

*Two Spirits United
in the Elysian Fields*



Abstract and train of thoughts

Madame Blavatsky reviews a deeply mystical novel on transcendental psychology written by Alfred Percy Sinnett.

The propensity to seek defects in natural beauty is not proof of taste, but evidence of its absence.	3
Who can possibly know his Self, while living in the mephitic atmosphere of the material world?	5
Sinnett weaves seamlessly lucid metaphysical insights in a prosaic story of everyday life.	6
The real and the illusive aspects of our being are always next to each other, like twin parallel lines, but they never meet unless the animal tendencies created by selfishness are conquered, and the devil of the duad annihilated.	9
Two spirits were finally united in the limited nirvanic state of Devachan, from whence no traveller returns.	12



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[Regarding this Review of A.P. Sinnett's novel, which bears the above title (London: George Redway, 1886; 2 vols.), Madame Blavatsky has the following to say, in a letter dated January 10th, 1887; which she wrote to Sinnett from Ostende:¹

“You are wrong in attributing to *my neglect* the review of your *United*. It is there two-thirds done ever since you went away but I wanted to do it well, or leave it alone. Two pages *were dictated to me* — the rest left to my own brilliant pen. Hence it clashes like a star with a rush-light. I am on it again however and this time *will finish it . . .*”]

The propensity to seek defects in natural beauty is not proof of taste, but evidence of its absence.

Months have passed since the publication of this remarkable work — remarkable as a psychic production besides its undeniable literary worth — and we have been watching all the time to see the effects produced by it on the Philistine press. The latter forgetting but too often “that it is not the eye for faults, but beauties, that constitutes the true critic,” has made us acquainted for years with the spirit with which it generally treats theosophical works. There are not a few reviewers in the Metropolis of England, pre-eminent among these the literary critics of the *Saturday Review*, who love to proceed in the spirit so sternly denounced by Macculloch. He says:

Fastidiousness, the discernment of defects and the propensity to seek them, in natural beauty, are not the proofs of taste, but the evidence of its absence.

And adds:

. . . it is worse than that, since it is a depravity, when pleasure is found in the discovery of such defects, real or imaginary.²

¹ Originally published in *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, pp. 226-29.

² [Dr. John Macculloch, *Proofs and Illustrations of the Attributes of God: from the facts and laws of the physical universe: being the foundation of natural and revealed religion* (1843), Vol. III, pp. 273-74]

When no defects can be ferreted out in unpopular works, the press boycotts them in contemptuous silence.

It came to pass as it was expected. Unable to tear the mystic romance to shreds, to find fault with its style, or even to criticize the subject, as its author had wisely screened it behind the privileges of a fancy novel — the Philistines simply ignored it. There appeared two or three short notices in the leading papers in which, with [307] one or two exceptions, chaff — not always witty — was made to stand for a literary notice, and then the press subsided into silence. The novel was seriously mystical, the descriptive portions of the various phases of psychic phenomena were photographed from nature, and it was written by an earnest and a well-known Theosophist. This was, of course, amply sufficient to place the work on the *Index Expurgatorius*.¹ *The Graphic*² alone had a few words of appreciation in its columns.

As the present notice lays no claim to an analysis of the literary merits of *United*, but means to treat only of the psychic element in it, it may be worth our while to remind the reader of what was said of this novel in one, at least, of the best London papers.

Mr. Sinnett's new contribution to the literature of transcendental psychology, *United*, is more than a worthy successor to *Karma*. Adepts and disciples will, no doubt, apply to this work as to its predecessor, in order to find freshly suggestive light thrown on the doctrine it illustrates and seeks to popularize. But the ordinary reader is by no means forgotten — quite the contrary: and it is from his point of view that it will be the most prudent to discuss the work. Independently of its subject then, *United* is a thoroughly interesting romance. Well constructed, and perfectly clear, calculated to exercise a fascination over the most sceptical or indifferent with regard to esoteric theosophy. Moreover, though it is, and should be, no purpose of a story to convince, it is likely to attract, and, in any case, to inspire personal respect for the very obvious earnestness of the author. The main story, little broken by episode, is that of a man who transfers his entire vitality to a girl, in order to save her life, and, by his self-sacrifice, not only raises her to a higher scale of being, but has earned the right to her life in return in a loftier sphere. All this sounds very mystical, but the result is a pathos only to be obtained through skill in giving to the mystical the semblance and impression of realism — a very high form of art indeed, and very seldom carried out so well. No doubt faith, in the completest sense, has something to do with the artistic and popular success of Mr. Sinnett's achievement in so exceedingly difficult a field.³

