

# The Literary Remains of Thomas Bragdon

By John Kendrick Bangs

I was much pained one morning last winter on picking up a copy of the *Times* to note therein the announcement of the death of my friend Tom Bragdon, from a sudden attack of la grippe. The news stunned me. It was like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky, for I had not even heard that Tom was ill; indeed, we had parted not more than four days previously after a luncheon together, at which it was I who was the object of his sympathy because a severe cold prevented my enjoyment of the whitebait, the fillet, the cigar, and indeed of everything, not even excepting Bragdon's conversation, which upon that occasion should have seemed more than usually enlivening, since he was in one of his most exuberant moods. His last words to me were, "Take care of yourself, Phil! I should hate to have you die, for force of habit is so strong with me that I shall forever continue to lunch with none but you, ordering two portions of everything, which I am sure I could not eat, and how wasteful that would be!" And now he had passed over the threshold into the valley, and I was left to mourn.

I had known Bragdon as a successful commission merchant for some ten or fifteen years, during which period of time we had been more or less intimate, particularly so in the last five years of his life, when we were drawn more closely together; I, attracted by the absolute genuineness of his character, his delightful fancy, and to my mind wonderful originality, for I never knew another like him; he, possibly by the fact that I was one of the very few who could entirely understand him, could sympathize with his peculiarities, which were many, and always ready to enter into any one of his odd moods, and with quite as much spirit as he himself should display. It was an ideal friendship.

It had been our custom every summer to take what Bragdon called spirit trips together—that is to say, generally in the early spring, Bragdon and I would choose some out-of-the-way corner of the world for exploration; we would each read all the literature that we could find concerning the chosen locality, saturate our minds with the spirit, atmosphere, and history of the place, and then in August, boarding a small schooner-rigged boat belonging to Bragdon, we would cruise about the Long Island Sound or sail up and down the Hudson River for a week, where, tabooing all other subjects, we would tell each other all that we had been able to discover concerning the place we had decided upon for our imaginary visit. In this way we became tolerably familiar with several places of interest which neither of us had ever visited, and which, in my case, financial limitations, and in Bragdon's, lack of time, were likely always to prevent our seeing. As I remember the matter, this plan was Bragdon's own, and its first suggestion by him was received by me with a smile of derision; but the quaintness of the idea in time won me over, and after the first trial when we made a spirit trip to Beloochistan, I was so fascinated by my experience that I eagerly looked forward to a second in the series, and was always thereafter only too glad to bear my share of the trouble and expense of our annual journeyings. In this manner we had practically circumnavigated this world and one or two of the planets; for, content as we were to visit unseen countries in spirit only, we were never hampered by the ordinary limitations of travel, and where books failed to supply us with information the imagination was called into play. The universe was open to us at the expense of a captain for our sharpie, canned provisions for a week, and a moderate consumption of gray matter in the conjuring up of scenes with which neither ourselves nor others were familiar. The trips were refreshing always, and in the ease of

our spirit journey through Italy, which at that time neither of us had visited, but which I have since had the good-fortune to see in the fulness of her beauty, I found it to be far more delightful than the reality.

“We’ll go in,” said Bragdon, when he proposed the Italian tour, “by the St. Gothard route, the description of which I will prepare in detail myself. You can take the lakes, rounding up with Como. I will follow with the trip from Como to Milan, and Milan shall be my care. You can do Verona and Padua; I Venice. Then we can both try our hands at Rome and Naples; in the latter place, to save time, I will take Pompeii, you Capri. Thence we can hark back to Rome, thence to Pisa, Genoa, and Turin, giving a day to Siena and some of the quaint Etruscan towns, passing out by the Mont Cenis route from Turin to Geneva. If you choose you can take a run along the Riviera and visit Monte Carlo. For my own part, though, I’d prefer not to do that, because it brings a sensational element into the trip which I don’t particularly care for. You’d have to gamble, and if your imagination is to have full play you ought to lose all your money, contemplate suicide, and all that. I don’t think the results would be worth the mental strain you’d have to go through, and I certainly should not enjoy hearing about it. The rest of the trip, though we can do easily in five days, which will leave us two for fishing, if we feel so disposed. They say the blue-fish are biting like the devil this year.”

