GEORGE MACDONALD

PAUL FABER, SURGEON

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Содержание

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TO

W.C.T

TUUM EST

Clear-windowed temple of the God of grace,
From the loud wind to me a hiding-place!
Thee gird broad lands with genial motions rife,
But in thee dwells, high-throned, the Life of life
Thy test no stagnant moat half-filled with mud,
But living waters witnessing in flood!
Thy priestess, beauty-clad, and gospel-shod,
A fellow laborer in the earth with God!
Good will art thou, and goodness all thy arts—
Doves to their windows, and to thee fly hearts!
Take of the corn in thy dear shelter grown,
Which else the storm had all too rudely blown;
When to a higher temple thou shalt mount,

Thy earthly gifts in heavenly friends shall count;
Let these first-fruits enter thy lofty door,
And golden lie upon thy golden floor.

G.M.D.
PORTO FINO, *December*, 1878.

CHAPTER I

THE LANE

The rector sat on the box of his carriage, driving his horses toward his church, the grand old abbey-church of Glaston. His wife was inside, and an old woman—he had stopped on the road to take her up—sat with her basket on the foot-board behind. His coachman sat beside him; he never took the reins when his master was there. Mr. Bevis drove like a gentleman, in an easy, informal, yet thoroughly business-like way. His horses were black—large, well-bred, and well-fed, but neither young nor showy, and the harness was just the least bit shabby. Indeed, the entire turnout, including his own hat and the coachman's, offered the beholder that aspect of indifference to show, which, by the suggestion of a nodding acquaintance with poverty, gave it the right clerical air of being not of this world. Mrs. Bevis had her basket on the seat before her, containing, beneath an upper stratum of flowers, some of the first rhubarb of the season and a pound or two of fresh butter for a poor relation in the town.

The rector was a man about sixty, with keen gray eyes, a good-humored mouth, a nose whose enlargement had not of late gone in the direction of its original design, and a face more

than inclining to the rubicund, suggestive of good living as well as open air. Altogether he had the look of a man who knew what he was about, and was on tolerable terms with himself, and on still better with his neighbor. The heart under his ribs was larger even than indicated by the benevolence of his countenance and the humor hovering over his mouth. Upon the countenance of his wife rested a placidity sinking almost into fatuity. Its features were rather indications than completions, but there was a consciousness of comfort about the mouth, and the eyes were alive.

They were passing at a good speed through a varying country —now a thicket of hazel, now great patches of furze upon open common, and anon well-kept farm-hedges, and clumps of pine, the remnants of ancient forest, when, halfway through a lane so narrow that the rector felt every yard toward the other end a gain, his horses started, threw up their heads, and looked for a moment wild as youth. Just in front of them, in the air, over a high hedge, scarce touching the topmost twigs with his hoofs, appeared a great red horse. Down he came into the road, bringing with him a rather tall, certainly handsome, and even at first sight, attractive rider. A dark brown mustache upon a somewhat smooth sunburned face, and a stern settling of the strong yet delicately finished features gave him a military look; but the sparkle of his blue eyes contradicted his otherwise cold expression. He drew up close to the hedge to make room for the carriage, but as he neared him Mr. Bevis slackened his speed,

and during the following talk they were moving gently along with just room for the rider to keep clear of the off fore wheel.

"Heigh, Faber," said the clergyman, "you'll break your neck some day! You should think of your patients, man. That wasn't a jump for any man in his senses to take."

"It is but fair to give my patients a chance now and then," returned the surgeon, who never met the rector but there was a merry passage between them.

"Upon my word," said Mr. Bevis, "when you came over the hedge there, I took you for Death in the Revelations, that had tired out his own and changed horses with t'other one."

As he spoke, he glanced back with a queer look, for he found himself guilty of a little irreverence, and his conscience sat behind him in the person of his wife. But that conscience was a very easy one, being almost as incapable of seeing a joke as of refusing a request.

"—How many have you bagged this week?" concluded the rector.

"I haven't counted up yet," answered the surgeon. "—*You*'ve got one behind, I see," he added, signing with his whip over his shoulder.

"Poor old thing!" said the rector, as if excusing himself, "she's got a heavy basket, and we all need a lift sometimes—eh, doctor? —into the world and out again, at all events."

