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Содержание

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FROM SIBERIA TO SWITZERLAND
The Story of an Escape

BY WILLIAM WESTALL

Escapes of political and other convicts from Western Siberia are more frequent than is generally supposed, but from Eastern Siberia, though often attempted, they seldom succeed. Save for convicts under sentence of penal servitude, and actually imprisoned, it is easy to elude the vigilance of the police and get away from a convict village or settlement, but it is almost impossible to get out of the country. The immense distances to be traversed, the terrible climate, lack of money, the absolute necessity of keeping to the high roads, prove, except in very few

instances, insuperable obstacles to final success. In order to be really free, moreover, it is imperative for a fugitive not alone to pass the frontier of European Russia, but to reach some country where he runs no risk of falling into the clutches of the imperial police. Even in Germany he is liable to be recaptured, and is really safe only in England, France, or Switzerland. Hence, to make good a flight from Eastern Siberia requires a conjuncture of so many favorable and nearly impossible circumstances as to render a complete escape a rare and remarkable event. But the incentives to escape are as great as the obstacles to success. No life can be more horrible than that of a political exile in the far east or far north of Siberia. Even at Irkoutsk the mean temperature is fifty degrees below the freezing-point of Réaumur; for many months of the year the sun in some parts of the country shines but two or three hours in the twenty-four, and for days together darkness covers the face of the land. A man untrained to manual labor, or unacquainted with the arts of trapping and killing wild animals and collecting peltry, turned adrift in the remoter parts of Siberia, runs the risk of perishing of hunger and cold. A Russian refugee, now at Geneva, tells that, during his sojourn in Eastern Siberia, he spent the greater part of the long winter in bed, rising only to swallow some rancid oil, the sole food he could obtain. To escape from such a life as this a man will risk almost anything. Even incarceration in a central prison, or the penal servitude of the mines, can hardly be more terrible. The trouble is, that the way to freedom lies

through Western Siberia and Russia in Europe. The road south is barred by the wild tribes that haunt the frontiers of Mongolia and Manchuria, who either kill or give up to the Russians all the fugitives that fall into their hands.

On the other hand, the escape of a prisoner or of a convict under sentence of penal servitude is far more difficult than the flight of an involuntary exile; the latter may leave when he will, the former must either break out of prison or evade his guardians, and being soon missed he runs great risk of being quickly recaptured. How, in one instance at least, by boldness, address, presence of mind, and good luck, the difficulties were overcome, the following narrative, related, as nearly as possible, in Debagorio Mokrievitch's own words, will show. Other fugitives, for instance Nicolas Lopatin, a gentleman now living in Geneva, who escaped from Vercholensk in 1881, may have encountered great hardships, but, being exiles at large, they were neither so soon missed nor so quickly pursued. Debagorio was under sentence of penal servitude, and the flight from Siberia of a man condemned to penal servitude is almost unexampled. Even rarer than an escape is the true account of one, related by the fugitive himself. Imaginary accounts exist in plenty, but, so far as I am aware, no authentic personal narrative of an escape from Eastern Siberia – at any rate in English or French – has ever before been given to the world.

I first heard of Mokrievitch in May, 1881, a few days after his arrival in Geneva, and through the kindness of Prince Krapotkine

obtained (and communicated to a London newspaper) a brief sketch of his fellow-exile's adventures; but for certain reasons, that exist no longer, it was not considered expedient to publish the full and complete account which the reader will find in the following pages.

William Westall.

The Arrest

On the evening of February 11, 1879, several friends of the revolutionary cause, of whom I was one, met at Yvitchevitche's lodgings, in the house Kossarovsky, Yleanski Street, Kieff, the town where I was then living. After a short conversation, Anton, myself, and several others left the house with the intention of passing the rest of the evening with our friend, Madame Babitchev. The inevitable samovar was bubbling on the table, our hospitable hostess gave us a warm welcome, cigarettes were lighted, conversation was joined, and an hour or more passed very pleasantly.

Anton was the first to leave, and he could hardly have reached the street when we were startled by a loud report like the firing of a pistol. We stared at each other in consternation, and Strogov, running into the ante-room, looked through the window and listened at the door, in order to find out what had happened. In a few minutes he came back with satisfactory tidings. Nothing unusual seemed to be stirring in the street; and he attributed the report we had heard to the banging of a door in a neighboring café. So we resumed our conversation and our tea-drinking with quiet minds. But five minutes later we were again disturbed; this time by sounds the character of which there was no mistaking. The trampling of heavy feet in the vestibule, hurried exclamations, words of command, and the rattling of

arms, told us only too well with whom we had to do.

The police were upon us.

Notwithstanding our desire to resist, we knew that we should be compelled to yield without a blow. There was not a weapon amongst us. A few seconds were passed in anxious thought. Then the double-winged doors were thrown violently open, and we saw that the ante-room was occupied by a detachment of soldiers, with bayonets lowered and ready to charge. From the right flank came the words, loud and clear: "Will you surrender, gentlemen? I am the officer in command of the detachment."

I looked round and recognized in the officer with the gendarme uniform and drawn sword, Soudeikin in person, then a subaltern in the Kieff gendarmerie, later the famous chief of the political police of the capital.

Despite the imposing military array, the haughty bearing of the officer, the glittering bayonets and stern looks of the soldiers, and the unpleasant sense of having fallen into their toils, the whole affair seemed to me just a little amusing, and I could not help smiling, and saying, in answer to Soudeikin's summons, "Are we then a fortress, Mr. Officer, that you call upon us to surrender?"

"No; but your comrades…" the rest of the sentence, owing to the din, I did not catch.

"What comrades?" I asked.

"You will soon see," replied Soudeikin.

Then he ordered his men to search us, after which we were to

be taken to the police office.

The searching over, we were surrounded by thirty or forty soldiers, with arms at the trail, and conducted to the Libed police station. Even before we reached our destination we could see that something unusual had happened. The building was lighted up, and there was an excited crowd about the door. After mounting the staircase we were led into the waiting-room. It was filled with armed men. Pushing my way with some difficulty through the press, I saw on the other side of the room several of our friends. But, my God, what a state they were in! Posen and Steblin Kamensky were bound hand and foot; the cords so tightly drawn that their elbows, forced behind their backs, actually touched. Close to them were Mesdames Arnfeld, Sarandovitch, and Patalizina. It was evident that something extraordinary had befallen in the house of Kossarovsky, shortly after we left. I could not, however, ask our friends any questions, for that would have been taken as proof that we were acquainted. Yet, from a few words dropped here and there, I soon learnt what had come to pass. They had resisted the police, a gendarme had been killed, and all whom we had left at the meeting arrested.

I had hardly made this discovery when a disturbance was heard in the next room – trampling of feet, loud exclamations, and voices in contention, one of which I seemed to know. The next moment a man burst into the reception-room, literally dragging behind him two gendarmes, who tried in vain to stop him. His dishevelled hair, pale face, and flaming eyes, showed

that he had been engaged in a struggle beyond his strength.

In a few minutes he was garotted and forced into a seat near us.

"Separate the prisoners one from another!" cried Colonel Novitzki.

On this each of us was immediately surrounded by four soldiers.

"If they resist, use your bayonets!" said the colonel.

After a short interval we were called one after another into the next room. I was called the last. On responding to the summons I found myself in the presence of several gendarmes and officers of police, by whom I was searched a second time.

"Have the goodness to state your name," said Colonel Novitzki, after the operation was completed.

"I would rather not," I answered.

"In that case I shall tell you who you are."

"You will do me a great pleasure," I replied.

"You are called Debagorio Mokrievitch," said the colonel.

"Yes, that is your name," put in Soudeikin.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance, colonel," I answered, giving the military salute.

It would have been useless to deny my identity. My mother, my brother, and my sister were living at Kieff, and I did not want to have them compelled to confront the police and ordered to recognize me.

The Sentence

We were lodged in the principal prison of Kieff. On April 20, we received copies of the indictment, drawn up by Strelnikoff, prosecuting advocate to the Military Tribunal (he was afterwards killed at Odessa). We were, in all, fourteen prisoners, accused of sedition, of belonging to secret political societies, and of resisting the police. In order to give greater publicity to the trial, we resolved to have ourselves defended by counsel from St. Petersburg and put forward a request to this effect. But after some delay we were informed that if we wanted advocates, we must choose them from among the candidates for judgeships attached to the tribunal of Kieff, and therefore dependent for promotion on the functionary by whom the prosecution was to be conducted. Deeming this a practical denial of justice, we determined to take no active part whatever in the proceedings.

At six o'clock on the morning of April 20, we were taken before the tribunal. Eight of our party were men, six women. The first thing that struck me was the strength of the escort – more than a hundred Cossacks, besides gendarmes and policemen. Officers were running from group to group, giving orders and making arrangements, as if they were preparing for a general action. The women were led off first, after which we men were placed in a large barred carriage, so spacious indeed that we could all seat ourselves comfortably.

Then the procession moved off. At its head rode Gubernet, the chief of the police. After him came the captain of the gendarmerie, Rudov, an old schoolfellow of mine. Our carriage was surrounded by Cossacks, the rear-rank men carrying loaded carbines. All the horses were put to the gallop, and the police, who feared a manifestation in our favor, had cleared the streets of spectators, and ordered a complete suspension of traffic. Not a figure without uniform was to be seen, and strong bodies of troops occupied every street corner.

I need not describe the trial – if trial it can be called: it lasted four days, and ended in the condemnation of three of our number to death; the rest were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. My sentence was fourteen years and ten months' penal servitude.

We were led back to prison with precisely the same precautions as had been observed when we were taken before the tribunal. The people were not allowed by their presence in the street to show even silent sympathy, either with us, or with the cause for which we suffered and so many had perished.

After the verdict and the sentence life became a little easier for us. Instead of being compelled to take exercise one by one, we were now allowed to meet and walk about freely in the prison yard. The police had an object in granting us this indulgence. Before the trial several attempts had been made to take our photographs; but this we had resolutely refused to allow. For those who cherish hopes of regaining their liberty, the possession

of their likeness by the police is strongly to be deprecated. We were now informed by the authorities of the gaol that unless we complied with their wishes in this matter our meetings and our walks would be stopped. We enjoyed our social intercourse immensely. It was an unspeakable comfort to us. Three of our little company were under sentence of death, the fate of three others trembled in the balance, and would be made known only at the foot of the scaffold. It was not possible that we could long remain together, and we offered to comply with the wish of our gaolers on condition that we should not be separated until the last. This condition being accepted, our photographs were taken.

The quarters of several of us were in an upper story of the prison, and from our grated windows we could watch the construction of the gallows. The place of execution was a plain about two-thirds of a mile from the prison gates. Those doomed to death, being on a lower story, did not witness these ghastly preparations, and none of us, of course, gave them a hint of what was going on.

At length, and only too swiftly, came the 13th of May. We had been told nothing, but from the completion of the gallows, the behavior of the warders, and from other signs, we thought that the executions were fixed for the following day. The condemned thought so themselves. Although we did our utmost to keep outwardly calm, the farewells that evening were unspeakably sad. Most touching and agonizing of all was the parting of those who were to die on the morrow with those who expected to follow

them a little later on to the scaffold and the grave. Two months afterwards Beltchomsky and Anisim Fedorow were hanged on the same gallows.

Five thousand soldiers and gendarmes escorted our doomed friends to the place of execution. On previous occasions the authorities had thought it well to do their hanging early in the morning, while people slept. This time they did it with pomp, circumstance and parade. The cavalcade of death did not leave the prison gates until nearly noon; traffic was suspended, but the streets were crowded with spectators, and when the bodies of our comrades swung in the air, the military band struck up a lively tune, as if they were rejoicing over some great victory.

Sent to Siberia

From the time of the execution to the date of our departure for Siberia nothing noteworthy came to pass. All sorts of rumors were current touching our destination and our fate. Every day brought a new conjecture or a fresh story. It was said that we were to be confined in one of the dreaded central prisons – that we were to be immured in the casemates of St. Peter and St. Paul – that we were to be sent to Eastern Siberia, to Western Siberia – to the island of Sakhalin – that we were not to be sent anywhere, but to stay where we were.

At length, on May 30, the question was settled. Ten prisoners, of whom I made one, were summoned to the office, and told that we were forthwith to take our departure – whither, our custodians refused to say. The next proceeding was to put two of our friends, who did not belong to the privileged order, in irons and shave their heads. We others, being nobles, were to be spared this indignity until we reached our destination. For the present we were required only to don the ordinary convict costume, consisting of a long gray capote, marked on the back with a yellow ace for those sentenced to simple transportation, and with two aces for those condemned to penal servitude.

"Will you not tell us whither we are going?" asked one of our number of General Gubernet, as we stepped into the van.

"To Eastern Siberia," said the General, who stood near the

door.

Then I knew my fate – fourteen years hard labor – possibly in a region of almost endless night, and as cold as the Polar regions.

The station of Koursk, the cities of Mzensk, Moscow, and Nijni Novgorod are passed in quick succession. At Nijni Novgorod we leave the railway and continue our journey, as far as Perm, by water. It is only here that we begin to realize that we are really on the road to Siberia. We are transferred to little three-horse carriages, with a soldier in front and a gendarme by the side of each prisoner. By leaning a little forward it is possible to see the vast horizon before us, and the forests and mountains that stretch for unknown distances on either side of the road. It is difficult to describe the feelings of a captive who for months, or it may be for years, has been under bolt and bar, and whose views have been limited to the blank walls of a prison, when he once more breathes the free air of heaven, and beholds nature in all her grandeur and her beauty. It is as if the liberty for which his soul has never ceased to yearn were opening to him her arms and bidding him be free.

The country through which we were passing was thinly peopled, and buildings and houses were few and far between. The broad highway was bordered in some places by brushwood, in others by immense forests. All sorts of fancies flitted through my brain. I thought of home – of father, mother and friends – of the cause, of the incidents of my trial, and the dreary future that lay before me: fourteen years' hard labor in Eastern Siberia – a

hell hopeless as any conceived in the brain of Dante. And then plans of escape surged through my mind, each wilder and more fantastic than its fellow.

We travel night and day, always with the same soldier and gendarme, though not always with the same driver. On one occasion we change horses at midnight, and shortly afterwards I see that my guards are overcome by sleep. They nod and rouse themselves in turn; their efforts to keep awake are laughable. As for me, my thoughts hinder sleep, but an idea occurs to me, and I nod too, and, drawing myself into my corner, I snore. The stratagem succeeds. A few minutes later my gendarme is snoring loud enough to waken the dead. The soldier who sits before me embraces his rifle with both hands and feet, and sways to and fro with the motion of the tarantass, now and then incoherently muttering in a guttural voice. He is deep in dreamland. I rise softly and look out into the night. A million stars are shining in the clear sky, and I can see that we are passing through a thick forest. A spring, a bound, and I could be among those trees. Once there, my guards can no more find me than the wolf that steals through the covert, for I am fleet of foot and eager for freedom. But dressed in this convict costume, how long should I be able to keep my freedom? To regain Russia, I must follow the highroad, and the first soldier or gendarme I met would arrest me. True, I might throw away my capote, with its double ace, but I had no hat, and a bare-headed man would invite attention even more than one clad in the costume of a felon. Worse still, I had no

arms. I could neither defend myself against wild animals nor kill game; and if I am compelled to take to the woods, game may be the only food I shall be able to procure.