I regret now that we did not include a stenographer among the necessaries of our spirit trips, for, as I look back upon that Italian tour, it was well worthy of preservation in book form, particularly Bragdon’s contributions, which were so delightfully imaginative that I cannot but rejoice that he did not live to visit the scenes of which he so eloquently spoke to me upon that occasion. The reality, I fear, would have been a sore disappointment to him, particularly in relation to Venice, concerning which his notions were vaguely suggestive of an earthly floating paradise.

“Ah, Philip,” he said, as we cast anchor one night in a little inlet near Milford, Connecticut, “I shall never forget Venice. This,” he added, waving his hand over the silvery surface of the moonlit water—“this reminds me of it. All is so still, so romantic, so beautiful. I arrived late at night, and my first sensations were those of a man who has entered a city of the dead. The bustle, the noise and clatter, of a great city were absent; nothing was there but the massive buildings rising up out of the still, peaceful waters like gigantic tombs, and as my gondolier guided the sombre black craft to which I had confided my safety and that of my valise, gliding in and out along those dark unlit streams, a great wave of melancholy swept over me, and then, passing from the minor streets into the Grand Canal, the melancholy was dispelled by the brilliant scene that met my eyes—great floods of light coming from everywhere, the brilliance of each ray reinforced by its reflection in the silent river over which I was speeding. It was like a glimpse of paradise, and when I reached my palace I was loath to leave the gondola, for I really felt as though I could glide along in that way through all eternity.”

“You lived in a palace in Venice?” I asked, somewhat amused at the magnificence of this imaginary tour.

“Certainly. Why not?” he replied. “I could not bring myself to staying in a hotel, Phil, in Venice. Venice is of a past age, when hotels were not, and to be thoroughly *en rapport* with my surroundings, I took up my abode in a palace, as I have said. It was on one of the side streets, to be sure, but it was yet a palace, and a beautiful one. And that street! It was a rivulet of beauty, in which could be seen myriads of golden-hued fish at play, which as the gondola passed to and fro would flirt into hiding until the intruder had passed out of sight in the Grand Canal, after which

they would come slowly back again to render the silver waters almost golden with their brilliance.”

“Weren’t you rather extravagant, Tom?” I asked. “Palaces are costly, are they not?”

“Oh no,” he replied, with as much gravity as though he had really taken the trip and was imparting information to a seeker after knowledge. “It was not extravagant when you consider that anything in Venice in the way of a habitable house is called a palace, and that there are no servants to be tipped; that your lights, candles all, cost you first price only, and not the profit of the landlord, plus that of the concierge, plus that of the maid, plus several other small but aggravatingly augmentative sums which make your hotel bills seem like highway robbery. No, living in a palace, on the whole, is cheaper than living in a hotel; incidentals are less numerous and not so costly; and then you are so independent. Mine was a particularly handsome structure. I believe I have a picture of it here.”

Here Bragdon fumbled in his satchel for a moment, and then dragged forth a small unmounted photograph of a Venetian street scene, and, pointing out an ornate structure at the left of the picture, assured me that that was his palace, though he had forgotten the name of it.

“By-the-way,” he said, “let me say parenthetically that I think our foreign trips will have a far greater *vraisemblance* if we heighten the illusion with a few photographs, don’t you? They cost about a quarter apiece at Blank’s, in Twenty-third Street.”

“A good idea that,” I answered, amused at the thoroughness with which Bragdon was “doing” Venice. “We can remember what we haven’t seen so very much more easily.”

“Yes,” Bragdon said, “and besides, they’ll keep us from exaggeration.”

And then he went on to tell me of his month in Venice; how he chartered a gondola for the whole of his stay there from a handsome romantic Venetian youth, whose name was on a card Torn had had printed for the occasion, reading:

GIUSEPPE ZOCCO  
GONDOLAS AT ALL HOURS  
Cor. Grand Canal and Garibaldi St.

“Giuseppe was a character,” Bragdon said. “One of the remnants of a by-gone age. He could sing like a bird, and at night he used to bring his friends around to the front of my palace and hitch up to one of the piles that were driven beside my doorstep, and there they’d sing their soft Italian melodies for me by the hour. It was better than Italian opera, and only cost me ten dollars for the whole season.”