There was more of the reflective in this utterance than the parson was in the habit of displaying; but he liked the doctor,

and, although as well as every one else he knew him to be no friend to the church, or to Christianity, or even to religious belief of any sort, his liking, coupled with a vague sense of duty, had urged him to this most unassuming attempt to cast the friendly arm of faith around the unbeliever.

"I plead guilty to the former," answered Faber, "but somehow I have never practiced the euthanasia. The instincts of my profession, I suppose are against it. Besides, that ought to be your business."

"Not altogether," said the rector, with a kindly look from his box, which, however, only fell on the top of the doctor's hat.

Faber seemed to feel the influence of it notwithstanding, for he returned, "If all clergymen were as liberal as you, Mr. Bevis, there would be more danger of some of us giving in."

The word *liberal* seemed to rouse the rector to the fact that his coachman sat on the box, yet another conscience, beside him. *Sub divo* one must not be *too* liberal. There was a freedom that came out better over a bottle of wine than over the backs of horses. With a word he quickened the pace of his cleric steeds, and the doctor was dropped parallel with the carriage window. There, catching sight of Mrs. Bevis, of whose possible presence he had not thought once, he paid his compliments, and made his apologies, then trotted his gaunt Ruber again beside the wheel, and resumed talk, but not the same talk, with the rector. For a few minutes it turned upon the state of this and that ailing parishioner; for, while the rector left all the duties of public

service to his curate, he ministered to the ailing and poor upon and immediately around his own little property, which was in that corner of his parish furthest from the town; but ere long, as all talk was sure to do between the parson and any body who owned but a donkey, it veered round in a certain direction.

"You don't seem to feed that horse of yours upon beans, Faber," he said.

"I don't seem, I grant," returned the doctor; "but you should see him feed! He eats enough for two, but he *can't* make fat: all goes to muscle and pluck."

"Well, I must allow the less fat he has to carry the better, if you're in the way of heaving him over such hedges on to the hard road. In my best days I should never have faced a jump like that in cold blood," said the rector.

"I've got no little belongings of wife or child to make a prudent man of me, you see," returned the surgeon. "At worst it's but a knock on the head and a longish snooze."

The rector fancied he felt his wife's shudder shake the carriage, but the sensation was of his own producing. The careless defiant words wrought in him an unaccountable kind of terror: it seemed almost as if they had rushed of themselves from his own lips.

"Take care, my dear sir," he said solemnly. "There may be something to believe, though you don't believe it."

"I must take the chance," replied Faber. "I will do my best to make calamity of long life, by keeping the rheumatic and

epileptic and phthisical alive, while I know how. Where nothing *can* be known, I prefer not to intrude."

A pause followed. At length said the rector,

"You are so good a fellow, Faber, I wish you were better. When will you come and dine with me?"

"Soon, I hope," answered the surgeon, "but I am too busy at present. For all her sweet ways and looks, the spring is not friendly to man, and my work is to wage war with nature."

A second pause followed. The rector would gladly have said something, but nothing would come.

"By the by," he said at length, "I thought I saw you pass the gate—let me see—on Monday: why did you not look in?"

"I hadn't a moment's time. I was sent for to a patient in the village."

"Yes, I know; I heard of that. I wish you would give me your impression of the lady. She is a stranger here.—John, that gate is swinging across the road. Get down and shut it.—Who and what is she?"

"That I should be glad to learn from you. All I know is that she is a lady. There can not be two opinions as to that."

"They tell me she is a beauty," said the parson.

The doctor nodded his head emphatically.

"Haven't you seen her?" he said.

"Scarcely—only her back. She walks well. Do you know nothing about her?

Who has she with her?"

"Nobody."

"Then Mrs. Bevis shall call upon her."

"I think at present she had better not. Mrs. Puckridge is a good old soul, and pays her every attention."

"What is the matter with her? Nothing infectious?"

"Oh, no! She has caught a chill. I was afraid of pneumonia yesterday."

"Then she is better?"

"I confess I am a little anxious about her. But I ought not to be dawdling like this, with half my patients to see. I must bid you good morning.—Good morning, Mrs. Bevis."

As he spoke, Faber drew rein, and let the carriage pass; then turned his horse's head to the other side of the way, scrambled up the steep bank to the field above, and galloped toward Glaston, whose great church rose high in sight. Over hedge and ditch he rode straight for its tower.

