underdog wagged cordially. Gud built a snare out of weeping willow twigs, and the Underdog ran round the birds and barked the birches. Presently an old bird that was steadfast in the faith walked into the snare and Gud reached out his hand and took the bird, and it perched upon his shoulder and told him why love grows cold. This made Gud very happy, for he had always wanted to know.

CHAPTER XXXI

The mists that whirl in greater mists
Around the cliffs of space
Leave little drops of glistening water
Upon His wrinkled face.

Have you heard Him, as walking through
The valleys of the night
He paces ever back and forth,
Silent, old and white?

Upon some jagged piece of dust
As high as night is high
He watches all the tiny worlds
Go spinning down the sky.

Around Him are the burning stars
That toss like little ships
And winds blow out of dim unknowns
Across His very lips.

Have you heard Him amid the silence,
Vast as a silken cloud,
Lifting His arms with jewelled pendants,
Cloaked in a heavy shroud?

CHAPTER XXXII

As Gud and Fidu journeyed on they came to a rippling rivulet and saw two women who were bathing in the laughing water. Gud was not astonished at what he saw because Gud sees all things, and familiarity breeds contempt. Neither were the women alarmed, because they were busy talking and did not see Gud.

"I am sick of love," one woman said.

Whereupon the other woman said: "My husband understands me."

Just then the Underdog came up panting and athirst and started to lap of the laughing waters of the rippling rivulet. Gud thrust his hand out and jerked the poor beast away. Alas, too late! Fidu had drunk of the bewitched water and when the moon changed its name and a meteor fell into a fit of despondency; the Underdog went mad and frothed at the mouth and bit the hand that fed him, which was the right hand of Gud.

Gud made a tourniquet out of a miser's heart-strings, so that the infection did not pass above the

elbow; and he applied leeches to the wound and also an ointment of soothing words so that the pain abated. But the poison of falsehood was so potent that Gud found his right hand had become a deceitful hand and could not write the truth. So Gud exchanged his right hand for his left hand, which was very easy to do since he was in the Nth dimension and outside the limitations of three-dimensional space.

When Fidu, the Underdog, went mad he lost his reason. Gud did not note this at the time because of his own affliction. But after his wound had healed so that it ceased to hurt anything but his conscience, Gud observed, as they walked along, that Fidu had lost his reason. The poor dog walking along there without his reason looked so unreasonable that Gud's heart was touched with compassion and he said: "Fidu, it grieves me to see you without a reason. Here, take mine."

Fidu looked up gratefully out of his sad, mad eyes as Gud handed him his reason. Glad to have a reason again Fidu seized it in his mouth and ran off, frisking and twisting and wanting to bark, which he could not do because he was carrying Gud's reason in his mouth. So he ran ahead and came to a place where the curve crossed over a deep, dark stream. Glancing down into the mirror-like surface of the water, the Underdog saw his reflection. He did not think the reflection was another dog with another reason in his mouth—for Fidu had his reason in his mouth and was still mad in his eyes. When he saw his reflection in the water, he thought it was a porcupine or a civet cat or some other unapproachable creature, and so he barked; and in doing so he let Gud's reason fall into the water. Down, down sank the reason of Gud into the dark, deep water, for it was a very weighty reason.

Fidu did not attempt to dive after it, but the poor, mad dog just stood there and let it sink out of sight into the deep dark water.

When Gud came up he, too, was without his reason and he thought Fidu, standing forlornly on the bridge, was an evil genius. When the mad dog ran on into the gloomy wilderness that was beyond the stream, the mad Gud followed after him and became lost in the wildness of the wilderness.

As Gud wandered on amid the gloomy shadows, the void in his mind, where his reason had been, became filled with many strange illusions, and he discovered that he could now believe many things that he had not previously been able to believe because they had been unreasonable. Faith in things unseen grew within him. The fourth dimension and the squared circle no longer annoyed him. He found that chimeras were very real and also wyverns, and that metaphysical hypotheses were as solid substance and as proven facts.

Gud now understood for the first time in his life that he was Gud and at the same time he was a holy ghost, and that he was also his own father. This last bit of unreasonable comprehension especially relieved Gud. He was sorry he had not accepted it sooner, for because of it he had never really written his autobiography. When he had started to write, he began by describing his father as being in existence before his own birth, and yet Gud had realized that such could not be, as he and his father were one and the same being. The situation had confused Gud's reason, but now with his reason gone it was all very clear.

There were also many other things which Gud had been unable to accept with his reason, but which now, with no appeal to reason, he gladly embraced, and so reveled joyously in his growing faith. The transfiguration of souls particularly entranced him, and he spent many happy hours, as he walked along amid the gloomy shadows of the wildness of the wilderness, in picking out favorite animals to have been and to be. He rather favored having been a quacking ornithorhynchus and going to be a ring-straked giraffe; and yet the claims of the groundhog, which sleeps half its life away, also appealed to Gud, because he had a long time to live. Having considered these and many others, Gud decided to have been all the unattractive animals in the past and to be all the nice ones in the future. After all, he had plenty of past and future and there was no occasion for abbreviating the list.

With his reason gone Gud also accepted polytheism as being quite compatible with monotheism. He no longer found it objectionable to be the only god and yet have a lot of assistant gods, for he saw that this would relieve him of a great deal of labor.

And thus it came about that through the loss of his reason many irrational things which he had previously disputed and disbelieved were now lucid and believable. So gratified was Gud as he realized the magnitude of his growing faith that he gave a great shout of joy.

The shout echoed through the wildness of the wilderness, and the echo came back to Gud; and Gud thought it was a lion's roar.

The mad Underdog also heard Gud's shout and the echo of Gud's shout, and he thought the shout was the blast of a war trumpet, and that the echo was the noise of the celebration of peace.

But Gud did not know what Fidu thought, for Gud was mad. If Gud could only have looked sanely into Fidu's insane eyes, a deal of trouble might have been avoided. But he could not; and Gud thought the echo of his shout was the roar of a mighty, wicked lion, and he thought Fidu thought so, too. And maybe he did.

Then the lion's roar roared again. But Gud was not afraid, for he had no reason to be afraid. Filled with unreasonable faith and valor, Gud seized his staff and charged into the jungle after the lion's roar. And Fidu, the Underdog, followed after Gud, for why shouldn't a mad dog follow a

mad master?

The lion's roar roared yet again. The hair on the mad Underdog's back bristled. The dark, dank jungle trembled with the lion's roar. The monkeys in the tree tops chattered with excitement, for it looked to them as if there was going to be a fight.

Gud charged through the underbrush brandishing his staff and came face to face with the lion's roar. And Gud struck viciously and valorously at the lion's roar. But it was only the illusion of a lion's roar and Gud's staff went through the incorporeal stuff like a whip lash through mercy.

Then the lion's roar roared once again, and this time so mightily that Gud died of fright.

When the Underdog came upon the scene, the roar, ashamed of its unreality, had slunk off into the wilderness, and all was quiet in the gloom and the shadow of death.

Fidu sniffed pathetically at his dead master, and then, filled with remorse, he whined piteously, for now that his master was dead the poor mad dog regretted that he had lost Gud's reason.

For a long time Fidu sat in silent vigil by his dead master's side, grieving as hard as a poor mad dog could. But at last he arose and licked the right hand of Gud, which he had bitten in his madness, and gazed again into his dead master's face.

Then, mad though he was, Fidu turned and trotted with unerring canine instinct back to the bridge across the stream. Reaching the bridge he faltered not but dove off bravely into the deep, dark water and retrieved Gud's reason.

All wet and cold, he came back to his poor master's side and laid Gud's reason down beside Gud's head and then barked loudly.

But Gud did not hear the bark of the Underdog, for Gud was dead. So it must be that the hero of this tale, in what shall come hereafter, is only the Ghost of Gud.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The mists that whirl in greater mists
Around the cliffs of space
Leave little drops of water
Upon his wrinkled face.

Have you heard Him, as walking through
The valleys of the night
He paces ever back and forth,
Silent, old and white?

Upon some jagged piece of dust
As high as night is high,
He watches all the tiny worlds
Go spinning down the sky.

Around Him are the burning stars
That toss like little ships,
The winds blow out of dim unknowns
Across his very lips.

Have you seen Him amid the silence,
Vast as a silken cloud,
Lifting His arms with jeweled pendants
Cloaked in a heavy shroud?

When sweeping through the open night
Great pinions touch the face;
Vast wings that fold the face of God
Against the breast of space;

We hear the hills that all one's life
Were silent as the sun,
Break forth in songs that waited there
Since life had first begun.

We reach out for the fluttering hand
And finding it is gone,
We know the stars that shake the sky
Are only old and wan.

We stand and listen and we know
That rising through the night

Pass all the hosts of all the years
Death ever hides from sight.

So much and yet so little then
With thrust that follows thrust....
The paltry things of paltry life
Shrink swiftly into dust.

We lift our hungry hands to Heaven
For pity and in pain
The only answer ever given
Is that fancy and faith remain.

Wars we wage that One might rule....
Proud and jealous is He.
With fire and sword we crush the fool
Who does not bend the knee.

Temple and palace, hovel and hut,
Dreamer and doer of deeds,
At least one door is never shut,
God answers all our needs.

He walks the crest of some far hill
Against the setting sun,
The presence of a mighty will
Whose journey is never done.

Into the night and over the dawn
All the things that are
Through empty voids go plunging on....
Planet and sun and star.

Yet He we worship died years ago
Like some poor human clod,
And that which wanders to and fro
Is only the ghost of God!

CHAPTER XXXIV

"A bear went over the mountain," sang the child (Gud stopped to listen, for the child had had its voice cultivated prenatally) "to see what he could see. A row of hanging skeletons, a swinging in the wind, was all the bear could see in front, and he could not see behind."

"See here," interrupted Gud, "you have the song mixed—what the bear saw was the other side of the mountain."

"Awh, I know," replied the child, "that was what the preteristic old bear saw, but I sing of the futuristic young bear."

Gud shook his head sadly. It made him feel archaic to come thus face to face with the younger generation in art and literature. Somehow he felt that there was something amiss in this new universe that seemed to have arisen Phoenixlike out of the ashes of nothing.

Gud turned from the child with the prenatally cultivated mind and went on his way sorrowfully. And as he walked he hummed softly to himself—"The old-time creation, the old-time creation, It was good for Unph and Godumph ... and it's good enough for me...."

"Come, come," monologued Gud—"I must not get retrospective—I destroyed it all—ashes to ashes and dust to dust."

As Gud trudged on, trying to shake this mood of a sentimental retrospection from him, he found the light waning and the ether about him turning grey and grim and gruesome.

Then like an avalanche of dead ravens, sable darkness came tumbling down upon him. But there were whitish outlines in the darkness, moving and swaying, and there were rattlings and clanking sounds, and eery whistlings.

Rachitic with fear Gud's knees bent beneath him and he sank down in the blackness and shuddered in his soul.

Before him, like a great grey army marching, the skeletons of all the mortal dead, of all the worlds and all the ages that had ever been, were filing by.

In measured time they marched, their gaunt legbones swinging in great sweeping strides, their backbones bending and creaking as they marched; while the winds between the worlds whipped

through empty eyes and hollow skulls and made eery whistling sounds—and all the dry bones rattled.

So the material dead, in the empty mockery of marching, passed by Gud in vain review.

And Gud sat shuddering and alone and watched them—for eons and epochs, and epochs piled on eons of unmarked time.

After all the countless and infinitely innumerable swinging, swaying, clanking, dry-boned skeletons had marched by Gud, they started around again.

Gud knew that they were going around a second time, because he saw one pass, bearing before his bleached and grinning face the glow of a good cigar.

There could be no mistake about it, for these were the bones of the only smoker who had ever believed that tobacco was as injurious as the non-smokers said it was!

Thus made aware that the show was being repeated on him, Gud realized that even the most gruesome and ghoulish sights and sounds became commonplace with repetition; and he became bored, and his fear died within him. So he arose and walked right through the marching mass of swinging, swaying, rattling, whistling, dry-boned skeletons, and out into the sunlight of a new day where he found Fidu digging up a freshly planted lawn in search of a bone he had buried on a golf course countless eons before.

"Come, come," said Gud, "let the dead bones stay buried—the future of eternal life is long enough without digging up the past."

Having dissuaded Fidu from his search for provender Gud offered him a portion of his own lunch.

"Do you remember," remarked Gud to the Underdog, as they sat munching their sandwiches, "the time I was on that little world back there—"

"Which one?" asked Fidu.

"The one I am talking about, silly—I ran into an earthquake. It shook things up rather badly and toppled over about half the houses, killing and maiming millions of mortals."

"What caused it?"

"I don't know, probably it was accidental—but that isn't important. What interested me was what those poor mortals thought caused it. As I was strolling through a town watching the relief committee at work, I happened to see people going into a steep roofed building, which being well constructed, had not fallen down. I joined the crowd and went in. One of their kind was standing on a box at the far end of the building and talking. I sat down with the others and listened to him.

"He was talking about the 'divine visitation.' For a moment I became self-conscious, thinking my incognito had been discovered. But I soon realized that he referred to the earthquake.

"His theory was interesting. He thought their silly little world had been shaken up by their divinity. I knew that he was mistaken, for I knew the chap who had that world in charge; he is a weak little god who could not shake up a good-sized island."

"For what reason did the mortals think your friend shook them up?" asked Fidu.

"The one who was talking had two theories about it. You see they had two kinds of folks in that world—one bunch was called 'sinners' and one was called 'righteous.' Plenty of both bunches were killed by the quake. But it seemed that the fellow who was talking, wanted the sinners killed and he was praising my friend for doing it. But his difficulty was in explaining the death of the righteous, whom I gathered were friends of his that had been in the habit of paying him to talk to them. There were a good many empty stalls in the room with black cloths on them, and some of the women in the crowd were weeping.

"Well, after the talker got through explaining that their deity had caused the earthquake for the purpose of killing the sinners, he had to admit that it also got a few of the righteous. He said that this was due to the 'mysterious working of the divine purpose' or some such vagary."

"Well, what of it?" asked Fidu.

"Nothing in particular, only it struck me as funny."

"Is that all?"

"About," said Gud—"but as I left that world, I took hold of its axis and gave it another shake."

"Did you know," said Fidu, "that the Copycat had been visiting?"

"What makes you think so?"

"Because there are five little copy kittens."

After which they journeyed on until they came to a wall. In this wall were two doors. Before the wall stood a great multitude and they stared at the two doors with fixed glassy eyes.

Gud turned and spoke to the multitude and said: "Why stare ye at the doors in the wall and durst not enter?"

"Alas, Great Gud," cried the multitude, as with one voice, "we wish not to enter the doors, but would only know which door the man entered."

"That I will find out for you," said Gud, and he stepped up and examined the knobs of the doors. Then he turned and bowed to the multitude, and turned yet again, and seizing the knob of one of the doors he swung it boldly open.

And behold, there stood a man-eating tiger, contentedly licking his chops, his belly with fat lover lined.

And Gud beckoned to the tiger which came out through the door and faced the multitude, and on the tiger's face there was a faint fragrance of a smile.

And the tiger bowed to the multitude, and Gud also bowed with the tiger.

And from the eyes of the multitude the glassy stare faded, and they turned and walked away, and some spoke exultant words to the others.

"But," asked Fidu of Gud, as they again went on their journey, "how did you know which door to open—did you smell the blood?"

"No, you hundopomorphic canine fool, I looked for finger prints on the knobs of the doors."

CHAPTER XXXV

Gud, sauntering through the Market of Knowledge, came to a stall of a prophet and passed the time of day with him.

"Business is terrible," lamented the prophet.

"What is the trouble?" asked Gud sympathetically.

"Unfair competition," replied the prophet. "Those up-start scientists across the way have berated my goods and stolen my customers until I have none left save a few old ladies. Indeed, I fear we shall never again see those good old days when even young men believed there was magic in the stars."

"But," said Gud, as he glanced about, "your goods look shelf-worn."