“And did this Giuseppe speak English, Tom?” I queried. “or did you speak Italian? I am curious to know how you got on together in a conversational sense.”

“That is a point, my dear Phil,” Bragdon replied, “that I have never decided. I have looked at it from every point of view, and it has baffled me. I have asked myself the question, which would be the more likely, that Giuseppe should speak English, or that I should speak Italian? It has seemed to me that the latter would be the better way, for, all things considered, an American produce-broker is more likely to be familiar with the Italian tongue than a Venetian gondola-driver with the English. On the other hand, we want our accounts of these trips to seem truthful, and you *know* that I am not familiar with Italian, and we do not either of us know that a possible Zocco would not be a fluent speaker of English. To be honest with you, I will say that I had hoped you would not ask the question.”

“Well,” I answered, “I’ll withdraw it. As this is only a spirit trip we can each decide the point as it seems best to us.”

“I think that is the proper plan,” he said, and then, proceeding with his story, he described to me the marvellous paintings that adorned the walls of his palace; how he had tried to propel a gondola himself, and got a fall into the “deliciously tepid waters of the canal,” as he called them, for his pains; and it seemed very real, so minute were the details into which he entered.

But the height of Bragdon’s realism in telling his story of Venice was reached when, diving down into the innermost recesses of his vest pocket, he brought forth a silver filigree effigy of a gondola, which he handed me with the statement that it was for me.

“I got that in the plaza of St. Marc’s. I had visited the cathedral, inspected the mosaic flooring, taken a run to the top of the campanile, fed the pigeons, and was just about returning to the palace, when I thought of you, Phil, getting ready to do Rome with me, and I thought to myself ‘what a dear fellow he is!’ and, as I thought that, it occurred to me that I’d like you to know I had you in mind at the time, and so I stopped in one of those brilliant little shops on the plaza, where they keep everything they have in the windows, and bought that. It isn’t much, old fellow, but it’s for remembrance’ sake.”

I took it from him and pressed his hand affectionately, and for a moment, as the little sharpie rose and fell with the rising and falling of the slight undulating waves made by the passing up to anchorage of a small steam-tug, I almost believed that Tom had been to Venice. I still treasure the little filigree gondola, nor did I, when some years later I visited Venice, see there anything for which I would have exchanged that sweet token of remembrance.

Bragdon, as will already have been surmised by you who read, was more of a humorist than anything else, but the enthusiasm of his humor, its absolute spontaneity and kindness, gave it at times a semblance to what might pass for true poetry. He was by disposition a thoroughly sweet spirit, and when I realized that he had gone before, and that the trips he and I had looked forward to with such almost boyish delight year by year were never more to be had, my eyes grew wet, and for a time I was disconsolate; and yet one week later I was laughing heartily at Bragdon.

He had appointed me, it was found when his will was read, his literary executor. I fairly roared with mirth to think of Bragdon’s having a literary executor, for, imaginative and humorous as he undoubtedly was, he had been so thoroughly identified in my mind with the produce business that I could scarcely bring myself to think of him in the light of a literary person. Indeed, he had always seemed to me to have an intolerance of literature. I had taken but half of a spirit trip with him when I discovered that he relied more upon his own imagination for facts of interest than upon what could be derived from books. He showed this trait no more strongly than when we came, upon this same Italian tour of which I have already written at some length, to do Rome together, for I then discovered how imaginary indeed the trips were from his point of view. What seemed to him as proper to be was, and neither history nor considerations of locality ever interfered with the things being as he desired them to be. Had it been otherwise he never would have endeavored to make me believe that he had stood upon the very spot in the Colosseum where Cæsar addressed the Roman mob in impassioned words, exhorting them to resist the encroachment upon their liberties of the Pope!

At first it seemed to me that my late friend was indulging in a posthumous joke, and I paid his memory the compliment of seeing the point. But when, some days later, I received a note from his executors stating that they had found in the store-room of Bragdon’s house a large packing-box full of papers and books, upon the cover of which was tacked a card bearing my address, I began to wonder whether or not, after all, the imagination of my dead friend had really led him to believe that he possessed literary ability.

