

Chapter 20

Occultism—Its Uses and Abuses

**LOVE—MARRIAGE—SPELLS—CHARMS—SPIRITUAL AFFINITY—
TRUE SOUL LOVE—METAPHYSICAL KNOWLEDGE.**

The progress of my narrative brings me to a period during which the unhappy land of Hindostan seemed to have had a moment's breathing-time granted her in the midst of ever-accumulating intestine and foreign calamity. It was during one of those seasons of false peace and hollow truce that have occasionally lifted the war demon's hand from the bleeding breast of hapless India that I found leisure to cultivate systematically the teachings which exalted my soul to the gods of antiquity and brought me into communion with the holy beings that would fill our world with the tracks of angels, did we not drive them back with the work of devils.

Almost the happiest hours of my life were those devoted to the sessions of the glorious Brotherhood, of whose teachings I have given a slight and most imperfect sketch in the preceding chapter. So long as the influence of those seances was upon me I felt as if I had been living with gods, angels, and spirits, and as I grew more and more familiar with the sublime ideas they opened up to me, I became reconciled to the chaotic present and hopeful for the inevitable future. Still, I realized then, as I do now, when I recall those ecstatic communings derived from the heaven of heavens, that they measurably unfitted me, for earth, and rendered a return to its spoliation and licentiousness weary and distasteful to me. Yet I knew it was my lot to return, aye, and to take an earnest and active part in the terrible era that impended—a dance of death more gaunt and grim than any that had of late desolated the doomed land of the Orient. I knew, too, by the force of that prophetic nature which is the ban as well as blessing of its possessor, that there was an episode in my life to be passed through of a totally different character to any that had preceded or could follow it, and though these monitions could neither be banished nor modified, they did not enable me to avoid the breakers, or steer my life's barque out of the stormy sea that threatened to wreck it. Our holy seances had closed for the time being.

The mystic Bygas, the noble Brahmins, and the associated brothers, many of them strangers from distant lands, must all separate and depart each on their several ways. The bright angels who ministered amongst us would wing their way hence to fairer though none the less worshipful scenes. The attendant spirits would rise, by virtue of their labors in our behalf, another round higher on the ladder of progression, whilst the solemn crypts of the ancient temples would become silent, deserted, given up to the desolation which falls upon everything and every creature where life has been and life is not.

Of the throng that had assembled in our subterranean temple to partake of the sublime teachings there imparted, all were scattered like the snows of a past winter, save my Brahminical friend, Nanak Rai, and myself. In our departure from the neighborhood of Ellora we were accompanied by Capt. Graham, a young Scotch-man whose acquaintance I had made some years before while traveling with Professor von Marx, and whom I had subsequently encountered wandering, like myself, amidst the stupendous cave temples. Some years had elapsed since we first met, and time had worked great changes in us both, yet we immediately recognized each other, and gladly renewed an acquaintance which had already ripened into friendship.

In his own country Capt. Graham was an habitue of the best society, not only on account of his birth and connections, but also for the sake of his amiable manners, genial disposition, and cultivated intellect. With a remarkably handsome person, the clear blue eye and ruddy complexion of his Highland progenitors, this young officer united qualities of mind and physique which endeared him to all who knew him. The specialty which first attracted him to me was his strong sympathy with my Spiritualistic pursuits, and the fact that he was gifted with the peculiar faculty of what the Scotch call "second sight." Having obtained a short furlough, he had left his regiment at Allahabad in order to make a visit to the famous cave temples at Ellora, where I was fortunate enough to meet him and become useful in guiding him through the intricacies of the wonderful ruins with which I was myself familiar.

I perceived that he was no subject for our association, the existence of which he, like thousands of others who trod over the very ground which our halls of meeting undermined, was profoundly ignorant of. Still I found him eager and yearning for metaphysical knowledge, and an apt student in that school of philosophy wherein Nanak Rai was an especial proficient. I presented him, therefore, to that learned Brahmin, happy in realizing the treasures of wisdom which the young neophyte would receive from such an admirable instructor. And these were the two esteemed companions who journeyed with me to Benares, where the Brahmin resided and near which I had made for myself a temporary abiding-place.