¹ [A list of books that the Roman Catholic Church forbade its members to read unless certain passages condemned as dangerous to faith or morals were deleted or changed.]

² [A British weekly illustrated newspaper, first published on 4th December 1869 by William Luson Thomas' company Illustrated Newspapers Ltd. Thomas' brother Lewis Samuel Thomas was a co-founder. The premature death of the latter in 1872 marked a gap in the early history of the publication. It was set up as a rival to the popular *Illustrated London News*. The influence of *The Graphic* within the art world was immense, its many admirers included Vincent van Gogh, and Hubert von Herkomer. It continued to be published weekly under this title until 23rd April 1932 and then changed title to *The National Graphic* between 28th April and 14th July 1932; it then ceased publication, after 3,266 issues.]

³ *The Graphic*, July 24th, 1886, London

The above is not over-extravagant in giving a clear idea of the work, but it is fair and honest in its appreciation. No longer notice of *United* has appeared, even in our Theosophical publications. We will not stop to find [308] any valid reasons for it, for there were none; except, perhaps, as regards *The Theosophist* — an instinctive fear of saying too much or too little. It is time that this remarkable novel and its esoteric truths should be more amply analysed and thus pointed out to the attention of theosophical readers, at any rate. Hitherto there has been too much tendency in the organs of our Society to sacrifice spirit to form, to lay too much stress on isolated cases of the normal manifestations of psychic powers, instead of popularising them as a LAW IN HUMAN NATURE.

This power is “latent *in MAN*,” and not in solitary units of the human family only, though this mystery of dual life in every man, woman, and child may remain unknown to them ninety-nine times out of a hundred. This ignorance is due to our Western modes of life.

Whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate — we, of the civilized nations, are born, live and die under an artificial light; a *false* light which, distorting our real selves like a mirror cracked in all directions, distorts our faces, and makes us see ourselves not as we are, but as our religious superstitions and social prejudices show us to ourselves. Otherwise — the Ediths and Marstons would be less rare in every class of society than they are now.

Who can possible know his Self, while living in the mephitic atmosphere of the material world?

For who of us knows, or has any means of knowing *Self*, while he lives in the lethal atmospheres of whether Society or Proletariat? Who, taught from babyhood that he is born in sin, helpless as a reed, whose only true support is the “Lord” — can think of testing his own powers — when even their presence in him is a thought that never could enter his mind? Between the eternal struggle for more gold, more honours, more power in the higher classes, and the “struggle for existence,” for bread and *life*, in the lower ones, there is no time or room for the manifestation of the “inner man” in us. Thus, from birth to death that EGO slumbers, paralyzed by the external man, and asserts itself only occasionally in dreams, in casual visions, and strange “coincidences” — unbidden and unheeded. The *Psychic* or HIGHER SELF [309] as it is called in *United*, has to be, first of all, entirely ridden of the soporific influence of *Personal Self*, before it can proclaim obviously its existence and actual presence in man.¹ But once this condition is fulfilled, then truly

. . . he who reigns within himself, and rules Passions, Desires, and Fears, is more [than] a King,²

as Milton says: for he *is an adept already*; the *shell* alone between the inner man and the world of objective as subjective manifestation, is to be overcome; and when it offers no better resistance than a merely passive one then the higher self is as free as on the day on which that shell will be left behind him for ever. But there are rare in-

¹ [Consult “Higher Manas and Lower Manas” and “Higher Self and Higher Ego,” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [*Paradise Regained* (1671), Book II, 466-67]

dividuals who seem born with this capacity for certain mysterious objects of karma, and whose *inner SELVES* are so strong as to actually reduce to nought the resistance of their personal or provisional bodies. Such a “rare efflorescence” of her age is Edith — first the child, and then the girl heroine of Mr. Sinnett’s novel.