I immediately sent word to the executors to have the box forwarded to me by express, and awaited its coming with no little interest, and, it must be confessed, with some anxiety; for I am apt to be depressed by the literary lucubrations of those of my friends who, devoid of the literary quality, do yet persist in writing, and for as long a time as I had known Bragdon I had never experienced through him any sensations save those of exhilaration, and I greatly feared a posthumous breaking of the spell. Poet in feeling as I thought him, I could hardly imagine a poem written by my friend, and while I had little doubt that I could live through the reading of a novel or short prose sketch from his pen, I was apprehensive as to the effect of a possible bit of verse.

It seemed to me, in short, that a poem by Bragdon, while it might easily show the poet's fancy, could not fail to show also the produce-broker's clumsiness of touch. His charm was the spontaneity of his spoken words, his enthusiastic personality disarming all criticism; what the labored productions of his fancy might prove to be, I hardly dared think. It was this dread that induced me, upon receipt of the box, appalling in its bulk and unpleasantly suggestive of the departure to other worlds of the original consignor, since it was lone and deep like the outer oaken covering of a casket, to delay opening it for some days; but finally I nerved myself up to the duty that had devolved upon me, and opened the box.

It was full to overflowing with printed books in fine bindings, short tales in Bragdon's familiar hand in copy-books, manuscripts almost without number, three Russia-leather record-books containing, the title-page told me, that which I most dreaded to find, *The Poems of Thomas Bragdon*, and dedicated to "His Dearest Friend"—myself. I had no heart to read beyond the dedication that night, but devoted all my time to getting the contents of the box into my library, having done which I felt it absolutely essential to my happiness to put on my coat, and, though the night was stormy, to rush out into the air. I think I should have suffocated in an open field with those literary remains of Thomas Bragdon heaped about me that night.

On my return I went immediately to bed, feeling by no means in the mood to read *The Poems of Thomas Bragdon*. I tossed about through the night, sleeping little, and in the morning rose up unrefreshed, and set about the examination of the papers and books intrusted to my care by my departed friend. And oh, the stuff I found there! If I was depressed at starting in. I was stupefied when it was all over, for the collection was mystifying to the point that it stunned.

In the first place, on opening Volume I. of *The Poems of Thomas Bragdon*, the first thing to greet my eyes were these lines

### CONSTANCY

Often have I heard it said  
That her lips are ruby-red:  
Little heed I what they say,  
I have seen as red as they.  
Ere she smiled on other men.  
Real rubies were they then.  
But now her lips are coy and cold;  
To mine they ne'er reply;  
And yet I cease not to behold  
The love-light in her eye:  
Her very frowns are fairer far

Than smiles of other maidens are.

As I read I was conscious of having seen the lines somewhere before, and yet I could not place them for the moment. They certainly possessed merit, so much so, in fact, that I marvelled to think of their being Bragdon's. I turned the leaves further and discovered this:

### DISAPPOINTMENT

Come to me, O ye children,  
For I hear you at your play,  
And the questions that perplexed me  
Have vanished quite away.

The Poem of the Universe  
Nor rhythm has nor rhyme;  
Some God recites the wondrous song,  
A stanza at a time.

I dwell not now on what may be;  
Night shadows o'er the scene;  
But still my fancy wanders free  
Through that which might have been.

Two stanzas in the poem, the first and the last, reminded me, as did the lines on "Constancy," of something I had read before. In a moment I had placed the first as the opening lines of Longfellow's "Children," and a search through my books showed that the concluding verse was taken bodily from Peacock's exquisite little poem "Castles in the Air."

Despairing to solve the problem that now confronted me, which was, in brief, what Bragdon meant by bodily lifting stanzas from the poets and making them over into mosaics of his own, I turned from the poems and cast my eyes over some of the bound volumes in the box.