"Shelf-worn you say? And why not? I have rare antiques here. See, here is the Golden Fleece and there is the Philosopher's Stone. That box in the corner is the Hope Chest of Venus. And there in the window is the Fountain of Youth. That puzzle beside it is the Riddle of the Universe. And this vial here contains the Evil Eye preserved in spirits of mocking wine."

"All very fine antiques," agreed Gud, "but in this age a merchant must keep up-to-date; you need new goods on your shelves."

"And new goods, I have had in time and again," declared the prophet. "But they have stolen them from me. Did I not once make good money auguring from the entrails of animals, till these scientists found that they were useful for sausage casings? And when the stars paled in popularity because the scientists turned their spy-tubes upon them, did I not sit over a wall of gas and make myself drunk with its stinking fumes, while my wife sold my insane babblings for wisdom, until those scientists stole the gas and ran it through pipes to the houses to make fuel for pots to boil? And did not I read the cracks in fools' palms, until the scientists made fingerprints to identify criminals, and then the people durst not give me their hands to read lest I be a spy in the employ of the state searching out their crimes? And did I not call messages out of the air from distant lands, until the scientists trained the lightning to bring messages and harnessed it to vehicles so that the people could go and see for themselves that the lightning had not lied?"

"Did you ever try interpreting dreams?" asked Gud.

"Bah!" said the prophet. "That was the idea with which I began business when this world was young. But they have spoiled that also and taught the people that dreams were merely neurotic emanations of a bad bellyful of beef and beans. I tell you, my friend, they have left me nothing, nothing of mystery and magic to sell the people; and here I am, a prophet, wise in all the ways of prophecy, and sitting in an empty shop full of musty bones!"

Taking leave of this disgruntled prophet, Gud strolled through the Market of Knowledge to see for himself how it was that these scientists had ruined the honorable business of prophecy. And Gud saw many wonders and much business going on. In one stall he saw a chemist with tubes and retorts brewing pretty smells to scent ill-favored women. In another he saw a doctor with a microscope studying the germs of disease and making poisons to kill them. And in another was a chemist analyzing foods to see how much fatness or leanness they contained, so that he could sell recipes that would make the waists of his customers of a girth suited to the length of their lovers' arms.

And in all the shops of the scientists, Gud discovered that young men were busy analyzing things

and dissecting and dismembering them and finding out of what they were made, so that they could prepare some recipe or medicine or knowledge and sell it and get gain. And Gud wondered what was left that his old friend, the prophet, could dissect and analyze and sell as a scientific product and so get gain.

As Gud pondered this he chanced to stroll into the shop of a psychologist whose secretary had the nose bleed so that she fainted, and Gud asked: "What is the matter with her?"

"She is unconscious," replied the psychologist, "her mind has lost its awareness."

"Is her mind dead?"

"No, no," retorted the psychologist.

"Then why does she not talk?"

"Because her mind is unconscious and she cannot use it to talk with."

"But, what is she doing with it?"

"Dreaming, most likely," replied the psychologist.

"Why do you not dissect her unconscious mind and see of what her dreams are made?"

"Get out!" cried the psychologist, "I am a married man and I do not want to know of what her dreams are made."

When Gud left the shop of the psychologist it was growing dark in the Market of Knowledge. So he waited until the lights in the houses were being extinguished and the people were falling asleep.

The next morning when Gud entered the shop of his old friend, the prophet, he carried a sack, the contents of which he dumped on the table.

"What are these things?" demanded the prophet.

"They are unconscious minds," said Gud, "and they are full of dreams. I want you to dissect them and analyze them and see how the dreams are made and what are the elements of them. Thus you shall make a science of dreams to sell to the people and get gain."

So saying, Gud left the shop and walked up the side of a grassy mountain where all the birds were singing and all the ewes were lambing and the little toadstools were pushing up great rocks with the power of the life that was in them. And Gud lay down upon the new-grown grass and fell asleep, and slept till winter came. When the snow began to fall upon the feet of Gud, he dreamed a dream.

Upon awakening, Gud wondered what the meaning of the dream might be; and thus he recalled the Market of Knowledge, and went straightway to the shop of the prophet to have his dream interpreted. As he approached the shop he saw a line of people on the sidewalk, and took his place in the line. As the line moved through the door each one handed the doorkeeper a sum of money. But Gud said he was a friend of the prophet and was permitted to enter so that he could hear the dreams being interpreted.

A man said: "I dreamed that I once misspelled a word by omitting the letter 'M.'"

"That means," answered the prophet, "that you once knew a girl whose name began with 'M.' Probably her name was Mary."

A young woman said: "I dreamed I was an old maid and yet I was going to hell."

"That means," said the prophet, "that virtue is its own reward."

"I dreamed," said a man, "that I was dead and in my grave, and that I could hear the clods dropping on my coffin."

"That means," interpreted the prophet, "that you are a pessimist, and that you have that same infernal tin roofing on your house that I have on mine—I heard it raining last night myself."

"I dreamed," a young girl related, "that I was being run over by a steam roller, and I am anxious to have the dream interpreted because I am sure it is very significant."

"No, you are mistaken," explained the prophet. "And you ought not to be reading those uncensored books on psychoanalysis, for they are very suggestive. What your dream really means is that you have something between your teeth and need a toothpick. The analysis is simple. A toothpick was formerly a goose quill—a quill is part of a feather—feathers help birds to fly—airplanes also fly and have engines—so do steam rollers, the reason steam rollers do not fly is because they roll."

Said a man: "I dreamed that the woman I married and whom I love very dearly had eloped with the janitor. Then I woke up and found that she had, and I want to know what it all means."

"It means," replied the prophet who was very strong on professional ethics, "that your dream has come true and doesn't need interpreting; ask the doorkeeper to give you your money back."

"I dreamed," related another man, "that I had been captured by cannibals; the fire was roaring;

the pot boiling; I was led forth, my head laid on the chopping block, the battle ax was lifted—and then the cannibal chief's daughter rushed forward with a joyous cry and flung herself upon my neck in place of the ax and so I was saved."

"That means," replied the prophet, "that the sex instinct is stronger than the nutritional instinct."

"I dreamed," stated another man, who was just in front of Gud, "that I was in love with my brother."

"That means nothing indecent," expounded the prophet, "because dreams are the voices of the unconscious mind which we inherited from an earlier period of our evolution. Homo-sexual dreams merely hark back to the time when we were all asexual creatures, hence they are entirely proper. By similar psychic law we whitewash dreams of incest, murder, torture, rape, arson, cannibalism, and political graft. All such dreams are perfectly respectable and may be told with pride to your wife, your mother, or your pastor, because they indicate that the unconscious mind is perfectly natural. But there is one dream that should not be told to your wife. To wit: a dream of polygamy—it is too damned natural."

Now Gud had supposed that his friend would recognize him. But the prophet was busy with some figures in a small book and he merely called, "Next." So Gud told this dream:

"I dreamed," replied Gud, "that I heard a most wonderful melody. But when I woke up I found that I was sleeping near a strawstack and was listening to the braying of a jackass."

"That means," replied the prophet, "that you are one too. Five dollars please, and what did you come in here for? When I was dealing in black magic and making prophecies by poking into the steaming entrails of virgin goats, I at least had my self-respect. And now you get out of here before I call the Centurian and have you arrested for stealing the subconscious mind of the President of our Academy of Science."

Ingratitude is sharper than a woman's tongue; and when Gud heard what the prophet said, he whipped out a ram's horn and blew a withering blast. When the ground trembled with the echo thereof, all the shops in the Market of Knowledge fell down and a great tidal wave swept in from the Sea of Trouble.

CHAPTER XXXVI

After everyone else had drowned, Gud came up for air. He lit a cigarette and blew a smoke ring and tossed it on the water to see if it would float. It did and so Gud climbed upon it and sat there cross-legged to wait for his robe to dry.

Presently he saw a man coming toward him running on the water and carrying a package under one arm and a half-finished manuscript under the other. The man came up panting and out of breath and cried: "Save me!"

"Perhaps," said Gud. "But what have you in the package?"

At this the man hurled the package at Gud and sank into the depths with bubbling groan.

Gud unwrapped the package and found that it contained three mountains. These Gud tossed upon the water where they floated equidistant on the surface of the sea. On the first mountain was a man in dire agony of soul. On the second mountain was a beautiful woman about to plunge a dagger into her heart because of her love for the man. On the third mountain was another woman no less beautiful, and she was about to cast herself into the sea because of her hate of the woman who loved the man. But Gud, who knew all things, was not interested in what would happen next; and, his robe being dry, he arose and walked leisurely away on the water and did not once look back.

Tiring of walking on the water Gud looked about for a conveyance. Just then a deep-sea fish came to the surface and winked at Gud with his glassy eye.

"I came up to see if I could find out," said the fish, "who that fellow was who came tumbling down into my depths a little while ago."

"Why do you wish to know?" asked Gud.

"Because," replied the fish, "I feel as if I had swallowed a theological discussion and it is giving me indigestion."

"Suppose you turn over and let the sun shine on your belly," suggested Gud. "Sunlight is very healing."

"Thanks, but my belly is white and I do not wish to have it sunburned—but who do you suppose is coming in yonder boat?"

When the boat came nearer Gud and the fish saw that the boat also contained a man and two women. The man was talking. "Suppose," said he, "that the boat should upset: neither of you can swim, and what would I do? For I could not save you both. I could not let my dear old mother

drown and yet how could I let my beautiful wife drown? If I had realized how I was going to worry about it, I should have insisted on going to the mountains for our vacation."

Upon hearing the man's words the two women set up a great weeping.

"I wonder," said Gud, "which one he would save!"

"Let's find out," laughed the fish; and without further ado he dived beneath the boat and upset it with a mighty stroke of his great scaly tail.

"Help!" screamed the mother.

"Help!" gurgled the young wife.

"Now I am in a devil of a fix," groaned the man, "which ever one I save, the neighbors will say I should have saved the other one." And he started off alone swimming rapidly toward the shore.

Then the fish remembered that the young wife was quite plump—even if she wasn't beautiful as her husband had said she was, so he dived deep into the sea and left Gud standing there on the water without a blessed thing to do and nothing to think about.

And now a wind came sighing over the deep blue sea, and little ripples stirred upon the surface of the water, and then the wind came sougning over the roughened sea, and larger wavelets raced and ran atop the cold, damp water. And soon the wind began to howl and tear the wild, wet sea, and mighty waves began to break and toss and splatter—and it made Gud seasick.

So he began to wonder why the waves kept going on and leaving him behind. The more he thought about it, the more it worried him; and finally it occurred to Gud that he was opposing the waves subconsciously. So he sublimated his subconscious conflict and harmonized his ego with the spirit of the waves, and when the next wave hit him he rode atop it like a cat on the ridgepole of a cabin going down the river in a June rise.

As the wave struck the shore, it began to break and make breakers. As soon as it was broke, Gud dismounted and strolled along the beach looking for flotsam and jetsam.

He didn't find any, so he picked up a jeweled casket and started to wonder with a great curiosity what it contained. Then suddenly, he tossed the jeweled casket aside without even examining the padlock, for he had remembered that he knew all things and hence could not wonder nor possess curiosity. But upon further consideration he realized that lack of wonder and curiosity on his part would kill all the suspense in his story, so he began to wonder what the wild waves were saying, and why sea shells are pink inside, and what the ink-fish was writing on the sands of time.

Gud pondered these things as he walked along the beach until he saw before him a series of shallow depressions. At first he thought they were ordinary soul tracks. Then he looked again and gave forth a low whistle of surprise and amazement and bent low to examine the footprints—and shrank back in horror, for they were stained a deep crimson.

Cautiously Gud touched his finger to the stain and examined it critically. "'Tis blood!" he cried.

Gud began to trail the stained footprints along the beach and followed them until they turned and led into the sea. At the edge of the water he paused and sighed, for his robe was now nicely dehydrated. But curiosity is a compelling instinct and wonder a powerful emotion; and so Gud followed the trail as it led down the sloping beach and on down along the bottom of the sea.

At last the trail led to a rocky cavern where phosphorescent eyes stared out of opalescent water. Here the trail came finally to an end as it entered a door in the side of a barnacle-covered hull of an ancient galley.

"And what is this place?" asked Gud of a mermaid, who was sitting on one of the ship's knees: "and what bold criminal with a blood-stained trail has entered here?"

"Can't you read?" retorted the mermaid. "The sign tells you plainly enough that this is our Deep-Sea Butcher Shop, and he who just now entered was the butcher's boy, who had been up on the shore to get some red-blooded meat. We tire dreadfully down here of having seven Fridays in a week. And now if you will quit being silly and playing at amateur detective I will sing you a song." And so she sang:

CHAPTER XXXVII

It was a soulful song he sung,
A doleful song sang he,
For in the sun her body swung
High on the gallows' tree.

The loathsome vultures swooped among
The shadows hungrily,
As though awaiting for the dung
That swayed there horribly.

Then as a distant church bell rung
Slowly, peacefully,
Out through the night a mad cry flung
Red echoes suddenly.

A mad cry, then the silence clung
O'er sky and shore and sea;
He dead below, and she that hung
High on the gallows' tree.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"Oh, listen to the mocking bird!" cried the crustacean.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the crinoid, "that is only a mock turtle."

"Oh H₂O!" snorted the good red herring, "you talk like a fish out of water."

"She has a necklace of shark's teeth," whispered the jealous water baby.

"And a pearl without a price," piped the sea lady.

"But why do mermaids have fish tales to tell?" demanded Gud.

"I don't know," answered the deep sea diver, who was looking for the treasure. "But they call 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea' prophetic fiction, but you can't shoot a rifle under water without blowing your head off."

Just then the Underdog barked at the copycat and Gud woke up and realized that all this marine stuff was just the subconscious yearning of a writer born in the short grass country to imitate Conrad, and that he, Gud, was still lying in the pasture, and that the snow had changed to rain and his feet were wet.

CHAPTER XXXIX

And old Giasticuticus
Stood on a mountain side,
His right legs shorter than his left,
And scratched his tough, thick hide.

"I live upon a bias, true,
With legs I'd like to hide,
But that arose from dwelling here
Upon the mountain side."

CHAPTER XL

And Gud came upon a paradise, its streets of hammered gold. Iridescent fountains played beneath o'er-hanging palms, and gentle breezes, wafting through the glistening latticery of ornate edifice, made music soft and low that lulled of peace and quiet and eternal joy.

Here was a paradise prepared for most exacting saints. Gud strolled its million leagues about and wondered why there was no sign of occupants. These heavenly mansions were not newly built but rather spoke of use. While all the major structures were intact, the minor furnishings gave evidence of chaos and disorder. This paradise, it seemed to Gud, had once o'erflown with life, but now was empty and abandoned.

All this puzzled Gud and worried him. He was familiar with the ruins of many a paradise that had been smashed and broken by rebellion or by war, but his mind could find no reason why a heaven so fine as this should be deserted, and yet remain in such fair state of preservation.

The most likely theory which he could conceive, was that some pestilence had raged and stripped the place of every living soul. Over this Gud cogitated. Had it been a dwelling place of mortal flesh, a pestilence would have left its tell-tale stench or whitening bones. But immortal souls—how could pestilence have slain them? His theory thus became a paradox or worse yet a dilemma, and either one is harrowing to the mind. So Gud started out again in search of facts.

After much meandering he was rewarded by finding himself looking down into a high-walled garden, most beautiful of any spot that he had yet discovered. And better still, he noted signs of life. He hastened to descend, that he might explore the garden. It was there beneath a bower that

he found a female soul most radiant. She was sitting on a gorgeous purple rock, and singing, and knitting as she sang, while all about her, tumbling on the grass in a most completely idiotic fashion, were little souls at play.

"Good morning," said Gud.

The soul stared up at him in most incredulous manner and replied; "I thought they were all dead."

With much patient questioning, Gud wrested from this soul, alone in a vast heaven—save for the little souls that played most idiotically upon the grass—a tale of a paradise gone wrong because of a theological blunder.