No; I must abandon the idea now, and watch for a more favorable opportunity hereafter. As I come reluctantly to this conclusion I remember – it seemed like an inspiration – that the gendarme has a hat on his head and a revolver by his side. Why not take them? He is still fast asleep, snoring, if possible, harder than ever. I shall never have such another chance. I will do it: two minutes more and then – freedom.

I almost shout.

Holding my breath, and trying to still the beatings of my heart, I creep close to the sleeping man, and lay my hand gently on the hat. He makes no sign, and the next moment the hat is under my capote. Now the revolver! I lay hold of the butt, and try to draw it from the gendarme's belt. It does not come out easily – I pull again – pull a second time, and am preparing to pull a third time, when the snoring suddenly ceases.

Quick as thought, I shrink into my corner, breathe deeply and pretend to sleep. The gendarme rouses himself, mutters, and passes his hand over his head. Then he searches all about him, and, evidently alarmed by the loss of his hat, he sleeps no more.

"Hallo, brother!" I say, "you seem to have lost your hat."

"I am afraid I have, sir," he answers in a puzzled voice, at the same time scratching his head by way, probably, of keeping it warm.

“You see what it is to sleep on the road, my friend! Suppose, now, I had slipped out of the carriage! Nothing would have been easier.”

“Oh, but you never thought of such a thing, and I am sure you would not do it, sir.”

“But why?” I ask.

“Because I have done you no harm, and you do not want to get a poor fellow into trouble! You know yourself how severely gendarmes are dealt with who let their prisoners escape.”

“Very well, brother, here is your hat which I found and hid – just to frighten you a bit.”

Just then we reached another station, and the poor fellow as he put on his head-gear thanked me quite pathetically, as much for not running away as for restoring his property.

The Convoy

At Krasnovarski we were put in prison again, and there remained several weeks, awaiting further orders as to our disposal, for, notwithstanding what we had been told at Kieff, there appeared to be some doubt touching the fate in store for us. At length came the final instructions. We were to march with the chain-gang of common prisoners to Irkoutsk. It was then that, as an expedient for avoiding penal servitude and eventually regaining my liberty, the idea of effecting an exchange first occurred to me. The device is one frequently practised among the outlaws of Siberia. This is the method of it: – Two prisoners make a bargain, whereby one of the contracting parties takes the name and certificate and assumes the crime of the other, and *vice versâ*. There is, in fact, a complete change of identities, and the one who gains by the exchange settles the difference by a money payment. The result is that the man condemned to hard labor becomes a Siberian settler, and the other takes his place at the mines or in gaol. The bargain may appear an unequal one, but a moneyless man will sometimes do a great deal for a small sum of ready cash – especially if he has a passion for gambling or drink – and there is always the possibility that, when the deceit is discovered, the more extreme penalty may not be enforced. In the meantime, moreover, the supposed political prisoner, who is generally of noble birth, enjoys a consideration

and some material advantages which are denied to the common malefactor.

During the long tramp of the chain gang these substitutions are effected without much difficulty. The escort being changed every two days, it is impossible for the members of it, in so short a time, to familiarize themselves with the names and condition of the ten or twelve score prisoners who compose the convoy. They can do no more than count heads, and when the officer in command of the party has delivered to his successor the same number of convicts, in each category, which he received from his predecessor, his task is fully acquitted. Whether they are the same persons he cannot undertake to say, and is never asked.

On August 20, or thereabouts – I am not sure to a day – we were once more *en route*, this time on foot. From Krasnovarski the distance is 700 English miles, and the journey, it was reckoned, would occupy about two months. I had thus ample time to make the acquaintance of my convict comrades and carry out the substitution.

We were now put under an altogether different *régime*. Hitherto we had not been able to exchange a word with anybody. I saw about me only my fellow political convicts, and might speak, when occasion required, to none but my guards. Now we were allowed to communicate freely with each other, and with the rather mixed society of which we formed a part. The gang consisted of 170 persons of both sexes and of every class and age; from the babe in its mother's arms to the old man with snow-

white hair. Most of them were peasants; yet several among us could claim the privileges of nobility. But the strength of the convoy diminished as we went on, for Krasnovarski is within the limits of Eastern Siberia, and several prisoners were left as colonists at the villages through which we passed.

The escort consisted of an officer and thirty soldiers, armed with old-fashioned muskets. A detachment of three or four marched at the head of the column. The others marched at the side and were supposed to form a military chain. But it was so weak, relatively to its duties, as to be almost worthless, the convoy being increased to a portentous length by the baggage-wagons and the families of the prisoners who were following them into exile. After the baggage-wagons came two carriages occupied by gentlemen malefactors of the nobility, and three in which, when they were footsore, rode the political prisoners.

About six o'clock in the evening the convoy generally reached the "half-stage," a building in which we pass the night. After a march of two days, or of a full day, we had a day's rest at one of the buildings known as *étapes*, or stages. On these occasions the prisoners are ranged in front of the building and counted. If the count be right the gates are opened, and with cries of joy the weary wayfarers throw themselves into the court. Then, pushing and hustling, clanking their chains and cursing like demons, they fight their way into the house, struggling desperately for the best places. The first comers take possession of the benches; the others lie where they can. When all are inside the gates are

closed, but the doors are not barred until nightfall.

The "stage" is a small wooden barrack – with a large court, formed of palisades, in the rear – divided into several compartments, one of which is assigned to the nobles of the convoy; but like all the others it is far too little for its destined purpose. The prisoners are as closely packed as herrings in a barrel. A few only can find places on the benches. The others have to sleep on the damp and dirty floor. Next to the benches the most desirable spot is under them, for there it is a little cleaner and the sleepers are less likely to be disturbed than on the open floor.

The struggle for places over, the barrack-yard becomes very lively. The prisoners are preparing the evening meal; some laying fires, others putting a few scanty morsels of food into a pot – for our fare is terribly meagre; others bringing water and making tea. After supper we are again counted, driven inside, and left there for the night. No one is allowed to go out for any purpose whatever; but as a substitute for latrines large wooden pails are placed in the corridor. The presence of these abominations among so many people in ill-ventilated rooms renders the air unutterably foul; its odor is something quite peculiar, as all who have had occasion to enter the prisoners' quarters at night, or, still worse, early in the morning, well know.

In the same corridor, but at the other end, is the *maidan*, a sort of itinerant shop, which serves at the same time as a club and gambling saloon; for the prisoners are much given to play.

This *maidan* is an institution common to every Siberian convoy and gaol. The *markitant*, or keeper of it, is always a prisoner. The post, which is much coveted and very profitable, is sold to the highest bidder, and the proceeds of the sale, often considerable, are added to the common hoard. For one of the first proceedings of the prisoners is to form themselves into a society, which is a faithful reproduction of the rural *mir*. They elect a *starosta*, who also acts as general cashier, and appoint him an assistant. The authorities, on their part, always recognise this system of self-government, and acknowledge the authority of the *starosta*. All orders are communicated through him, and he makes all payments on behalf of the community. He acts, in short, as general intermediary between the prisoners and their custodians – bribes, when it is necessary, the agents of justice, and pays a regular tribute to the executioner, in consideration whereof that official is good enough, often at the risk of his own back, to wield his whip with all possible consideration for the feelings of his victim.

The scene in the *markitant's* den on a rest day was very queer, and, well painted, would make a striking picture: the players round the capote-covered table, as excited and as intent over their game as if they were playing for thousands of roubles instead of fractions of kopecs – the shouting and gesticulating onlookers, following with keenest interest the varying fortunes of the game – a ruined gambler bargaining with the *markitant* for an advance on a coat, a pair of shoes, or an old watch – a convict asleep

on the floor – another mending a rent in his clothes – a third hammering at his irons. He is widening the rings that shackle his legs, in order that he may slip them off when he is on the road – walking in irons not being precisely an amusement. The sentries and the officers cannot fail to hear the clang of the hammer, but the custom of removing irons while on the march is so common as to have the force of a recognised regulation, and is seldom, if ever, objected to by the commander of an escort.

Day followed day with unvarying monotony, but every one brought us nearer to our destination, and though I had not yet ventured to effect an exchange, I never wavered in my resolution to escape on the first favorable opportunity. Almost every day we met vagabonds, as runaway convicts are called, making for Russia. Their dress, their closely cropped hair, and their general appearance left no doubt as to their quality. Yet neither the officer of the escort nor the local authorities paid the least attention to them, so common are fugitive convicts on Siberian roads. When they met us they would draw on one side, sometimes saluting the officer. I have known old friends meet in this way.

"Hallo, Ivan Ivanovitch, how goes it?" would call out one of the tramps to a man whom he recognised in the chain gang.

"Ah, is that you, Iliouschka?" would answer the other pleasantly. "What! have you become a vagabond[1] already?"

[1] As vagabonds are frequently mentioned in this narrative, and Mokrievitch himself became one of them, it may be well to explain that the wanderers so designated are simply tramps unfurnished with passports. A double stream of these waifs is always on the move through Siberia – one towards the east, the other towards the west –

"Yes, I am on the lookout for cheap lodgings; I dare say I shall soon get accommodated."

This in allusion to the certainty, sooner or later, of his recapture.

Political prisoners on the march enjoy privileges which are denied to ordinary convicts. They are not fettered; they can, when so disposed, ride in the carriages which accompany the convoy, and they are allowed fifteen kopecs (threepence) a day for food.

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the latter free, the former generally in bonds. Many of the involuntary settlers either do not take kindly to work, or find their lot intolerable, and so make off on the first opportunity, begging their way, and living on the charity of the peasants, who never refuse a destitute traveller a crust of bread and a night's lodging. Not a few of these wanderers sink under the hardships to which they are exposed, or freeze to death in the forests, and the survivors are nearly always arrested before they reach the frontier of European Russia; but they cause the police a world of trouble. Having no papers, they are able to give false names, and deny being fugitive transports – which they almost invariably do. There is then nothing for it but to write to whatever address a man may give – generally some remote village – and inquire if he is known there. Should the answer be in the negative, the fact is taken as proof of the paperless one's guilt, and he is sent back in chains to the interior of Siberia. As likely as not, however, it will be in the affirmative, for there prevails among these outcasts a strange yet regular trade in what the vagabonds call "nests." For instance, Ivan Ivanovitch, being in want of money, sells to Peter Iliouschka, who has a few kopecs to spare, the name and address of some mujik of his acquaintance, who long ago left his native village for parts unknown – or, perhaps, his own name and address. This is Peter's nest, and when he falls into the hands of the police he tells them he is Paul Lubovitch, from, let us say, Teteriwino, in the government of Koursk. On this, a missive is sent to the *starosta* of Teteriwino, who replies, in due course, to the effect that the village did once possess a Paul Lubovitch, but whether the person in question be the same man he is unable to say. The next proceeding is to send the *soi-disant* Paul to Teteriwino for identification. This proceeding naturally results in the detection of the imposture, whereupon our friend Peter is condemned to a new term of exile, and sent back whence he came.

On the other hand, the orders in our regard given to the officers of the escort were exceedingly stringent; orders, however, which for the most part it was impossible to execute. For instance, they were enjoined to keep us always apart, and not let us on any account mix with the other prisoners. But the weakness of the escort, and, above all, the arrangement of the buildings at the *étapes*, or halting-places, rendered observance of this injunction so extremely difficult that it was seldom enforced.

The Substitution

We were within fourteen days of Irkoutsk before I succeeded in effecting an exchange of identities with a convict condemned to simple exile. Many others followed my example. Of the 170 men who composed the convoy, not more than fifty were under sentence of penal servitude, and at least twenty of them obtained substitutes. So far as the prisoners were concerned, this was done quite openly; concealment, in fact, would have been impossible, even if it had been necessary – and it was not necessary; for so long as the convoy held together, and the communistic organisation endured, betrayal was not to be feared. The traitor would have died within a few hours of his treason by the hand of one of his comrades – and this all knew.

My substitute, a peasant by origin and a burglar by profession, agreed to the exchange of identities in consideration of a sum of sixteen shillings in coin, a pair of boots and a flannel blouse. Two days before our arrival at the *étape*, where it was arranged to carry the agreement into effect, I pretended to have a bad toothache, bound up my face with a pocket-handkerchief, and at the half-way halting-place remained all the time on the bench that served for a bed, as if I were distracted with pain. This I did to hide my features from the soldiers of the escort, one of whom, sharper than his fellows, might otherwise possibly discover the stratagem. The risk was too great, my longing for liberty too intense, to

permit me to neglect a single precaution.

Exchanges were most easily effected at the principal halting-places because the escort was changed there. Among the common prisoners the transaction was conducted in the simplest way imaginable. At the roll-call the contracting parties answered respectively to each other's name, took each other's places, and the thing was done. In the case of a political prisoner under special surveillance, just then very stringent, the operation entailed greater risk and demanded more care. I arranged with my substitute that the moment we arrived at the *étape* in question, he should follow me to an obscure corner of the barrack-yard – to speak plainly, to the latrine. The plan succeeded to admiration. In a few minutes we had exchanged dresses. Pavlov, my burglar friend, was transformed into a political prisoner of the nobility, and I became a common malefactor in irons. Though in face as unlike as possible, we were about the same height and build, and, at a distance, might easily be mistaken one for another.

The delivery of the gang to the new escort went off without difficulty. Pavlov lay on a bench with his face bound up. Nobody took any notice either of him or of me, and when the old escort marched away, we knew we were safe. The moment they were gone, I went into the common room and got myself shaved and my hair cut close to my head, so that my coiffure might resemble that of my new comrades.

I wondered then, and I have often wondered since, at the ease with which my custodians were deceived in the matter of this

substitution. On the register I was set down as a former medical student. I had, therefore, been a member of a university; Pavlov, on the other hand, was almost wholly illiterate. He could hardly open his mouth without betraying his origin and showing his ignorance. His appearance, moreover, was little in harmony with his new character. I, as a noble, had worn my hair and beard long, while his head was closely cropped, and he wore no beard at all. How could all this fail to excite suspicion? For three weeks, he acted as my substitute, and it never seems to have occurred either to the officers of the escort or the authorities of Irkoutsk that the *soi-disant* Debagorio Mokrievitch was *not* the real Simon Pure. But for the denunciation – of which I shall speak presently – I do not believe the secret ever would have been discovered, always supposing that Pavlov kept the compact, and he really behaved very well. One day an officer of the escort, seeing by the register that I was a medical student, consulted my substitute touching some ailment he had, and Pavlov, with an impudence that bordered on the sublime, gave him the benefit of his advice. He was fortunately not called upon to put his prescription in writing.