"The young fool!" said the rector, looking after him admiringly, and pulling up his horses that he might more conveniently see him ride.

"Jolly old fellow!" said the surgeon at his second jump. "I wonder how much he believes now of all the rot! Enough to humbug himself with—not a hair more. He has no passion for humbugging other people. There's that curate of his now believes every thing, and would humbug the whole world if he could! How any man can come to fool himself so thoroughly as that man does, is a mystery to me!—I wonder what the rector's driving

into Glaston for on a Saturday."

Paul Faber was a man who had espoused the cause of science with all the energy of a suppressed poetic nature. He had such a horror of all kinds of intellectual deception or mistake, that he would rather run the risk of rejecting any number of truths than of accepting one error. In this spirit he had concluded that, as no immediate communication had ever reached his eye, or ear, or hand from any creator of men, he had no ground for believing in the existence of such a creator; while a thousand unfitnesses evident in the world, rendered the existence of one perfectly wise and good and powerful, absolutely impossible. If one said to him that he believed thousands of things he had never himself known, he answered he did so upon testimony. If one rejoined that here too we have testimony, he replied it was not credible testimony, but founded on such experiences as he was justified in considering imaginary, seeing they were like none he had ever had himself. When he was asked whether, while he yet believed there was such a being as his mother told him of, he had ever set himself to act upon that belief, he asserted himself fortunate in the omission of what might have riveted on him the fetters of a degrading faith. For years he had turned his face toward all speculation favoring the non-existence of a creating Will, his back toward all tending to show that such a one might be. Argument on the latter side he set down as born of prejudice, and appealing to weakness; on the other, as springing from courage, and appealing to honesty. He had never put it to

himself which would be the worse deception—to believe there was a God when there was none; or to believe there was no God when there was one.

He had, however, a large share of the lower but equally indispensable half of religion—that, namely, which has respect to one's fellows. Not a man in Glaston was readier, by day or by night, to run to the help of another, and that not merely in his professional capacity, but as a neighbor, whatever the sort of help was needed.

Thomas Wingfold, the curate, had a great respect for him. Having himself passed through many phases of serious, and therefore painful doubt, he was not as much shocked by the surgeon's unbelief as some whose real faith was even less than Faber's; but he seldom laid himself out to answer his objections. He sought rather, but as yet apparently in vain, to cause the roots of those very objections to strike into, and thus disclose to the man himself, the deeper strata of his being. This might indeed at first only render him the more earnest in his denials, but at length it would probably rouse in him that spiritual nature to which alone such questions really belong, and which alone is capable of coping with them. The first notable result, however, of the surgeon's intercourse with the curate was, that, whereas he had till then kept his opinions to himself in the presence of those who did not sympathize with them, he now uttered his disbelief with such plainness as I have shown him using toward the rector. This did not come of aggravated antagonism, but of admiration

of the curate's openness in the presentment of truths which must be unacceptable to the majority of his congregation.

There had arisen therefore betwixt the doctor and the curate a certain sort of intimacy, which had at length come to the rector's ears. He had, no doubt, before this heard many complaints against the latter, but he had laughed them aside. No theologian himself, he had found the questions hitherto raised in respect of Wingfold's teaching, altogether beyond the pale of his interest. He could not comprehend why people should not content themselves with being good Christians, minding their own affairs, going to church, and so feeling safe for the next world. What did opinion matter as long as they were good Christians? He did not exactly know what he believed himself, but he hoped he was none the less of a Christian for that! Was it not enough to hold fast whatever lay in the apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian creed, without splitting metaphysical hairs with your neighbor? But was it decent that his curate should be hand and glove with one who denied the existence of God? He did not for a moment doubt the faith of Wingfold; but a man must have some respect for appearances: appearances were facts as well as realities were facts. An honest man must not keep company with a thief, if he would escape the judgment of being of thievish kind. Something must be done; probably something said would be enough, and the rector was now on his way to say it.

CHAPTER II

THE MINISTER'S DOOR

Every body knew Mr. Faber, whether he rode Ruber or Niger —Rubber and Nigger, his groom called them—and many were the greetings that met him as he passed along Pine Street, for, despite the brand of his atheism, he was popular. The few ladies out shopping bowed graciously, for both his manners and person were pleasing, and his professional attentions were unexceptionable. When he dropped into a quick walk, to let Ruber cool a little ere he reached his stall, he was several times accosted and detained. The last who addressed him was Mr. Drew, the principal draper of the town. He had been standing for some time in his shop-door, but as Faber was about to turn the corner, he stepped out on the pavement, and the doctor checked his horse in the gutter.