It was a tedious tale and she who sat knitting there upon the purple rock told it to Gud in broken fragments of narration. First she related how the place had been peopled by all the host of souls passed over from a certain muddy sphere, and who came to this heaven as the result of faith in a most liberal theology that promised universal salvation to saint alike with sinner.

And so they all in one triumphal procession came to claim the rewards and demand the fulfillment of the promises. And yet they had not tarried—none but she who told the tale and the bevy of little tumbling spirits, who were none other than the souls of idiotic babes born into their material world of long ago, deaf and blind as they were imbecile.

Gud suspected, even as the tale unfolded, that there had been some fearful blunder in the promises; and right enough he was, for the ninth promise of their creed had been, "Then ye shall know the truth."

So all the myriads of saved souls, who had cherished the promises, had come to know the truth as it had been promised them. When they arose in glittering gowns and halos bright upon that Resurrection Morn and started singing, one by one and then by twos and tens and soon by scores and thousands they remembered all that they had wished to know of all their pasts and ponderings. And to their minds, reborn to omniscience of the truth of what had been as it had really been, came also the memories of what they thought had been.

The books of hymns had fallen from their hands, and voices lost the key and shrieked in agony. Insane ravings, babblings and cursing smote the air of heaven. Chaos reigned supreme and all the hosts of heaven went raving mad and babbled as they raved.

CHAPTER XLI

I buy my clothes in high-priced shops;
My collars match my shirts;
I swing a dapper cane with ease
And ogle all the skirts.

I follow the ads in the Satevepost;
I have picked the car to buy;
I read the "Book of Etiquette,"
And "Sappho" on the sly.

A bit of my handkerchief always shows
In a pocket of my coat....
I carry a letter next to my heart
That a movie actress wrote.

I said to a lady I flirted with:
"I'm a gent!" But then she ran,
Though over her shoulder sweetly said:
"That's a third of a gentleman!"

CHAPTER XLII

And Gud came to a great Republic and sat himself down at meat in a tavern of the capital city thereof. Said the damsel who came to serve him: "Alas, there is no meat, for we have civil war, and all the meat is requisitioned for the soldiers."

When she had said that a volley of guns sounded in the street. Gud looked out of the window and saw two armies firing at each other. The one army was composed of men richly garbed, and the other of men poorly clad, and the rich men and the poor men were killing each other. Seizing the white table linen, Gud went out into the midst of the murderous armies and waved the table linen peacefully.

The General of the Rich Men and the General of the Poor Men rushed up angrily to Gud and both

demanded in aggrieved tones to know why he was peacefully interfering with the war.

"Because," said Gud, "The soldiers are eating all the meat."

"But," cried the generals, "you have stopped the war—and now what shall we do? We had tried the courts; we had tried the ballot; we had tried arbitration and all failed. So we resorted to war, which is the last resort of civilized people, and we do not wish to revert to savagery."

"I stopped the war," said Gud, "because I dislike to have the streets covered with blood—it makes them slippery, but I am sorry. Is there anything I can do to help you start it again?"

The generals shook their heads sadly, for they saw that the Poor Men and the Rich Men were fraternizing and exchanging cigarettes, and they knew that the war was over.

"I wonder," said Gud, "since I spoiled the war, if you would mind telling me what it was all about?"

"Gladly," said the generals, and they invited Gud into the tavern—and now the damsel brought meat which Gud ate, while the generals of the late war related the cause thereof.

"It so happened," they said, "that we wished to erect a shrine to the President of our Republic while he was yet alive to be worshipped therein. The rich men gave the money and the poor men held their hats to receive it.

"When the money was gathered, the committee took it to our beloved President and asked him the manner of shrine he would have. And our President said: 'All that any man is, his mother made him—therefore I ask that the shrine shall consist of a great gallery, and in this gallery shall hang the portrait of my mother.'

"So our committee called upon all the artists and they selected the two best. One artist's name was Jake Smith, and he was born naked into the world amidst dire poverty and considerable adversity, but he had become a great artist for all that and had painted the portraits of many rich and be-jeweled ladies.

"And the other artist bore the name of Glengary Du Peyster, and he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth; but in spite of that he also learned to paint, and he had searched out all the poor and wretched old women of our slums and hovels and painted of them very great pictures.

"When these artists took samples of their work to show to our President, he said: 'You may both paint my mother, and then my mother shall decide which is the best painting.'

"'Very well,' said the artists, 'will you conduct us to her home?'

"So the President took them to a little flat in K Street where lived a poor, blind widow and he said: 'Artists, meet my mother!'

"Glengary Du Peyster was over-joyed, for this was the kind of a woman he could paint best, and he wished to send immediately for his canvas and brushes.

"But it was not to be so, for the President now conducted the artists to a mansion in D Street, and here in a great hall hung with tapestry and shaded lights was a fine old lady, and the president said again: 'Artists, meet my mother!'

"And now it was Jake Smith's time to rejoice; and he glared at Glengary Du Peyster, and neither of them durst speak their thoughts.

"Then the President took them both back to his official residence and feasted them on grouse and wine, and as they sat about their cigars Jake Smith said: 'Mr. President, which is your mother?'

"'Alas,' said our great President, 'I do not know.'"

"At this both artists lost their artistic tempers and rushed into the street. As the news-makers gathered about them, they told what had happened and what the president had said, and it was published abroad in our great Republic, together with photos of the two women, each of whom the President had introduced as his mother.

"Then our citizens warmed to heated arguments and gathered themselves into two parties, the poor to themselves under the leadership of Jake Smith, for they agreed with him that our great President should have a fine and noble lady for his mother. But the rich, under the leadership of Glengary Du Peyster said: 'Surely our President was born of the poor and lowly mother, how else can we be a true republic, where all men are born free and equal?'"

"That is very interesting," said Gud as he took another forkful of meat, "but why did you not ask the women themselves?"

"We did ask them," said the leaders of the late war, "but both said they did not know. So we thought war was the only way to settle the matter. And now you have spoiled the war, which is the last resort of civilized people, and we shall surely revert to savagery."

The following day Gud was conducted with great pomp and ceremony to the Hall of Justice, where he sat down upon the judge's bench.

Said Gud to the President of the great Republic, who was there in his own person: "Bring in your

poor mother and put her on the witness stand."

The President did so, and Gud saw before him a stooped, wrinkled and blind creature who was poorly dressed but neat and clean.

"Now," said Gud in his most kindly tone, "we will dispense with the swearing and you may tell me all that happened in your own language."

"Believe me, your honor," said the poor mother, "it was no fault of mine, for I was blind and how could I tell which one was which? You see, I was a widow, because my husband died by the falling on him of a stone in the quarry when he was getting out rocks for the cellar of the house of Eben Gratz. And so when they buried him I was left all by myself, but for the babe that was coming. When it came it was a twin and they both cried just alike, so that I could not tell which one was which.

"And nobody had ever seen them until the day I heard a fine automobile driving up the road, purring like a cat fed upon cream. It stopped by my cabin and a lady with a rustly gown got out and came into the cabin. I sat waiting for her to speak to me, thinking that perhaps in her rich kindness she might have brought some clothes for my twins. I heard her go to the old cow trough where the twins were lying under the horse blanket. Then, without saying a word, she rustled out again and was gone.

"And presently the twins began to cry and I could tell now that they did not cry alike, and I knew that she had stolen one of my babies and left another in its place.

"So I raised them up as best I could. The girl she was good and dutiful and married a good man. But the boy, he was smart and did not marry anybody; and he became the President of his country just as I knew he would. While I am not saying whether he is my son or not, I can not say he isn't; and he can't, either, because he can't remember whether it was himself or his sister that was brought that day by the fine lady and exchanged for his brother. So you see, sir, just how it is."

Gud did not see, but disliked to admit it, so he asked that the rich mother of the President of the Great Republic be brought also before him.

As she came into the room he saw what a grand old lady she was, for she walked erect and proud and her manners were queenly and stately, and Gud could see how she impressed all the poor men in the courtroom with her greatness.

When the rich mother of the President began speaking in a low, melodious voice that quivered with emotion, she said:

"Your honor, there is naught I can tell save to confess that when my child was born I was so overwhelmed with maternal emotion that I became ambitious for my child. But I knew that I was rich and lived in a mansion and that riches are a handicap to any child. I recalled that it was always the boys born in log cabins and nurtured in poverty that became our great men, and presidents of our great Republic.

"So I took my darling babe with me in my car and drove out into the mountains where the soil was rocky and the people were poor, and finally I came to a very picturesque log cabin that had only three sides. I stopped the car, and took my own child and stole toward the cabin and peeped in. There sat a poor, blind, widowed mother knitting with a ball of coarse yarn.

"And over in the corner I saw a cow trough and a horse blanket and it was from there that the cry of the child came. So I stole over and raised the blanket and saw there the faces of two sweet babes. I closed my eyes and tore off the wrappings from my own child and quietly placed him in the trough; and then, seizing one of the babes in the trough, I wrapped it in the silken robes I had taken from my own child and hastened back to my car.

"The child I stole, when he learned to talk, told me that he was a boy."

"Pardon me, madame," interrupted Gud, "but what was the sex of your own child that you left in the cow trough?"

At the question the refined lady blushed painfully. "Do not insult me, sir," she said icily. Then she continued: "I raised this child of the poor blind widow and he became the best dancer of the younger set. But while I lavished on him all of a fond mother's care, deep in my heart was the love for my own child that I had so bravely committed to the care of the poor blind widow in the log cabin with only three sides.

"So I employed detectives to keep secret watch about the cabin, and when the two children were old enough to be dressed distinctively the detective reported to me that one was a boy and one was a girl.

"It was then that I realized my grievous error in exchanging my own child for one of two twins, for I could not know whether the boy or the girl was my own child. So I waited to see how they would turn out. And when the girl married a clam digger down on the river I decided to say nothing to her. But when the boy worked his way through college by delivering milk before dawn, I sent for him and confessed to him that I was either his mother or his sister's mother.

"So from that day to this he has been a dutiful son to me as well as to the poor blind widow who

may also be his mother. And when he was elected President of our Great Republic, both she and I rejoiced. All would be well, if only his love for his mother had not prompted him to wish to have her painting hung in the memorial shrine. That is all I have to confess."

CHAPTER XLIII

Who shall say that his love was not good
For the dummy of cloth and wax and wood?
I know that more curious things exist
Than the love of a dreaming ventriloquist.

He liked to perch her on his knee
Combing her black hair lovingly,
Then talk by the hour just as though
She understood and ought to know.

Her chatter merged with his and twice,
I know, he struck her ... it wasn't nice.
Repenting, he bought her costly things—
Gowns, rare necklaces and rings.

One night they found him on the floor
Stark dead ... each year I wonder more
Why, killing himself, he never wrote
Of the dagger he sank in her wooden throat.

CHAPTER XLIV

Now the fame of Gud's wisdom was broadcast about, so that important personages of other worlds came and laid their problems at the feet of Gud and begged of him solutions.

Among them were two citizens of a world that was in dire distress. And one of these citizens was a Keeper of Morals of his sphere, and the other was the Vital Statistician.

To Gud the Statistician said: "Our world is full, so that there is no more room for further population, and I have therefore ordered that the issue of birth permits be curtailed."

"And in doing so," cried the Keeper of Morals, "you have ignored the law which bade us be fruitful and multiply."

"That have I done," replied the Statistician, "because the facts have obsoleted the law. Our world is full, and what good would it do to issue more birth permits when there is no more room to be born into?"

"But you should make room," protested the Keeper of Morals, "by issuing more death permits. Surely it is not as great a sin to die as it is not to be born."

"But I insist," declared the Statistician, "that to issue more death permits than there are people ready to sicken and die would be to encourage suicide and murder. Do you countenance such unmoral ways of dying?"

"Certainly not," retorted the Keeper of Morals, "suicide and murder are crimes. We must not encourage them, but neither must we discourage births, for we are commanded to be fruitful and multiply."

"I agree with you," said Gud, addressing himself to the Keeper of Morals, "in your belief that it is wrong to discourage births, and also wrong to encourage deaths—for unrestricted birth and unpremeditated death are great moral principles and nothing must be allowed to interfere with them."

"Exactly," replied the Keeper of Morals, "yet this Statistician is interfering by producing his unwelcome facts. He tells us that our world is full and that there is room in it for not a single being more."

Gud turned to the Statistician and demanded: "Is this fact that you have produced a true fact or is it only a statistical fact?"

And the Statistician replied: "The fact is a true fact. Indeed, when we left to come here to consult you, we were obliged to make dummies and leave them in our places so that we would find room for ourselves when we returned. All this I can readily prove to you, if you will come with us and see for yourself that there is room in our world for not a single being more."

"It is not necessary for me to go out of my way," said Gud, "to see your world, but I will send for

it." And Gud called Fidu and commanded the Underdog to go and fetch the world from whence his visitors came.

So Fidu went and fetched that world, and brought it and laid it at the feet of Gud.

Gud looked upon that world and saw that the fact of its fullness was a true fact and that there was room thereon for not a single being more. So Gud turned and said to the Keeper of Morals: "The fact of the absolute fullness of your world is a true fact and also obvious and incontrovertible. What do you propose to do about it?"

"Why, nothing, Your Deity," replied the Keeper of Morals, "it is not my business to deal with facts when they interfere with morals—I merely ignore them."

"Then," asked Gud, "why quarrel you with this Statistician? Why do you not let him and his facts alone?"

"And that I should do gladly, if he would but let me and my morals alone, but he is withholding the issuing of birth permits."

So Gud addressed the Statistician and said: "Why do you not let this man and his morals alone?"

"Because," the Statistician made reply, "his morals are incompatible with my facts, which are: First, our world is absolutely full: Second, there can be no more births than deaths: Third, we must either issue more death permits or cease to issue so many birth permits. That is absolutely logic, yet this Moralist refuses to accept it."

"I certainly do," shouted the Moralist. "Away with your sinful facts and your wicked logic! The morality of our world must be preserved at all costs. We must not encourage murder nor suicide, nor dare we discourage births, for that is also murder of those who would be born, and so it is race suicide. On these moral principles I stand as on the rock of truth, and no torrents of facts or floods of logic can dislodge me."

"You will have to admit," argued Gud, addressing the Vital Statistician, "that the Moralist has the courage of his convictions. Therefore the great truth of moral principle should be regarded above the smaller truths of material facts and mental logic—and many of the inhabitants of your world, if I know mortal nature, will agree with me."

"Sad but true," agreed the Statistician. "I am only able to hold my job because I am under civil service and not subject to popular election. But you, Great Gud, appear to me to be a rational being."

"Oh, yes," confessed Gud, "I am quite rational at times; but from the nature of my position it is only right that I should uphold morality when it clashes with rationality, as I regret to say it often does. Because I must do this, I can see both sides of the case, which neither of you gentlemen can. So to me the solution is very simple, and will outrage neither morals nor reason. Murder and suicide must not be encouraged, births must not be limited, yet your world is full. Obviously, you must proceed to empty it. There is only one moral way to do that. You must have a war—preferably a righteous war. That requires a cause with two right sides. Such causes are plentiful. Any question that can be looked at from two sides, either of which, when looked at rightly is the right side, will serve as the cause for a righteous war. This dispute that you gentlemen bring me will do nicely. Let the moralists fight for their moral principles and the rationalists fight for their facts."

"But," interrupted the Statistician, "my side would have very few adherents; men do not fight to defend facts. We would be overwhelmed by superior numbers and annihilated."

"Certainly," said Gud, "what more could you expect if you espouse an unpopular cause?"

"But why stand here babbling? See, your valorous enemy has already returned to his followers and is calling them to arms. Why do you not hasten to join your colors?"

"Thanks," replied the Statistician, "but I left a dummy in my place and I am going to stay right here and count the stars."

CHAPTER XLV

Passing a heap of fossil platitudes Gud came to an oasis in a Desert of Righteousness and saw nineteen pretty murderers hanging in a row. There also he saw the couple who were parted at the altar, a woman who had lost her intuition, and a herd of ambitious animals who believed in the transmigration of souls.