It may be asked why I did not profit by the laxity of the escort during the first part of the journey to escape before we reached our destination. Because I should have been missed at the first halting-place, and by means of the telegraph and an active pursuit, immediately recaptured; I could have had only a few hours' start, and I wanted, at the least, several days.

After the substitution, I marched as a common felon on foot, carrying my irons; my allowance was reduced to twopence a-day, while Pavlov had threepence, and could vary the monotony of the way by riding in one of the carriages provided for the political prisoners.

About October 20, 1879, we reached Irkoutsk, where we were to be received and inspected by the higher authorities. Towards eight o'clock in the evening, we entered the central prison and were taken into a large room with three doors and two exits. One of these was open and led into an adjoining room, where the inspection took place. Our starosta standing on the doorstep, called the prisoners one by one, and each, as he was summoned, went into the room, carrying with him his poor belongings, in order that it might be ascertained if he still possessed the articles given him by the Crown. This done, he passed on into a further apartment, where the prisoners were to be quartered for the night.

At length came my turn.

"Pavlov!" shouts the starosta.

"Here," I answered, and, taking up my bag, I enter the audience chamber, and find myself in the presence of several important-looking functionaries, sitting at a big table covered with registers.

"Paul Pavlov?" says the presiding councillor, and then, after favoring me with a fugitive glance, he bends once more over his books.

"Yes, your nobleness," I reply, doing my best to speak and look like a peasant prisoner.

"For what crime were you judged?"

"For burglary, your nobleness."

"Are the effects given you by the Government all in order?"

"They are, your nobleness."

"Two shirts, two pairs of drawers, woollen trousers, great coat, pelisse, a pair of boots, leg irons?" enumerated the councillor, in a rapid, monotonous voice.

As each article is named, I say, "It is here," and during the interrogation an obscure personage fumbles in my bag to verify my statement.

This concluded the inspection, and after surrendering my fetters, which I removed without the help of a blacksmith, I passed into the apartment where I was to remain as a prisoner until they took me to the village where I had to be interned as a settler.

I had not long to wait. The fifth day after our arrival, the remaining vagabonds of the gang were sent further east, and there remained only the ordinary exiles and prisoners under sentence of penal servitude. An important consequence of the departure of the vagabonds – old offenders who formed the bulk of the convoy – was the break-up of our communistic organisation, and the subsequent revelation of my secret.

On the following day the involuntary colonists, of whom I was now one, started for our final destination, a village some

forty miles from Irkoutsk, and on November 1st, we arrived at Talminsky, the end of our long journey. For the last time we were paraded and counted in the court of the *volost*. Then, after our effects had been again examined, we received our registers and were handed over to the clerk of the village, who had orders to find us quarters.

The escort went one way, we went another, and we walked through the streets of the great village free men – within the limits assigned to us.

The Flight

If I meant to escape I had no time to lose. At any moment I was liable to be betrayed. My comrades among the colonists, as also the prisoners we had left at Irkoutsk, all knew who I was. Any of these, by turning traitor, could earn a considerable reward; even a slight indiscretion might reveal the secret, and the disclosure of my identity to the authorities would lead to my immediate arrest. It was therefore necessary to go at once; yet I could not start on so long a journey without money, and I did not possess a kopeck. So I sold my great coat, my woollen trousers, and my gloves, for a rouble and a half. It was not much. After this depletion of my wardrobe, my costume left a good deal to be desired. A regulation pelisse, a fur cap, thin trousers, and ordinary underclothing, did not afford much protection against the intense cold of a Siberian winter. But I dared not hesitate. On November 2d, at ten o'clock, before noon, I set out from the village. The morning though cold was clear and quiet. I made no attempt to hide my quality; it was evident to everybody. My yellow regulation pelisse and closely cropped head showed clearly enough that I was a vagabond. But this gave me little anxiety; I had observed that in Eastern Siberia vagabonds were neither arrested nor questioned. It would be the same with me, I thought, and in this expectation I was not disappointed. My journey as a vagabond lasted about eight days, and I suffered

much both from hunger and cold. In the valleys – for the country was hilly – I often experienced a cold so intense that I thought my limbs would freeze as I walked. Sometimes the valley bottoms were filled with a thick fog. Going through one of those fogs was like taking a bath of pins and needles – so keen was the cold – and, though on these occasions I always ran, one of my knees became frost-bitten – my pelisse not being long enough to cover my legs, which were clothed only in light cotton pantaloons.

I generally passed the night in the bath-room of some peasant after the manner of vagabonds, for nobody in Siberia, however poor, is without a vapor bath, the vapor being produced by pouring water on red-hot stones.

One afternoon, just as night was closing in, I reached a village and sought a lodging. I had heard from the experienced vagabonds of the gang that it was always better to ask charity or help from the poor than from the well-to-do. Never, they said, when you are on the tramp, knock at the door of a rich man's house. Go rather to the most wretched cabin you can find.

This rule, based on a wide experience and a profound truth – for the poor naturally receive more sympathy from the poor than from the well-to-do – I deemed it expedient to follow. At the end of the village in question I found a cabin of unprepossessing aspect, and, concluding that it was exactly what I wanted, I went in, making, as I entered, the sign of the cross before the picture of a saint, as is the custom in Russia. Then I greeted my hosts.

"Good day, my boy," answered the peasant, an old man with

a long white beard, in a kindly voice.

"Could you sell me a bit of bread?" I asked; for though I travelled as a vagabond I did not like to beg after the manner of vagabonds, and always tendered a piece of money for what I received.

"Yes, you can have bread," said the old man, handing me a loaf.

"Thank you, father; and may I pass the night in your house?"

"I fear that is impossible, my boy. You are a vagabond, aren't you? They are very severe just now about vagabonds, the police are. If you take in a man without a passport you may get fined. Where do you come from, my boy?"

"From the convoy."

"I thought so. I was right then. You are a vagabond."

I answered with a supplicatory gesture, and I dare say I looked cold enough and wretched enough to move the compassion of a harder-hearted man than this good old peasant.

"You fellows generally sleep in the baths, don't you?" he said, after a pause. "Well, go into mine if you like; I can put you nowhere else. And I have heated it to-day; you will be warm."

So picking up my loaf, and laying on the table a few kopecks – nobody ever thinks of bargaining with a wanderer – I leave the house. The bath is hard by, and on going in I find that it is quite warm, as the old man had said. The heat is so great, indeed, that I can dispense with my pelisse.

These peasants' bath-rooms are seldom supplied with a

chimney. The stones are heated in the middle of the room, and the smoke, after blackening the rafters, finds its way out as best it can. There were no windows, and, in order to look round, I had to light one of the tallow candles which I carried in my bag. They were very useful for rubbing my feet with after a long march. I was in no hurry to sleep, and before lying down on the wooden bench which was to be my couch I had a little operation to perform. My yellow pelisse proclaimed my quality a long way off. That was an inconvenience, and in certain easily conceivable circumstances, might lead to awkward consequences. I meant to change its color. This I did by smearing the garment with a mixture composed of tallow from my candles and soot from the wall. It was not a very fast black perhaps, but it answered the purpose. Henceforth, nobody, without a pretty close inspection, would perceive that I was a vagabond on the tramp.

This done, I lay down on the bench and was soon fast asleep. I must have slept an hour or two when I was wakened by the creaking of the door, and I heard the heavy steps of a man entering the room. As it was pitch dark I could not see him, and I did not think it worth while to strike a light. The newcomer seemed to be of the same opinion, for, without speaking a word, he groped his way towards my bench and laid down beside me. Though he touched my body he made no remark, and a few moments later I could tell by his regular breathing that he was fast asleep. Then I slept again, and did not open my eyes until I was wakened by the cold – for the bath-room had lost all its

warmth, and the temperature was far below freezing-point. So I rose from my couch, donned my pelisse, and, though the sun had not yet risen, I left my snoring bed-fellow, whom I never saw, to his slumbers and resumed my journey.

My plan was to reach the house of a friend about 150 miles from the village where I had been interned. To traverse a region as large as Europe without money was quite out of the question, and even if I had succeeded in doing so it would have been impossible, without papers, either to cross the frontier or leave the country. It is hardly necessary to say that I took care never to ask my way. That would have been a great imprudence. And there was little need, for the roads in Siberia are so few that it is scarcely possible to go wrong. According to my reckoning I was still about thirty miles from my destination. Shortly after leaving the village I saw, near a little cabin by the road-side, a man who eyed me keenly. From his short hair and stubby beard I guessed that he was a recently arrived colonist who had come into the country with a chain gang.

"Won't you come in, brother," he said, "and rest yourself and take a cup of tea?"

I accepted the invitation with pleasure, for I had not broken my fast. We entered the cabin together. It was very small, and on a brick hearth was sitting a woman, probably the exile's wife. My host asked me to take a seat and began to prepare the samovar, an appliance which is found in every Siberian cottage. As we drank we talked.

"Is it a long time since you left the gang?" asked my entertainer.

"Quite lately. I belonged to convoy number four."

"You have turned vagabond then, brother?"

"Yes, what is the good of staying here?"

"You are quite right," returned the exile bitterly. "The country is abominable. I shall do the same thing myself in a month or two. Which way do you go – by the Angara road?"

I gave him an itinerary, though not exactly the one I meant to follow.

"I know all these places well," observed my host. "But do you know you will have to be prudent. The authorities hereabouts are very vicious just now. They arrest every wayfarer they see. You must look out, my brother, or they will arrest you."

"What would you advise me to do, then," I asked, greatly alarmed at this news.

"I will tell you, brother; listen!"

And then he gave me very valuable information; described the villages through or near which I should have to pass, indicating at the same time those that were dangerous and the footpaths by which I might avoid them. He gave me the names and described the dwellings of the peasants with whom I might lodge, and, in a word, told me everything which it imported a wandering outlaw to know.

"But why," I asked, "are the police so active just now? I thought this road was one of the safest for vagabonds in the whole

country."

"God knows. Perhaps they have found a body somewhere and are looking for the murderer."

I made no remark, but I thought it was much more likely that they had discovered my flight and were looking for me. And so it proved.

After finishing the tea we talked a little longer, and as I took my leave I thanked my host warmly for his hospitality and information.

When I reached the last village before that at which lived my friend, I was quite overcome with fatigue, and faint with hunger and cold; but I counted on a long and quiet rest in the cottage of a peasant woman whose address had been given me by the friendly exile. It was at the extremity of the village, and to get thither I had to pass the headquarters of the communal authorities. In the light of the exile's warning, and my own fears, this seemed a sufficiently dangerous enterprise. Albeit I put on an air of indifference and took care not to increase my pace, yet I could not avoid an occasional backward glance to see if I was being followed. No one, however, seemed to notice me, and I reached my destination without receiving any unpleasant attentions. The peasant woman welcomed me kindly, if not very effusively. But she was a dear good soul, gave me of her best, and let me lie on a bench and pass the night in her house.

About two hours before sunrise my hostess came into the kitchen and began to busy herself with preparations for breakfast.

But I remained stretched on my bench; the cottage was warm. I felt very comfortable, and I saw no reason for hurry. The day was before me, and I had not far to go. So I turned round on my wooden couch and was just sinking into a second slumber when I heard the sound of bells, such as post-chaises and mail-carts in Russia invariably carry.

"Bells!" I cried, starting up. "Does a mail-coach run on this road?"

"No," answered the peasant, "we have no mail-coach here; it is probably a private carriage which is passing through the village."

Meanwhile the bells came nearer; then the sound suddenly ceased, as it seemed not far from the cottage. I did not like this at all. What could it mean?

"Would you mind going to see what or whose carriage it is?" I said. She went, and as the door closed behind her, I jumped off my bench and put on my clothes.

In a few minutes she was back with the news that the carriage belonged to the gendarmes, and that they were questioning the *starosta* and the clerk.

"The gendarmes!" I exclaimed, "who says so – where are they from?"

"From Irkoutsk. It is the coachman himself who told me. He thinks they are after a political runaway."

"In that case, I had better be going," I said, laughing. "They may perhaps think I am the man. Now look here – if they ask you any questions, know nothing. If you do it may be worse for

you; they may make you pay a fine. Good-by" (putting the last of my kopecks on the table).

"Good-by," answered my hostess; "don't be uneasy. I shall not say a word." She was a worthy woman, and a friend in need, that old peasant.

I went out. It was still dark, and I might creep through the village without being seen. The last of the houses passed, I ran at the top of my speed, for I felt sure that the pursuers were at my heels, and the possibility of being retaken enraged me almost past endurance. I had been denounced shortly after leaving the settlement, of that there could be no doubt. But how had the police managed to trace me so soon? I had been very careful, neglected no conceivable precaution, given misleading answers to all who questioned me about my past movements and future plans. I had made long *detours* to avoid the larger villages, and during the latter part of my journey put up only with the most trusted friends of vagabond wanderers. Yet the gendarmes had followed me step by step to my very last resting-place, and but for the friendly warning of the bells I should certainly have been recaptured, for I could not have left the village by daylight without being seen. Even now I was in imminent danger; my safety absolutely depended on my reaching my friend's house at once, and lying a long time in hiding. Though I had never been there, I knew the place so well by description – its situation and appearance were so vividly impressed on my mind – that I could find it, even in the dark, without asking a question. It was

only about seven miles from the village I had just left. But how could I get thither unperceived? For if I was seen by a single person entering my friend's house, it might be the ruin of us both. Something must be decided on the instant. Day was dawning, the gendarmes were behind me, and by the barking of the dogs I reckoned that the village where dwelt my friend could not be more than two miles away. I looked round. On one side of the road were open fields; on the other thick brushwood grew. As yet, I had not met a soul, – nobody could tell the gendarmes in which direction I had gone – but it was now no longer dark, and if I went on, I might encounter a peasant or a wayfarer any moment. Only one thing could be done; I must hide somewhere – even at the risk of being frozen stiff – and remain hidden until sundown, when I might perchance gain my friend's house unperceived. Among the bushes! Yes, that was the place, I could lie *perdu* there all day. But just as I was about to put this plan into execution, another thought came to trouble me. How about my footsteps? Fresh snow had fallen in the night, and the police could follow me to my hiding-place as easily as a hound tracks a deer to its lair. And then I bethought me of an ingenious artifice, about which I had read in some romance. Turning my face to the road I walked backward toward the bushes, taking care at every step to make a distinct impression on the snow. It was now quite daylight, and a little way off I could see two summer cabins of the Buriats – in winter always empty. Thither I went, always backward, and entering one of the cabins remained there the whole day and far into the night.

When I thought all the peasants would be indoors, I stole quietly out, and going stealthily and with many precautions to my friend's house, knocked in fear and misgiving at his door.

To my great relief he opened it himself.

"I should not have recognised you, if I had not just heard all your history," he said, after we had exchanged greetings.

"I am very curious to see myself," I returned, approaching a mirror which hung on the wall. "I have not seen a looking-glass since my arrest."