The first of these to come to hand was a copy of *Hamlet*, bound in tree calf, the sole lettering on the book being on the back, as follows:

### HAMLET

BRAGDON

~

New York

This I deemed a harmless bit of vanity, and not necessarily misleading, since many collectors of books see fit to have their own names emblazoned on the backs of their literary treasures; but pray imagine my horror upon opening the volume to discover that the name of William Shakespeare had been erased from the title-page, and that of Thomas Bragdon so carefully inserted that except to a practised eye none would ever know that the page was not as it had always been. I must confess to some mirth when I read that title-page

# HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK

A Tragedy

BY

THOMAS BRAGDON, ESQUIRE

The conceit was well worthy of my late friend in one of his most fanciful moods. In other volumes the same substitution had been made, so that to one not versed in literature it would have seemed as though “Thomas Bragdon, Esquire,” had been the author not only of *Hamlet*, but also of *Vanity Fair*, *David Copperfield*, *Rienzi*, and many other famous works, and I am not sure but that the great problem concerning the “Junius Letters” was here solved to the satisfaction of Bragdon, if not to my own. There were but two exceptions in the box to the rule of substituting the name of Bragdon for that of the actual author; one of these was an Old Testament, on the fly-leaf of which Bragdon had written, “To my dear friend Bragdon,” and signed “The Author.”

I think I should have laughed for hours over this delightful reminder of my late friend’s power of imagination had not the second exception come almost immediately to hand—a copy of Milton, which I recognized at once as one I had sent Tom at Christmas two years before his death, and on the fly-leaf of which I had written, “To Thomas Bragdon, with the love of, his faithfully, Philip Marsden.” This was, indeed, a commonplace enough inscription, but it gathered unexpected force when I turned over a leaf and my eyes rested on the title, where Bragdon’s love of substitutes had led him to put my name where Milton’s had been.

The discovery was too much for my equanimity. I was thoroughly disconcerted, almost angry, and I felt, for the first time in my life, that there had been vagaries in Bragdon’s character with which I could not entirely sympathize; but in justice to myself, it must be said, these sentiments were induced by first thoughts only. Certainly there could be but one way in which Bragdon’s substitution of my name for Milton’s could prove injurious or offensive to me who was his friend, and that was by his putting that copy out before the world to be circulated at random, which avenue to my discomfiture he had effectually closed by leaving the book in my hands, to do with it whatsoever I pleased. Second thoughts showed me that it was only a fear of what the outsider might think that was responsible for my temporary disloyalty to my departed comrade’s memory, and then when I remembered how thoroughly we twain had despised the outsider, I was so ashamed of my aberration that I immediately renewed my allegiance to the late King Tom; so heartily, in fact, that my emotions wellnigh overcame me, and I found it best to seek distractions in the outer world.

I put on my hat and took a long walk along the Riverside Drive, the crisp air of the winter night proving a tonic to my disturbed system. It was after midnight when I returned to my apartment in a tolerably comfortable frame of mind, and yet as I opened the door to my study I was filled with a vague apprehension—of what I could not determine, but which events soon justified, for as I closed the door behind me, and turned up the light over my table, I became conscious of a pair of eyes fixed upon me. Nervously whirling about in my chair and glancing over towards my fireplace, I was for a moment transfixed with terror, for there, leaning against the mantel and gazing sadly into the fire, was Tom Bragdon himself—the man whom but a short time before I had seen lowered into his grave.

“Tom,” I cried, springing to my feet and rushing towards him—“Tom, what does this mean? Why have you come back from the spirit world to—to haunt me?”

As I spoke he raised his head slowly until his eyes rested full upon my own, whereupon he vanished, all save those eyes, which remained fixed upon mine, and filled with the soft, affectionate glow I had so often seen in them in life.

“Tom,” I cried again, holding out my hand towards him in a beseeching fashion, “come back. Explain this dreadful mystery if you do not wish me to lose my senses.”

And then the eyes faded from my sight, and I was alone again. Horrified by my experience, I rushed from the study into my bedroom, where I threw myself, groaning, upon my couch. To collect my scattered senses was of difficult performance, and when finally my agitated nerves did begin to assume a moderately normal state, they were set adrift once more by Tom’s voice, which was unmistakably plain, bidding me to come back to him there in the study.

Fearful as I was of the results, I could not but obey, and I rose tremblingly from my bed and tottered back to my desk, to see Bragdon sitting opposite my usual place just as he had so often done when in the flesh.