Gud entered the caravansary of the place and bargained with the keeper thereof to make a supper with meat and wine—after which there should be dancing.

To the supper, Gud bade a Skeptic, a Cynic, a Critic and a Cryptic. And Gud and his guests made merry.

Gud blew four halos of phosphorescent smoke and gave one to each of his guests. Whereupon

they were flattered and waxed loquacious, and the Cynic said to Gud: "If you had not insisted on following that Impossible Curve, but had come here by the straight way, how much sooner you would have joined us."

"True," agreed the Critic, "but the straight and narrow way would have seemed much further, for it lies wholly in the Desert of Righteousness."

"But most of all I hate to see," remarked the Cynic, "is a female cat sitting on a gravestone in the moonlight, after I carefully killed her the day before."

"Quite true," replied the Cryptic, with a weary shrug.

CHAPTER XLVI

Then the Skeptic related to Gud some of the gossip of the place. "We have here," said he, "a powerful sheik who rules over this oasis in the Desert of Righteousness. The sheik being old, had twenty young wives; and each of these wives had a lover. Came a time when the old sheik went on a journey but returned a day before he was expected. Finding only one of his wives in the harem, he called the masons and walled up the windows and doors of the place, and that is why the nineteen pretty murderers are hanging in a row."

"But," said Gud, "the story seems incomplete."

"Not at all," replied the Skeptic, "it is only that you do not understand our laws and customs. These things are relative, you know...."

"If you will listen well," spoke up the Cryptic, "I will expound relativity to you. Now, if a man should buy a lot on time and the lot had but two dimensions, then if time should be destroyed, could the real estate agent justly demand payment for the lot?"

"Why, certainly," answered Gud. "Is not the Impossible Curve in the Nth dimension?"

"But I have not told you yet," interrupted the Skeptic, "what the old sheik did. You see, he felt so remorseful that he endowed a School of Theological Mathematics, and each year he grants a doctor's dilemma to the young man who can most nearly solve the problem of the trinity."

"What is the solution?" asked Gud.

"We do not know," replied the Skeptic, "for as yet no man has ever solved it."

"But I was explaining relativity to our host," cried the Cryptic, "and you interrupt me with this trifling gossip. Now, if a mass of silence traveling at the speed of light, should be deflected by a caricature of a phantom magnetic force, would the energy engendered—"

But at that moment the keeper of the caravansary appeared in the doorway and looked upon Gud questioningly. Gud nodded to him approvingly, whereupon five beautiful damsels entered dancing to flats and sharps, and flute and cymbal.

So the discussion of relativity was forgotten, as all things of the intellect are forgotten, when damsels young and beautiful dance to lute and timbrel.

After there had been much joyous dancing, the Cynic plucked at Gud's sleeve and asked:

"Who be these beautiful damsels, who dance so divinely, and whence came they?"

And Gud made answer and said: "These damsels be the daughters of the Pope, but I know not whence they came."

CHAPTER XLVII

And it came to pass that as Gud was making a long journey to a certain place he neared a wayside inn, and being weary he entered and found six characters drinking tea.

"Good evening," spoke Gud. "Why are you drinking tea?"

"We are drinking tea," replied the Clerical Collar, "so that we can engage in theological disputation without cutting one another's throats."

"What is the dispute about?" asked Gud.

The Black Bathrobe made answer and said: "It concerns our belief in Gud."

"May I join you?" inquired Gud.

"Delighted!" cried the Vest with the Silver Horseshoes, not recognizing the caller.

Gud sat down and the Clerical Collar poured him a cup of hot water, but neglected to pass him

the tea ball. Not wishing to attract attention to the oversight, which he realized was due to the host's being absorbed in spiritual matters, Gud was about to convert the water into tea by a miracle. Upon second thought he refrained, lest the display of miraculous power would reveal his incognito. Still Gud did not like the idea of drinking water straight; so instead of performing a miracle he reached over and helped himself to the tea ball—noting, as he did so, how much simpler it is to get results by natural laws than by unnecessary miracles.

The venerable Beard being less wrought up over the disputation, explained the nature of the meeting to the newcomer. Said he: "We are all worshipers and ministers of the one true Gud, having been born and baptised in the faith and duly ordained in its ministry. But of late certain heresies have arisen among us, and we are gathered here to ferret out the heretic and bring him to the bar of ecclesiastical justice. Sad to confess, I find that I alone have remained staunch in our faith, which is founded on the rock of unchanging truth."

"Liar," cried out the Spectacles of the Student, "we modernists are also staunch in the faith; it is merely the conceit of fundamentalist bigotry to argue that truth cannot be changed. Indeed, it must be changed or intelligent people will cease to believe it."

"You are more accurate than expedient," admonished the Vest with the Silver Horseshoes. "The faith of the people is waning fast, but it will never be restored by your muddled mixtures of science and psychology. What is needed is a great faith-arousing event, such as the trial and burning of a heretic, and for that purpose are we assembled here."

"Sad, but true," agreed the Threadbare Coat. "Any burning at the stake would tend to revive faith, but the revival would be much stronger if the burning flesh savored of heresy."

"What?" shrieked the horrified Spectacles of the Student. "Is it necessary to burn human flesh in this modern age? Would it not do quite as well to set fire to a cage of black cats? Surely the burning of cats would create a stench that would smell to high heaven."

"Tut, tut," sniffed the Clerical Collar.

Then the Venerable Beard spoke up nobly. "The red hand of heresy grapples white faith by the throat. What is the use of all our theological blue laws if the black heart of atheism continues to control our yellow press?"

"Softly, softly, Brother," the Threadbare Coat made answer; "It is not charitable, neither is it wise, to bite the hand that feeds the press."

"Do not worry," replied the Vest with the Silver Horseshoes. "I never let my theological hand know what my secular hand doeth. Let us proceed to business. The burning of any heretic is good for a headline."

The Spectacles of the Student now arose in righteous indignation, pointed a finger of contempt at the Vest with the Silver Horseshoes and cried: "Do not tell me that you merely wish to burn a heretic to make news for your paper. I know why you are a fundamentalist. You have a monopoly on the oil!"

"Young man, you betray your ignorance," spake the Clerical Collar. "The church has its own oil reserves."

"But we should save the oil to pour on troubled waters," suggested the Threadbare Coat; "and that we could do if we had an obese heretic who would burn in his own fat."

The Vest with the Silver Horseshoes became self-conscious. "There is no necessity of my being the martyr," he said. "I am already known to the masses. Moreover a heretic, to burn brilliantly, must have ideas, not mere fat."

A look of great fear now came into the Spectacles of the Student, who cried out: "You all assume because you see a light in my attic that I am burning the midnight candle at both ends in search of ideas; but I tell you it is the light of faith that shines from my window."

"What use is a false faith?" retorted the Clerical Collar. "I know that my faith alone is the true faith, because my mother told me it was so. But I will reveal the heretic to you." And he pointed an accusing finger at the Venerable Beard.

"If you have no respect for my grey hairs," wailed the accused, "I will pluck them out." And he seized his beard and tore it from his face.

"Do not think, brother," replied the Clerical Collar, "that by doing penance with self-torture, you can avoid the stake. Moreover you should feel honored at my charge, for I do not accuse you of any petty heresy, such as doubting that the eclipse of our moon is for the purpose of hiding the angels at their baths. I accuse you of the *Heresis Maximus*, that you doubt the virgin father!"

"Why, how absurd!" remarked Gud naively. "There never was one to doubt."

No sooner were these words out of the mouth of Gud than the six characters in search of a heretic pounced in frenzied joy upon him. Binding him with chains of iron and fetters of brass, they dragged him forth to the heretical pyre, to which the Vest of the Silver Horseshoes applied the torch, while the presses hummed with the news of the burning.

But as the flames licked hot about the feet of Gud, he slipped his chains; and blazing with

ethereal fire that dulled the smoke of intolerance and the smudge of inquisition, Gud, the martyr, arose in a flame of splendor. And using the stars as stepping stones, he strode across the heavens to the place where he was going—for he had an assignation there.

CHAPTER XLVIII

She came toward Gud with an arch smile. In fact, her smile was very arch. Her brows were also arched. But her nose was as straight as the road to Hell and her lashes were curved as the newborn moon. They were also long and drooping. Her eyes were opalescent, her complexion translucent, her forehead high, and her cheekbones low. She had a cupid's bow mouth and her lips were very ruby. Her teeth were like genuine pearls and her chin was dimpled and single.

When she spoke to Gud her voice was as musical as the song the silkworms sing.

And when Gud spoke to her, she sighed in ecstasy of lavender-scented flattery, and her eyelids drooped like languid draperies across a seacoal fire.

"I have brought my book," she murmured as she reached into her corsage and drew forth a manuscript bound with skins of humming birds. "May I read it to you? Its title is 'Art and Wealth and Anatomy Sesame.'"

She opened the book at random—which is the proper way to open any non-fiction book written by a woman—and her voice warbled as she read:

"The lambent enoughness of atomless ultraness vegetateth for eons in ultramarine slime and thence crawleth hence, attaining esoteric power by the sublimation of the egomania into splenetic colorature which by chemic vortices electrifying plasmic erotifcanaticism ascends to organic indefinability and multitudinous indefinity, and soareth toward the inordinate fulfillment of superconscious metapsychoses."

She of the dimpled and single chin, laid aside her manuscript and stared reproachfully at Gud. "Do you comprehend it?" she beseeched.

"Why, certainly. But what does it mean?" said Gud, who was always willing to increase his knowledge if he could do so without interfering with his previous beliefs.

"It is a new theory," replied the ruby lips, "of the conquest of anatomy. This theory is based on the hypotheses that the organ called the brain is nothing but an adventitious, radio-active tumor that yields two secretions. The external secretion is what is called the mind and the internal secretion is known as the soul. From this hypothesis there follows the tetravalent truth:

"All life is anatomy.

"All anatomy is matter.

"All matter is nothing.

"Therefore nothing matters."

"Then why bother about it?" asked Gud.

But she did not answer, for her drooping eyes had again sought the open book that lay on her dimpled knees, and her voice whiplashed and yodeled as she read.

"The immortal soul is destroyed by the psychic spirit.

"The psychic spirit is destroyed by the mental psyche.

"The mental psyche is destroyed by the rational mind.

"The rational mind is destroyed by the common sense.

"The common sense is destroyed by the emotion.

"The emotion is destroyed by the instinct.

"The instinct is destroyed by the physiology.

"The physiology is destroyed by the anatomy.... How do you like my eyes?"

"Very," said Gud, "for your pupils shine as unborn souls of May-green stars floating in the nebulous nonentity."

After which her butler came to say that Messrs. Confucius and Buddha were calling.

CHAPTER XLIX

We have built our own skyscrapers
Out of slender metal girders,
We have flung our shining cities,
Reaped our harvests from the sod....
With our paths of empire crimson
From a list of countless murders,
We go shrieking down the darkness,
Bent on worshipping a god.

CHAPTER L

Gud came around a bend in the Impossible Curve and lo, the Curve broadened into a great highway which was very smooth. The way had been rough before, so Gud now rejoiced and struck his staff gleefully on the pavement, as he walked on in the middle of the great highway. But ere he had progressed far, there came from behind him an agonizing shriek, as of a man being flayed alive because he loved his neighbor's wife.

The agonizing shriek startled Gud, so that he leaped sideways rather spryly—considering that he was not slender. Just as he leaped, a chariot rushed by with the speed of light, which is the speed limit. Had Gud been less spry he would have ended fatally, the chariot would not have stopped, and Gud would have never known what it was. But having been spry, Gud had leaped almost out of the way; only his staff had been knocked from his hand and his elbow broken. Observing the injury done to the pedestrian, the demon who drove the chariot caused its speed to abate, and presently it wheeled about and came roaring back to where Gud stood, and stopped.

The demon alighted and said: "Seems we had a little accident."

"Nay, it feels, I know not seems," returned Gud, rubbing his elbow.

"Pedigreed?" asked the demon.

"No, fractured," said Gud.

"Dead, I take it," remarked the demon, and he kicked something that lay limp and prone on the highway.

Then Gud observed that the Underdog was dead.

"How much?" asked the demon. And before Gud could speak, the demon pulled out a roll of the medium of exchange and unrolled it and handed Gud a portion of the medium.

As Gud had no pockets he put the medium under his girdle and remarked: "If my staff had not been broken, I could revive him."

"A pulmotor would be more likely," said the demon; and he went to the chariot, brought back an instrument and applied last aid to the Underdog, who presently wagged his tail feebly, opened his eyes and whined piteously.

Gud realized that the demon had paid him because the Underdog had been dead; and now that Fidu was no longer dead, Gud felt constrained to return that which the demon had given him.

Thereupon the demon looked more gracious and said: "Where are you going?"

"We were walking for pleasure," answered Gud.

At this foolish reply the demon looked confounded. "Well I don't see any pleasure in walking," he remarked. "Better jump in—I'll take you as far as Progress. It is just beyond Advertising."

So Gud assumed alacrity, and jumped into the chariot; and the demon threw the Underdog, which was still whining piteously, into the rear of the chariot, and then sat himself beside Gud.

The demon manipulated many mechanisms skilfully; and the chariot began to roar mightily and then to purr contentedly, as the great highway slipped beneath it.

Gud was pleased with the demon's chariot and sat back on the cushions and sighed enviously.

Suddenly the chariot swerved and shrieked its agonizing shriek, and Gud saw a lesser chariot, like unto the demon's chariot but smaller and meaner looking. And the demon smiled scornfully, and said: "That was a Lord."

And they had not gone far after they passed the Lord when they came to a small place with a great sign: "SPEED LIMIT THE SPEED OF SOUND."

And the demon swore balefully, and the powerful chariot heaved and groaned distressingly. Gud looked out upon the way and saw that it was rough like a washlady's board, and there were many sharp turns and detours; and at one place there was a sign: "THIS ROAD TO HIGHWATER." Presently there was another sign: "THIS ROAD TO BREAKFAST."

Gud asked: "What place is this?"

Just as he had spoken the chariot reversed its direction so that Gud could see behind it, and there was a sign which read: "FREE AIR AND GAS TO BURN, BUT DON'T ASK FOR WATER."

Gud was about to ask the meaning of all these strange signs and wonders when the chariot turned a somersault, and Gud saw another sign being written on the sky. This was mightier than all, and as Gud read it the Lord passed beneath them; for the reading of the sign was: "THIS IS HELL."

When they had passed through Hell the road became smooth again, and the demon smiled and began to burn up the road; and Gud looked into a small mirror and could see Hell diminishing according to the law of perspective. But of a sudden Hell ceased to be visible, for the demon was angry; and he was exceeding the speed limit, which was the speed of light, and that is why the light of Hell could no longer reach them.

As there was nothing now to be seen in the rear, Gud looked ahead and found that he could see more than twice as fast as usual, for they were meeting the light that came from that direction at more than its own speed. So Gud saw the tail light of the Lord that had passed them in Hell. The demon turned on the warning glare to apprise the little Lord of his approach, but this action was without avail since they were exceeding the speed of light and the glare could not shine fast enough to warn the Lord; and so the Lord was unwarned. Then the demon swore unjustly and called the Lord "A way-swine"; but it availed nothing and the Lord was run down and run over, and left as an empty tin that had been stepped on by a dinosaur with an iron heel.

After they had passed through Advertising and through Alltalk, which was a suburb of Advertising, they came to Progress and the demon slowed down and began to show Gud the town.

The Underdog had recovered from his injuries and crawled out and stood on the running board with his fore feet on the front defender and barked joyfully, for Progress was a lively enough town and largely made up of show windows and chariot factories.

When the demon came to the end of his journey Gud alighted and said: "Much obliged."

The demon said: "Not at all."

The Underdog jumped from the chariot and ran gleefully up to one who was standing in front of a factory and playing with an enormous horse-power.

