

## *A Modern Magician*

### *A Story of the World's Greatest War—Soul Versus Self*

**W**HAT'S THE TROUBLE, Brownleigh, the book or the weather?\*" It has been hot, deucedly hot, down town, but out here on the veranda, a big rocker and a good book seem rather ideal to me."

"Sit down, Captain. It is fine out here after a busy day in the city. A club house is a boon for tired, unattached business men. It was the book I was thinking about when you came. I suppose you have seen it and possibly read parts of it. The thing I cannot understand is how a man, otherwise intelligent, sane, and logical, ever happened to get mixed up in this sort o—what would you call it—not rubbish or twaddle—inane, that's the word; it is inane imaginings. What does the man expect to gain by such writing? Surely he cannot hope to have his readers take him seriously."

Alfred Benson took the proffered book and turned several pages thoughtfully before replying.

"*Sir William Henderson's Son, Beckworth*, I see. To a man of your beliefs and understanding I suppose this book is somewhat unintelligible. But to myself and many others it has proven quite interesting and there are a number of men I could mention who consider it not only far from being inane but a very long way from being at all impossible."

"Captain, you talk as though you were one of those who are actually inclined to countenance this sort of stuff. I sincerely trust that being in the war didn't turn your head a bit, eh? You made a record over there that we are all proud of, and you went through hardships enough to kill half a dozen men,

and you may have your little joke with men if you like, but don't, I implore you, insinuate again that you take any stock in the kind of material with which this book is constructed."

Captain Benson remained silent for some moments.

"Ever do any investigating along psychic or spiritualistic lines, Brownleigh?"

"Lord, man, no! I've been too busy for such nonsense were I so inclined. I'm not even orthodox. I've been a sort of a student, and a good deal of a thinker all my life. I've observed believers and nonbelievers, priests and preachers, deacons and deaconesses, and I tell you, Captain, they are all alike. It is money and position everywhere. And it makes mighty little difference to any of them where or how they get it, just so it is obtained. Gold is the idol of the whole world today. It is the only thing that counts. Get it by some hook or crook, and more often than not, it is crook, but only be smooth enough, and get enough, and lo! presto change! you are a captain of industry and the world lies groveling at your feet."

"That is your viewpoint, Brownleigh. But you were not in the war. You didn't fight in Argonne Woods. You are proud to designate yourself as a scoffer, a skeptic, materialist, and proclaim money as your God. But I want to tell you, my friend, that there are a vast number of boys in the world right now who know there is something bigger, higher, more worthy of attainment. There is more than one boy in America today who wore the khaki over there, that will tell you with white lips and bated breath that the story of Mary's Son is not a myth, that the Christ did walk between the trenches, that

\*The plot for this story, written by Kittie Cowen, was provided by Max Heindel.

He was there to succor, cheer, and sustain when the world's soul lay all but crucified in the bleeding forests of Argonne. To one whose eyes have seen, Brownleigh, such talk as yours is idle. I doubt not, however, that you are honest and sincere as far as you have gone, but the trouble is that you have only gone in one direction. Now suppose you cease to theorize and speculate and do a little real, unbiased, firsthand investigating for yourself. Are you willing to lay aside, for a time, all your preconceived ideas and give me an opportunity to prove to you that even now, at this moment, we are standing on the very verge of a new order of things?"

"I have just told you that I have no faith in unrealities. Nothing but the real thing appeals to me."

"Well, who has asked you for an exhibition of your faith or evinced a desire that you believe in unrealities? I am asking you if you would like to know? If you would, and will go about it in earnest, I think I can show you a few things that will surprise you enough to lift you quite out of your skepticism and give you something decidedly out of the ordinary to think about."

"What's the idea, Captain?"

"Your brains, your energy, and your ability. We need just such men as you more than anything in the world if you will only use what you get in the right way. You have the courage of your convictions, Brownleigh, and men like that are hard to find. Three fourths of the world's population are not thinking at all. That requires too much effort on their part. They simply let the thoughts of the forceful few, be they good or bad, drift into their idle brains, accept the usurpers as their own creations, and move serenely along without even a thought for the morrow. But that is getting away from our subject. How about it, are you willing and do you really care to do a little first-hand investigating with me?"

"Why, certainly, if you mean what you say in all seriousness. The whole proposition looks like a joke to me, but I am willing to try anything once, Captain."