"I wish you would look in upon Mr. Drake, sir," he said. "I am quite uneasy about him. Indeed I am sure he must be in a bad way, though he won't allow it. He's not an easy man to do any thing for, but just you let me know what *can* be done for him—and we'll contrive. A *nod*, you know, doctor, etc."

"I don't well see how I can," returned Faber. "To call now

without being sent for, when I never called before!—No, Mr. Drew, I don't think I could."

It was a lovely spring noon. The rain that had fallen heavily during the night lay in flashing pools that filled the street with suns. Here and there were little gardens before the houses, and the bushes in them were hung with bright drops, so bright that the rain seemed to have fallen from the sun himself, not from the clouds.

"Why, goodness gracious!" cried the draper, "here's your excuse come direct!"

Under the very nose of the doctor's great horse stood a little woman-child, staring straight up at the huge red head above her. Now Ruber was not quite gentle, and it was with some dismay that his master, although the animal showed no offense at the glowering little thing, pulled him back a step or two with the curb, the thought darting through him how easily with one pash of his mighty hoof the horse could annihilate a mirrored universe.

"Where from?" he asked, by what he would himself have called a half-conscious cerebration.

"From somewhere they say you don't believe in, doctor," answered the draper. "It's little Amanda, the minister's own darling—Naughty little dear!" he continued, his round good-humored face wrinkled all over with smiles, as he caught up the truant, "what ever do you mean by splashing through every gutter between home and here, making a little drab of yourself? Why your frock is as wet as a dish-clout!—*and* your shoes! My

gracious!"

The little one answered only by patting his cheeks, which in shape much resembled her own, with her little fat puds, as if she had been beating a drum, while Faber looked down amused and interested.

"Here, doctor!" the draper went on, "you take the little mischief on the saddle before you, and carry her home: that will be your excuse."

As he spoke he held up the child to him. Faber took her, and sitting as far back in the saddle as he could, set her upon the pommel. She screwed up her eyes, and grinned with delight, spreading her mouth wide, and showing an incredible number of daintiest little teeth. When Ruber began to move she shrieked in her ecstasy.

Holding his horse to a walk, the doctor crossed the main street and went down a side one toward the river, whence again he entered a narrow lane. There with the handle of his whip he managed to ring the door-bell of a little old-fashioned house which rose immediately from the lane without even a footpath between. The door was opened by a lady-like young woman, with smooth soft brown hair, a white forehead, and serious, rather troubled eyes.

"Aunty! aunty!" cried the child, "Ducky 'iding!"

Miss Drake looked a little surprised. The doctor lifted his hat. She gravely returned his greeting and stretched up her arms to take the child. But she drew back, nestling against Faber.

"Amanda! come, dear," said Miss Drake. "How kind of Dr. Faber to bring you home! I'm afraid you've been a naughty child again—running out into the street."

"Such a g'eat 'ide!" cried Amanda, heedless of reproof. "A yeal 'ossy—big! big!"

She spread her arms wide, in indication of the vastness of the upbearing body whereon she sat. But still she leaned back against the doctor, and he awaited the result in amused silence. Again her aunt raised her hands to take her.

"Mo' 'yide!" cried the child, looking up backward, to find Faber's eyes.

But her aunt caught her by the feet, and amid struggling and laughter drew her down, and held her in her arms.

"I hope your father is pretty well, Miss Drake," said the doctor, wasting no time in needless explanation.

"Ducky," said the girl, setting down the child, "go and tell grandpapa how kind Dr. Faber has been to you. Tell him he is at the door." Then turning to Faber, "I am sorry to say he does not seem at all well," she answered him. "He has had a good deal of annoyance lately, and at his age that sort of thing tells."

As she spoke she looked up at the doctor, full in his face, but with a curious quaver in her eyes. Nor was it any wonder she should look at him strangely, for she felt toward him very strangely: to her he was as it were the apostle of a kakangel, the prophet of a doctrine that was evil, yet perhaps was a truth. Terrible doubts had for some time been assailing her—doubts

which she could in part trace to him, and as he sat there on Ruber, he looked like a beautiful evil angel, who *knew* there was no God —an evil angel whom the curate, by his bold speech, had raised, and could not banish.