Although there was nothing in our external circumstances to create a bond of association between the young Scotch officer and myself, I have said it was the season of rest and treacherous lull in the political life of hapless Hindostan; there was therefore nothing to disturb the interchange of the most kindly relations between us, or mar the interest with which we entered upon the discussion of abstruse points in occultism and metaphysics whilst he remained my guest. It was during a conversation of this character, as we lay beneath the luxuriant shadows of a clustering palm-grove smoking fragrant cheroots, that my friend with some hesitation began to question me concerning the occult powers of certain fakirs whom I entertained in my establishment.

It was only after a considerable amount of circumlocution that I ascertained the drift of his questioning, and found that he wished to learn how far the magical acquirements attributed to these ecstasies could be made available in procuring the love of the opposite sex. At first, I treated the subject with the contempt and indifference which I felt it merited; but when I found Capt. Graham was not only in deep earnest, but actually proposed to avail himself of the power which he was so curiously seeking to understand, I became considerably startled, and asked him, bluntly enough, I suppose, how it was possible that a man of his fine mind could propose to avail himself of arts so unworthy and for purposes so base. Fixing his clear blue eyes upon me, and without any show of resentment for the unintentional severity of my rebuke, he said "My dear Chevalier, do you believe that the exercise of any powers with which nature endows us is wrong?"

"That all depends upon the purpose for which we employ our powers," I replied.

"Granted," he answered; "but suppose nature has endowed me with strong psychological powers, would you deem it a base and unworthy act if I exerted them to induce a return of affection from the woman I love?"

"I can see nothing unnatural or objectionable in that, Graham."

"Again you grant the only position I contend for," said my friend. "Then, wherein can the wrong exist of adding to the powers with which nature has endowed me, occult powers of a still stronger kind? that is, provided the purpose be the same, and that I only seek to secure the affection of the woman I love?"

"Does she whom you love fail to return your affection?"

"Just so."

"And you would compel her to do so, even against her will?"

"I would bend that will to my own, Chevalier; and if I could succeed, do you deem me capable of misusing my advantage? I desire to marry a woman whom I cannot as yet succeed in inspiring with my own devotion. Could I do so, how should I wrong her by spending my life in ministering to her happiness?"

"Graham," I answered, "if you yourself were an ascended spirit, freed from all the gross desires and selfishness of earth; in a sphere of higher and holier aspirations than earth ever engendered; would you devote your exalted powers to satisfy the promptings of a merely sensual human passion?"

"By heavens, Chevalier!" replied my friend, starting up and pacing the ground in great agitation, "I never thought of the matter in such a light. Why, the very idea of asking blessed spirits to engage in such a work, as you present it, is blasphemy."

"I am answered, Graham; but where does your confession lead you to? Do you not perceive that you rule out the intervention of good spirits in the acts under consideration? and if this be so, what class of beings do you suppose would be attracted to your service or willing to aid in your enchantments?"

"Wicked spirits, of course, or if not actually wicked, still beings of a less exalted grade than I could desire companionship with; but, my friend, you know there are powers inherent in ourselves, occult forces, too, in nature, which could achieve the end desired without the aid of spirits. You yourself, Chevalier, have often proved your resistless power of will and ability to bend the will of others to your desire. Why cannot I use a similar influence to impress the object of my affections with sentiments of reciprocity?"

"You have constantly tried to do this?"

"I have."

"And without success?"

"Entirely so."

"Then you have simply proved what I have so often told you concerning the conditions which may interpose to hinder the effect of psychological impressions."

"Will you not repeat the substance of your theory?"

"I believe my will, clothed with the force of my magnetism which is life, powerful enough to remove mountains, provided there be no intervening obstacle between the current of my magnetism and the mountain I would act on. You can compel whom you will to love, hate, or obey you, irrespective of distance or material obstacles, provided there be no cross magnetism intervening between you and your object, no more powerful will than your own operating against you; in that case, your will must be thwarted and the currents of your magnetism will be dissipated in space."