I was so much altered that I hardly knew myself. I saw before me the reflection of a wild, strange, haggard face, and I could almost have believed I was somebody else.

"When did you hear of my flight?" I asked.

"To-day. There has been quite an inquest here. The gendarmes questioned everybody and searched every house. They followed you step by step to the last village. They found out where you passed the night, and then they seem to have lost the scent entirely. Where have you been?"

I told him.

"Did anybody see you come here?"

"Not a soul."

"Good. All the same, you must not stay here an hour longer than we can help. It would be too dangerous. The police are baffled; but they have by no means given up the quest, and as likely as not will be here again to-morrow. You must not sleep here."

"Where then?"

"At my farm. But first of all you must change your skin."

As he spoke, my friend in need opened a cupboard, and took therefrom some garments in which, when I had arrayed myself and had a good wash, I looked and felt like a new man.

"Is your farm far from here?" I asked, as we sat down to supper.

"About twenty-five versts (fifteen miles), in the depth of the forest, far from any highway. Hunting parties from Irkoutsk visit us there sometimes. Your coming will, therefore, be no surprise for the servants. It is true your hair is just a little short (looking at my head); but that is nothing. You have had typhoid fever, and are going to recruit your strength in the forest. You look haggard enough to have had three fevers."

An hour later we were *en route*, my friend, who had lived many years in the country, himself taking the reins, and he contrived matters so well that nobody in the house knew either of my coming or my going. The police were thrown completely off the scent.

Liberty

As I learnt subsequently, my identity and my stratagem were revealed to the authorities by one of my comrades of the convoy shortly after I left Irkoutsk. But when the gendarmes went to the village of Talminsky, I had already vanished. Every effort was, however, made to retake me, the quest being kept up night and day for six weeks. Then it was rumored that a body found in the forest had been identified as mine, and that I had perished of hunger. According to another story, I had been arrested at Nijni Oudinsk, and was being brought back to Irkoutsk. Among the vagabonds who at this time were captured right and left on the high roads throughout the province, were several whom it pleased to call themselves by my name. The deceit was naturally soon detected, but while it lasted the deceivers enjoyed certain advantages, which helped to render their detention tolerable. Instead of walking they rode in carriages, and were accompanied by an escort, and being regarded as important prisoners, they were both better fed and better treated than common malefactors, while their audacity rendered them highly popular with their vagabond and convict comrades. There were at one time no fewer than four false Debagorio Mokrievitches in the jail of Irkoutsk. The police sought me with great diligence among the political exiles of the province; a most stupid proceeding on their part, for to take refuge with the politicals would have been

putting my head in the lion's mouth.

Three other men who about the same time attempted to escape were all recaptured.

I stayed in Siberia a year, making during that time several journeys to the eastward of Irkoutsk. At length the police having abandoned all hope of finding me, I resolved to leave the country. A passport being absolutely necessary, I borrowed the name and obtained the papers of a gentleman recently deceased – Ivan Alexandrovitch Selivanoff. It was in the winter of 1880 that I set out on my long journey of 3,600 miles. I travelled post, by way of Irkoutsk, Krasnoiarsk and Tomsk – towns through which, a twelvemonth before, I had passed as a prisoner. Rather a bold undertaking in the circumstances; but as I possessed an itinerary-card signed by the governor of the province, giving me the right to relays of horses, I ran no great danger, and left the home of my hospitable friend with an easy mind.

During the journey I met from time to time gangs of prisoners on the way from Russia to Irkoutsk. The clanking of the irons, the yellow pelisses, the worn faces, the weary walk, and the shorn heads of these unfortunates – how familiar they all were, and how the sight of them thrilled me to the soul! And behind the chain gang came the wagons of the political prisoners, among whom, more than once, I recognized the face of a dear friend. But instead of jumping from my carriage and folding the poor fellows in my arms, I had to look the other way!

All went well with me, but once I had a terribly narrow escape

of falling a second time into the toils. It so chanced that I passed through the province of Tobolsk in company with a tchinovnik (government employé), whose acquaintance I had made on the road, a big-paunched, rosy-cheeked fellow, with merry eyes and a mellow voice; and, being on his way home after a long absence, in high good humor and full of fun. Once at the end of a long day's journey, we arrived about midnight at a town in the neighborhood of Tobolsk, and, being tired and sleepy, resolved to pass the rest of the night there. So we went into the travellers' room, ordered tea, and handed our itinerary cards to the starosta of the station, in order that he might make the necessary entries in the travellers' book. Before going to the sleeping room we requested that the horses might be ready at seven o'clock next morning.

I slept the sleep of the just, rose betimes, and called for the starosta.

"Are the horses ready?" I asked. "And be good enough to bring hither our itinerary-cards."

"The station-master will himself bring your itinerary-cards, and as for the horses they are already yoked up."

Half-an-hour later the station-master (otherwise director), came into our room, holding in his hand the itinerary-cards.

"I am sorry to trouble you," he said politely; "but I should like to know which of you young gentlemen is Ivan Alexandrovitch Selivanoff?"

"At your service sir," I answered, stepping forward.

The station-master looked at me with a ludicrous expression

of bewilderment and surprise.

"A thousand pardons," he said at length, with a low bow. "But really – I don't quite understand. The fact is, I knew Mr. Selivanoff, and here I see the same surname and Christian name; the name of the father is also the same, the tchin (rank) likewise! Yet I was told he had died – more than a year ago – but when I saw his name on the card I thought the news must be false, and I came to assure myself. I see that I am mistaken. A thousand pardons, sir, a thousand pardons," and again he saluted me still more profoundly than before.

I felt as if the ground were opening under my feet, and was thinking how on earth I should get out of the scrape, when my companion came – without knowing it – to the rescue.

"What a capital joke!" he shouted, clapping me on the back, and laughing so that he could hardly speak. "One might suppose that the worthy director takes you for an escaped prisoner with a dead man's passport. Ha, ha, ha, what a capital joke to be sure!"

And holding his big belly with both hands, he balanced himself first on one foot and then the other, laughing the while, until he could hardly stand.

"You are quite right," I said, also laughing, though with considerable effort. "It is really an excellent joke. But seriously (turning to the station-master), the thing is easily explained. In the part I come from the Selivanoffs are as plentiful as blackberries. The late Ivan Alexandrovitch, your friend, and I were kinsmen, and had a great affection for each other; the name

is so common in the province that I could introduce you to a dozen of my namesakes any day."

The station-master seemed satisfied with this explanation. At any rate, he made no objection to our departure, and shortly afterwards we were once more *en route*. But my companion, the tchinovnik did not cease laughing for a long time. "To take you for a fugitive convict with a false passport!" he would say "it is really too good," and whenever he remembered the incident he would laugh as if he never meant to stop. I remembered it, as may be supposed, with very different feelings. The escape was a very narrow one, and showed me how much I was still at the mercy of the slightest mishap. But this proved to be my last adventure and my last peril. In May, 1881, I reached Geneva, and felt that I was at last really free.

As most stories of Russian revolutionary life have necessarily, if they be true, a tragical termination, readers of the foregoing narrative may be pleased to know that M. Mokrievitch is still in a land where he feels really free. Though one of the heroes of Russian liberty he has not yet become one of its martyrs. But the time may come when he, as many other fugitives have done, will return to the volcanic soil of his native country, there to take part in the struggle to death which, though unseen, goes always on, and must continue without truce and without surcease until the sun of Freedom shall dawn in the Empire of the Night. —*Contemporary Review.*

COLERIDGE AS A SPIRITUAL THINKER

BY PRINCIPAL TULLOCH

Mr. Traill's recent volume has recalled the poet-philosopher who died just fifty years ago, leaving a strongly marked but indefinite impression upon the mind of his time. The volume has done something to renew and vivify the impression both in respect of Coleridge's poetry and criticism. His work as a critic has never, perhaps, been better or more completely exhibited. It is recognised generously in all its largeness and profundity, as well as delicacy and subtlety; and justice is especially done to his Shakesperian commentary, which in its richness, variety, felicity, combined with depth and acuteness, is absolutely unrivalled. But Mr. Traill cannot be said to have even attempted any estimate of Coleridge as a spiritual thinker. It may be questioned how far he has recognised that there is a spiritual side to all his thought, without which neither his poetry nor his criticism can be fully understood, cleverly as they may be judged.

It is not only out of date, but outside of all intelligent judgment to quote at this time of day Mr. Carlyle's well-known caricature from his *Life of Sterling*, and put readers off with this as a

"famous criticism." We now know how to value utterances of this kind, and the unhappy spirit of detraction which lay beneath such wild and grotesque humors. Carlyle will always remain an artist in epithets – but few will turn to him for an intelligent or comprehensive estimate of any great name of his own or of recent time.

We propose to look at Coleridge for a little as a religious thinker, and to ask what is the meaning and value of his work in this respect now that we can calmly and fully judge it. If Coleridge was anything, he was not only in his own view, as Mr. Traill admits, but in the view of his generation, a religious philosopher. It is not only the testimony of men like Hare, or Sterling, or Maurice, or even Cardinal Newman, but of John Stuart Mill, that his teaching awakened and freshened all contemporary thought. He was recognised with all his faults as a truly great thinker, who raised the mind of the time and gave it new and wide impulses. This judgment we feel sure will yet verify itself. If English literature ever regains the higher tone of our earlier national life – the tone of Hooker and Milton and Jeremy Taylor – Coleridge will be again acknowledged, in Julius Hare's words, as "a true sovereign of English thought." He will take rank in the same line of spiritual genius. He has the same elevation of feeling, the same profound grasp of moral and spiritual ideas, the same wide range of vision. He has, in short, the same love of wisdom, the same insight, the same largeness – never despising nature or art, or literature, for the sake of religion,

still less ever despising religion for the sake of culture. In reading over Coleridge's prose works again, returning to them after a long past familiarity, I am particularly struck by their massive and large intellectuality, akin to our older Elizabethan literature. There is everywhere the play of great power – of imagination as well as reason – of spiritual perception as well as logical subtlety.

To speak of Coleridge in this manner as a great spiritual power, an eminently healthy writer in the higher regions of thought, may seem absurd to some who think mainly of his life, and of the fatal failure which characterised it. It is the shadow of this failure of manliness in his conduct, as in that of his life-long friend, Charles Lamb, which no doubt prompted the great genius who carried manliness, if little sweetness, from his Annandale home, to paint both the one and the other in such darkened colors. We have not a word to say on behalf of the failings of either. They were deplorable and unworthy; but it is the fact, notwithstanding, that the mind of both retained a serenity and a certain touch of respectfulness which are lacking in their great Scottish contemporary. They were both finer-edged than Carlyle. They inherited a more delicate and polite personal culture; and delicacy can never be far distant from true manliness. Neither of them could have written of the treasures of old religion as Carlyle did in his *Life of Sterling*. Whether they accepted for themselves those treasures or not, they would have spared the tender faith of others and respected an ancient ideal. And this is the higher attitude. Nothing which has ever deeply interested

humanity or profoundly moved it, is treated with contempt by a good and wise man. It may call for and deserve rejection, but never insult. Unhappily this attitude of mind, reserved, as well as critical, reverent as well as bold, has been conspicuously absent in some of the most powerful and best known writers of our era.

There is a striking contrast between the career of Coleridge and that of his friend Wordsworth. Fellows in the opening of their poetic course, they soon diverged widely. With a true instinct, Wordsworth devoted himself, in quietness and seclusion, to the cultivation of his poetic faculty. He left aside the world of politics and of religious thought, strongly moved as he had been by the interests of both. It may be said that Wordsworth continued a religious thinker as well as poet all his life. And to some extent this is true. The "Wanderer" is a preacher and not only a singer. He goes to the heart of religion, and lays again its foundations in the natural instincts of man. But while Wordsworth's poetry was instinct with a new life of religious feeling, and may be said to have given a new radiancy to its central principles,[2] it did not initiate any movement in Christian thought. In religious opinion Wordsworth soon fell back upon, if he ever consciously departed from, the old line of Anglican traditions. The vague Pantheism of the *Excursion* implies rather a lack of distinctive dogma than any fresh insight into religious problems or capacity of co-ordinating them in a new manner. And so soon as definite religious conceptions came to the poet,

[2] Admiration, Hope, and Love. *Excursion*, b. iv.

the Church in her customary theology became a satisfactory refuge. The *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* mark this definite stage in his spiritual development. Wordsworth did for the religious thought of his time something more and better perhaps than giving it any definite impulse. While leaving it in the old channels, he gave it a richer and deeper volume. He showed with what vital affinity religion cleaves to humanity, in all its true and simple phases, when uncontaminated by conceit or frivolity. Nature and man alike were to him essentially religious, or only conceivable as the outcome of a Spirit of life, "the Soul of all the worlds."[3] Wordsworth, in short, remained as he began, a poet of a deeply religious spirit. But he did not enter the domain of theological speculation or attempt to give any new direction to it.

In all this Coleridge is his counterpart. He may be said to have abandoned poetry just when Wordsworth in his retirement at Grasmere (1799) was consecrating his life to it. Whether it be true, according to De Quincey, that Coleridge's poetical power was killed by the habit of opium-eating, it is certainly true that the harp of Quantock[4] was never again struck save for a brief moment. The poet Coleridge passed into the lecturer and the poetical and literary critic, and then, during the final period of his

[3] Admiration, Hope, and Love. *Excursion*, b. ix.

[4] Not only the *Ancient Mariner* and the first part of *Christabel*, but also *Kubla Khan* were composed at Nether Stovey among the Quantock Hills in 1797. The second part of *Christabel* belongs to the year 1800, and was written at Keswick, although not published till 1816. Nothing of the same quality was ever produced by Coleridge, although he continued to write verses.

life, from 1816 to 1834, into the philosopher and theologian. It is to this latter period of his life in the main that his higher prose writings belong, and especially the well-known *Aids to Reflection* which – disparaged as it is by Mr. Traill – may be said to contain, as his disciples have always held to contain, all the finer substance of his spiritual thought. It is true that it is defective as a literary composition. We are even disposed to allow that it has "less charm of thought, less beauty of style," and in some respects even less "power of effective statement,"[5] than is common with Coleridge; but withal it is his highest work. These very defects only serve to bring out the more its strong points, when we consider the wonderful hold the book has taken of many minds, and how it has been the subject of elaborate commentary.[6] It is a book, we may at the same time say, which none but a thinker on divine things will ever like. All such thinkers have prized it greatly. To many such it has given a new force of religious insight; for its time, beyond all doubt, it created a real epoch in Christian thought. It had life in it; and the living seed, scattered and desultory as it was, brought forth fruit in many minds.

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[5] It is strange, however, to find Mr. Traill commending Coleridge's very last volume (1830) *On the Constitution of Church and State*, as "yielding a more characteristic flavor of the author's style" than the *Aids to Reflection*. Characteristic, no doubt, this volume is of the author's mode of thought; but in point of style, it and his *Lay Sermon* or *Statesman's Manual* in 1816 appear to us the most desultory and imperfect of all his writings.