Gud was jealous when he saw how much the Underdog seemed to love the stranger and how much the stranger seemed to love the Underdog, and Gud asked the demon who the stranger was. And the demon said: "Why, that is Lord, who makes the little Lord chariots. If you won't tell him I ran over one, I'll introduce you."

So Gud met Lord, and Lord said: "I think I make a pretty good chariot."

"Yes," said Gud, "It can pass any chariot in Hell."

After that Lord excused himself and went into his office to dictate an article on the "Importance of Eating Pork"; and Gud was left at the mercy of Lord's sales force.

So Gud went across the street and entered the palatial office of a great chariot maker and once inside he was obliged to pledge his honor and his name. And when Gud came out of that place he was the proud possessor of a great chariot with a mild roar.

They started off and went back toward Hell, for they were headed that way and could not turn around. They passed through Hell and went on from Hell to Breakfast, and the chariot roared beautifully.

Then the price of faith, which the great chariot burned, began to increase at each filling station, and the hope, which smoothed its running, became full of grit, and the charity on which it rolled began to blow up, and the way became rough and the curves became impossible, even for a great chariot; and Gud began to wish for a Lord.

But there was no Lord in sight. Gud tinkered with the great chariot with patience, and energized the battery with nerve, but all was of no avail.

So when a Blackamoor came along on a gray mule, Gud made a bargain and exchanged the great chariot for the mule. But Gud recalling the story about the old man and his son and the jackass, Gud threw his animal into the river at once, to avoid criticism.

Gud now whistled to the Underdog, and the Underdog harkened to the whistle and followed after Gud, for they were both meek in the humility of wisdom.

CHAPTER LI

They had not gone far until Gud was arrested. His thumb print was taken and he was cast into jail. As he did not know how to change his thumb print, he wished to know why he had been arrested, in order to judge whether it would be honorable to escape. So he inquired of one of his

fellow prisoners. And the prisoner listened to Gud's story and made answer: "You have been arrested because you drove a high-powered chariot without being possessed of a large amount of money. The catalog of crime which such a combination engenders is tedious and fulsome."

"But what is the remedy?" asked Gud, for he did not like to remain a criminal.

"Money," replied the prisoner, "you should make money. If we could get out of this place I would show you how, for I am by trade a money-maker."

"Very well," said Gud, and he commanded the walls of the jail to fall down, and he and the money-maker walked out over the fallen walls and proceeded to the money-maker's den.

But Gud soon tired of the tedious process of copper engraving; and going out for a stroll about the town he came upon the booth of a fortune-teller.

"I wish you would tell me a fortune," said Gud, "for I am badly in need of one."

"But for that I charge money," said the fortune-teller.

"Why?" asked Gud.

"Because, I know what is going to happen."

"So do I," said Gud.

"Liar!" cried the fortune-teller. "If you knew what was going to happen, and had any insight whatsoever into future events, you would not be standing idly here, for you would be in the Street."

"Thanks for the suggestion," replied Gud, "I will go there immediately."

When Gud reached the Street he found many bulls there and bears and lambs, and men who were busy watering their stock. And Gud found there also a private secretary who was watching the tape. And Gud said: "Why do you watch the tape with eager eyes?"

And she answered and said to Gud: "Because I wish to know what figures are on the tape as quickly as any one else."

"And how would you like to know more quickly?"

"Indeed," she cried, "if one could, he would soon own the earth."

"It is easy," said Gud. "All you have to do is to read these figures before they appear instead of afterwards."

"Can you do that?"

"Why certainly! It is easy to read the future, if you know how."

And so Gud showed her how to read the future, and she showed Gud how to cash in on the readings, and presently they owned the earth.

CHAPTER LII

He loads the dice, scratches the cards,
Hoists us up by our own petards;
And when low music thrills the banquet halls,
His shadow like a silent spectre falls
In grotesque imagery upon the walls.

A mad child left an empire's might
The kingdom of the day and night
And as he babbles on the palace floor,
He listens to the silver thunder roar
Like troubled seas upon some distant shore.

With froth upon a sensual lip,
He sinks in play some crowded ship.
Then lightly in an idle mood of mirth
As though it were a trinket of no worth
Down starry skies he flings some living earth.

Life's roulette table stops for him
To any cackling vagrant whim.
His own police are venal, full of doubt;
Indeed the cheapest little racetrack tout
Knows more what sportsmanship is all about.

His gold face and his jet black hair

The jewels his madness makes him wear.
His laws, a madman's irony
The moon his mask above the sea
Some morning he will turn his vacant eyes
And see the sun with jealous new surprise
And on the following day it will not rise.

CHAPTER LIII

And when the last sound had gone howling by and tumbled into the bottomless pit of silence, Gud held his breath, and even Fidu ceased to breathe and listened ... and listened for the echo that was still ... and it was as quiet as the missing link, as silent as a broken heart, as mute as a withered violet in a virgin's dream.

CHAPTER LIV

Gud had traveled many infinite distances since he had seen any sign of matter or mind or spirits. In this region things were not merely dead! they were absolutely non-existent, and Gud became a trifle lonesome.

He was in his ghostly incognito, for he always traveled lightly in vacuous and doubtful regions. To sojourn as an immaterial spirit among material beings gives one a sense of power, for what could be more glorious than to see without eyes, hear without ears, ring bells without hands or kick over tables without feet? But it is a very dull business to journey along as a spirit in absolute nothingness.

Indeed it is a business as dull as a Latin conjugation. So Gud now realized that he was sensing something with his seventh sense, which was more acute than the canine instinct of the Underdog and almost as unerring as a woman's intuition.

This seventh sense told Gud that he had entered a spiritual realm, and he became aware of a black ghost of a white cat with one ghoulish unseeing eye, sitting on the shadow of a back fence echoing a diabolical howl.

Gud could not hear the ghost cat howl, but he knew that it was howling because with his seventh sense he felt the vibration of its howl quivering through the impalpable and ghostly ether.

The howl of the ghost cat petrified Gud's gall, for he sensed that the creature had nine notches on its tail; hence would never live again, and had nothing to howl about.

So Gud picked up a stone and threw it at the ghost cat, but he aimed high, and the stone, passing through a bush of credulity, killed two birds of promise; whereupon the ghost cat ceased to howl.

As Gud went on he became aware of ghosts strolling about among the ruins of nothing.

And Gud said to the ghosts: "Where is your king?"

And the ghosts replied to Gud: "We have no king."

"Then," said Gud, "I would be told of your form of government."

But the ghosts answered: "Our government has no form because we have no government."

"Then," said Gud, "I would meet your doctors or lawyers or great and famous ghosts."

And they made answer that they had none.

"Then," said Gud, "I would be told of your religion and learn of your faith."

Said the ghosts: "We have no religion and no faith, for we are too immaterial to sin; and are therefore without fear of death, and thus need no religion and no faith."

"Then," said Gud, "this is a dull place. What do you call it?"

Replied the ghosts, who had a very long time to live: "We have no name for the place, but we are very happy here."

When Gud learned that this place was nameless, he whistled for his Underdog and they went on and passed through an impalpable fog of etheric vibrations, and over a great gulf of sublimated emptiness, and through a dark forest of neglected memories, and across a sandless desert swept by a breathless wind.

CHAPTER LV

The graveyard of the gods is silent under a heavy sky,
Where all the gods who never lived are buried when they die.

Pale angels kneel beside the graves, stretching row on row,
And madmen carrying mouldy flowers quickly come and go.

A withered lily in her hand Saint Any-One-At-All,
With pale, thin fingers opens the gate in an ivied wall.

Her face an open wound of wonder, bleeding with defeat,
And as she walks, the shining snow crunches under her feet.

The ghosts of trees reach icy arms up to a starless sky,
Mourning the gods who never were that rest here when they die.

Pale angels kneel beside the graves stretching row on row,
And madmen carrying mouldy flowers quickly come and go.

CHAPTER LVI

Having passed through the graveyard of the gods, Gud came to a vast beyond where there really was nothing, when the gods are dead there can be nothing. And so Gud journeyed on, for he would not stop at nothing, and he came to a church, because it was Saturday night.

Crouched by the steps of the church was a poor old skeptic begging alms of faith.

"Why do you beg?" asked Gud.

"Because I have need of faith," said the skeptic.

"If I should give you a great amount of faith, would you use it to destroy your doubts, or would you go out and proclaim it to others, and thus give it all away?"

"Try me," said the skeptic.

"Then believe that I am Gud."

"I will, if you can prove it to me!"

"What proof shall I offer you?" asked Gud. For while he knew that proof was not necessary to faith, yet he was willing to humor the poor old skeptic because he was so weighted down with his burden of doubts.

"If you be Gud," said the skeptic, "then you should know all things."

"And that I do."

"Very well," said the skeptic, "how mad is a wet hen?"

Whereupon Gud called down fire from the heaven of that place and smote the blasphemer so that he died.

But when Gud called down the fire that smote the skeptic, alas, he destroyed the church house also. The next morning when the sun arose, behold the spot where the church had been was a greensward of two-bladed grass. But presently worshippers came and seated themselves upon the grass and lifted up their eyes in prayer.

Gud did not wait to see who answered their prayers, for he had gone on into a realm where the nights are as cold as greed, and where little stars are born—and comets, like tadpoles, lose their tails, and burst into shining suns.

And yet again Gud passed on beyond all stars and on and on until he reached the limits of thoughts, beyond which were only dim traces of imagination. And passing still on and ever on he came to a place where only the hope of faith abides, and lo, he was confronted here with a great wall of light.

And Gud knew—for he still knew all things—that this wall of light was the great and mighty wall that flings its shining reaches round about the City of the Forgotten Ghosts. These ghosts feared that dark memories, which were their only enemies, might find them out, so they had builded this mighty wall of light about their ghostly city.

But those who know all things need stop at nothing, and Gud, first casting off all memories that clung about him, kneeled down beside the wall of light and rubbed a little ring of pale intrusion. And behold a door of darkness opened in the wall of light. Gud arose and passed through the door of darkness in the wall of light. When he had passed through, the door of darkness closed behind him, and, having revoked all memories, Gud could not recall that it had been.

As Gud now journeyed through the outer environs of the City of the Forgotten Ghosts, he rejoiced to become aware that these were holy ghosts—for behold the way was lined with the shadows of ten thousand crosses whereon hung ten thousand crucified ghosts.

Seeing that he was among friends, Gud decided to tarry yet a little while.

He was very much interested to learn that the inhabitants of this realm were not merely the spiritual leftovers of deceased material beings, but were true ghosts who had always been ghosts. This fact puzzled Gud, but there was no doubt about its authenticity, for the ghosts had a revelation that testified to their purely ghostly origin.

All the ghosts accepted this revelation of their origin, but there were differences of opinion as to their destination. Having an honest difference of opinion about an unknowable matter, there was, of course, ample justification for the ten thousand crucified ghosts that hung on the shadows of crosses.

Among these ghosts, who were so positive about their origin and so uncertain about their destiny, there were two sects: the Spiritualists and the Materialists. The Spiritualists, knowing that they had always been spirits, argued that they would always remain spirits. But the Materialists decried this pessimistic faith and held forth a great hope that if they adhered to all the platitudes they would have the pleasure of shuffling off the immortal coil and being reborn as material beings.

It was the tenets of this sect that Gud espoused, for he admired the faith of these mere ghosts who had never sensed matter, and yet had lifted up their eyes in the hope of material life.

With his experience in such affairs Gud readily assumed the role of a prophet of this Materialistic faith. But it is not sufficient merely to call the righteous to repentance, and Gud indulged his imagination to think of some way to impress the skeptical Spiritualists with the truth of the Materialist faith.

It was Fidu who gave Gud the idea for the great miracle, for Fidu had remained close to his master, both of course, in their spiritual beings.

The ghosts were not aware that Fidu was among them, and not being familiar with dogs they walked right through him, ignoring the poor beast quite utterly, which was very humiliating to Fidu.

So Gud, in sympathy with the Underdog's humiliation, conceived of a great idea, and he called the leaders of the Materialist sect together and asked: "Have any of you ever sensed a material being?"

"No!" answered they, "we have never sensed matter, which is why we have faith in its existence."

"True," said Gud, "enough for the faithful, but these infidels, some of whom you neglected to crucify, have not faith without works. Let us therefore create a material being wherewith to confound them."

"And of what will you create a material being?"

"I usually create things out of nothing," answered Gud.

"But Master," cried the Ghosts, "we have very little of nothing. How much would it take?"

"It will suffice," said Gud, and he whistled to Fidu and straightway materialized him.

A real live dog weighing about twenty-seven pounds, running around through the ghosts, made quite a sensation; and it greatly delighted those of the Materialist faith and converted most of the Spiritualists.

Gud thought for a time he had converted all the infidels and skeptics in the realm to the true faith, but he later found that there was one little band upon whom the materialization of Fidu had made no impression. This sect denied the spiritual existence that they were living, and taught that there was no such a thing as the spirit, but that all was matter.

Gud could not understand why this sect should call themselves Materio-Spiritists, since they were certainly not Spiritualists, as they denied the existence of spirit—and yet they were not Materialists, for they did not believe in matter as matter, but in spirit as matter.

These Materio-Spiritists were not impressed by the miracle Gud had wrought in the interest of the orthodox Materialist faith. They believed that all was matter, yet they did not recognize matter when they met it in the road. They denied the matter-of-fact Fidu, and said he was only an illusion of the non-existent spiritual mind and hence could have no existence, material or immaterial.

Even when Gud took the material dog to their place of worship and had him bark at the service, they still argued that the material Fidu was non-existent.

Gud was a little crest-fallen at his inability to convert the Materio-Spiritists, and yet the more he argued with them, the more doubtful he became of his own convictions. In fact, he became so confounded that he forgot what his convictions were, and was not sure whether he was a ghost or not, or whether the material dog was real or imaginary.

Finally, to settle his doubts, Gud decided to kill all the ghosts and see whether they would be reborn as material beings or disappear altogether. When he proclaimed his intention there was much rejoicing in the ranks of the Materialists, who thus saw the fulfillment of their faith.

As the day of the spiritual death approached there was a great revival of faith, and much repentance and divers preparation to assume the material role.

Gud was a little puzzled as to how to kill so many ghosts at once. Earthquakes and floods and all that sort of thing were clearly inadequate, but he recalled that the crowing of a cock was very destructive to ghostly life. So he sent Fidu back to the last material realm they had passed, to retrieve a cock which could crow most lustily.

The cock arrived amid a vast darkness, and Gud prepared a great light, at the sight of which the cock crew mightily—and every ghost died of fright.

As the cock was pedigreed, Gud sent Fidu back to restore it to its owner, while he sat himself down to wait for the appearance of the material beings.

None appeared.

After a while Gud grew tired of waiting.

The place was very still and very dark for the wall of light was dark on the inside. In spite of his own ghostly being Gud found that he was getting nervous. He had creepy sensations up and down his spine—

This is a flunk. Ghosts of the ghosts are too much for my imagination. It was Hersey's idea anyway. When you kill a ghost, of course you would have a ghost of a ghost to take its place, and one ought to be able to imagine it. But if you kill that, then you should have the ghost of a ghost of a ghost, and that is straining the imagination to its cracking point. And if you kill that then you should have the ghost of a ghost of a ghost of a ghost—et cetera, ad infinitum, to the Nth expansion—me for Einstein and his warped light.

CHAPTER LVII

As Gud strolled along trying to forget the past he stumbled over the soul of an old blind ghost who was sitting on a petrified memory and sentimentalizing over her woes.

"Pardon me," said Gud, "but why are you so blind that I could not see you?"

"I am blind," replied the old soul, "because I strained my eyes out looking at the moving pictures, and now I am very miserable because I can not see them."

"Oh, if that is all," answered Gud, "I will restore your sight. It will cost you nothing but a little praise and gratitude."

When the old soul received her sight she looked around the barren astral landscape and was sorely disappointed, for there were no moving pictures there; and she complained bitterly in her disappointment.

"I could make a motion picture for you if you would tell me how," offered Gud.