"But how can I be aware of this, or, knowing its probability, how prevent it?"

"You can but take your chance. We are not yet clairvoyant enough to be masters of every situation we would experiment with. Be assured these baffling cross magnetisms, projected from a thousand sources unknown to us, are the causes of the many failures which occur in just such cases as yours. Successes are most frequent when the operator is potential or electrically positive, and the subject is passive and negative. Such is the relation sustained by that worst and meanest of all criminals, the licentious seducer, towards his victim. He projects his foul psychology upon a negative and wholly unguarded subject. Those around her, probably unsuspecting of her danger, exert no counteracting influence, no cross magnetism to thwart his; the result is the subjection of the weak to the strong, the passive to the negative, an angel perhaps, to a devil assuredly."

"I must accept your positions," replied Graham. "I know you have often claimed sovereign potency for the will, and yet urged the reasons just assigned why it is so successful in some instances, and so inoperative in others. Be it so. I must abandon two contingent resources then—the aid of good spirits and the exercise of psychological power; but is there nothing left for me—no mendicaments in the realm of Nature, no spells, enchantments, or talismans whereby her occult power may be exerted for my benefit? I know I shock you, my friend; you will despise if not hate me for these questionings, to me so importunate, to you so lowering and contemptible. But Chevalier, remember you do not love, you never did love, nor can you know what that name means. Oh! believe me, love is stronger than death, more cruel than the grave. All else—wit, wisdom, piety, learning, hope of heaven or fear of perdition, pale before the strength of this giant passion; but I see I speak to empty air; you cannot understand me."

"You are mistaken," I replied, kindly pressing my poor friend's hand, and addressing him in the most sympathizing tone I could command. "I can and do understand you, although no mortal has ever yet moved me to the master passion; but the day will come, Graham, when I shall be thus moved; nay, more, when I shall love, as you do now, in despair and hopelessness, in life-long endurance and silent misery; and yet I would despise myself and renounce my art, did I deem it possible I could be induced to use it for the unholy purpose of captivating the woman I prophetically know I shall be doomed to love in vain."

"You love in vain! you, Chevalier!" exclaimed my friend with equal naivete and amazement. "Nay, that is impossible."

"Your partiality makes you egotistical for your friend, Graham, neither do you justly estimate the character of woman in her noblest, highest phases. What I tell you is the truth,

and though I have never yet seen her of whom I prophesy, except in spirit, I know she is not of the class who give men occasion to boast of their too easy conquests. The women who are marketable commodities are only worthy of the men who buy them. For every true man in creation there is a woman who should be, nay, who must be and is, his angel side. One such I shall fail to win on earth, but gain in heaven; but let us return to your last proposition, consulting together as students of occultism, rather than as men striving to win the affections of women by aid of impure arts. Charms, spells, and enchantments depend for their success on the aid of spirits and psychological impression. I have already endeavored to show you that the spirits who could or would assist in such rites are unholy, and in obtaining their aid you would league yourself to them in such relations that when you become like themselves a spirit, you would find yourself bound to them in the chains of a magnetic rapport which would be horrible to endure and difficult to break. We have already considered the chance of success or failure in psychological impression; what other art would you inquire about?"

"You have not answered me concerning the effect of charms and talismans, Chevalier. Is their alleged potency only an idle fiction?"

"See this handkerchief, Graham; it was but yesterday taken from the bazaar; what virtue inhered in its fabric as it lay exposed for sale?"

"Surely, none that I know of."

"As you say, none. But supposing you were to place it now in the hands of a sensitive or psychometrist, you would find my character and physique, nay, my very motives and the most secret intentions of my mind impressed upon its every fibre, is it not so?"

"We have proved the possibility of such soul-readings. Go on."

"Supposing, then, I should add to the magnetism which already adheres to this fabric, some strongly concentrated idea, wish, or purpose; do you not suppose that idea, wish, or purpose would also be detected there? and would not that voluntary impression of my mind upon this inanimate substance constitute it a talisman?"