[6] By Dr. James Marsh, an American divine, whose preliminary essay is prefaced to the fifth English edition, and by Mr. Green in his *Spiritual Philosophy* (1865), founded on Coleridge's teaching.

What, then, were its main contributions to religious thought, and in what respects generally is Coleridge to be reckoned a spiritual power?

(1.) First, and chiefly, in the *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge may be said to have transformed and renewed the current ideas of his time about religion. He was, we know, a man of many ambitions never realised; but of all his ambitions, the most persistent was that of laying anew the foundations of spiritual philosophy. This was "the great work" to which he frequently alluded as having given "the preparation of more than twenty years of his life."[7] Like other great tasks projected by him, it was very imperfectly accomplished; and there will always be those in consequence who fail to understand his influence as a leader of thought. We are certainly not bound to take Coleridge at his own value, nor to attach the same importance as he did to some of his speculations. No one, indeed, knew better than Coleridge himself that there was nothing new in his Platonic Realism. It was merely a restoration of the old religious metaphysic which had preceded "the mechanical systems," that became dominant in the reign of Charles the Second. He himself constantly claims to do nothing more than re-assert the principles of Hooker, of Henry More, of John Smith, and Leighton, all of whom he speaks of as "Platonizing divines!" But the religious teaching of Coleridge came upon his generation as a new breath, not merely or mainly

[7] *Spiritual Philosophy, founded on the Teaching of the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* By Jos. Henry Green, F.R.S., D.C.L. 1865.

because he revived these ancient principles, but because he vitalised anew their application to Christianity, so as to transform it from a mere creed, or collection of articles, into a living mode of thought, embracing all human activity. Coleridge was no mere metaphysician. He was a great interpreter of spiritual facts – a student of spiritual life, quickened by a peculiarly vivid and painful experience; and he saw in Christianity, rightly conceived, at once the true explanation of the facts of our spiritual being and the true remedy for their disorder. He brought human nature, not merely on one side, but all sides, once more near to Christianity, so as to find in it not merely a means of salvation in any limited evangelical sense, but the highest Truth and Health – a perfect philosophy. His main power lies in this subjective direction, just as here it was that his age was most needing stimulus and guidance.

The Evangelical School, with all its merits, had conceived of Christianity rather as something superadded the highest life of humanity than as the perfect development of that life; as a scheme for human salvation authenticated by miracles, and, so to speak, interpolated into human history rather than a divine philosophy, witnessing to itself from the beginning in all the higher phases of that history. And so Philosophy, and no less Literature, and Art, and Science, were conceived apart from religion. The world and the Church were not only antagonistic in the Biblical sense, as the embodiments of the Carnal and the Divine Spirit – which they must ever be; but they were,

so to speak, severed portions of life divided by outward signs and badges: and those who joined the one or the other were supposed to be clearly marked off. All who know the writings of the Evangelical School of the eighteenth and earlier part of the nineteenth century, from the poetry of Cowper and the letters of his friend Newton, to the writings of Romaine, John Forster, and Wilberforce, and even Chalmers, will know how such commonplaces everywhere reappear in them. That they were associated with the most devout and beautiful lives, that they even served to foster a peculiar ardor of Christian feeling and love of God, cannot be disputed. But they were essentially narrow and false. They destroyed the largeness and unity of human experience. They not merely separated religion from art and philosophy, but they tended to separate it from morality.

Coleridge's most distinctive work was to restore the broken harmony between reason and religion, by enlarging the conception of both, but of the latter especially, – by showing how man is essentially a religious being having a definite spiritual constitution, apart from which the very idea of religion becomes impossible. Religion is not, therefore, something brought to man, it is his highest education. Religion, he says, was designed "to improve the nature and the faculties of man, in order to the right governing of our actions, to the securing the peace and progress, eternal and internal, of individuals and communities." Christianity is in the highest degree adapted to this end; and nothing can be a part of it that is not duly proportioned thereto.

In thus vindicating the rationality of religion, Coleridge had a twofold task before him, as every such thinker has. He had to assert against the Epicurean and Empirical School the spiritual constitution of human nature, and against the fanatical or hyper-evangelical school the reasonable working of spiritual influence. He had to maintain, on the one hand, the essential divinity of man, that "there is more in him than can be rationally referred to the life of nature and the mechanism of organisation," and on the other hand to show that this higher life of the spirit is throughout rational – that it is superstition and not true religion which professes to resolve "men's faith and practice" into the illumination of such a spirit as they can give no account of, – such as does not enlighten their reason or enable them to render their doctrine intelligible to others. He fights, in short, alike against materialistic negation and credulous enthusiasm.

The former he meets with the assertion of "a spirituality in man," a self-power or Will at the root of all his being. "If there be aught spiritual in man, the will must be such. If there be a will, there must be a spirituality in man." He assumes both positions, seeing clearly – what all who radically deal with such a question must see – that it becomes in the end an alternative postulate on one side and the other. The theologian cannot prove his case, because the very terms in which it must be proved are already denied *ab initio* by the materialist. But no more can the materialist, for the same reason, refute the spiritual thinker. There can be no argument where no common premiss is

granted. Coleridge was quite alive to this, yet he validly appeals to common experience. "I assume," he says, "a something the proof which no man can give to another, yet every man may find for himself. If any man assert that he has no such experience, I am bound to disbelieve him, I cannot do otherwise without unsettling the foundation of my own moral nature. For I either find it as an essential of the humanity common to him and to me, or I have not found it at all… All the significant objections of the materialist and necessitarian," he adds, "are contained in the term morality, and all the objections of the infidel in the term religion. These very terms imply something granted, which the objector in each case supposes not granted. A moral philosophy is only such because it assumes a principle of morality, a will in man, and so a Christian philosophy or theology has its own assumptions resting on three ultimate facts, namely, the reality of the law of conscience; the existence of a responsible will as the subject of that law; and lastly, the existence of God… The first is a fact of consciousness; the second, a fact of reason necessarily concluded from the first; and the third, a fact of history interpreted by both."

These were the radical data of the religious philosophy of Coleridge. They imply a general conception of religion which was revolutionary for his age, simple and ancient as the principles are. The evangelical tradition brought religion to man from the outside. It took no concern of man's spiritual constitution beyond the fact that he was a sinner and in danger of hell. Coleridge started from a similar but larger experience, including

not only sin, but the whole spiritual basis on which sin rests. "I profess a deep conviction," he says, "that man is a fallen creature," "not by accident of bodily constitution or any other cause, but as diseased in his will – in that will which is the true and only strict synonyme of the word I, or the intelligent Self." This "intelligent Self" is a fundamental conception lying at the root of his system of thought. Sin is an attribute of it, and cannot be conceived apart for it, and conscience, or the original sense of right and wrong governing the will. Apart from these internal realities there is no religion, and the function of the Christian Revelation is to build up the spiritual life out of these realities – to remedy the evil, to enlighten the conscience, to educate the will. This effective power of religion comes directly from God in Christ. Here Coleridge joins the Evangelical School, as indeed every school of living Christian Faith. This was the element of Truth he found in the doctrine of Election as handled "practically, morally, humanly," by Leighton. Every true Christian, he argues, must attribute his distinction not in any degree to himself – "his own resolves and strivings," "his own will and understanding," still less to "his own comparative excellence," – but to God, "the being in whom the promise of life originated, and on whom its fulfilment depends." Election so far is a truth of experience. "This the conscience requires; this the highest interests of morality demand." So far it is a question of facts with which the speculative reason has nothing to do. But when the theological reasoner abandons the ground of fact and

"the safe circle of religion and practical reason for the shifting sand-wastes and mirages of speculative theology," then he uses words without meaning. He can have no insight into the workings or plans of a Being who is neither an object of his senses nor a part of his self-consciousness.

Nothing can show better than this brief exposition how closely Coleridge in his theology clung to a base of spiritual experience, and sought to measure even the most abstruse Christian mysteries by facts. The same thing may be shown by referring to his doctrine of the Trinity, which has been supposed the most transcendental and, so to speak, "Neo-Platonist" of all his doctrines. But truly speaking his Trinitarianism, like his doctrine of Election, is a moral rather than a speculative truth. The Trinitarian idea was, indeed, true to him notionally. The full analysis of the notion "God" seemed to him to involve it. "I find a certain notion in my mind, and say that is what I understand by the term God. From books and conversation I find that the learned generally connect the same notion with the same word. I then apply the rules laid down by the masters of logic for the involution and evolution of terms, and prove (to as many as agree with my premisses) that the notion 'God' involves the notion 'Trinity,'" So he argued, and many times recurred to the same Transcendental analysis. But the truer and more urgent spiritual basis of the doctrine of the Trinity, even to his own mind, was not its notional but its moral necessity. Christ could only be a Saviour as being Divine. Salvation is a Divine work. "The idea

of redemption involves belief in the Divinity of our Lord. And our Lord's Divinity again involves the Trinitarian idea, because in and through this idea alone the Divinity of Christ can be received without breach of faith in the Unity of the Godhead." In other words, the best evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity, is the compulsion of the spiritual conscience which demands a Divine Saviour; and only in and through the great idea of Trinity in Unity does this demand become consistent with Christian Monotheism.[8]

These doctrines are merely used in illustration, as they are by Coleridge himself in his *Aids to Reflection*. But nothing can show in a stronger light the general character of the change which he wrought in the conception of Christianity. From being a mere traditional creed, with Anglican and Evangelical, and it may be added Unitarian alike, it became a living expression of the spiritual consciousness. In a sense, of course, it had always been so. The Evangelical made much of its living power, but only in a practical and not in a rational sense. It is the distinction of Coleridge to have once more in his age made Christian doctrine alive to the reason as well as the conscience – tenable as a philosophy as well as an evangel. And this he did by interpreting

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[8] This was a favorite thought with Coleridge, as for example, in his *Literary Remains* (vol. i. p. 393-4): "The Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead would have been a necessary idea of my speculative reason. God must have had co-eternally an adequate idea of Himself in and through which He created all things. But this would only have been a speculative idea. Solely in consequence of our redemption does the Trinity become a doctrine, the belief of which as real is commanded by conscience."

Christianity in the light of our moral and spiritual life. There are aspects of Christian truth beyond us —*Exeunt in mysteria*. But all Christian truth must have vital touch with our spiritual being, and be so far at least capable of being rendered in its terms, or, in other words, be conformable to reason.

There was nothing absolutely new in this luminous conception, but it marked a revolution of religious thought in the earlier part of our century. The great principle of the Evangelical theology was that theological dogmas were true or false without any reference to a subjective standard of judgment. They were true as pure data of revelation, or as the propositions of an authorised creed settled long ago. Reason had, so far, nothing to do with them. Christian truth, it was supposed, lay at had in the Bible, an appeal to which settled everything. Coleridge did not undervalue the Bible. He gave it an intelligent reverence. But he no less reverenced the spiritual consciousness or divine light in man; and to put out this light, as the Evangelical had gone far to do, was to destroy all reasonable faith. This must rest not merely on objective data, but on internal experience. It must have not merely authority without, but *rationale* within. It must answer to the highest aspiration of human reason, as well as the most urgent necessities of human life. It must interpret reason and find expression in the voice of our higher humanity, and so enlarge itself as to meet all its needs.

If we turn for a moment to the special exposition of the doctrines of sin and redemption which Coleridge has given in the

Aids to Reflection, it is still mainly with the view of bringing out more clearly his general conception of Christianity as a living movement of thought rather than a mere series of articles or a traditionary creed.

In dealing first with the question of sin, he shows how its very idea is only tenable on the ground of such a spiritual constitution in man as he has already asserted. It is only the recognition of a true will in man – a spirit or supernatural in man, although "not necessarily miraculous" – which renders sin possible. "These views of the spirit and of the will as spiritual," he says more than once, "are the groundwork of my scheme." There was nothing more significant or fundamental in all his theology. If there is not always a supernatural element in man in the shape of spirit and will, no miracles or anything else can ever authenticate the supernatural to him. A mere formal orthodoxy, therefore, hanging upon the evidence of miracles, is a suspension bridge without any real support. So all questions between infidelity and Christianity are questions here, at the root, and not what are called "critical" questions as to whether this or that view of the Bible be right, or this or that traditionary dogma be true. Such questions are, truly speaking, inter-Christian questions, the freest views of which all Churches must learn to tolerate. The really vital question is whether there is a divine root in man at all – a spiritual centre, answering to a higher spiritual centre in the universe. All controversies of any importance come back to this. Coleridge would have been a great Christian thinker if for no

other reason than this, that he brought all theological problems back to this living centre, and showed how they diverged from it. Apart from this postulate, sin was inconceivable to him; and in the same manner all sin was to him sin of origin or "original sin." It is the essential property of the will that it can originate. The phrase original sin is therefore "a pleonasm." If sin was not original, or from within the will itself, it would not deserve the name. "A state or act that has not its origin in the will may be a calamity, deformity, disease, or mischief, but a sin it cannot be."

Again he says: "That there is an evil common to all is a fact, and this evil must, therefore, have a common ground. Now this evil ground cannot originate in the Divine will; it must, therefore, be referred to the will of man. And this evil ground we call original sin. It is a mystery, that is, a fact which we see, but cannot explain; and the doctrine a truth which we apprehend, but can neither comprehend nor communicate. And such by the quality of the subject (namely, a responsible will) it must be, if it be truth at all."

This inwardness is no less characteristic of Coleridge's treatment of the doctrine of atonement or redemption. It is intelligible so far as it comes within the range of spiritual experience. So far its nature and effects are amply described or figured in the New Testament, especially by St. Paul. And the apostle's language, as might be expected, "takes its predominant colors from his own experience, and the experience of those whom he addressed." "His figures, images, analogies,

and references," are all more or less borrowed from this source. He describes the Atonement of Christ under four principal metaphors: 1. Sin-offering, sacrificial expiation. 2. Reconciliation, atonement, καταλλάγη. 3. Redemption, or ransom from slavery. 4. Satisfaction, payment of a debt. These phrases are not designed to convey to us all the Divine meaning of the atonement, for no phrases or figures can do this; but they set forth its general aspect and design. One and all they have an intelligible relation to our spiritual life, and so clothe the doctrine for us with a concrete living and practical meaning. But there are other relations and aspects of the doctrine of atonement that transcend experience, and consequently our powers of understanding. And all that can be said here is, "exit in mysteria." The rationalism of Coleridge is at least a modest and self-limiting rationalism. It clears the ground within the range of spiritual experience, and floods this ground with the light of reason. There is no true doctrine can contradict this light, or shelter itself from its penetration. But there are aspects of Christian doctrine that outreach all grasp of reason, and before which reason must simply be silent. For example, the Divine act in redemption is "a causative act – a spiritual and transcendent mystery *that passeth all understanding. 'Who knoweth the mind of the Lord, or being his councillor who hath instructed him?' Factum est.*" This is all that can be said of the mystery of redemption, or of the doctrine of atonement on its Divine side.