"That I will do gladly," cried the old soul, "but first you must have an author to write the scenario."

"That is easy," replied Gud. "There—I have created one. Speak to her, author, for the poor old soul was blind."

"So I see," answered the author, as he extracted a cigarette. "And she wants a story, I take it; but she has been blind and is probably illiterate, and can not read, and I never tell my stories as poets recite their verses—it is bad taste, you know."

"I will restore her literacy," offered Gud, who was in a miraculous mood, "and then she can read."

"It would be doing me no good," sighed the old soul, "for even if I could read the directions on patent medicine bottles because they are printed in so many languages, yet I could never read fiction stories on account of the quotation marks, and it's the pictures I want anyway."

"Oh, pictures," said the author, as he ignited his cigarette, "now that is a different matter; I create stories for the love of art, but moving pictures can not be created for the love of art, for there is no art in them to love."

"Since we are both creators," said Gud, "I don't like to dictate to you, so suppose we compromise. You write a poem for art's sake—as there is no other excuse for writing one—but put it in the form of a scenario."

"Now that is what I call clever!" exclaimed the author, and he whipped out his Corona and wrote the scenario forthwith.

What it was you shall never know, for movie scenarios could never get by heavenly censors

without mutilation, and when the censors had done with this one there remained not even the mutilation. However, the author read it to the old soul.

"That is a fine scenario," cried she to Gud, "but you will have to make a director to make the picture out of the scenario."

So Gud made a director. He had never made one before but they are easily made, as they can be made out of most anything.

"Well, I see we have the scenario," remarked the director, when Gud had finished making him, "but it hasn't the proper ending."

"I am sorry," said the author, "but I didn't write a proper ending as I knew you would use your own anyway."

"I know his ending," cried the ugly old soul, "and it is very beautiful—it's the one where—"

"Shut up, you old fool," bawled the director, "don't you know you will spoil the suspense by telling the audience how it is going to end?"

"But in this case we have a real plot," said the author, "and it ought not to be mutilated—"

"Shut up, you conceited pup," howled the director, "and here, take your scenario and have it printed if you like. I don't need it anyway."

And so the author took the scenario and folded it and put it in his inside pocket and walked away, inhaling angrily on his last cigarette.

"Now," spoke the director, "as that infernal ass is gone we can get busy."

"What can I do?" asked Gud.

"Make the cast for me, pick out the sets and rig the props. But first I must have six beautiful girls. It is going to be an all-star cast and I want each of them as beautiful as she can be, yet distinctive, so the audience can tell which is which."

So Gud made six girls, all as beautiful as they could be, and yet all as different as wives are from concubines.

"Fine," exclaimed the director, as he pawed them over affectionately.

"I love you," said the girl with the Cupid's bow mouth.

"I loved him first," spoke the girl with the sorrowful eyes.

"But I love him most," cried the girl with the angel-child curls.

"But I love him like the flower loves the dew," wailed the girl with the human form divine.

"But I love him so that I could die for him," sobbed the girl with the very tender heart.

"Then die," shrieked the old-fashioned vampire, as she plunged a dagger into the very tender heart.

All the girls brought orange blossoms and laid them on the coffin and wept much in each other's arms, and the director renounced his professional ambitions and went back to his old job as market reporter on an undertaker's weekly.

"Oh, thank you so much," spoke the ugly old soul to Gud.

"For what?" asked Gud.

"For the beautiful sentiments of the picture," she replied.

"But that wasn't a picture," corrected Gud, "that was reality."

"What are you saying?" queried the old soul, "I was blind, you know, and didn't hear very well either."

"Oh, nothing," said Gud. "I am glad you enjoyed it." For he saw that she had taken reality for romance, which is a far more beautiful illusion than taking romance for reality. So Gud went quietly on his way.

CHAPTER LVIII

And Gud overtook a thief who had stolen an ocean and loaded it into a wagon which he had hitched to a star. The thief was making a poor getaway, for the wagon was leaking badly and was dropping clues at every step.

To avoid being drowned in the drippings, Gud turned into an unexplored dimension, but before he could get his bearings he was run down by an insane comet collector, who was madly chasing a comet that was buzzing dangerously near an incandescent sun—so hot that its nearest

molecules were farther apart than the hearts of a bigamist's wives.

To avoid the net of the comet collector Gud hid himself in an ethereal cavern. There he found a spiritual paleontologist at work reconstructing extinct souls from the merest fossil fragments.

Gud picked up a tiny fragment and asked the paleontologist what manner of soul it had been.

The paleontologist scrutinized it through his confounded monocle and replied: "It is a bit of ectoplasm from the soul of a woman killed by curiosity. She was forever asking her lovers, 'How much do you love me?'"

The paleontologist now reached up to a geometrical plane and brought down another small fossil. "Observe," said he, "the marking on this other bit of petrified ectoplasm, and note how the two differ."

"Yes, I see," said Gud, "what is that one?"

"That," replied the paleontologist, "is a fragment of the aura of a woman who wished to be loved for herself alone."

"It is very interesting," agreed Gud, "but tell me why those two completed models on the nebulous shelf behind you look so argumentative."

"Ah," said the paleontologist, "they are the pride of my collection, being the reconstruction of two friendly enemies. One was the soul of a deist and the other the soul of an atheist, and they argued and argued through one eternity after another. They argued not wisely but too well, for each finally converted the other, and the deist became an atheist and the atheist became a deist. Then they started arguing all over again. But before the atheist who had become a deist could convert the deist who had become an atheist back to deism, or the deist who had become an atheist could convert the atheist who had become a deist back to atheism, the astral plane was rotated into a cosmic epizoid, resulting in a cataclysm that buried these two poor souls in an avalanche of metaphysical debris which was stratified under the radiant pressure, just as we find it here."

"It is very wonderful," said Gud, "but why do you probe into secrets of the dead past when there are so many living souls existing in poverty of hopes or a sorrow of memories?"

The paleontologist removed the confounded monocle from his eye, and wiped the lens with a bit of chamois skin.

"I am no base utilitarian," said he, "but a pure scientist seeking truth for truth's sake."

"Well," said Gud, "a good deal of it isn't worth seeking for any other reason. Do you know I have often wondered what any one would do with all the truth if he did find it—for my part I have never been able to make use of half I possessed."

"But you misunderstand the aims of pure science. We scientists have no use for truth either, after we have found it; but the search for truth raises us above the base utilitarian."

"Yes," said Gud, "pure science is all right in its place, but you wipe the lens of your confounded monocle with a chamois skin, and how could one get chamois skin unless there were farmers and butchers and skimmers and tanners to farm, butcher, skin and tan the chamois?"

"Mere hewers of wood and drawers of water," repeated the pure scientist with disdain, "let them serve truth and searchers after truth; for knowledge is power and the truth shall make us free."

"Free of what?" asked Gud.

But the paleontologist did not answer, for he had spied another bit of fossilized ectoplasm and was readjusting his confounded monocle so that he might examine it, to see if it were part of the fragment of the soul of the infant prodigy who had mastered calculus before it cut its canine teeth, or merely another piece of that soul of the man who had gone spiritually to pieces when he met his fame.

Alas, it was neither but something worse, and so Gud asked what it was.

"It is the fragment," replied the paleontologist, "of the soul of an old maid who committed suicide because she could not live in eternal doubt."

"And what did she doubt?" asked Gud.

"Her virtue."

"And why did she doubt that?"

"Because she suffered from a dual personality complicated by amnesia."

"Oh, I see," said Gud, "she wanted to know how the other half lived."

"No, no," protested the fossil collector, "she was not a sociologist but one of the minor female poets who specialize in ballads in the romantic manner. See, here is one of her manuscripts that she had translated so that she could take it with her."

"Translated into what?" asked Gud.

"Into spirit language," said the paleontologist, "and if you read it you will see for yourself how

very spiritual it is."

Gud took the poem and glanced at the first line. "Pardon me," he said, "but is there a graveyard handy?"

"As you should judge for yourself," replied the paleontologist, "from the number of bones I have been digging up, this place itself was once a graveyard."

"All things that were can be again," said Gud, as he turned back the wheel of time until he came into the graveyard as it was in the days of its prosperity.

Seeing that he was in the respectable part of the graveyard, Gud hastened to walk down the hill to the less respectable portion. Experience had taught him that in the part of a graveyard where rich men are buried he was likely to be annoyed by relatives who felt they had been cheated in the wills and were anxious to have resurrections performed.

As Gud strolled through the disreputable portion of the cemetery he came upon a man who was sitting on a grave and weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER LIX

The Gods of the Gallows ride tonight
Their shadowy faces spotted white.
The creature who watches through the bars
Hears every footfall under the stars.
The gods of the gallows need no rest—
They ride like chieftains—twelve abreast.
And now they have vanished, leaving hope,
And a thing that hangs at the end of a rope.

Under the lattice a rosebud trembles, a rosebud trembles gently....
Under the trees the shadows fall
In a silver pool by the garden wall;
Then here and there among the trees
Wind whispers rouse low litanies.
Like tiny voices of tongueless grief
That stir the silence of every leaf.
And who would know that under the lattice, under the lattice window,
Where the rosebud stirred like a startled fawn,
Two hands are creeping up the wall,
Two hands that are slim and white and small?
And who can hear the lattice open, the lattice open gently?
Now over the lip of the window sill,
A rustle of silks, the lattice closes,
No one has heard, the night is still,
Save unblossomed buds of the startled roses.
Yet were attentive ears to hearken: enemy ears to listen
Far off, far off, where the white road bends,
And the upturned cup of the blue sky ends,
They might have heard a horse's hoofs
Go clickity, clickity, clickity hack, clickity hack, clickity ...
clickity ... clickity ... hack
Wisely wondered why late at night
So speedy a horseman rode its back....
Then the echo dimmed at the edge of a wood,
And the sound and the horse were gone for good.
The creature who watches through the bars
Heard every footfall under the stars.

Beside the doorway of his cell
Imprisoned in that iron hell,
He taunted the guards of the King—the King's own guards they were—
With scarlet breeches and purple coats,
Shining buckles upon their boots.
He taunted them with sneering jests.
He sneered at the medals on their breasts;
Laughed in the haughty captain's face,
Cut short the chaplain's plea for grace,
And hummed the popular air of the day
When they read the sentence, and bade him pray.

"I promised her at our final tryst,
When our aching bodies clung and kissed,
That come what may, no matter when

I should see her to tell her I love her again."

And he laughed through the bars
In a redcoat's face,

Then he looked through the window
Up at the stars,
And saw that the dawn was taking place.
I'll be returning ere the dusk is down,
I'll be returning....
Wait for me!
I'll be returning though life claims
Allegiance under lying names.

This was the song he sang for her—for her this song he sang.

So there by the pool where the rose leaves drift.
She waited knowing the dawn was near,
And when she saw the shadows lift
And all the skies turn deep and clear,
She fled to her room—he had not come.
They dared not speak to her of him,
Her mother, her sister—aye, any of them.
For her face was carven out of stone
And her little lips made moan, made moan.

Yet late that night when the house was still
She heard a horse ride over the hill.
"It is he, it is he," her heart sang sweet.
Then out of the window climbed to meet
The lover who made her hot heart beat.
Yes there he was with his handsome head,
And now the same dear things he said
As he drew close with a sweep of his arm.
The gods of the gallows need no rest—
They ride like chieftains twelve abreast.

One flower touched as she fluttered by,
Swung on its stem,
And one bright star in the purple sky
Shone over them.
And what he said, it matters not,
Nor what she said to him.
And he stopped to listen like one who is stirred;
His horse even hearkened, as though he heard.
For down the road there came abreast
Twelve men in ancient armor dressed.
There was something strange in the way they rode;
There was something odd in their manners.
They did not see the lovers there,
Nor heed the house at all,
But they rode like mad their horses backs....
Rode through the solid wall.
When she had opened her frightened eyes
What was her pitiful heart's surprise
To find him gone
And the yellow dawn
A roaring flame in the new day's skies.

And now they have vanished leaving hope,
And a thing that hangs at the end of a rope.

They found her there
In a little heap
As though she had walked
In her lilled sleep.
And they never knew,
Though her mother said:
"It's a pity, so,
With her lover dead
On the gallows' tree
Three days ago...."

CHAPTER LX

"Why do you weep?" asked Gud, "since most of these dead ones will go to Hell anyway."

The man did not answer but kept on weeping. So Gud paused to read the epitaph on the tombstone of the grave on which the man was sitting. The inscription was: "IN THIS GRAVE LIE THE DAMNED SOULS OF UNBAPTIZED BABES."

"Come," said Gud, shaking the weeping man by the shoulder. "If your child wasn't baptized it ought to be damned, but there is no use weeping about it."

"I never had a child," said the man, "but if I were going to have one, I would take no chances, for I would call the priest before I sent for the doctor."

"Then why are you weeping?" repeated Gud.

"Not over the contents of this grave, I assure you, but because of the contents of that grave there by the creek's edge."

"Is a relative of yours buried there?" asked Gud.

"He was no relative of mine," said the man. "And yet I am weeping because he is dead, and you would weep, too, if you were in my boots. You see, I am the hangman and I hanged that man only a fortnight ago."

"Ah, ha!" said Gud, "you hanged an innocent man!"

"Indeed I did not! And if I wept over every innocent man I have hanged, I would never have time to clean the scaffold. But I hanged that man for a petty crime that was never committed."

"And you weep?" asked Gud.

"I weep," said the hangman, "because since I hanged him, we have discovered that he was guilty of a great crime for which I hanged another man a year ago."

"Then you are weeping for the other man?"

"No, no!" retorted the hangman, growing quite angry, "I am weeping because, having hanged this man for a petty crime which was never committed, I cannot hang him now for I have already hanged the other man."

"At last I understand," said Gud, greatly relieved, "and I think I can help you out. Go get your rope and call your citizens!"

CHAPTER LXI

As he was sitting one night by a campfire waiting for the beans to boil, Gud picked up a newspaper. Glancing over the advertisements, his eye fell on this item:

PARTNER WANTED: Fine opportunity for experienced deity to share control of fully evolved world. Will call at any address to give details.—I. B. DEVIL.

This interested Gud, for his vacation was getting irksome. So he called Fidu and let him sniff the advertisement and said: "Go get him!"

Fidu immediately hit the trail through the great darkness, baying beautifully.

When the Underdog returned there followed at his heels a handsome Devil.

Gud shook hands with his caller and, removing the pot of beans from the hot rocks in the center of the fire, asked him to be seated.

The Devil, throwing off his cape, sat down in the flames and poked his feet comfortably into the glowing coals.

"You are very considerate," said the Devil, as he took out his pipe and filled the bowl with brimstone; "most fellows of your ilk would let me shiver or make me start my own fire."

"Don't mention it," said Gud. "You have, I believe, a partnership proposition."

"That I have," returned the Devil, "but first may I ask how you came to be out of employment?"

"I smashed everything," explained Gud, "and quit business. The place got too big to be handled easily and I couldn't get efficient help. I thought I would retire, or at least take a long vacation; but you know how that goes, we are all creatures of habit."

"Yes," agreed the Devil, "many of us are like that. We try to do too much, and get discouraged and throw up everything. However, I have always been a hard worker and rather liked it."

"But you are out of a job now," said Gud significantly, "and before I can talk business I will have

to know why."

"Certainly," said the Devil, "I am out of employment for the very excellent reason that my god died."

"What! You don't mean it?"

"Why not? You fellows don't want to take your immortality too seriously. It's a necessary pose, of course, as a matter of business; but you see my god was really very old. He had a premonition, too, and very thoughtfully left me a letter of recommendation. Would you like to see it?"

"Thanks, but I never look at letters of recommendation. I have written too many of them. But tell me about this death of your employer."