Sinnett weaves seamlessly lucid metaphysical insights in a prosaic story of everyday life.

The author has enhanced the value of his great services to Theosophy and laid the world of thought under an additional obligation by the publication of the above novel; not as the reviewer in the *Graphic* thinks, because he gave “to the mystical the semblance and impression of realism,” but because he clothed REALITY — an actual psychic phenomenon which under *pseudo-impartial* modern investigation and too scientific a treatment could hitherto grow no higher in public recognition than a “telepathic impact” — in such attractive yet natural garb, and presented it in such an easy reading form. To that numerous class of the reading public which has no taste for abstract metaphysical speculation, the interweaving of some *true* occult doctrines into the framework of such an interesting narrative is invaluable. In fact, the mystic bias now tempering so much current light literature, is in a large measure accountable for the rush of spirituality which constitutes not the least noticeable feature of the last few years. Difficult as it is to convey in an intelligible manner to the general reader the more advanced doctrines of the secret teaching, we must make the attempt. In *United*, a mass of lucid metaphysical [310] speculation is blended with the subject matter of a story of prosaic, everyday society life.

The story opens with a description of the early life of the heroine — Edith Kinseyle — with her widowed father and a good, simple soul of a governess, in a lonely country house. The father is an ever-occupied scholar, an ardent philologist leading his own inner life of study, so absorbed in it, that “he realized for the first time that she [the wife] had been seriously ill” only when “in a gentle, unobtrusive way,” Mrs. Kinseyle “had dropped into the grave.” The first lines of the work acquaint the reader with the whole character of the heroine’s father, and thus lead him to see how much the early surroundings of the child were propitious for the development in her of her *abnormal* powers. She was the only child of a quiet country gentleman, of no large means, whose lack of fortune as much as the retired habits of a book-worm, had narrowed the horizon of her social life from birth, and thus thrown her forcibly upon the resources of a mental, inner world of her own. Her governess, Miss Barkley, “a tall, thin spinster, with very prominent teeth, a mild disposition and a long experience of life” — the latter quality having no effect upon her terror of ghosts — rather developed than checked in the child an early and ungovernable love for the mysterious and the “supernatural,” by thus awakening in the girl a natural spirit of innocent combativeness and malice. From the early age of six, Edith manifested an abnormal interest in the occult. She rummaged out all the old books in her father’s library to get information upon ghosts in general and “a family ghost” especially; and was frequently found by her governess perched on the entrance gate of the avenue wistfully wanting to catch a glimpse of the family “apparition” — an old knight on horseback whose astral picture occasionally curdled the blood in the veins of the rustic “elect” who happened to see it.

The story of the simple child-life of that young dreamy soul evolving from *without within*, so to speak, and [311] awakening with every day more to an *inner* instead of an outer world under the sole guidance of *her* own personal instincts — is very beautiful. Till the age of six when her mother died, the child had been left entirely to follow her own quiet tastes. It was only when placed under the necessity of either sending his daughter to school or taking a governess for her, that the widower was brought to a closer acquaintance with his child. He was quite startled and perplexed to discover that the six years old baby *had a will* in the choice of her future destinies. For when Ferron Kinseyle attempted to argue her into making her choice of rather school than governess,

“Oh, Papa!” she cried, more in sorrow than in anger, “you don’t mean that you will send me from you *against my will!*” and with that she melted into tears.

Both will and tears had their desired effect. Miss Edith remained at home, and time rolled on for her, calm but never monotonous, between her kind father and as kind a governess on the external plane; and the fathomless world within herself she was never tired of exploring till she was seventeen. Her beauty expanded, but she preferred her quiet home to everything else.