And here emerges another important principle of the

Coleridgian theology. While so great an advocate of the rights of reason in theology, of the necessity, in other words, of moulding all its facts in a synthesis intelligible to the higher reason he recognises strongly that there is a province of Divine truth beyond all such construction. We can never understand the fulness of Divine mystery, and it is hopeless to attempt to do so. While no mind was less agnostic in the modern sense of the term, he was yet with all his vivid and large intuition, a Christian agnostic. Just because Christianity was Divine, a revelation, and not a mere human tradition, all its higher doctrines ended in a region beyond our clear knowledge. As he himself said, "If the doctrine is more than a hyperbolical phrase it must do so." There was great pregnancy in this as in his other conceptions; and probably no more significant change awaits the theology of the future, than the determination of this province of the unknown, and the cessation of controversy, as to matters which come within it, and therefore admit of no dogmatic settlement.

(2.) But it is more than time to turn to the second aspect, in which Coleridge appears as a religious leader of the thought of the nineteenth century. The *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* was not published till six years after his death, in 1840; and it is curious to notice their accidental connection with the *Confessions of a Beautiful Soul*, which had been translated by Carlyle some years before.[9] These *Confessions*, in the shape of seven letters to a friend, gather together all that is valuable in the Biblical

[9] In his well-known translation of *Wilhelm Meister*.

criticism of the author scattered through his various writings; and although it may be doubtful whether the volume has ever attained the circulation of the *Aids to Reflection*, it is eminently deserving – small as it is, nay, because of its very brevity – of a place beside the larger work. It is eminently readable, terse and nervous, as well as eloquent in style. In none of his writings does Coleridge appear to greater advantage, or touch a more elevating strain, rising at times into solemn music.

The *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* were of course merely one indication of the rise of a true spirit of criticism in English theology. Arnold, Whately, Thirlwall, and others, it will be seen, were all astir in the same direction, even before the *Confessions* were published. The notion of verbal inspiration, or the infallible dictation of Holy Scripture, could not possibly continue after the modern spirit of historical inquiry had begun. As soon as men plainly recognised the organic growth of all great facts, literary as well as others, it was inevitable that they should see the Scriptures in a new light, as a product of many phases of thought in course of more or less perfect development. A larger and more intelligent sense of the conditions attending the origin and progress of all civilisation, and of the immaturities through which religious as well as moral and social ideas advance, necessarily carried with it a changed perception of the characteristics of Scriptural revelation. The old Rabbinical notion of an infallible text was sure to disappear. The new critical method besides is, in Coleridge's hands, rather an idea – a happy and germinant

thought – than a well-evolved system. Still to him belongs the honor of having first plainly and boldly announced that the Scriptures were to be read and studied, like any other literature, in the light of their continuous growth, and the adaptation of their parts to one another.

The divinity of Scripture appears all the more brightly, when thus freely handled. "I take up the work," he says, "with the purpose to read it as I should read any other work – so far as I can or dare. For I neither can nor dare throw off a strong and awful prepossession in its favor, certain as I am that a large part of the light and life in and by which I see, love, and embrace the truths and the strengths organised into a living body of faith and knowledge have been directly or indirectly derived to me from the sacred volume." All the more reason why we should not make a fetish of the Bible, as the Turk does of the Koran. Poor as reason may be in comparison with "the power and splendor of the Scriptures," yet it is and must be for him a true light. "While there is a Light higher than all, even the *Word that was in the beginning*; – the Light of which light itself is but the Schechinah and cloudy tabernacle; – there is also a 'Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;' and the spirit of man is declared to be 'the candle of the Lord,'" "If between this Word," he says, "and the written letter I shall anywhere seem to myself to find a discrepance, I will not conclude that such there actually is. Nor, on the other hand, will I fall under the condemnation of those that would *lie for God*, but, seek as I may, be thankful for what

I have and wait."

Such is the keynote of the volume. The supremacy of the Bible as a divinely inspired literature is plainly recognised from the first. Obviously it is a book above all other books in which deep answers to deep, and our inmost thoughts and most hidden griefs find not merely response, but guidance and assuagement. And whatever there *finds* us "bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from the Holy Spirit." "In the Bible," he says again, "there is more that *finds* me than I have experienced in all other books put together; the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being, and whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit."

But there is much in the Bible that not only does not find us in the Coleridgian sense, but that seems full of contradictions, both moral and historical; the psalms in which David curses his enemies; the obviously exaggerated ages attributed to the patriarchs; and the incredible number of the armies said to be collected by Abijah and Jeroboam (2 Chron. xiii. 3), and other incidents familiar to all students of Scripture. What is to be made of such features of the Bible? According to the old notion of its infallibility such parts of Scripture, no less than its most elevating utterances of "lovely hymn and choral song and accepted prayer of saint and prophet," were to be received as dictated by the Holy Spirit. They were stamped with the same Divine authority. Coleridge rightly enough emphasises this view as that of the

fathers and reformers alike; but he no less rightly points out that not one of them is consistent in holding to their general doctrine. Their treatment of the Scriptures in detail constantly implies the fallacy of the Rabbinical tradition to which they yet clung. He no less forcibly points out that the Scriptures themselves make no such pretension to infallibility, "explicitly or by implication." "On the contrary, they refer to older documents, and on all points express themselves as sober-minded and veracious writers under ordinary circumstances are known to do." The usual texts quoted, such as 2 Tim. iii. 16, have no real bearing on the subject. The little we know as to the origin and history of many of the books of the Bible, of "the time of the formation and closing of the canon," of its selectors and compilers, is all opposed to such a theory. Moreover, the very nature of the claim stultifies itself when examined. For "how can infallible truth be infallibly conveyed in defective and fallible expression?"

But if the tenet of verbal inspiration has been so long received and acted on "by Jew and Christian, Greek, Roman, and Protestant, why can it not now be received?" "For every reason," answered Coleridge, "that makes me prize and revere these Scriptures; – prize them, love them, revere them beyond all other books." Because such a tenet "falsifies at once the whole body of holy writ, with all its harmonious and symmetrical gradations." It turns "the breathing organism into a colossal Memnon's head, a hollow passage for a voice," which no man hath uttered, and no human heart hath conceived. It evacuates of all sense and

efficacy the fact that the Bible is a Divine literature of many books, "composed in different and widely distant ages under the greatest diversity of circumstances and degrees of light and information." So he argues in language I have partly quoted and partly summarised. And then he breaks forth into a magnificent passage about the song of Deborah, a passage of rare eloquence with all its desultoriness, but which will hardly bear separation from the context. The wail of the Jewish heroine's maternal and patriotic love is heard under all her cursing and individualism – mercy rejoicing against judgment. In the very intensity of her primary affections is found the rare strength of her womanhood; and sweetness lies near to fierceness. Such passages probably give us a far better idea of the occasional glory of the old man's talk as "he sat on the brow of Highgate Hill," than any poor fragments of it that have been preserved. Direct and to the point it may never have been, but at times it rose into an organ swell with snatches of unutterable melody and power.

(3.) But Coleridge contributed still another factor to the impulsion of religious thought in his time. He did much to revive the historic idea of the Church as an intellectual as well as a spiritual commonwealth. Like many other ideas of our older national life this had been depressed and lost sight of during the eighteenth century. The Evangelical party, deficient in learning generally, was especially deficient in breadth of historical knowledge. Milner's History, if nothing else, serves to point this conclusion. The idea of the Church as the mother of

philosophy and arts and learning, as well as the nurse of faith and piety, was unknown. It was a part of the Evangelical creed, moreover, to leave aside as far as possible mere political and intellectual interests. These belonged to the world, and the main business of the religious man was with religion as a personal affair, of vast moment, but outside all other affairs. Coleridge helped once more to bring the Church as he did the gospel into larger room as a great spiritual power of manifold influence.

This volume *On the Constitution of Church and State according to the idea of each* was published in 1830, and was the last volume which the author himself published. The Catholic Emancipation question had greatly excited the public mind, and some friend had appealed to Coleridge expressing astonishment that he should be in opposition to the proposed measure. He replied that he is by no means unfriendly to Catholic emancipation, while yet "scrupling the means proposed for its attainment." And in order to explain his difficulties he composed a long letter to his friend which is really an essay or treatise, beginning with the fundamental principles of his philosophy and ending with a description of antichrist. The essay is one of the least satisfactory of his compositions from a mere literary point of view, and is not even mentioned by Mr. Traill in his recent monograph. But amidst all its involutions and ramblings it is stimulating and full of thought on a subject which almost more than any other is liable to be degraded by unworthy and sectarian treatment. Here, as everywhere in Coleridge's writings, we are brought in contact

with certain large conceptions which far more than cover the immediate subject in hand.

It has been sometimes supposed that Coleridge's theory of the Church merely revived the old theory of the Elizabethan age so powerfully advocated by Hooker and specially espoused by Dr. Arnold in later times. According to this theory the Church and State are really identical, the Church being merely the State in its educational and religious aspect and organisation. But Coleridge's special theory is different from this, although allied to it. He distinguishes the Christian Church as such from any national church. The former is spiritual and catholic, the latter institutional and local. The former is opposed to the "world," the latter is an estate of the realm. The former has nothing to do with states and kingdoms. It is in this respect identical with the "spiritual and invisible church known only to the Father of Spirits," and the compensating counterpoise of all that is of the world. It is, in short, the Divine aggregate of what is really Divine in all Christian communities, and more or less ideally represented "in every true church." A national church again is the incorporation of all the learning and knowledge – intellectual and spiritual – in a country. Every nation in order to its true health and civilisation requires not only a land-owning or permanent class along with a commercial, industrial, and progressive class, but moreover, an educative class to represent all higher knowledge, "to guard the treasures of past civilisation," to bind the national life together in its past, present, and future, and to communicate

to all citizens a clear understanding of their rights and duties. This third estate of the realm Coleridge denominated the "Clerisy," and included not merely the clergy, but, in his own language, "the learned of all denominations." The knowledge, which it was their function to cultivate and diffuse, embraced not only theology, although this pre-eminently as the head of all other knowledge, but law, music, mathematics, the physical sciences, "all the so-called liberal arts and sciences, the possession and cultivation of which constitute the civilisation of a country."

This is at any rate a large conception of a national church. It is put forth by its author with all earnestness, although he admitted that it had never been anywhere realised. But it was his object "to present the *Idea* of a national church as the only safe criterion by which we can judge of existing things." It was only when "we are in full and clear possession of the ultimate aim of an institution" that we can ascertain how far "this aim has ever been attained in other ways."

These, very briefly explained, are the main lines along which Coleridge moved the national mind in the third decade of this century. They may seem to some rather impalpable lines, and hardly calculated to touch the general mind. But they were influential, as the course of Christian literature has since proved. Like his own genius, they were diffusive rather than concentrative. The Coleridgian ideas permeated the general intellectual atmosphere, modifying old conceptions in criticism as well as theology, deepening if not always clarifying the

channels of thought in many directions, but especially in the direction of Christian philosophy. They acted in this way as a new circulation of spiritual air all around, rather than in conveying any new body of truth. The very ridicule of Carlyle testifies to the influence which they exercised over aspiring and younger minds. The very emphasis with which he repudiates the Coleridgian metaphysic probably indicates that he had felt some echo of it in his own heart. —*Fortnightly Review*.

THE PORTRAIT
A Story of the Seen and the Unseen

At the period when the following incidents occurred I was living with my father at The Grove, a large old house in the immediate neighborhood of a little town. This had been his home for a number of years; and I believe I was born in it. It was a kind of house which, notwithstanding all the red and white architecture, known at present by the name of Queen Anne, builders nowadays have forgotten how to build. It was straggling and irregular, with wide passages, wide staircases, broad landings; the rooms large but not very lofty; the arrangements leaving much to be desired, with no economy of space; a house belonging to a period when land was cheap, and, so far as that was concerned, there was no occasion to economise. Though it was so near the town, the clump of trees in which it was environed was a veritable grove. In the grounds in spring the primroses grew as thickly as in the forest. We had a few fields for the cows, and an excellent walled garden. The place is being pulled down at this moment to make room for more streets of mean little houses, – the kind of thing, and not a dull house of faded gentry, which perhaps the neighborhood requires. The house was dull, and so were we, its last inhabitants; and the furniture was faded, even a little dingy, – nothing to brag of. I do

not, however, intend to convey a suggestion that we were faded gentry, for that was not the case. My father, indeed, was rich, and had no need to spare any expense in making his life and his house bright if he pleased; but he did not please, and I had not been long enough at home to exercise any special influence of my own. It was the only home I had ever known; but except in my earliest childhood, and in my holidays as a schoolboy, I had in reality known but little of it. My mother had died at my birth, or shortly after, and I had grown up in the gravity and silence of a house without women. In my infancy, I believe, a sister of my father's had lived with us, and taken charge of the household and of me; but she, too, had died long, long ago, my mourning for her being one of the first things I could recollect. And she had no successor. There was, indeed, a housekeeper and some maids, – the latter of whom I only saw disappearing at the end of a passage, or whisking out of a room when one of "the gentlemen" appeared. Mrs. Weir, indeed, I saw nearly every day; but a curtsey, a smile, a pair of nice round arms which she caressed while folding them across her ample waist, and a large white apron, were all I knew of her. This was the only female influence in the house. The drawing-room I was aware of only as a place of deadly good order, into which nobody ever entered. It had three long windows opening on the lawn, and communicated at the upper end, which was rounded like a great bay, with the conservatory. Sometimes I gazed into it as a child from without, wondering at the needlework on the chairs,

the screens, the looking-glasses which never reflected any living face. My father did not like the room, which probably was not wonderful, though it never occurred to me in those early days to inquire why.

I may say here, though it will probably be disappointing to those who form a sentimental idea of the capabilities of children, that it did not occur to me either, in these early days, to make any inquiry about my mother. There was no room in life, as I knew it, for any such person; nothing suggested to my mind either the fact that she must have existed, or that there was need of her in the house. I accepted, as I believe most children do, the facts of existence, on the basis with which I had first made acquaintance with them, without question or remark. As a matter of fact, I was aware that it was rather dull at home; but neither by comparison with the books I read, nor by the communications received from my school-fellows, did this seem to me anything remarkable. And I was possibly somewhat dull too by nature, for I did not mind. I was fond of reading, and for that there was unbounded opportunity. I had a little ambition in respect to work, and that too could be prosecuted undisturbed. When I went to the university, my society lay almost entirely among men; but by that time and afterwards, matters had of course greatly changed with me, and though I recognised women as part of the economy of nature, and did not indeed by any means dislike or avoid them, yet the idea of connecting them at all with my own home never entered into my head. That continued to be

as it had always been, when at intervals I descended upon the cool, grave, colorless place, in the midst of my traffic with the world; always very still, well-ordered, serious – the cooking very good, the comfort perfect – old Morphew, the butler, a little older (but very little older, perhaps on the whole less old, since in my childhood I had thought him a kind of Methuselah), and Mrs. Weir, less active, covering up her arms in sleeves, but folding and caressing them just as always. I remember looking in from the lawn through the windows upon that deadly-orderly drawing-room, with a humorous recollection of my childish admiration and wonder, and feeling that it must be kept so forever and ever, and that to go into it would break some sort of amusing mock mystery, some pleasantly ridiculous spell.