"My partner, you mean," corrected the Devil. "Of course, I was only the junior partner, but I had a share in the loot. As I said, this chap was old and had won and lost many realms. I was with him on his final venture, running a hell as usual, and a purgatory on the side—the heavy end of the job, I call it, on that three-realm theology. This old god had nothing to do but sit up there surrounded by his angels—yes, he really had angels, old-fashioned place, you know—and wait for the resurrection when I was to deliver up his share of the loot from purgatory, and the Chief Arch was to blast the sleepers out of their graves."

"That's a bit muddled," remarked Gud.

"I grant it, but we had it arranged that way. Well, we got everything ready and I turned the crowd out of purgatory as per agreement; and the Arch blasted out the sleeping souls, and they all went trooping into heaven, demanding to see their god.

"It was a sorry affair, all those countless souls who had lived and died, and some of them had suffered in purgatory for eons. And finally they came trooping into heaven and no god in sight.

"They sent an angel down for me, for the situation was beyond those harp playing satellites. I found that the old god had died peacefully in his sleep, leaving the letter for me and a proper will drawn up, but he was dead.

"I fixed up a double and set him on the throne to keep the crowd quiet while I stood behind a screen to prompt him. But some disgruntled little wing flapper betrayed us and the fraud got out. The crowd stopped squabbling about their gowns and harps, and dropped their hymn books and stared up at us.

"It makes me sad yet when I think about it. I have roasted them and flayed them and boiled them without mercy; all that was nothing like seeing the disappointed expression in the eyes of those poor souls, all arrayed in their new celestial gowns and with harps in hand, staring like little lost children up at a dummy on the throne, and wailing because their god was dead!"

"When did all this happen?" asked Gud.

"A long while ago—like you, I've been on a vacation. The fact was that experience gave me a distaste for my profession. But you know how it is. We are all creatures of habit, as you say, and there are ups and downs in all business. I feel now that it is about time I got back to work—especially since I discovered this virgin world. With that we can start all over, everything new, all our experience to help us, and the likelihood of good luck this time by the law of averages."

"Right you are," agreed Gud, "there is nothing like work. A shoemaker should stick to his last and die with his hammer in his hand. Yes, I think I will consider your proposition. Where is this property you speak of?"

"In the eighth plane."

"The eighth plane!" repeated Gud incredulously. "My dear fellow, there are only seven planes!"

"That's just it; it's being in a place where it could not be explains why it is still there."

"A fascinating tale," said Gud dubiously, "but how can mortals stay rational and civilized if they do not know that we exist, or that there are immortal joys and torments awaiting for them after they are through with their brief span of mortality?"

"Now I can't answer that question as to theory, but I can report my observation of the fact that they manage it very decently well."

"It seems incredible to me," sighed Gud.

"It doesn't to me," replied the Devil, "for if I were mortal I would surely make the best of the life I had instead of pining and worrying about another, which, as you know for yourself, is never quite up to mortal expectations."

The Devil knocked the ash out of the bowl of his pipe on one of the glowing rocks. "Naturally we haven't as much interest as you have in keeping the superstition alive, since we have the dirty end of the deal. But you know very well that you can't do business without us. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that mortals quickly lose interest in those one-sided theologies which, like their own Utopias, are insipid with perfect goodness and boresome with joy. What pleasure could there be in hoping to go to an eternal sunparlor without knowing that one's neighbor was going to hell?"

"Yes, yes, I grant that argument, but this virgin world of yours is hardly plausible."

"Holy comets!" exclaimed the Devil, springing up angrily, "do you doubt my observation or my veracity?"

"Both," said Gud.

"We are wasting words. If you will step this way you can see for yourself."

"Just a moment," said Gud, who then arose and set the pot back on the hot rocks, and commanded Fidur to tend the fire and not to spill the beans.

"Watch your step," called back the Devil. "There are some ugly holes in the void beyond the seventh plane."

"How is that for a sphere?" spoke the Devil as he pointed out his find.

"Not half bad," admitted Gud, "but it's a little flat at the poles. Strictly speaking, it is a spheroid."

"Don't quibble over details. And now, if you don't mind, I'll materialize as a prosperous gentleman and you can be my cane-bearer."

"Not on your smoke," retorted Gud, "you advertised for a partner. We materialize as equals or we stop right here."

"Have it your way. I'll be a king in exile, and you can be a bricklayer on strike."

So in that guise they stepped aboard, taking care to alight on the north pole to avoid the chance of an ugly fall.

"Which way, now?" asked Gud.

"South. We must obey their natural laws."

So they traveled south to the equator, passing along the seashore where the thriving cities were. As Gud walked along between the Devil and the deep blue sea he saw many things that were never intended for him to see.

"Now," said the Devil, "we have seen the northern hemisphere, and the southern one is just like it."

"I am quite interested," admitted Gud.

"Then let us step up the side of this volcano where we can both be comfortable while we close our deal."

So they climbed the volcano and the Devil found a seat on a heap of freshly crusted lava, and Gud sat down on a nearby glacier.

"First," began the Devil, "I would ask you if they had any souls?"

"Not a soul," admitted Gud. "One could see it in their eyes."

"And what about evidence of proprietorship?"

Gud picked up a rock and examined it critically. "I see no evidence of design," he confessed.

"And how about their rationality?"

"That's what worries me. They are entirely too rational. If we try to give them souls they might reject them."

"I can solve that," laughed the Devil. "Give the souls to the females first."

"What!" exclaimed Gud, "that has never been heard of. To give them all souls at once is quite as radical a move as I could consider."

"Well, I won't quibble over details. How long will it take you to fix up your pace?"

"I should say it would take me an eon."

"Make it an epoch."

"Oh, very well."

"And how do you propose to divide the booty? Would you be satisfied with predestination on a fifty-fifty split?"

"I would not," returned Gud decisively. "I consider such collusion to suppress competition most unprofessional. I will give them a revelation, you can plant seeds of doubt and temptation, and we will divide on the usual tests of faith."

"But what about those that pass over without hearing the revelation?"

"I get them on the mercy clause," said Gud.

"That's too liberal," replied the Devil, "and you know it; they belong to me by right of original sin."

If you insist on taking them we will call the whole deal off."

"Let's compromise on transmigration and reincarnate them till they do hear my revelation. It will mean quite a saving in the stock of new souls, for we will have to buy them. I was never good at designing home-made souls; I could never get them of even size, and the big ones were always knocking the little ones about."

"Very well," agreed the Devil, who was anxious to get going. "Order the souls when you get ready."

Just then the volcano conveniently erupted and dematerialized the king in exile and the bricklayer on strike.

CHAPTER LXII

Once Gud sat all alone
High on his shining throne.
The Devil had been driven
Flaming out of heaven;
And this was eons after
Gud suddenly burst with laughter,
Remembering with a shout
A story the Devil told
Before they drove him out—
(Though even then 'twas old)

CHAPTER LXIII

I. B. Devil paced restlessly about in his brand new Hell. Everything was running in apple pie order, but not a soul in torment. That fact worried him, for it had been nearly two generations since Gud had planted the souls. He had done it well, had plunged the busy sphere into a day of thick darkness. There had been a mad howling and babble among the conceited rationals until the whole race of them had tumbled in their tracks and fallen into a profound slumber. It was then that the souls were planted.

One of Gud's newly employed assistants had made the count of the mortals, and the Devil had marvelled at his accuracy, for there were only six souls left over. These Gud had laughingly handed to the Devil, who had given them to six of his firemen—appreciative chaps they were, and it hadn't spoiled them, this thing of having two souls.

After the soul planting was finished, the Devil and Gud had parted cordially enough. They had agreed it was best not to be seen together after that. By the agreement Gud was first to visit the sphere alone and give out his revelation, and the Devil was then to make one visit to sow doubts and temptations.

The Devil had glanced at Gud's revelation most casually; it seemed quite ordinary—old stuff, and he had been rather careless in planting his doubts and temptations. The competition had looked easy. But now two generations had passed on the sphere and not a soul had arrived for torment.

The Devil was profoundly puzzled. He wondered if Gud had been unethical and double-crossed him with a spurious revelation, getting out another one later with utterly different beliefs and morals, so that the doubts and temptations were thus all obsoleted. This possibility made the Devil furious, for it was plausible enough—yet that Gud chap had seemed such a fair and simple sort!

Half a dozen times the Devil started to go up and see about it—yet, had he not pledged his own incombustibility on his keeping away from the sphere after the first visit? He had been a simple fool, and here he was with a fully equipped hell on his hands and a big payroll to meet and the best of his helpers deserting right and left, because they were bored with idleness. As good a hell as ever burned brimstone and not a soul to roast!

Dreadfully enough, the Devil began his rounds again. He had to keep the boys cheered up. How he wished that he had not been so democratic and told them just when things had been started on the sphere. The best he could do now, was to lie out of that and claim that this was just a trial run. But he could see that many of his once loyal helpers had utterly lost faith in his leadership. He had been proud of those helpers, some of the brightest demons in the game. He had bid them off good jobs in older hells by promises of greater freedom to try out their own ideas. In that way he had obtained a superior set of tortures for special sins. But now no souls—and half his demons deserted and the cleverest of his torture machines rusting from lack of use.

At last he could stand it no longer, and he went back to his private chambers. Telling his valet that he was not to be disturbed, he locked the door and took a sleeping potion gauged for a

century.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

I. B. Devil awoke and tried to stretch himself, but he was so stiff he could hardly move. Cold, icy cold penetrated his very bones. He managed at last to sit up on the edge of his couch, and then the chamber door fell in before the battering ram of the last of his faithful followers. Six shivering demons piled into the chamber—the six grateful firemen to whom he had given the extra souls.

"The last of the fires are out, Your Majesty, and all the others have deserted."

"But why," demanded the Devil, "did you not keep my private furnace fired? We shall all freeze to death."

"But, Your Majesty, there is no one to work the mines. Do you not remember that you arranged for them to be worked by the souls of scabs who were to be killed by strikers?"

"Another blunder," sighed the Devil. "Well, there is a grate and in that case yonder is my private stock of smoking brimstone. Light it, for I must get thawed out so I can think."

The two-souled firemen hastened to obey and the seven of them were soon sitting around the spluttering blue flames and inhaling the delicious vapors.

The Devil got out a set of heavy, asbestos furs, smiling as he recalled for whom he had ordered them. He had intended to keep her in his private chamber to light his pipe and brew his tea—and he had chuckled many a time at the thought of her in summer furs.

He laid the furs on a chair and went to his desk and wrote busily for a few minutes.

"Now, boys," he said, "here are your passes for mortality, and remember you have two souls."

The firemen vanished and the Devil was alone in Hell.

He drew on the furs and wrapped his own travelling cape about them. Then he went into the outer chamber. Across the room the windows, into which usually shone the cheery redness of roaring flames, were now frosted with weird designs, and the fireproof platinum fittings on the great door were hoary white.

Slowly the Devil trudged across the chill chamber and, with a fur-clad hand, grasped the frosted handle, swung open the great door, and stepped out on the balcony.

For a moment he was blinded by the dazzling, sparkling white. He stumbled over some object and bent down to find the huddled form of a demon frozen stiff as an ice idol. It was poor little Beezel, who had come all the way from the hell of the three-ringed planet to try out his new scheme of torture for trigamists.

I. B. Devil stepped lightly over his frozen disciple and went to the balcony rail. Shading his eyes until they became accustomed to the white glare, he now looked far up and down the wide stretches of his domain, puzzled, dumbfounded and subdued. The water mains that supplied the steam baths had burst and flooded the place, and all hell was frozen over!

I. B. Devil leaped from the balustrade and straight as an arrow shot upward to Gud's Paradise.

He paused for a moment only outside the portals to discard the furs he wore, then he pushed open the great unguarded gate and stepped inside.

It was a goodly heaven, vast and beautiful and shining in its new-made emptiness.

I. B. Devil did not pause for admiration, but went straightway to Gud's private office and kicked open the door. There was no one there. Beside the larger desk was a lesser one, and on this lay a powder puff and a small mirror. The Devil stepped to the file cabinet, flung it open; and with uncanny accuracy reached in, pulled out the carbon copy of the order for souls, and read:

"In accordance with your quotation, you may ship us at once three billion mortal souls."

"Poor old chap," mused the Devil, "I should never have trusted one."

Then he stepped outside and mounted to the throne of Gud. There he found a note pinned to the upholstery. It read: "We have gone to Hell."

The Devil went back to the portal of Gud's heaven and picked up the furs: "I guess," he said, "I had better take them down to her."

But Gud let her go to Hell alone, for in the course of their headlong flight, he heard the faint sound of far off barking. Wheeling in the ether Gud made straight for the campfire, where he had

left Fidu watching the beans.

"Did the beans boil over?" asked Gud.

"No, indeed," said Fidu, in his best dog language, "but you were gone so long that I caught a nice wild boar so that there is pork in the beans."

"Don't you know, Fidu," admonished Gud, "that I disapprove of eating pork?"

"But," said Fidu, "this was a vegetarian pig, for he was rooting for peanuts when I caught him."

CHAPTER LXIV

There are figures in the shadow but the shadow hides the faces,
And their silence is a subject that must flagellate the flesh.
There are hands and arms that touch you with their lingering embraces
Like the petals of clipped flowers still miraculously fresh.

There are voices through the darkness 'round which darkness swiftly
closes;
Remembered words and phrases that are only lost in death,
Heard within some misted twilight in a garden filled with roses
As though our own youth whispered with its awed and hollow breath.

There is nothing in the shadow that will satisfy our quest,
For each shore that's undiscovered has been lined with molding wrecks,
And if we should burst on Beauty with her healing hands of rest
Life would bind us down in duty to some slavery of sex.

There is something quite sardonic in the race's old ideals,
And the struggle for their gaining is derisive as a jest....
He who prays unto his Godhead will be wiped out as he kneels,
While the wonders of decay will destroy all the rest.

We are grinding in the shadow for the glory of the ages,
Though no hope of immortality has ever come to stay;
Yet each human soul is fretting at the bars of separate cages
Hearing rhythms of tomorrow in the discords of today.

All the ones who started seeking when the game was strange and new,
See the beauty of believing lost in wonders of deceit
There is truth in every vision, but the day is hardly through,
Ere the night is all around us with her silence and defeat.

There is dogma, there is duty in the urge of dead emotion
Through the worshipped gods of yesterday the present gods exist
Hid away among our temples for the dreams of our devotion
The alters of the ages in their ruins still persist.

Let the mothers bear their children for the centuries to come
There is truth in adoration for the thing that is adored
And if all the many answers on the lips of life are dumb
At least the coming children may be murdered for the Lord.

CHAPTER LXV

After Gud had regaled himself on pork and beans he laid down under a deadly nightshade tree and fell asleep. As he slept a worm happened along and stepped on Gud, and Gud turned.

"Pardon," said the worm, "but I did not notice you until you turned. You see I was very preoccupied, for I have just returned from the Diet of Worms, which was called by the Conqueror Worm to suppress a book. As soon as I heard that a book had been suppressed I went in search of a copy. I found one in the Master's chamber of a deserted mansion of the newly cultured. I carefully chewed it up and removed the fragments to my nest, where I pieced them together again."

"What kind of book is it?" asked Gud. "I am rather fond of forbidden books."

"It is a book of etiquette," replied the worm, "and if you will promise me not to mark it up or tear out any choice passages, I will lend you my copy."

So Gud sat down upon a gravel and the worm climbed a stalk of timothy and handed Gud the book; but it was so badly patched up that he could not read it.

"Perhaps," suggested the worm, "I should read it to you. See, this is the table of contents. It says:

"How to shake hands with gloves on.

"How to introduce people who already know each other.

"How to steal postage stamps without having a guilty conscience.

"How to dance without knowing how.

"How to pretend to understand relativity.

"What to wear if you don't like spats.

"How to tell a risqué story in the presence of a minister.

"How to get rich without making your friends envious.

"How to catch large fish with little worms.'

"Ah," cried the worm, "that is the very line that caused the Diet of Worms to suppress the book, for that is an allusion to the bitter truth that worms are put on hooks to catch fish. We worms, who know that in the end we shall conquer man himself, do not like to be reminded that in the meanwhile man may use us for fish bait."