Her love of the quiet seclusion of Compton Wood was born of no shrinking timidity of nature, still less of any morose dislike of her fellow creatures. The sunny brightness of her own temperament gilded the old house with all the gaiety she required. . . .

Thus she passed her days between her quiet home and visits to an old manor belonging to some relatives whither she was drawn by a “Countess’ Study,” so called, in it. It was not a “*canny* habitation after dusk” for nervous people; for that “Countess” of old had left a memory after her for having practised the “black art,” and after her death her wraith had been seen at the same windows in the “moon-light.” But it was the more attractive for Edith, who had never been “nervous,” to her governess’ sorrow. In that large room of the deserted house she used to sit for long hours before dusk, while Miss Barkley ventilated her fidgety fears with Mrs. Squires, the lodge-keeper’s wife. During [312] one of such rests in the lodge while Edith is in the “Countess’ Study,” the governess meets with two young gentlemen — George Ferrars and Marston. After mutual introduction the former gives the curious information that he is at present engaged in following a clue for his sister, Mrs. Malcolm. The latter, who is fond of penetrating into the depths of things occult and who is a clairvoyant, has received a mysterious communication: she must become acquainted with a young girl connected with an old manor called Kinseyle-Court. His companion, Marston — the chief hero in the occult plot — turns out, later on, to be a strong mesmerizer, one deeply versed in the mysteries of psychic lore.

Meanwhile, feeling more brave with two young men to protect her from possible ghosts, Miss Barkley “marvelling at the strange coincidence,” proceeds in search of Edith in company of her new acquaintances. But Edith does not answer the call from the hall. In great terror the governess rushes through the old house in search for her and finds her pupil at last.

Half kneeling, half lying prostrate on the floor, her creamy white dress shining as though luminous in the moonbeams, her hands clasped together and her face turned upwards towards . . . the Countess' Study . . .

“Oh, why did you disturb us?” she said in a dreamy tone . . . “I feel as if I had been in Heaven, but now *she* has gone. . . .”

“The beautiful angel has been here just where I am standing talking to me, for I don't know how long, filling my mind with such rapture I can't describe it to you . . . I have been lifted up out of myself — I can't bear to come down again.”

Edith cannot tear herself away from the spot where she had this first experience of *living in her Higher Self*, and outside of her body. A little water brought by Marston, however, who says in a confident tone that:

“It is pure water, with only a little magic in it . . . which will not be at war with the vision,”

recalls Edith back to this life, and the two — the natural born seeress and the strong adept and mesmerizer, become linked in the same destiny from that hour henceforward. [313]

It is not mutual love however — as no profane novel writer would fail to make it. On Edith's part it is not even a very acute sympathy or interest. She feels his influence later on, and chiefly during her hours of supersensuous existence, when separating from her body she lives in her “Higher-Self.” Otherwise, this first and several subsequent meetings have no immediate effects upon the girl — though Marston's fate is sealed from that night. He becomes passionately devoted to her, but with a mystic love that has nothing of the terrestrial element in it.

Edith and Marian Malcolm (Ferrars' sister) soon become great friends and feel a passionate affection for each other. Both are mutually attracted at first, because both labour under the impression that they are visited by one and the same “Spirit Queen” — although the latter is only the glorious Spirit SELF of the pure girl, called Edith, who thus strangely mistakes that Higher-Self for a being independent of her own individuality. Marston, the adept in occult mesmerism, finally disabuses her and reveals the truth to the young Seeress. But in doing so he seals his own destiny.

There is a deadly secret in his life, a mystery that is known only to this old and trusted friend of his young days, Ferrars, and his sister, and one that makes him lead the life of a Cain, for no crime of his own. That crime — expiated by his father on the gallows — digs an abyss between himself and the girl he loves. With his mesmeric power over her it would be easy for him, as he says to Mrs. Malcolm, to have chained her life to his, but he will not do it. “Would it not have been base to do so?” he asks. As for Edith, as she brings back to earth none of the knowledge of persons and things she exhibits while plunged by Marston in her trances, she is ignorant of that great love. None of the terrestrial impurities seem to touch her, and she is wholly absorbed only in her dream-life. She even gets engaged to a worthy Colonel who adores her, but whom she consents to wed, simply because, as she writes,

“I have been [314] paired off by my destinies and my friends with Colonel Denby.”