The surgeon had scarcely begun a reply, when the old minister made his appearance. He was a tall, well-built man, with strong features, rather handsome than otherwise; but his hat hung on his occiput, gave his head a look of weakness and oddity that by nature did not belong to it, while baggy, ill-made clothes and big shoes manifested a reaction from the over-trimness of earlier years. He greeted the doctor with a severe smile.

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Faber," he said, "for bringing me home my little runaway. Where did you find her?"

"Under my horse's head, like the temple between the paws of the Sphinx," answered Faber, speaking a parable without knowing it.

"She is a fearless little damsel," said the minister, in a husky voice that had once rung clear as a bell over crowded congregations—"too fearless at times. But the very ignorance of danger seems the panoply of childhood. And indeed who knows in the midst of what evils we all walk that never touch us!"

"A Solon of platitudes!" said the doctor to himself.

"She has been in the river once, and almost twice," Mr. Drake went on. "—I shall have to tie you with a string, pussie! Come away from the horse. What if he should take to stroking you? I am afraid you would find his hands both hard and heavy."

"How do you stand this trying spring weather, Mr. Drake? I don't hear the best accounts of you," said the surgeon, drawing Ruber a pace back from the door.

"I am as well as at my age I can perhaps expect to be," answered the minister. "I am getting old—and—and—we all have our troubles, and, I trust, our God also, to set them right for us," he added, with a suggesting look in the face of the doctor.

"By Jove!" said Faber to himself, "the spring weather has roused the worshiping instinct! The clergy are awake to-day! I had better look out, or it will soon be too hot for me."

"I can't look you in the face, doctor," resumed the old man after a pause, "and believe what people say of you. It can't be that you don't even believe there *is* a God?"

Faber would rather have said nothing; but his integrity he must keep fast hold of, or perish in his own esteem.

"If there be one," he replied, "I only state a fact when I say He has never given me ground sufficient to think so. You say yourselves He has favorites to whom He reveals Himself: I am not one of them, and must therefore of necessity be an unbeliever."

"But think, Mr. Faber—if there should be a God, what an insult it is to deny Him existence."

"I can't see it," returned the surgeon, suppressing a laugh. "If there be such a one, would He not have me speak the truth? Anyhow, what great matter can it be to Him that one should say he has never seen Him, and can't therefore believe He is to be seen? A god should be above that sort of pride."

The minister was too much shocked to find any answer beyond a sad reproving shake of the head. But he felt almost as if the hearing of such irreverence without withering retort, made him a party to the sin against the Holy Ghost. Was he not now conferring with one of the generals of the army of Antichrist? Ought he not to turn his back upon him, and walk into the house? But a surge of concern for the frank young fellow who sat so strong and alive upon the great horse, broke over his heart, and he looked up at him pitifully.

Faber mistook the cause and object of his evident emotion.

"Come now, Mr. Drake, be frank with me," he said. "You are out of health; let me know what is the matter. Though I'm not religious, I'm not a humbug, and only speak the truth when I say I should be glad to serve you. A man must be neighborly, or what is there left of him? Even you will allow that our duty to our neighbor is half the law, and there is some help in medicine, though I confess it is no science yet, and we are but dabblers."

"But," said Mr. Drake, "I don't choose to accept the help of one who looks upon all who think with me as a set of humbugs, and regards those who deny every thing as the only honest men."

"By Jove! sir, I take you for an honest man, or I should never trouble my head about you. What I say of such as you is, that, having inherited a lot of humbug, you don't know it for such, and do the best you can with it."

"If such is your opinion of me—and I have no right to complain of it in my own person—I should just like to ask you

one question about another," said Mr. Drake: "Do you in your heart believe that Jesus Christ was an impostor?"

"I believe, if the story about him be true, that he was a well-meaning man, enormously self-deceived."

"Your judgment seems to me enormously illogical. That any ordinarily good man should so deceive himself, appears to my mind altogether impossible and incredible."

"Ah! but he was an extraordinarily good man."

"Therefore the more likely to think too much of himself?"

"Why not? I see the same thing in his followers all about me."

"Doubtless the servant shall be as his master," said the minister, and closed his mouth, resolved to speak no more. But his conscience woke, and goaded him with the truth that had come from the mouth of its enemy—the reproach his disciples brought upon their master, for, in the judgment of the world, the master is as his disciples.