Gud smiled at the thought that the worms could only suppress the truth, whereas he could change it. So he made it to be that men should no longer put worms on hooks to catch fish, but should henceforth put fish on hooks to catch worms. That is how came the great sport of worming; and some of the worm tales men tell do not need to be suppressed, for there is no truth in them.

CHAPTER LXVI

And now Gud came to a place where the ether was as thick as coal tar. It was so dark that Fidur could not even imagine a moon, and Gud could not see any reason for existence.

Just as he had about decided that there would never be any more light, Gud saw a wee small flicker shining in the inky void, as might an invisible star if there never had been brighter stars to pale its flame.

Hastening on Gud and Fidur came upon the source of light and found it to be a man with a torch in his hand who was very much occupied in searching for something.

"Have you lost anything?" asked Gud.

"No," replied the man, "but I am looking for something."

"I shall be glad to assist you," offered Gud, "and my dog here is very good in locating lost articles; so if you will kindly tell us what you are looking for we will help you find it."

"I am looking," replied the man, "for creation's dawn and the end of all things. I also wish to find the unknowable first cause and the eternal varieties and the limits of space. I am searching for the cause of hope, the reason for despair, the explanation of love and the excuse for crime. I am seeking a reason for all that is, and a cause for all that ever was and an accurate prophesy of all that ever will be. I am also hunting for the fundamental principles, the absolute truth, the laws of nature, the theories of science, the hypotheses of metaphysics, the interpretations of creeds, the aims of arts and the melodies of songs that have never been sung. And I do wish so to locate all the unknown stars, and trace all the lost comets, and determine what kept the heavens in order before the law of gravitation was enacted. But most of all I want to find out why my wife thinks I am a fool to be out here looking for these things."

"If you do not object to a little operation," said Gud, "I can find all these things for you and show you where they all are."

Then without waiting for the man to reply, Gud caused a deep sleep to fall upon him, and straightway Gud opened up the man's skull and took out his brains and laid them upon a platter.

When the man awoke he looked upon his own brains and saw that they were very much like calf's brains, except that they were more convoluted and sutured.

"And why is this platter set before me?" demanded the man as he stood there gazing upon his own brains.

"Because," replied Gud, "therein lies what you were looking for, and you need search no further, for it is all there and much more besides."

"So, so," said the man, "I see it all, and now I shall go home to my wife and find if a child has been born unto her while I have been away."

"Then," said Gud, "would you give me your torch, since you will not be needing it longer?"

The man did so; and after he had gone, Gud took the torch and set the darkness on fire.

CHAPTER LXVII

Once more Gud walked along the Impossible Curve, which had now become more impossible than ever.

Gud was lonely, for he missed his faithful companion, the Underdog, whom he had sold into slavery. His heart was filled with grief, and remorse preyed upon his soul, and Gud resolved never again to be ungrateful and never to be unkind, and to grant to all creatures their wishes and to help them to realize their hearts' desires and make their dreams come true.

In his sorrow and loneliness Gud walked on until his feet were sore and he was athirst. Then he came to a flowing fountain of pure water. He paused and kneeled at the fountain. When he had quenched his thirst, he removed his sandals and bathed his feet in the stream that flowed from the fountain.

Then Gud laid himself down by the fountain and fell asleep, and dreamed that a beautiful bubble appeared on the surface of the fountain.

The bubble which Gud saw in his dream was iridescent with a great iridescence; for the colors of the bubble were many and they were ever changing, so that it was never twice alike.

In the iridescence of the bubble Gud saw the essence of transcendent beauty, for its beauty was as the beauty of youth, and as the beauty of faith, and as the beauty of love, and as the beauty of a woman, when she is young and has faith and a longing for more love than she has found.

As Gud looked upon the beauty of the bubble, he saw that it was no longer a bubble, for it had become a woman of flesh and blood, and hope and love and beauty. And he saw that she looked upon him with faith and trust. This pleased Gud, so he spoke in his dream to the woman of his dream and said: "Who art thou and what wouldst thou of me?"

And the woman replied, "Oh, Gud, I am a searcher after mysteries that have not been revealed and things which can not be understood. And I am sore distressed because I have looked and have found them not."

Gud asked, "Have you looked into the mind of man?"

"I have looked into the mind of man," replied the woman, "and it is very simple."

Again Gud asked: "Have you looked into the heart of woman?"

She replied to Gud and said: "Into the heart of woman have I also looked, and though it is not so simple, yet do I understand it, for am I not a woman?"

"Of a truth you are a woman, and you are very beautiful."

And she smiled upon Gud, and when she smiled, he vowed that he would grant her all her wishes and the fulfillment of all her dreams.

But first he would know who she was, and so he spoke to her again and said: "Of a truth, and who art thou?"

And she of the iridescent beauty, which is the beauty that is ever changing, made answer to Gud: "Of a truth, great Gud, I am no other than the reader of this book which two men are writing about you."

"What's this?" asked Gud, for he was much amazed, albeit not displeased, to hear that Hersey and I were writing this book about him.

And the iridescent woman said again, "I am the reader of 'The Book of Gud,' which Dan Spain and Harold Hersey are writing about you."

"How do you know they are writing it?"

"I know," said the woman, "because it is common gossip in the Village, for every one there gossips about anything Hersey has a hand in."

"Where is this village?" asked Gud, "and who is this Hersey creature?"

"The Village," she replied, "where Hersey burns his wee small flame, is South of Fourteenth Street and West of University Place, in the City of New York, which is the Gateway to the Melting Pot of the Planet Earth in the Solar System of the Universe."

"Which universe?" asked Gud.

"My universe," said the woman.

"It must be a nice one, but what do you wish that I should do for you?"

"What I wish," said she (who is none other than the reader of this book) "is to find some great

mystery in art or literature or in some psychic science; and I wish that you would inspire these men to put something into 'The Book of Gud' that no one can understand."

"I will look into the matter," said Gud. And he did.... Then he looked again into the iridescent eyes of the ever-changing woman and said to her: "It is useless, for I have searched the soul of that fellow Spain and he is not an inspired writer but only a disgruntled hack who could not possibly write anything that you could not understand."

Whereupon the woman was vexed with disappointment so that she began to weep, and in the small compass of each tear she shed was the iridescence of a tiny rainbow. As Gud saw her tears, that they were beautiful, his heart overflowed with tenderness, and he said with a gentle voice: "I will try again."

And now Gud searched the soul of Hersey. His search was not without reward and when he returned again to the beautiful woman she ceased to weep, for in his hand she saw that Gud held a poem. Seating himself beside her, he read her this poem that Hersey had written in the white heat of inspiration:

CHAPTER LXVIII

She stood there carelessly arrayed
All in jewelled dress,
And leaning on the balustrade
She wept with bitterness,
For facing her there stood a maid
Of rival loveliness.

Once she had been indifferent
To languishment or guile,
But when I argued with intent
To hold her by a smile,
Upon my eyes her own were bent
For quite a little while.

The lady raised her fluttering hands.
"The night is cold," she said,
"For tropic men in northern lands,
For old maids still unwed,
And for the evil one who stands
In heaven when he's dead."

She turned and gazed upon that face
As lovely as her own,
The poise of beauty and of grace
That matched her grace alone....
And in that close and silent place
I heard the lady moan.

I held the lady to my breast
And kissed her mouth and eyes.
She sighed and snuggled down to rest
Without the least surprise,
While I told tales of sweet unrest
That sounded very wise.

"They say I'm mad," she whispered then,
"I weep for dear despair,
No matter where I go, dark men
Follow me everywhere...."
To quiet her I kissed again
Her locks of golden hair.

"Great God!" she cried with finished grace,
"That woman whom I hate."
I looked and in a mirror's face
I saw the lady's mate.
Then quiet men of that strange place
Came down the halls of state.

They took the lady tenderly
Away from sound and sight.
I answered not. It seemed to me
As though they must be right.
So I smashed the mirror utterly

CHAPTER LXIX

And when Gud had finished reading the woman asked: "Is that all?"

And Gud looked at the poem in his hand and said sorrowfully, "That is all."

"But that is quite comprehensible," said the woman, "for it is merely one of Hersey's usual plagiarisms—a twittering parody of Rossetti's 'THE BLESSED DAMOSEL', and it is so simple."

"Do you understand it?" asked Gud.

"Of course, it merely means that the love of man is insufficient to satisfy the yearning of woman, and so she must look into the mirror of her own soul in search of greater spiritual joys. But alas, she is shadowed by her sex consciousness as reflected in her beauty of the flesh, and she can not escape that haunting shadow which finally drives her mad. Is that not simple?"

To D. S.: I protest. This interpretation is entirely erroneous.—H. H.

To H. H.: Good God, I know it! but if you had seen what I first wrote about it you would keep still.—D. S.

"I should say," said Gud, "that it is beautiful simplicity."

"That is just the trouble with all that these chaps are writing. They are so keen on the obvious. You see, I can understand all that these men have written, for it is all explainable by psychoanalysis. It is merely the symbolism of a suppressed wish to be famous. And, oh Gud, how I do crave true mystery!"

"Then," said Gud, "you shall have it, for am I not Gud the Great?"

"If you are, why do you not inspire these men who are writing this book about you to put something into the book that no one can understand? Indeed, if you cannot do that I shall be tempted to believe that you are not Gud, but only a mere figment of fancy conceived in the brains of two conceited young egotists who are seeking a cheap notoriety by shocking decent people with blasphemous literature."

"I fear you are right."

"Oh," cried the woman, "then you admit that you are what I said?"

"Not at all. I merely admit that he is what you said."

"Really, Gud, you ought to have had some well-known writer do this book about you—some one who had already been suppressed, or, better yet, a Russian."

"Who are the Russians?" asked Gud.

"They are the supremists in dancing, the theorists in politics, the idealists in economics and the realists in literature. But you are romantic, aren't you, Gud?"

"I think so. At least I feel so—did you always wear your hair that way?"

"Oh, no, indeed. You see, I used to wear it shorn like that of a boy, for that fashion was once the insignia of the female intelligence. But all the fat bankers' wives aped us, so now our only chance for distinction is to ape our mothers, and I wear my mother's hair. See, I will take it off and show it to you."

"It is very lovely," said Gud, as he fingered her mother's hair. "I think I should have loved your mother, and it is very sweet of you to wear this hair in remembrance of her. Most women who have risen to your intellectual heights forget their mothers."

"It is very kind of you to say that, but distinction is in being different, and so we ultra-intelligent women are again showing respect for our mothers to distinguish us from the mob of the commonplace intellectuals who came flopping into the pool of progress and muddied the water.... It is a great race, dear Gud, this struggle to keep ahead of the apings of the stupid."

"Yes, yes, so I find it. Little up-start muddling gods have quite fogged up the milky way with their nebulous creations—but pardon me if I suggest that I would rather that you put your mother's hair back on."

She had some difficulty in putting her mother's hair on straight; so Gud reached over, and with a few deft touches, arranged it for her. Then, plucking a button from his robe, he burnished it on his sleeve until it shone silvery bright, and then he held it before her. She looked into the mirroring silver and gave a little rapturous cry of joy, for the hair of her mother, on which they had both wasted so much henna, had been turned into a brilliant shade of fluorescent opalescence—a color that no artist of the Latin Quarter had ever painted and that no artist of the Village had ever imagined.

"Oh, Gud," she cried, "now I know that I love you, for they will go mad about it and I shall be the queen of the studios."

"I would rather that you remain just a woman as you have so sweetly shown yourself to be."

"Never!" cried she who wanted something that no one could understand, "never, never, will I be content to be just a woman! I must be, oh so much more. I must have super-personality, and hyper-yearnings, and ultra-strivings and transcendent seekings after ultimate mysteries—really I don't think you understand me at all!"

"Has any one ever understood you?" asked Gud.

"No," she breathed in soft expectancy.

"Only a little while ago you were searching for something that no one could understand—have we not found it in yourself?"

"Perhaps," she spoke dubiously.

"And if you were in my book, would it not then contain something that no one could understand?"

"Do you mean it?" she faltered.

"Yes, dear child, for whom all writers write, if it will bring me one more smile from those ever-changing eyes of beauty—I will see that you are in '*The Book of Gud*'—if I have to catch these blasphemous scribes and pound their heads together!"

"For that promise," said the iridescent lady, "I could love you forever and a day. To think that we two should be in a book together! Just me and Gud!"

"And now," she added, in a lower tone, "I'll confess to you why I want to be in the book. You see, I am supposed to be a literary character and one has to be in a book to be a literary character, you know."

"Yes, yes, I know. I suppose it will make me one also. But now I must hasten to seek out these mundane scribes, and see to it that they put you in my book—for they have it about finished."

"Which one of them do you propose to have write me into the book?"

"Which one would you prefer?"

"I hardly know," she said. "That fellow Spain is a woman hater, and I am afraid he will say something unkind about me. But that Hersey poet prostitutes his art to flatter women. He has an exaggerated idea of the importance of the sex consciousness in an intellectual woman's life. Really, it is a choice between two evils."

"If that is the way you feel about it," said Gud, "perhaps I had better write you into the book myself."

"Could you really? Oh, Gud! I would die of joy to be written by you; not even a movie actress ever had a celestial press agent!"

"I'll try," said Gud, "that is, if you will tarry with me as I write."

"Do you mean that I would inspire you?"

"Exactly."

"That is what they all say!"

"Then it must be true."

"But why do you not say something original, since you are Gud?"

"Because I am talking to you."

"You old brute!"

"Perhaps so, but a straight line is the shortest distance between two points."

"Oh, I like that," cried she who had sought for mystery. "It sounds so original, and I am sure that no one can understand it—what does it mean?"

"It means," said Gud, "that you and I have very much in common that quite transcends the reach and grasp of men."

"You flatter me."

"But really, that is true."

"Then quick, write it down before you lose the inspiration."

"But I have nothing on which to write," said Gud.

She blushed and turned away from him, and tore the whiteness from her bosom, and turned again toward Gud and handed him the whiteness that had covered up the secrets of her heart.

Gud took the whiteness of her bosom and thereupon he began to write, while she lay down upon the other side of the pool, and hid her bosom away from Gud, lest, now with its whiteness gone, he might see the color of her heart.

And so Gud, who is made in the image of man, became as a man. And as he wrote he forgot the woman, for when a pen is in the hand of man or god, the light that lies in woman's eyes burns dim as some brief candle.

And this indeed is the paradox of all who wield the treacherous weapon: that man sets out to write, some woman's heart to flutter; and having struck pen to paper, if there be anything in him that rises o'er the damp swamp of woman's kisses, then of a truth the instrument that she put into his hand becomes a knife to sever the cords with which she sought to bind him.

Such is the tragedy of her who flutters near while men make words on paper, that in their youth they write for her; and their youth gone, they still write on beyond the reaches of her soul.

And so, as Gud wrote upon the whiteness torn from a woman's bosom, he forgot quite utterly the woman herself, who lay by the pool trembling and suffering and trying to hide her heart from Gud.

And when she saw that he had forgotten her—even though he had told her he wanted her near him and needed her for inspiration—she suffered so that her heart died within her, and she shrank and withered and fell into the pool of the fountain, and, as a brown leaf, floated on the surface of the water.

CHAPTER LXX

When Gud had finished that which he was writing he arose and looked about him. He seemed to be searching for something, but could not recall what it was, and decided that it was of no importance.

He drew on his sandals and made ready to go upon his way. But the way was long and Gud recalled that he had been weary and had been athirst. So he knelt by the fountain and stooped over it to drink.

There was a brown leaf floating on the water, but he swished it away and drank his fill from the flowing fountain. Then Gud arose and girded up his loins and went on his way along the Impossible Curve.

CHAPTER LXXI

I met an old man walking through the sky,
A sort of startled twinkle in his eye.
"And who are you?" asked I.
"I am Gud," replied he, with a frown.
"Which one?" I asked, polite but terse,
But without answer he went shrieking down
The shadowy spaces of the universe.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOOK OF GUD ***

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