In one of her trance states she reveals to Marston and Mrs. Malcolm that her lung is very weak and that she will not live, that in her waking hours, feeling strong and healthy, she is ignorant of the danger; though when the doctors find it out this does not seem to affect her in the least. She remains throughout the same dreamy and, at the same time, merry girl as from the first.

It is this pre-eminently occult feature — the constant though unconscious longing for deliverance from the terrestrial bonds in every true psychic, all the attractions, happiness and joy of a young life, notwithstanding — that the author has admirably developed and described in his heroine. Her *dual* nature, so difficult to maintain in contrasted harmony in the same character, is drawn with a masterly hand by the author. He has created a marvellously natural combination in his heroine. Edith longs for the unalloyed bliss of a “Higher-self state” whenever she approaches the arcanum of her own nature, and yet once she is back on earth, she assumes no mystic melancholy airs, shows no disgust for life, but is thoroughly herself each time — the young and joyous daughter of the earth.

The real and the illusive aspects of our being are always next to each other, like twin parallel lines, but they never meet unless the animal tendencies created by selfishness are conquered, and the devil of the duad annihilated.

“Nobody would live in the body if they knew what it was to live in the world of spirit” she argues, when lying entranced . . . “but one must never hasten the change,” she adds. And yet all the aspirations of her life in her external body seem to make her unconsciously strive after that glorious “change,” as “everything else does seem so poor and worthless compared to the glory and joy” of that disembodied yet fully conscious state. Thus the two parallel lines of life of the illusive, external Edith and her HIGHER SELF as “Spirit Queen” and her own guardian — reminding us of the dramatic interview of Zanoni¹ with his shining and glorious *Augoeïdes* — are never blended together, and yet they present an integral whole, an artistic blending of the same spiritual individuality, the immortal reflecting itself in the mortal. [315]

The reader of *United* finds more than one mystic scene in it, whose details are occult truths presented under a semblance of romantic fiction. It is the business of the intuitional and esoteric student to discern the correct doctrine under a slightly modified form for purposes of an easier reading. The sacrifice of Sidney Marston is of an intensely dramatic character and *true to life* in the great and mysterious possibilities of the occult transfer of forces and even LIFE in mesmeric phenomena. In his intense and immortal love for her, his “Soul Queen,” who can never belong to him on this earth, Marston wants her to live and even to wed another man as he knows she could never be happy with himself. Hence he resolves to infuse into her veins and rapidly disappearing lungs the breath of life from his own organism, and then to die and vanish from this life to be ever near to her in his invisible soul-body. This he accomplishes notwithstanding her opposition, subduing her will under his stronger energy.

¹ [Consult “Zanoni by Bulwer-Lytton,” in our Buddhas and Initiates Series. — ED. PHIL.]

“Be merciful and gracious and do not reject my offering,” he pleaded. “For Edith, dearest, I tell you the die is cast — the step is taken. I would not draw back, if I would. . . . *This day has been spent in . . . work that cannot be undone.* . . . If I had been dying from common-place illness. . . . I should not be more free than I am to speak to you as I am speaking. I shall never see you again my beloved, after this night. . . . I give you my life, my own. It is my *supreme act of will.* . . . It is transfusing into your being as I speak, and my heart that has been beating for you only for so long, is beating nearly its last now in glad and proud exhaustion for your sake, as it rests for the first and last time against your own. You shall be happy in this life, my glorious queen, — in this life as in the next — and you will not be pained by the recollections of this evening after the first excitement of it has passed. . . . My beloved, we could not both be happy on this earth, and I choose to stand aside and let you pass. Anyhow I am of service to you in dying, and I can be of no service to you living.”