"You Christians," the doctor went on, "seem to me to make yourselves, most unnecessarily, the slaves of a fancied ideal. I have no such ideal to contemplate; yet I am not aware that you do better by each other than I am ready to do for any man. I can't pretend to love every body, but I do my best for those I can help. Mr. Drake, I would gladly serve you."

The old man said nothing. His mood was stormy. Would he accept life itself from the hand of him who denied his Master?—seek to the powers of darkness for cure?—kneel to Antichrist for favor, as if he and not Jesus were lord of life and death?

Would *he* pray a man to whom the Bible was no better than a book of ballads, to come betwixt him and the evils of growing age and disappointment, to lighten for him the grasshopper, and stay the mourners as they went about his streets! He had half turned, and was on the point of walking silent into the house, when he bethought himself of the impression it would make on the unbeliever, if he were thus to meet the offer of his kindness. Half turned, he stood hesitating.

"I have a passion for therapeutics," persisted the doctor; "and if I can do any thing to ease the yoke upon the shoulders of my fellows—"

Mr. Drake did not hear the end of the sentence: he heard instead, somewhere in his soul, a voice saying, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." He *could* not let Faber help him.

"Doctor, you have the great gift of a kind heart," he began, still half turned from him.

"My heart is like other people's," interrupted Faber. "If a man wants help, and I've got it, what more natural than that we should come together?"

There was in the doctor an opposition to every thing that had if it were but the odor of religion about it, which might well have suggested doubt of his own doubt, and weakness buttressing itself with assertion But the case was not so. What untruth there was in him was of another and more subtle kind. Neither must it be supposed that he was a propagandist, a proselytizer. Say nothing, and the doctor said nothing. Fire but a saloon pistol, however,

and off went a great gun in answer—with no bravado, for the doctor was a gentleman.

"Mr. Faber," said the minister, now turning toward him, and looking him full in the face, "if you had a friend whom you loved with all your heart, would you be under obligation to a man who counted your friendship a folly?"

"The cases are not parallel. Say the man merely did not believe your friend was alive, and there could be no insult to either."

"If the denial of his being in life, opened the door to the greatest wrongs that could be done him—and if that denial seemed to me to have its source in some element of moral antagonism to him—*could* I accept—I put it to yourself, Mr. Faber—*could* I accept assistance from that man? Do not take it ill. You prize honesty; so do I: ten times rather would I cease to live than accept life at the hand of an enemy to my Lord and Master."

"I am very sorry, Mr. Drake," said the doctor; "but from your point of view I suppose you are right. Good morning."

He turned Ruber from the minister's door, went off quickly, and entered his own stable-yard just as the rector's carriage appeared at the further end of the street.

CHAPTER III

THE MANOR HOUSE

Mr. Bevis drove up to the inn, threw the reins to his coachman, got down, and helped his wife out of the carriage. Then they parted, she to take her gift of flowers and butter to her poor relation, he to call upon Mrs. Ramshorn.

That lady, being, as every body knew, the widow of a dean, considered herself the chief ecclesiastical authority in Glaston. Her acknowledged friends would, if pressed, have found themselves compelled to admit that her theology was both scanty and confused, that her influence was not of the most elevating nature, and that those who doubted her personal piety might have something to say in excuse of their uncharitableness; but she spoke in the might of the matrimonial nimbus around her head, and her claims were undisputed in Glaston. There was a propriety, springing from quite another source, however, in the rector's turning his footsteps first toward the Manor House, where she resided. For his curate, whom his business in Glaston that Saturday concerned, had, some nine or ten months before, married Mrs. Ramshorn's niece, Helen Lingard by name, who for many years had lived with her aunt, adding, if not to the

comforts of the housekeeping, for Mrs. Ramshorn was plentifully enough provided for the remnant of her abode in this world, yet considerably to the style of her menage. Therefore, when all of a sudden, as it seemed, the girl calmly insisted on marrying the curate, a man obnoxious to every fiber of her aunt's ecclesiastical nature, and transferring to him, with a most unrighteous scorn of marriage-settlements, the entire property inherited from her father and brother, the disappointment of Mrs. Ramshorn in her niece was equaled only by her disgust at the object of her choice.