“Phil,” he said in a moment, “don’t be afraid. I couldn’t hurt you if I would, and you know—or if you don’t know you ought to know—that to promote your welfare has always been the supremest of my desires. I have returned to you here to-night to explain my motive in making the alterations in those books, and to account for the peculiarities of those verses. We have known each other, my dear boy, how many years?”

“Fifteen, Tom,” I said, my voice husky with emotion.

“Yes, fifteen years, and fifteen happy years, Phil. Happy years to me, to whom the friendship of one who understood me was the dearest of many dear possessions. From the moment I met you I felt I had at last a friend, one to whom my very self might be confided, and who would through all time and under all circumstances prove true to that trust. It seemed to me that you were my soul’s twin, Phil, and as the years passed on and we grew closer to each other, when the rough corners of my nature adapted themselves to the curves of yours, I almost began to think that we were but one soul united in all things spiritual, two only in matters material. I never spoke of it to you; I thought of it in communion with myself; I never thought it necessary to speak of it to you, for I was satisfied that you knew. I did not realize until — until that night a fortnight since, when almost without warning I found myself on the threshold of the dark valley, that perhaps I was mistaken. I missed you, and so sudden was the attack, and so swiftly did the heralds of death intrude upon me, that I had no time to summon you, as I wished; and as I lay there upon my bed, to the watchers unconscious, it came to me, like a dash of cold water in my face, that after all we were not one, but in reality two; for had we been one, you would have known of the perilous estate of your other self, and would have been with me at the last. And, Phil, the realization that chilled my very soul, that showed me that what I most dearly loved to believe was founded in unreality, reconciled me to the journey I was about to take into other worlds, for I knew that should I recover, life could never seem quite the same to me.

Here Bragdon, or his spirit, stopped speaking for a moment, and I tried to say something, but could not.

“I know how you feel, Phil,” said he, noticing my discomfiture, “for, though you are not so much a part of me that you thoroughly comprehend me, I have become so much a part of you that your innermost thoughts are as plain to me as though they were mine. But let me finish. I realized when I lay ill and about to die that I had permitted my theory of happiness to obscure my perception of the actual. As you know, my whole life has been given over to imagination—all save that portion of my existence, which I shall not dignify by calling life, when I was forced by circumstances to bring myself down to realities. I did not live whilst in commercial pursuits.

It was only when I could leave business behind and travel in fancy wheresoever I wished that I was happy, and in those moments, Phil. I was full of aspiration to do those things for which nature had not fitted me, and to the extent that I recognized my inability to do those things I failed to be content. I should have liked to be a great writer, a poet, a great dramatist, a novelist—a little of everything in the literary world. I should have liked to know Shakespeare, to have been the friend of Milton and when I came out of my dreams it made me unhappy to think that such I never could be, until one day this idea came to me: all the happiness of life is bound up in the ‘let’s pretend’ games which we learn in childhood, and no harm results to any one. If I can imagine myself off with my friend Phil Marsden in the lakes of England and Scotland, in the African jungle, in the moon, anywhere, and enter so far into the spirit of the trips as to feel that they are real and not imagination, why may I not in fancy be all these things that I so aspire to be? Why may not the plays of Shakespeare become the plays of Thomas Bragdon? Why may not the poems of Milton become the poems of my dearest, closest friend Phil Marsden? What is to prevent my achieving the highest position in letters, art, politics, science, anything, in imagination? I acted upon the thought, and I found the plan worked admirably up to a certain point. It was easy to fancy myself the author of *Hamlet* until I took my copy of that work in hand to read, and then it would shock and bring me back to earth again to see the name of another on the title-page. My solution of this vexatious complication was soon found. Surely, thought I, it can harm no one if I choose in behalf of my own conceit to substitute my name for that of Shakespeare, and I did so. The illusion was complete; indeed, it became no illusion, for my eyes did not deceive me. I saw what existed: the title-page of *Hamlett* by Thomas Bragdon. I carried the plan further, and where I found a piece of literature that I admired, there I made the substitution of my name for that of the real author, and in the case of that delightful copy of Milton you gave me, Phil, it pleased me to believe that it was presented to me by the author, only the inscription on the title-page made it necessary for me to foist upon you the burden or distinction of authorship. Then, as I lived on in my imaginary paradise, it struck me that for one who had done such great things in letters I was doing precious little writing, and I bethought me of a plan which a dreadful reality made all the more pleasing. I looked into literature to a slight extent, and I perceived at once that originality is no longer possible. The great thoughts have been thought; the great truths have been grasped and made clear; the great poems have been written. I saw that the literature of to-day is either an echo of the past or a combination of the ideas of many in the productions of the individual, and upon that basis I worked. My poems are combinations. I have taken a stanza from one poet, and combining it with a stanza from another, have made the resulting poem my own, and in so far as I have made no effort to profit thereby I have been clear in my conscience. No one has been deceived but myself, though I saw with some regret this evening when you read my lines that you were puzzled by them. I had believed that you understood me sufficiently to comprehend them.”