Whatever influences were working upon her, the intense excitement through which she was passing, or something else as well, were now so powerful that any coherent thought, not to speak of argumentative protest, were wholly impossible for her. She lay in his arms panting, and flushed and giddy with the tumultuous energy pulsing through her veins. . . . Under the dominion of a different kind of [316] bewilderment his own words become more confused and his own sight uncertain — “Ah! I am staying too long,” he stammered.

“I must go, good-bye, good-bye.”

He rose to his feet, staggering as if intoxicated, clutched the chairs, and made his way to the door . . . Edith came flying through the hall from the drawing-room as he was opening the carriage door.

“Do not let him go!” she cried. “Marian — he is very ill. Stay! I command you to stop. I will not live without you.”

“Too late! Too late!” he answered, but rather in exultation than in sorrow. “Drive on,” he called in a loud voice to the coachman.



“He has died for me,” Edith said almost fiercely. “We shall never see him living again.”

They never did; for as Edith explained it:

“These things which are so strange to you are tremendous realities to him and to me. He had always been able to make me strong — to refresh me by magnetism when I was enfeebled, and that used to exhaust him in exactly the same way it strengthened me. It was a transfer of vitality. He could give it out, I could

absorb it. But these small efforts in the past were as nothing to what he found out at last to be possible. He has learned how to pour out his life in a great flood upon me, so that I have been made strong and well, and he is dead at this moment in the carriage that is driving his body to London! . . . ”

Is this a fiction or a real fact in nature? Perchance, when that which Dr. Richardson¹ calls “etheric nerve-force,”² the life principle, is better known and accepted, the seemingly impossible phenomenon will become comprehensible. If animal magnetism is a fluid, a force, an energy, call it what you will [and] can heal diseases by infusing new life-energy into the patient’s veins, why *is the transfer of the whole supply of it from one body into another an impossibility?* Truths are stranger than fictions, and very often so. Still they are truths and have to remain facts in nature.

But the sacrifice proved useless. Instead of remaining in her physical organism, the life-energy Marston imparted to her, took another direction, and under the intense spirituality of Edith, loosened still more the bonds of union, between her astral Higher Self and the body. [317] Edith determined to leave her body for good. “Dear,” she said consoling Marian,

“Don’t you see it must be so? Knowing what I know now, and with the consciousness so vivid of what the other life open to me is like, how can I possibly go on with this one?”

There is a magnificent scene of clairvoyance between the two friends Marian and Edith in the old Manor, near the “Countess’ Study,” a day or two before the last disembodiment of the latter.

Then, the last scene, after Edith had prepared her father — unconscious of his approaching loss — to separation with his only child. In the night Mrs. Malcolm

Felt the glorified spirit of Edith beside her, even as she lay in a state of slumber. . . . It seemed to Mrs. Malcolm when the morning came, that she had passed through years of time, and that the bodily Edith was a beautiful memory rather than a fact of yesterday . . .

And then Edith bid her good-bye. The last words the vanishing spirit utters reveal the secret of her determining upon the untimely “change.” For she says:

“It is hardly good-bye from me at all, for I shall scarcely be conscious of missing any part of you from the Higher Self that will be always with me. I shall be none the less with you *because I shall be also with the one other person who has earned so thoroughly the right to blend his existence with mine.*”



¹ [Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson FRS FRCP, 1828–1896, leading British physician, anaesthetist, physiologist, sanitarian, and a prolific writer on medical history. He was the recipient of the Fothergill gold medal, awarded by the Medical Society of London in 1854, and of the Astley Cooper triennial prize for an essay in physiology.]

² [“Theory of a Nervous Ether,” in *The Popular Science Review* (1871) Vol. X, pp. 379-87]

Two spirits were finally united in the limited nirvanic state of Devachan, from whence no traveller returns.

Marston and Edith were UNITED in Devachan “from whence no traveller returns.” The glorious “Higher Self” with which we are united during life, gathers around itself the Higher selves of all those whom it loved on earth with an immortal spiritual love. Thus the spirit of Edith was right in saying to Marian she would not miss “any part” of her from HIGHER SELF, who would always be present.

H.P. BLAVATSKY