"Very well. I am going to spend the evening with a friend. Be prepared to accompany me. We will leave here about half past seven."

Mrs. Boyington evinced no surprise whatever when a few hours later Captain Benson presented himself at her door in company with a stranger. Brownleigh was not slow in discovering in her a woman of charming manners, refined, sensitive, and well informed on the various subjects that came up for discussion.

They had been in the lady's company some time when suddenly Captain Benson looked her very steadily in the eyes for a moment and then said, "Mrs. Boyington, my friend, Mr. Brownleigh, tells me he has become a confirmed materialist. Doesn't believe in anything that is not perfectly tangible to the five senses, and all that."

"And is he sure he believes in all the things that are tangible to the five senses?"

"Yes, I think I am." Brownleigh responded.

Mrs. Boyington smiled inscrutably and turned to the soldier. "Have you noticed a draft in the room, Captain? I have turned off the electric fan and yet I observe that Mr. Brownleigh's hair is blowing forward across his forehead."

Brownleigh cast back the suddenly distorted locks, but as quickly they again fell forward and this time the entire top of his head seemed to have been swept across by an electric current. Again he tossed the vagrant locks in place and again they as quickly returned bearing the electric current with them accompanied by the distinct touch of what seemed like fingers. His glance traveled quickly from Mrs. Boyington to Captain Benson. Both remained silent. Neither had changed position, and both were across the room. Then quickly he turned to see who might be standing near. His chair was several feet from the wall and only empty space intervened. The man's face suddenly blanched when even as he gazed a strong current fairly alive with electric tingling abruptly swept him from head to foot, and with a startled exclamation he involuntarily sprang from his seat, placing his back to the wall, only to see the vacated chair suddenly appear to take on life and begin to gaily cavort about the room, tipping tipsily first on the front legs, then on the back, and then, as if suddenly aware of its extraordinary demeanor, settle down on the floor and glide noiselessly back into place.

"Great God! Captain, are you trying to electrocute

me?" Brownleigh angrily exclaimed.

"Electricity requires wires to carry its current does it not, Brownleigh? Better examine the chair." This Brownleigh proceeded at once to do. Scarcely had he replaced it when two fingers out of nowhere tapped him lightly but distinctly on the forehead. Again he glanced quickly at his two companions only to find that neither had apparently changed position. And then he could have sworn he heard a faint mocking laugh ring in his very ear and that with it he felt for the moment the contact of lips.

"I give it up," he said brokenly, and dropped down in the chair. "If it's a trick, it's a very clever one, and if it isn't, I've had enough anyway."

decided to pursue it no further, but have prevailed upon him to give me occult training in spiritual development. Suppose you join us and we will form a little class all our own. It will be so much more interesting to have someone to talk things over with occasionally."

"I'll do it," Brownleigh replied after a few moments reflection. "I've already read and thought some along occult lines, but I have never yet found a book or a person that gave out a thing but theory. If you can prove to me, Captain, that I have within me these latent powers the occultists discuss so knowingly, I am not only ready but eager to begin work."

"Even though it subverts all your preconceived

***You must remember from the very first that your development, your progress, everything that you acquire along the lines of higher development depends in the ultimate, wholly upon yourself. Others can only point out the way.***

"It is not a trick, Mr. Brownleigh, and it is a very unusual demonstration. But I believe our friend here promised you that you would be shown. I trust I have not been over zealous in my endeavor to furnish you with proof. And now that you have both felt and seen, would you care for any further demonstration?"

"Great God, no! Not if I am to be the victim!"

"But how else, my friend, could you possibly know? "

"How is it done, Mrs. Boyington?"

"It is not done very often by me, and then only in cases, like this for instance, when a friend of mine has a friend in whom he recognizes unusual ability, which same ability is capable of becoming a power if rightly used. My sole object has been to prove to you the reality of the unseen forces. How would you like to take up a study, Mr. Brownleigh, that would teach the truth relative to the unseen causes that produce all the effects which we see around us? It seems to me such a study would be interesting in the extreme. I know nothing really of this great force which you might say I discovered by accident. Our friend, the Captain here, is an occult student, and has warned me so often of the dangers connected with my discovery that I have

ideas?"