But it was only at rare intervals that I went home. In the long vacation, as in my school holidays, my father often went abroad with me, so that we had gone over a great deal of the Continent together very pleasantly. He was old in proportion to the age of his son, being a man of sixty when I was twenty, but that did not disturb the pleasure of the relations between us. I don't know that they were ever very confidential. On my side there was but little to communicate, for I did not get into scrapes nor fall in love, the two predicaments which demand sympathy and confidences. And as for my father himself, I was never aware what there could be to communicate on his side. I knew his life exactly – what he did almost at every hour of the day; under what circumstances of the temperature he would ride and when

walk; how often and with what guests he would indulge in the occasional break of a dinner-party, a serious pleasure – perhaps, indeed, less a pleasure than a duty. All this I knew as well as he did, and also his views on public matters, his political opinions, which naturally were different from mine. What ground, then, remained for confidence? I did not know any. We were both of us of a reserved nature, not apt to enter into our religious feelings, for instance. There are many people who think reticence on such subjects a sign of the most reverential way of contemplating them. Of this I am far from being sure; but, at all events, it was the practice most congenial to my own mind.

And then I was for a long time absent, making my own way in the world. I did not make it very successfully. I accomplished the natural fate of an Englishman, and went out to the Colonies; then to India in a semi-diplomatic position; but returned home after seven or eight years, invalided, in bad health and not much better spirits, tired and disappointed with my first trial of life. I had, as people say, "no occasion" to insist on making my way. My father was rich, and had never given me the slightest reason to believe that he did not intend me to be his heir. His allowance to me was not illiberal, and though he did not oppose the carrying out of my own plans, he by no means urged me to exertion. When I came home he received me very affectionately, and expressed his satisfaction in my return. "Of course," he said, "I am not glad that you are disappointed, Philip, or that your health is broken; but otherwise it is an ill wind, you know, that blows nobody good

– and I am very glad to have you at home. I am growing an old man – ”

“I don't see any difference, sir,” said I; “everything here seems exactly the same as when I went away – ”

He smiled, and shook his head. “It is true enough,” he said, “after we have reached a certain age we seem to go on for a long time on a plane, and feel no great difference from year to year; but it is an inclined plane – and the longer we go on, the more sudden will be the fall at the end. But at all events it will be a great comfort to me to have you here.”

“If I had known that,” I said, “and that you wanted me, I should have come in any circumstances. As there are only two of us in the world – ”

“Yes,” he said, “there are only two of us in the world; but still I should not have sent for you, Phil, to interrupt your career.”

“It is as well, then, that it has interrupted itself,” I said, rather bitterly; for disappointment is hard to hear.

He patted me on the shoulder and repeated, “It is an ill wind that blows nobody good,” with a look of real pleasure which gave me a certain gratification too; for, after all, he was an old man, and the only one in all the world to whom I owed any duty. I had not been without dreams of warmer affections, but they had come to nothing – not tragically, but in the ordinary way. I might perhaps have had love which I did not want, but not that which I did want, – which was not a thing to make any unmanly moan about, but in the ordinary course of events. Such disappointments

happen every day; indeed, they are more common than anything else, and sometimes it is apparent afterward that it is better it was so.

However, here I was at thirty stranded – yet wanting for nothing, in a position to call forth rather envy than pity from the greater part of my contemporaries, – for I had an assured and comfortable existence, as much money as I wanted, and the prospect of an excellent fortune for the future. On the other hand, my health was still low, and I had no occupation. The neighborhood of the town was a drawback rather than an advantage. I felt myself tempted, instead of taking the long walk into the country which my doctor recommended, to take a much shorter one through the High Street, across the river, and back again, which was not a walk but a lounge. The country was silent and full of thoughts – thoughts not always very agreeable – whereas there were always the humors of the little urban population to glance at, the news to be heard, all those petty matters which so often make up life in a very impoverished version for the idle man. I did not like it, but I felt myself yielding to it, not having energy enough to make a stand. The rector and the leading lawyer of the place asked me to dinner. I might have glided into the society, such as it was, had I been disposed for that – everything about me began to close over me as if I had been fifty, and fully contented with my lot.

It was possibly my own want of occupation which made me observe with surprise, after a while, how much occupied my

father was. He had expressed himself glad of my return; but now that I had returned, I saw very little of him. Most of his time was spent in his library, as had always been the case. But on the few visits I paid him there, I could not but perceive that the aspect of the library was much changed. It had acquired the look of a business-room, almost an office. There were large business-like books on the table, which I could not associate with anything he could naturally have to do; and his correspondence was very large. I thought he closed one of those books hurriedly as I came in, and pushed it away, as if he did not wish me to see it. This surprised me at the moment, without arousing any other feeling; but afterward I remembered it with a clearer sense of what it meant. He was more absorbed altogether than I had been used to see him. He was visited by men sometimes not of very prepossessing appearance. Surprise grew in my mind without any very distinct idea of the reason of it; and it was not till after a chance conversation with Morphew that my vague uneasiness began to take definite shape. It was begun without any special intention on my part. Morphew had informed me that master was very busy, on some occasion when I wanted to see him. And I was a little annoyed to be thus put off. "It appears to me that my father is always busy," I said, hastily. Morphew then began very oracularly to nod his head in assent.

"A deal too busy, sir, if you take my opinion," he said.

This startled me much, and I asked hurriedly, "What do you mean?" without reflecting that to ask for private information

from a servant about my father's habits was as bad as investigating into a stranger's affairs. It did not strike me in the same light.

"Mr. Philip," said Morphew, "a thing 'as 'appened as 'appens more often than it ought to. Master has got awful keen about money in his old age."

"That's a new thing for him," I said.

"No, sir, begging your pardon, it ain't a new thing. He was once broke of it, and that wasn't easy done; but it's come back, if you'll excuse me saying so. And I don't know as he'll ever be broke of it again at his age."

I felt more disposed to be angry than disturbed by this. "You must be making some ridiculous mistake," I said. "And if you were not so old a friend as you are, Morphew, I should not have allowed my father to be so spoken of to me."

The old man gave me a half-astonished, half-contemptuous look. "He's been my master a deal longer than he's been your father," he said, turning on his heel. The assumption was so comical that my anger could not stand in face of it. I went out, having been on my way to the door when this conversation occurred, and took my usual lounge about, which was not a satisfactory sort of amusement. Its vanity and emptiness appeared to be more evident than usual to-day. I met half a dozen people I knew, and had as many pieces of news confided to me. I went up and down the length of the High Street. I made a small purchase or two. And then I turned homeward – despising myself, yet finding no alternative within my reach. Would a long

country walk have been more virtuous? – it would at least have been more wholesome – but that was all that could be said. My mind did not dwell on Morphew's communication. It seemed without sense or meaning to me; and after the excellent joke about his superior interest in his master to mine in my father, was dismissed lightly enough from my mind. I tried to invent some way of telling this to my father without letting him perceive that Morphew had been finding faults in him, or I listening; for it seemed a pity to lose so good a joke. However, as I returned home, something happened which put the joke entirely out of my head. It is curious when a new subject of trouble or anxiety has been suggested to the mind in an unexpected way, how often a second advertisement follows immediately after the first, and gives to that a potency which in itself it had not possessed.

I was approaching our own door, wondering whether my father had gone, and whether, on my return, I should find him at leisure – for I had several little things to say to him – when I noticed a poor woman lingering about the closed gates. She had a baby sleeping in her arms. It was a spring night, the stars shining in the twilight, and everything soft and dim; and the woman's figure was like a shadow, flitting about, now here, now there, on one side or another of the gate. She stopped when she saw me approaching, and hesitated for a moment, then seemed to take a sudden resolution. I watched her without knowing, with a prevision that she was going to address me, though with no sort of idea as to the subject of her address. She came up to me

doubtfully, it seemed, yet certainly, as I felt, and when she was close to me, dropped a sort of hesitating curtsey, and said, “It's Mr. Philip?” in a low voice.

“What do you want with me?” I said.

Then she poured forth suddenly, without warning or preparation, her long speech – a flood of words which must have been all ready and waiting at the doors of her lips for utterance. “Oh, sir, I want to speak to you! I can't believe you'll be so hard, for you're young; and I can't believe he'll be so hard if so be as his own son, as I've always heard he had but one, 'll speak up for us. Oh, gentleman, it is easy for the likes of you, that, if you ain't comfortable in one room, can just walk into another; but if one room is all you have, and every bit of furniture you have taken out of it, and nothing but the four walls left – not so much as the cradle for the child, or a chair for your man to sit down upon when he comes from his work, or a saucepan to cook him his supper – ”

“My good woman,” I said, “who can have taken all that from you? surely nobody can be so cruel?”

“You say it's cruel!” she cried with a sort of triumph. “Oh, I knowed you would, or any true gentleman that don't hold with screwing poor folks. Just go and say that to him inside there, for the love of God. Tell him to think what he's doing, driving poor creatures to despair. Summer's coming, the Lord be praised, but yet it's bitter cold at night with your counterpane gone; and when you've been working hard all day, and nothing but four bare walls

to come home to, and all your poor little sticks of furniture that you've saved up for, and got together one by one, all gone – and you no better than when you started, or rather worse, for then you was young. Oh, sir!" the woman's voice rose into a sort of passionate wail. And then she added, beseechingly, recovering herself – "Oh, speak for us – he'll not refuse his own son – "

"To whom am I to speak? who is it that has done this to you?" I said.

The woman hesitated again, looking keenly in my face – then repeated with a slight faltering, "It's Mr. Philip?" as if that made everything right.

"Yes; I am Philip Canning," I said; "but what have I to do with this? and to whom am I to speak?"

She began to whimper, crying and stopping herself. "Oh, please, sir! it's Mr. Canning as owns all the house property about – it's him that our court and the lane and everything belongs to. And he's taken the bed from under us, and the baby's cradle, although it's said in the Bible as you're not to take poor folks's bed."

"My father!" I cried in spite of myself – "then it must be some agent, some one else in his name. You may be sure he knows nothing of it. Of course I shall speak to him at once."

"Oh, God bless you, sir," said the woman. But then she added, in a lower tone – "It's no agent. It's one as never knows trouble. It's him that lives in that grand house." But this was said under her breath, evidently not for me to hear.

Morphew's words flashed through my mind as she spoke. What was this? Did it afford an explanation of the much occupied hours, the big books, the strange visitors? I took the poor woman's name, and gave her something to procure a few comforts for the night, and went indoors disturbed and troubled. It was impossible to believe that my father himself would have acted thus; but he was not a man to brook interference, and I did not see how to introduce the subject, what to say. I could but hope that, at the moment of broaching it, words would be put into my mouth, which often happens in moments of necessity, one knows not how, even when one's theme is not so all-important as that for which such help has been promised. As usual, I did not see my father till dinner. I have said that our dinners were very good, luxurious in a simple way, everything excellent in its kind, well cooked, well served, the perfection of comfort without show – which is a combination very dear to the English heart. I said nothing till Morphew, with his solemn attention to everything that was going, had retired – and then it was with some strain of courage that I began.

"I was stopped outside the gate to-day by a curious sort of petitioner – a poor woman, who seems to be one of your tenants, sir, but whom your agent must have been rather too hard upon."

"My agent? who is that?" said my father, quietly.

"I don't know his name, and I doubt his competence. The poor creature seems to have had everything taken from her – her bed, her child's cradle."

"No doubt she was behind with her rent."

"Very likely, sir. She seemed very poor," said I.

"You take it coolly," said my father, with an upward glance, half-amused, not in the least shocked by my statement. "But when a man, or a woman either, takes a house, I suppose you will allow that they ought to pay rent for it."

"Certainly, sir," I replied, "when they have got anything to pay."

"I don't allow the reservation," he said. But he was not angry, which I had feared he would be.

"I think," I continued, "that your agent must be too severe. And this emboldens me to say something which has been in my mind for some time" – (these were the words, no doubt, which I had hoped would be put into my mouth; they were the suggestion of the moment, and yet as I said them it was with the most complete conviction of their truth) – "and that is this: I am doing nothing; my time hangs heavy on my hands. Make me your agent. I will see for myself, and save you from such mistakes; and it will be an occupation – "

"Mistakes? What warrant have you for saying these are mistakes?" he said testily; then after a moment: "This is a strange proposal from you, Phil. Do you know what it is you are offering? – to be a collector of rents, going about from door to door, from week to week; to look after wretched little bits of repairs, drains, etc.; to get paid, which, after all, is the chief thing, and not to be taken in by tales of poverty."

"Not to let you be taken in by men without pity," I said.

He gave me a strange glance, which I did not very well understand, and said, abruptly, a thing which, so far as I remember, he had never in my life said before, "You've become a little like your mother, Phil – "

"My mother!" The reference was so unusual – nay, so unprecedented – that I was greatly startled. It seemed to me like the sudden introduction of a quite new element in the stagnant atmosphere, as well as a new party to our conversation. My father looked across the table, as if with some astonishment at my tone of surprise.

"Is that so very extraordinary?" he said.

"No; of course it is not extraordinary that I should resemble my mother. Only – I have heard very little of her – almost nothing."

"That is true." He got up and placed himself before the fire, which was very low, as the night was not cold – had not been cold heretofore at least; but it seemed to me now that a little chill came into the dim and faded room. Perhaps it looked more dull from the suggestion of a something brighter, warmer, that might have been. "Talking of mistakes," he said, "perhaps that was one: to sever you entirely from her side of the house. But I did not care for the connection. You will understand how it is that I speak of it now when I tell you – " He stopped here, however, said nothing more for a minute or so, and then rang the bell. Morphew came, as he always did, very deliberately, so that some time elapsed

in silence, during which my surprise grew. When the old man appeared at the door – "Have you put the lights in the drawing-room, as I told you?" my father said.

"Yes, sir; and opened the box, sir; and it's a – it's a speaking likeness – "

This the old man got out in a great hurry, as if afraid that his master would stop him. My father did so with a wave of his hand.

"That's enough. I asked no information. You can go now."

The door closed upon us, and there was again a pause. My subject had floated away altogether like a mist, though I had been so concerned about it. I tried to resume, but could not. Something seemed to arrest my very breathing: and yet in this dull respectable house of ours, where everything breathed good character and integrity, it was certain that there could be no shameful mystery to reveal. It was some time before my father spoke, not from any purpose that I could see, but apparently because his mind was busy with probably unaccustomed thoughts.

"You scarcely know the drawing-room, Phil," he said at last.

"Very little. I have never seen it used. I have a little awe of it, to tell the truth."