With a firm, dignified step, as if he measured the distance, the rector paced the pavement between the inn and the Manor House. He knew of no cause for the veiling of an eyelash before human being. It was true he had closed his eyes to certain faults in the man of good estate and old name who had done him the honor of requesting the hand of his one child, and, leaving her to judge for herself, had not given her the knowledge which might have led her to another conclusion; it had satisfied him that the man's wild oats were sown: after the crop he made no inquiry. It was also true that he had not mentioned a certain vice in the last horse he sold; but then he hoped the severe measures taken had cured him. He was aware that at times he took a few glasses of port more than he would have judged it proper to carry to the pulpit or the communion table, for those he counted the presence of his Maker; but there was a time for every thing. He was conscious to himself, I repeat, of nothing to cause him shame, and in the tramp of his boots there was certainly no self-abasement. It was

true he performed next to none of the duties of the rectorship—but then neither did he turn any of its income to his own uses; part he paid his curate, and the rest he laid out on the church, which might easily have consumed six times the amount in desirable, if not absolutely needful repairs. What further question could be made of the matter? the church had her work done, and one of her most precious buildings preserved from ruin to the bargain. How indignant he would have been at the suggestion that he was after all only an idolater, worshiping what he called *The Church*, instead of the Lord Christ, the heart-inhabiting, world-ruling king of heaven! But he was a very good sort of idolater, and some of the Christian graces had filtered through the roofs of the temple upon him—eminently those of hospitality and general humanity—even uprightness so far as his light extended; so that he did less to obstruct the religion he thought he furthered, than some men who preach it as on the house-tops.

It was from policy, not from confidence in Mrs. Ramshorn, that he went to her first. He liked his curate, and every one knew she hated him. If, of any thing he did, two interpretations were possible—one good, and one bad, there was no room for a doubt as to which she would adopt and publish. Not even to herself, however, did she allow that one chief cause of her hatred was, that, having all her life been used to a pair of horses, she had now to put up with only a brougham.

To the brass knocker on her door, the rector applied himself, and sent a confident announcement of his presence through the

house. Almost instantly the long-faced butler, half undertaker, half parish-clerk, opened the door; and seeing the rector, drew it wide to the wall, inviting him to step into the library, as he had no doubt Mrs. Ramshorn would be at home to *him*. Nor was it long ere she appeared, in rather youthful morning dress, and gave him a hearty welcome; after which, by no very wide spirals of descent, the talk swooped presently upon the curate.

"The fact is," at length said the memorial shadow of the dean deceased, "Mr. Wingfold is not a gentleman. It grieves me to say so of the husband of my niece, who has been to me as my own child, but the truth must be spoken. It may be difficult to keep such men out of holy orders, but if ever the benefices of the church come to be freely bestowed upon them, that moment the death-bell of religion is rung in England. My late husband said so. While such men keep to barns and conventicles we can despise them, but when they creep into the fold, then there is just cause for alarm. The longer I live, the better I see my poor husband was right."

"I should scarcely have thought such a man as you describe could have captivated Helen," said the rector with a smile.

"Depend upon it she perceives her mistake well enough by this time," returned Mrs. Ramshorn. "A lady born and bred *must* make the discovery before a week is over. But poor Helen always was headstrong! And in this out-of-the-world place she saw so little of gentlemen!"

The rector could not help thinking birth and breeding must go

for little indeed, if nothing less than marriage could reveal to a lady that a man was not a gentleman.

"Nobody knows," continued Mrs. Ramshorn, "who or what his father—not to say his grandfather, was! But would you believe it! when I asked her *who* the man was, having a right to information concerning the person she was about to connect with the family, she told me she had never thought of inquiring. I pressed it upon her as a duty she owed to society; she told me she was content with the man himself, and was not going to ask him about his family. She would wait till they were married! Actually, on my word as a lady, she said so, Mr. Bevis! What could I do? She was of age, and independent fortune. And as to gratitude, I know the ways of the world too well to look for that."

"We old ones"—Mrs. Ramshorn bridled a little: she was only fifty-seven!—"have had our turn, and theirs is come," said the rector rather inconsequently.

"And a pretty mess they are like to make of it!—what with infidelity and blasphemy—I must say it—blasphemy!—Really you must do something, Mr. Bevis. Things have arrived at such a pass that, I give you my word, reflections not a few are made upon the rector for committing his flock to the care of such a wolf—a fox *I* call him."