"Talismanic virtue is no fiction, then," cried Graham, triumphantly.

"Be patient," I replied. "Before we speculate further upon the possibility of effecting your purpose through any occult means, let me lay before you the general effect of such procedures; you may then be better enabled to determine the worth of what you propose. You think I do not understand the nature of human love. Philosophically speaking, I comprehend it better than you do. Love, or the motive so called, is generally one of three impulses: The first is 'magnetic affinity,' or a movement of the material atoms which compose the human body, and these being brought into the presence of another set of atoms for which they have a strong affinity, impress upon their subject that powerful sense of attraction which is commonly called love.

I insist that the emotion I describe is magnetic affinity only, and corresponds to the chemical affinity which exists between inanimate atoms of nature. The difference between the modes of attraction is this, however. Chemical affinities in atoms are permanent and changeless. If you separate the atoms, they still maintain their affinities, and when placed in the same relations again will manifest the same attractions; but magnetic affinities are not permanent. Their special attribute is change, and their attractions are merely temporary, soon

wearing out, and when once exhausted, never renewed. The chemical affinity which subsists between sulphur and gold will ever be the same. It existed ten thousand years ago, and will be as manifest ten thousand years hence as now; but the magnetic attractions which draw the libertine to the fair face of his victim almost invariably end in depolarization; then ensues coldness, neglect, indifference, followed by dislike and even loathing; hence it is that many intrigues based upon mere passionate attraction, have ended, aye, and will again, in the intense repulsion which impels the seducer even to the murder of his victim.

Believe me, it is not in idle fantasy that the phrenologist associates the cranial organs which impel to licentiousness and destructiveness in close proximity to each other. The demons of lust and murder are twin brothers, and follow on each other's track, from the law of which I speak. The swing of the mental pendulum which prompts the one carries the mind to the other extreme, and thus accounts for the aversion which so often succeeds the excess of violent and unbridled passion."

"Admirable, my dear philosopher!" cried poor Graham, almost excited to mirth by my grave analysis of a passion which he still insisted could only be known experimentally. "You have given me case No 1; now for your secondly. What sort of a phase is that, may I ask?"

"Oh! secondly, is not love at all," I replied. "It is simply friendship, and as such it may be an excellent basis of union between man and woman, far more likely also to remain a permanent sentiment than any evanescent passion; still, it is not love, and those who unite upon such a foundation, although restrained from infidelity to each other by principle, may yet experience emotions of love for others."

"Very good! I am with you there. Friendship between husband and wife! Pshaw! just the same as between man and man. I may and do feel the warmest sentiments of friendship for you, Chevalier, yet I do not wish to marry you, however I might feel if you were a woman. No, no, my Mentor! friendship is not love, of that I am quite certain; but now for your No. 3. Ah, you sigh! I almost begin to imagine you are more committed than you choose to acknowledge. No? Well, that emphatic shake of the head is your confession, and I must wait until I see you stricken down as I am; but come, I long to hear about your No. 3. What is it, I pray?"

"It is soul affinity, Graham—the realization that man and woman have no actual existence apart from each other; that they are, in fact, counterparts, without which their separate lives are imperfect and unformed. Life is dual, Graham, and love, true soul-love, is the bond of union which reunites the severed parts. It exists independent of personal charms or mental acquirements. It annihilates self and selfishness; prefers the beloved object beyond all adventitious acquirements; subsists through sickness or in health, through good or evil report, lives for the one beloved, dies and realizes heaven only in the union which death may interrupt but cannot sever. Divine spiritual affinity survives death and the grave, unites the two halves of the one soul, and in eternity perfects the dual nature of man and woman into one angel."

"Chevalier," replied my friend, "if you have not yet loved, you deserve to; and thrice blessed will she be who can secure to herself the affection you thus describe. That heavy sigh again! Why, you will compel me presently to believe you are the rejected one, and I the happy lover. But come, my Socratic and Platonic friend, you have not yet informed me what effect I might expect from the love potions, philters, or other approved methods of magical art, of which your famous fakirs are the expert professors."