"What is any idea worth if it can not be proven? That is exactly what I am looking for. Something that *can* be proven. You have most skillfully upset all of my theories tonight, so I am quite willing to try out yours."

"We have the proof, Brownleigh, but we are not hypnotists or fortune tellers. Neither are we magicians in the ordinary acceptance of the term. And we use our power when acquired only for the good of mankind. It must never be used for self. I shall be glad to have you join us if you are willing to accept the conditions."

"I am quite willing to accept anything for truth's sake. To know the truth is well worth any price."

"Yes, to know it, and then live it. Remember that is the real price. We must live the life. If, after thinking the matter over carefully, you find you are still of the same opinion, you may come here again with me one week from tonight and we will begin work. But you must remember from the very first that your development, your progress, everything that you acquire along the lines of higher development depends in the ultimate, wholly upon yourself. Others can only point out the way."

Promptly on the appointed hour a week later

Brownleigh returned with Captain Benson ready and eager to begin the work. And the man's progress was little short of phenomenal, so untiring was his energy, so determined and unswerving his will. His advancement was rapid from the first for truly "In His Law did he meditate day and night." Each step in his development thrilled him with delight. Gone was the scoffer, the materialist, for in all things created he searched and found the living God. Ere long, bit by bit, fragments of other lives came floating back to him across the dark abyss of time. Then he began contacting the invisible world. He was beginning to see sights unknown to the physical senses, and later, through the aid of his Teacher, he learned to function in an invisible body. Evening after evening he spent with Captain Benson, sometimes in the privacy of his own room, at others in a secluded corner of the club house veranda, or in the home of Mrs. Boyington.

The two men had just returned from a walk one evening and Brownleigh was upbraiding himself for his former arrogance, stupidity and materialistic pride, when a car drew up before the lodge and a gentleman alighted and signaled Captain Benson to meet him on the walk. Brownleigh noted the splendid air and easy assurance with which the man, though past middle life, carried himself, and thought musingly of the days not so far distant when his sole ambition had been to acquire a sizeable bank account and then assume just such an air of being some one, the acquaintance of whom was well worth cultivation. But he had indeed gone a long way since that day. Why, at this very moment the power was his to make the advancement he had once so vainly coveted. He smiled contemplatively at the thought as he reverently recalled the vows he had so recently taken for an unselfish use of that power and never, never to use it except in the behalf of others. Truly he had traveled a long, long way, when he could so happily lay ambition and earthly power aside to serve in humanity's cause.

As he thus mused, his eyes wandered on past the two men on the pavement until they reached the waiting car and there they quickly focused on the face of the young girl seated therein. Brownleigh had seen pretty women, plenty of them, but in this

girl, just past the first flush of youth, what was it that held his eyes as by a spell? Her face was in profile, but the tilt of the head, the small, well-formed nose, the firm young chin, and the lightly closed lips, all conjoined in one charming, fascinating whole to lure him on with desire to know more, to gain a closer view.

And then the two men, their consultation ended, parted and in another moment the auto rolled away.

"And who are the friends, Captain?" Brownleigh interrogated upon the soldier's return.

"Judge Cathcart and his daughter. Live up on Terrace Heights. They are entertaining some dignitary from the East next week and want me to attend a reception they are giving in his honor. That's what comes of being a soldier. They have even asked me to give a little talk. It is a terrible bore, Brownleigh.

"But you are going?" Brownleigh questioned half enviously.

"Oh, I suppose so. That may be just the place where I can drop the seed. There is always a chance when one is called upon to speak. Otherwise I should have refused, point blank."

"Know the young lady well?"

"Fairly. She is really a fine girl to have been reared the way she has, on a golden spoon, so to speak. She has brains and a lot of good common sense. But like all the others out in the world she is ambitious and proud. Let people once make money their god and there seems to be no half-way ground with them. The millionaire wants a billion. The billionaire has his gaze fixed steadfastly on further acquisition. There is no limit to where the lure of gold will lead you once you yield to its fascination. I haven't a cent to my name but my salary and I thank God for it."

"She certainly is very beautiful."

"She is a splendid young animal, but it seems to me she is getting about old enough to know better. She is twenty-four years old I heard her say not long ago."

"If a fellow hasn't money or a title, isn't a hero, I mean, or something of the sort, he certainly doesn't count for very much, from a worldly viewpoint." (Continued) □