

***FLORENCE
HUNTLEY***



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

Florence Huntley

The Gay Gnani of Gingalee; or, Discords of Devolution

**A Tragical Entanglement of Modern Mysticism and
Modern Science**

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CHAPTER I.

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“Philosophers Deride, Fools Investigate.”

PROPHET AND PROFIT.

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

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

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

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

“And if I consent,” finally murmured the Occultist, now toying mechanically with the long handled spoon, “If I consent,” he repeated in a weird monotone—his eyes following the process of a Lowball—“and look upon WOMAN—should I look upon her you would call your own,

remember, Bill, that *you* assume *my* responsibility, and that upon *your* head will rest the consequences of *my mad act*. Upon *you* must descend the penalties of my violation of the First Degree.”

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

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

The Vanderhook drug store once more stood the treat.

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

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

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

On attaining his majority Bill consulted with his father and accepted a partnership in the paternal pharmacy. Alonzo consulted with himself, determined upon mysticism

and cut loose from parental guidance. Upon this he resigned, as humorist of the *Daily Clarion*, and set out upon the path of wisdom.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alonzo was now well up in Yogum.

He approached Gnanum.

He apprehended the ALL.

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

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

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

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

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

Alonzo vouchsafed no reply.

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

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

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

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



CHAPTER II.

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MISS SHEETS IS SHE.

She was radiantly, 'wilderly beautiful.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Life in Chicago is of itself an education, and our heroine was rich in the accumulation of her experiences. Her years of service in the greatest pork mart of the world had developed a keen discrimination as to the relative

coincidences and differences among hogs and men. She was never deceived as to either. She valued each after his kind, in his own place and for his own proper purposes, as becomes a broadminded woman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Having finally decided to break his vow, Mr. Leffingwell went out of the drug store, sustained by the lowball and a shadowy hope that he would not be found out. He realized his departure from the fifty-seven Paths, but he did not

dream that as yet he had come up to his Karmic Destiny. He did not suspect that he and Bill were strolling down Asylum Avenue, arm in arm, for the last time.

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

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

To his innermost Inner he was steeled against Woman.

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

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

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

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