"My fakirs are occultists, Graham, not Voodoo charmers, nor would they be mine much

longer if Voodooism were amongst their practices; but to recur to your question. I answer; though the use of certain drugs, vapors, or other physical means might produce a temporary excitement in the person upon whom they were exercised, nevertheless, like psychology or other arts of enchantment, the effect is but temporary. They can impress, but not create the will; arouse passional attraction, but not permanent sentiment. They excite illusions, cast spells, induce impulses, but their transitory effects are always followed by depolarization and revulsive reaction, in which antipathy sets in as proportionably strong as the attraction was violent."

"I see it all," cried my poor friend. "You are a severe teacher, but I believe a truthful one; besides, our mutual experiences assure me you are correct. I would have risked my life and, heaven forgive me! periled my very soul to secure the love of her I adore, but the bare possibility that she who now tolerates me might one day learn to loathe me is too terrible to risk. It is enough. There is no hope for me. And now, Chevalier, the very lowest depths of my weakness having been laid open before you, let us return to our occultism. You say it is the magnetism and psychology impressed on an object which impart to it talismanic virtue; are there, then, no natural talismans in nature?"

"Thousands and millions, Graham, had we but the clear sight to discern them. There are myriads of herbs and stones full of virtue to heal, gladden, or sadden us; objects which can and do affect the senses and impress the spirit; links of connection between the visible and invisible worlds; and those who, with sapient self-sufficiency, scoff at these occult forces in nature and think to extinguish faith in them by the bugbear word, 'superstition,' are themselves the dunces, rather than those who unwittingly believe without being able to prove their belief."

"O my friend!" cried the enthusiastic young Scotchman, "why will you not lead me into those realms of occult power?"

"Because I am not there myself, Graham," I replied. "I have as yet only stood upon the threshold and glanced down the endless corridors of the invisible universe. I know such things are. Some of their powers and dangers I have tested, but only enough to warn and encourage me in yet deeper researches."

"You know enough," replied Graham, "to explain to me what talismanic influence is impressed upon this object."

As he spoke he drew from his vest a small package which he put into my hand, but even as he did so he started with astonishment and dismay at the effect his talisman produced upon me. Had the deadly cobra stung me, I could scarcely have experienced a pang more poignant. Something unconquerably antagonistic to my nature was contained in that package. The face and form of a very beautiful woman rose up before me, but the most loathsome dwellers on the threshold of humanity that ever drove the neophyte back from the country of the elementaries would have been more sympathetic to me than this terrible visionary woman. Almost breathless with emotion, I poured out to my friend a hurried description of the portrait—for such I knew it to be—that I held in my hand, and the effect that it produced upon me, and then the feeling of antipathy gave place to an irrepressible passion of grief as humiliating to myself as inexplicable to my friend.

Meantime doleful shapes flitted before my eyes, wailing sounds were in the air, and a sorrow as profound as unaccountable weighed me down and impelled me to push away my sympathizing companion and bury my face in the sheltering grass ere I could regain composure. Rebuked, indignant, and amazed to find myself the sport of such incomprehensible

emotions, I at length succeeded in freeing my clenched hand from the odious package, which I returned to Graham, entreating him to keep from me all such influences in future. He listened to and watched me with evident pain as well as interest. He said I was correct in my description of the beautiful female whose portrait was enclosed in that package, but why her image should be associated with such presages of sorrow and excite sentiments of antipathy in his best friend he was at a loss to conceive.

"Graham," I exclaimed, as we arose to separate, "if that portrait represents the woman you love, thank your guardian angel that your enchantments have failed. Better wind around your neck the slime of the boa-constrictor than the arms of that fatal woman."

"Chevalier de B____," cried the young Scotchman, in high wrath, "you shall answer for this!" Then returning, and grasping my hand which he had just flung from him, he murmured in his usually affectionate manner, "Forgive me, Louis, I am a half-dazed fool, I know, and as to you—why, you are only a mystic."