"That should not be. There is no reason for that. But a man by himself, as I have been for the greater part of my life, has no occasion for a drawing-room. I always, as a matter of preference, sat among my books; however, I ought to have thought of the impression on you."

"Oh, it is not important," I said; "the awe was childish. I have not thought of it since I came home."

"It never was anything very splendid at the best," said he. He lifted the lamp from the table with a sort of abstraction, not remarking even my offer to take it from him, and led the way. He was on the verge of seventy, and looked his age; but it was a vigorous age, with no symptoms of giving way. The circle of light from the lamp lit up his white hair, and keen blue eyes, and clear complexion; his forehead was like old ivory, his cheek warmly colored: an old man, yet a man in full strength. He was taller than I was, and still almost as strong. As he stood for a moment with the lamp in his hand, he looked like a tower in his great height and bulk. I reflected as I looked at him that I knew him intimately, more intimately than any other creature in the world, – I was familiar with every detail of his outward life; could it be that in reality I did not know him at all?

The drawing-room was already lighted with a flickering array of candles upon the mantelpiece and along the walls, producing the pretty starry effect which candles give without very much light. As I had not the smallest idea what I was about to see, for Morphew's "speaking likeness" was very hurriedly said, and only half comprehensible in the bewilderment of my faculties, my first glance was at this very unusual illumination, for which I could assign no reason. The next showed me a large full-length portrait, still in the box in which apparently it had travelled, placed upright, supported against a table in the centre of the

room. My father walked straight up to it, motioned to me to place a smaller table close to the picture on the left side, and put his lamp upon that. Then he waved his hand towards it, and stood aside that I might see.

It was a full-length portrait of a very young woman – I might say, a girl, scarcely twenty – in a white dress, made in a very simple old fashion, though I was too little accustomed to female costume to be able to fix the date. It might have been a hundred years old, or twenty, for aught I knew. The face had an expression of youth, candor, and simplicity more than any face I had ever seen – or so, at least, in my surprise, I thought. The eyes were a little wistful, with something which was almost anxiety – which at least was not content – in them; a faint, almost imperceptible, curve in the lids. The complexion was of a dazzling fairness, the hair light, but the eyes dark, which gave individuality to the face. It would have been as lovely had the eyes been blue – probably more so – but their darkness gave a touch of character, a slight discord, which made the harmony finer. It was not, perhaps, beautiful in the highest sense of the word. The girl must have been too young, too slight, too little developed for actual beauty; but a face which so invited love and confidence I never saw. One smiled at it with instinctive affection. "What a sweet face!" I said. "What a lovely girl! Who is she? Is this one of the relations you were speaking of on the other side?"

My father made me no reply. He stood aside, looking at it as if he knew it too well to require to look, – as if the picture was

already in his eyes. “Yes,” he said, after an interval, with a long-drawn breath, “she was a lovely girl, as you say.”

“Was? – then she is dead. What a pity!” I said; “what a pity! so young and so sweet!”

We stood gazing at her thus, in her beautiful stillness and calm – two men, the younger of us full grown and conscious of many experiences, the other an old man – before this impersonation of tender youth. At length he said, with a slight tremulousness in his voice, “Does nothing suggest to you who she is, Phil?”

I turned round to look at him with profound astonishment, but he turned away from my look. A sort of quiver passed over his face. “That is your mother,” he said, and walked suddenly away, leaving me there.

My mother!

I stood for a moment in a kind of consternation before the white-robed innocent creature, to me no more than a child; then a sudden laugh broke from me, without any will of mine: something ludicrous, as well as something awful, was in it. When the laugh was over, I found myself with tears in my eyes, gazing, holding my breath. The soft features seemed to melt, the lips to move, the anxiety in the eyes to become a personal inquiry. Ah, no! nothing of the kind; only because of the water in mine. My mother! oh, fair and gentle creature, scarcely woman – how could any man's voice call her by that name! I had little idea enough of what it meant, – had heard it laughed at, scoffed at, reverenced, but never had learned to place it even among the

ideal powers of life. Yet, if it meant anything at all, what it meant was worth thinking of. What did she ask, looking at me with those eyes? what would she have said if "those lips had language"? If I had known her only as Cowper did – with a child's recollection – there might have been some thread, some faint but comprehensible link, between us; but now all that I felt was the curious incongruity. Poor child! I said to myself; so sweet a creature: poor little tender soul! as if she had been a little sister, a child of mine – but my mother! I cannot tell how long I stood looking at her, studying the candid, sweet face, which surely had germs in it of everything that was good and beautiful; and sorry, with a profound regret, that she had died and never carried these promises to fulfilment. Poor girl! poor people who had loved her! These were my thoughts: with a curious vertigo and giddiness of my whole being in the sense of a mysterious relationship, which it was beyond my power to understand.

Presently my father came back: possibly because I had been a long time unconscious of the passage of the minutes, or perhaps because he was himself restless in the strange disturbance of his habitual calm. He came in and put his arm within mine, leaning his weight partially upon me, with an affectionate suggestion which went deeper than words. I pressed his arm to my side: it was more between us two grave Englishmen than any embracing.

"I cannot understand it," I said.

"No. I don't wonder at that; but if it is strange to you, Phil, think how much more strange to me! That is the partner of my

life. I have never had another – or thought of another. That – girl! If we are to meet again, as I have always hoped we should meet again, what am I to say to her – I, an old man? Yes; I know what you mean. I am not an old man for my years; but my years are threescore and ten, and the play is nearly played out. How am I to meet that young creature? We used to say to each other that it was forever, that we never could be but one, that it was for life and death. But what – what am I to say to her, Phil, when I meet her again, that – that angel? No, it is not her being an angel that troubles me; but she is so young! She is like my – my granddaughter," he cried, with a burst of what was half sobs, half laughter; "and she is my wife – and I am an old man – an old man! And so much has happened that she could not understand."

I was too much startled by this strange complaint to know what to say. It was not my own trouble, and I answered it in the conventional way.

"They are not as we are, sir," I said; "they look upon us with larger, other eyes than ours."

"Ah! you don't know what I mean," he said quickly; and in the interval he had subdued his emotion. "At first, after she died, it was my consolation to think that I should meet her again – that we never could be really parted. But, my God, how I have changed since then! I am another man – I am a different being. I was not very young even then – twenty years older than she was: but her youth renewed mine. I was not an unfit partner; she asked no better: and knew as much more than I did in some things –

being so much nearer the source – as I did in others that were of the world. But I have gone a long way since then, Phil – a long way; and there she stands just where I left her."

I pressed his arm again. "Father," I said, which was a title I seldom used, "we are not to suppose that in a higher life the mind stands still." I did not feel myself qualified to discuss such topics, but something one must say.

"Worse, worse!" he replied; "then she too will be like me, a different being, and we shall meet as what? as strangers, as people who have lost sight of each other, with a long past between us – we who parted, my God! with – with – "

His voice broke and ended for a moment: then while, surprised and almost shocked by what he said, I cast about in my mind what to reply, he withdrew his arm suddenly from mine, and said in his usual tone, "Where shall we hang the picture, Phil? It must be here in this room. What do you think will be the best light?"

This sudden alteration took me still more by surprise, and gave me almost an additional shock; but it was evident that I must follow the changes of his mood, or at least the sudden repression of sentiment which he originated. We went into that simpler question with great seriousness, consulting which would be the best light. "You know I can scarcely advise," I said; "I have never been familiar with this room. I should like to put off, if you don't mind, till daylight."

"I think," he said, "that this would be the best place." It was on the other side of the fireplace, on the wall which faced the

windows – not the best light, I knew enough to be aware, for an oil-painting. When I said so, however, he answered me with a little impatience, – "It does not matter very much about, the best light. There will be nobody to see it but you and me. I have my reasons – " There was a small table standing against the wall at this spot, on which he had his hand as he spoke. Upon it stood a little basket in very fine lace-like wickerwork. His hand must have trembled, for the table shook, and the basket fell, its contents turning out upon the carpet, – little bits of needlework, colored silks, a small piece of knitting half done. He laughed as they rolled out at his feet, and tried to stoop to collect them, then tottered to a chair, and covered for a moment his face with his hands.

No need to ask what they were. No woman's work had been seen in the house since I could recollect it. I gathered them up reverently and put them back. I could see, ignorant as I was, that the bit of knitting was something for an infant. What could I do less than put it to my lips? It had. been left in the doing – for me.

"Yes, I think this is the best place," my father said a minute after, in his usual tone.

We placed it there that evening with our own hands. The picture was large, and in a heavy frame, but my father would let no one help me but himself. And then, with a superstition for which I never could give any reason even to myself, having removed the packings, we closed and locked the door, leaving the candles about the room, in their soft strange illumination lighting

the first night of her return to her old place.

That night no more was said. My father went to his room early, which was not his habit. He had never, however, accustomed me to sit late with him in the library. I had a little study or smoking-room of my own, in which all my special treasures were, the collections of my travels and my favorite books – and where I always sat after prayers, a ceremonial which was regularly kept up in the house. I retired as usual this night to my room, and as usual read – but to-night somewhat vaguely, often pausing to think. When it was quite late, I went out by the glass door to the lawn, and walked round the house, with the intention of looking in at the drawing-room windows, as I had done when a child. But I had forgotten that these windows were all shuttered at night, and nothing but a faint penetration of the light within through the crevices bore witness to the instalment of the new dweller there.

In the morning my father was entirely himself again. He told me without emotion of the manner in which he had obtained the picture. It had belonged to my mother's family, and had fallen eventually into the hands of a cousin of hers, resident abroad – "A man whom I did not like, and who did not like me," my father said; "there was, or had been, some rivalry, he thought: a mistake, but he was never aware of that. He refused all my requests to have a copy made. You may suppose, Phil, that I wished this very much. Had I succeeded, you would have been acquainted, at least, with your mother's appearance, and need not have sustained this shock. But he would not consent. It gave him,

I think, a certain pleasure to think that he had the only picture. But now he is dead – and out of remorse, or with some other intention, has left it to me."

"That looks like kindness," said I.

"Yes; or something else. He might have thought that by so doing he was establishing a claim upon me." my father said: but he did not seem disposed to add any more. On whose behalf he meant to establish a claim I did not know, nor who the man was who had laid us under so great an obligation on his deathbed. He *had* established a claim on me at least: though, as he was dead, I could not see on whose behalf it was. And my father said nothing more. He seemed to dislike the subject. When I attempted to return to it, he had recourse to his letters or his newspapers. Evidently he had made up his mind to say no more.

Afterwards I went into the drawing-room to look at the picture once more. It seemed to me that the anxiety in her eyes was not so evident as I had thought it last night. The light possibly was more favorable. She stood just above the place where, I make no doubt, she had sat in life, where her little work-basket was – not very much above it. The picture was full-length, and we had hung it low, so that she might have been stepping into the room, and was little above my own level as I stood and looked at her again. Once more I smiled at the strange thought that this young creature, so young, almost childish, could be my mother; and once more my eyes grew wet looking at her. He was a benefactor, indeed, who had given her back to us. I said to myself, that if I could ever do

anything for him or his, I would certainly do, for my – for this lovely young creature's sake.

And with this in my mind, and all the thoughts that came with it, I am obliged to confess that the other matter, which I had been so full of on the previous night, went entirely out of my head.

It is rarely, however, that such matters are allowed to slip out of one's mind. When I went out in the afternoon for my usual stroll – or rather when I returned from that stroll – I saw once more before me the woman with her baby whose story had filled me with dismay on the previous evening. She was waiting at the gate as before, and – "Oh, gentleman, but haven't you got some news to give me?" she said.

"My good woman – I – have been greatly occupied. I have had – no time to do anything."

"Ah!" she said, with a little cry of disappointment, "my man said not to make too sure, and that the ways of the gentlefolks is hard to know."

"I cannot explain to you," I said, as gently as I could, "what it is that has made me forget you. It was an event that can only do you good in the end. Go home now, and see the man that took your things from you, and tell him to come to me. I promise you it shall be put right."

The woman looked at me in astonishment, then burst forth, as it seemed, involuntarily, – "What! without asking no questions?" After this there came a storm of tears and blessings, from which I made haste to escape, but not without carrying that curious

commentary on my rashness away with me – "Without asking no questions?" It might be foolish, perhaps: but after all how slight a matter. To make the poor creature comfortable at the cost of what – a box or two of cigars, perhaps, or some other trifle. And if it should be her own fault, or her husband's – what then? Had I been punished for all my faults, where should I have been now. And if the advantage should be only temporary, what then? To be relieved and comforted even for a day or two, was not that something to count in life? Thus I quenched the fiery dart of criticism which my *protégée* herself had thrown into the transaction, not without a certain sense of the humor of it. Its effect, however, was to make me less anxious to see my father, to repeat my proposal to him, and to call his attention to the cruelty performed in his name. This one case I had taken out of the category of wrongs to be righted, by assuming arbitrarily the position of Providence in my own person – for, of course, I had bound myself to pay the poor creature's rent as well as redeem her goods – and, whatever might happen to her in the future, had taken the past into my own hands. The man came presently to see me who, it seems, had acted as my father's agent in the matter. "I don't know, sir, how Mr. Canning will take it," he said. "He don't want none of those irregular, bad-paying ones in his property. He always says as to look over it and let the rent run on is making things worse in the end. His rule is, 'Never more than a month, Stevens:' that's what Mr. Canning says to me, sir. He says, 'More than that they can't pay. It's no use trying.' And it's a good rule;

it's a very good rule. He won't hear none of their stories, sir. Bless you, you'd never get a penny of rent from them small houses if you listened to their tales. But if so be as you'll pay Mrs. Jordan's rent, it's none of my business how it's paid, so long as it's paid, and I'll send her back her things. But they'll just have to be took next time," he added, composedly. "Over and over: it's always the same story with them sort of poor folks – they're too poor for anything, that's the truth," the man said.

Morphew came back to my room after my visitor was gone. "Mr. Philip," he said, "you'll excuse me, sir, but if you're going to pay all the poor folk's rent as have distresses put in, you may just go into the court at once, for it's without end – "

"I am going to be the agent myself, Morphew, and manage for my father: and we'll soon put a stop to that," I said, more cheerfully than I felt.

"Manage for – master," he said, with a face of consternation. "You, Mr. Philip!"

"You seem to have a great contempt for me, Morphew."

He did not deny the fact. He said with excitement, "Master, sir – master don't let himself be put a stop to by any man. Master's – not one to be managed. Don't you quarrel with master, Mr. Philip, for the love of God." The old man was quite pale.

"Quarrel!" I said. "I have never quarreled with my father, and I don't mean to begin now."

Morphew dispelled his own excitement by making up the fire, which was dying in the grate. It was a very mild spring evening,

and he made up a great blaze which would have suited December. This is one of many ways in which an old servant will relieve his mind. He muttered all the time as he threw on the coals and wood. “He'll not like it – we all know as he'll not like it. Master won't stand no meddling, Mr. Philip,” – this last he discharged at me like a flying arrow as he closed the door.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.