Here my ghostly visitor paused a moment and sighed. I felt as though some explanation of my lack of comprehension early in the evening was necessary, and so I said:

“I should have understood you, Torn, and I do now, but I have not the strength of imagination that you have.”

“You are wrong there, Phil,” said he. “You have every bit as strong an imagination as I, but you do not keep it in form. You do not exercise it enough. How have you developed your muscles? By constant exercise. The imagination needs to be kept in play quite as much as the muscles, if we do not wish it to become flabby as the muscles become when neglected. That your imagination is a strong one is shown by my presence before you to-night. In reality, Phil, I am

lying out there in Greenwood, cold in my grave. Your imagination places me here, and as applied to my books, the play of *Hamlet* by Thomas Bragdon, and my poems, they will also demonstrate to you the strength of your fancy if you will show them, say, to your janitor, tomorrow morning. Try it, Phil, and see; but this is only a part, my boy, of what I have come here to say to you. I am here, in the main, to show you that throughout all eternity happiness may be ours if we but take advantage of our fancy. Do you take delight in my society? Imagine me present, Phil, and I will be present. There need be no death for us, there need be no separation throughout all the years to come, if you but exercise your fancy in life, and when life on this earth ends, then shall we be reunited according to nature's laws. Good-night, Phil. It is late; and while I could sit here and talk forever without weariness, you, who have yet to put off your mortal limitations, will be worn out if I remain longer."

We shook hands affectionately, and Bragdon vanished as unceremoniously as he had appeared. For an hour after his departure I sat reflecting over the strange events of the evening, and finally, worn out in body and mind, dropped off into sleep. When I awakened it was late in the forenoon and I was surprised when I recalled all that I had gone through to feel a sense of exhilaration. I was certainly thoroughly rested, and cares which had weighed rather heavily on me in the past now seemed light and inconsiderable. My apartments never looked so attractive, and on my table, to my utter surprise and delight, I saw several objects of art, notably a Baryé bronze, that it had been one of my most cherished hopes to possess. Where they came from I singularly enough did not care to discover; suffice it to say that they have remained there ever since, nor have I been at all curious to know to whose generosity I owe them, though when that afternoon I followed Bragdon's advice, and showed his book of poems and the volume of *Hamlet* to the janitor, a vague notion as to how matters really stood entered my mind. The janitor cast his eye over the leather-covered book of poems when I asked what he thought of it.

"Nothin' much," he said. "You goin' to keep a diary?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Why, when I sees people with handsome blank-books like that I allus supposes that's their object."

*Blank-book indeed!* And yet, perhaps, he was not wrong. I did not question it, but handed him the Bragdon *Hamlet*.

"Read that page aloud to me," I said, indicating the title-page and turning my back upon him, almost dreading to hear him speak.

"Certainly, if you wish it; but aren't you feeling well this morning, Mr. Marsden?"

"Very," I replied, shortly. "Go on and read."

"Hamlet, Prince of Denmark" he read, in a halting sort of fashion.

"Yes, yes; and what else?" I cried, impatiently.

"A Tragedy by William Shak—"

That was enough for me. I understood Tom, and at last I understood myself. I grasped the book from the janitor's hands, rather roughly, I fear, and bade him begone.

The happiest period of my life has elapsed since then. I understand that some of my friends profess to believe me queer; but I do not care. I am content.

The world is practically mine, and Bragdon and I are always together.