"To-morrow I shall hear him preach," said the parson.

"Then I sincerely trust no one will give him warning of your intention: he is so clever, he would throw dust in any body's eyes."

The rector laughed. He had no overweening estimate of his

own abilities, but he did pride himself a little on his common sense.

"But," the lady went on, "in a place like this, where every body talks, I fear the chance is small against his hearing of your arrival. Anyhow I would not have you trust to one sermon. He will say just the opposite the next. He contradicts himself incredibly. Even in the same sermon I have heard him say things diametrically opposite."

"He can not have gone so far as to advocate the real presence: a rumor of that has reached me," said the rector.

"There it is!" cried Mrs. Ramshorn. "If you had asked me, I should have said he insisted the holy eucharist meant neither more nor less than any other meal to which some said a grace. The man has not an atom of consistency in his nature. He will say and unsay as fast as one sentence can follow the other, and if you tax him with it, he will support both sides: at least, that is my experience with him. I speak as I find him."

"What then would you have me do?" said the rector. "The straightforward way would doubtless be to go to him."

"You would, I fear, gain nothing by that. He is so specious! The only safe way is to dismiss him without giving a reason. Otherwise, he will certainly prove you in the wrong. Don't take my word. Get the opinion of your church-wardens. Every body knows he has made an atheist of poor Faber. It is sadder than I have words to say. He *was* such a gentlemanly fellow!"

The rector took his departure, and made a series of calls upon

those he judged the most influential of the congregation. He did not think to ask for what they were influential, or why he should go to them rather than the people of the alms-house. What he heard embarrassed him not a little. His friends spoke highly of Wingfold, his enemies otherwise: the character of his friends his judge did not attempt to weigh with that of his enemies, neither did he attempt to discover why these were his enemies and those his friends. No more did he make the observation, that, while his enemies differed in the things they said against him, his friends agreed in those they said for him; the fact being, that those who did as he roused their conscience to see they ought, more or less understood the man and his aims; while those who would not submit to the authority he brought to bear upon them, and yet tried to measure and explain him after the standards of their own being and endeavors, failed ludicrously. The churchwardens told him that, ever since he came, the curate had done nothing but set the congregation by the ears; and that he could not fail to receive as a weighty charge. But they told him also that some of the principal dissenters declared him to be a fountain of life in the place—and that seemed to him to involve the worst accusation of all. For, without going so far as to hold, or even say without meaning it, that dissenters ought to be burned, Mr. Bevis regarded it as one of the first of merits, that a man should be a *good churchman*.

CHAPTER IV

THE RECTORY

The curate had been in the study all the morning. Three times had his wife softly turned the handle of his door, but finding it locked, had re-turned the handle yet more softly, and departed noiselessly. Next time she knocked—and he came to her pale-eyed, but his face almost luminous, and a smile hovering about his lips: she knew then that either a battle had been fought amongst the hills, and he had won, or a thought-storm had been raging, through which at length had descended the meek-eyed Peace. She looked in his face for a moment with silent reverence, then offered her lips, took him by the hand, and, without a word, led him down the stair to their mid-day meal. When that was over, she made him lie down, and taking a novel, read him asleep. She woke him to an early tea—not, however, after it, to return to his study: in the drawing-room, beside his wife, he always got the germ of his discourse—his germon, he called it—ready for its growth in the pulpit. Now he lay on the couch, now rose and stood, now walked about the room, now threw himself again on the couch; while, all the time his wife played softly on her piano, extemporizing and interweaving, with an invention, taste,

and expression, of which before her marriage she had been quite incapable.

The text in his mind was, "*Ye can not serve God and Mammon*." But not once did he speak to his wife about it. He did not even tell her what his text was. Long ago he had given her to understand that he could not part with her as one of his congregation—could not therefore take her into his sermon before he met her in her hearing phase in church, with the rows of pews and faces betwixt him and her, making her once more one of his flock, the same into whose heart he had so often agonized to pour the words of rousing, of strength, of consolation.

On the Saturday, except his wife saw good reason, she would let no one trouble him, and almost the sole reason she counted good was trouble: if a person was troubled, then he might trouble. His friends knew this, and seldom came near him on a Saturday. But that evening, Mr. Drew, the draper, who, although a dissenter, was one of the curate's warmest friends, called late, when, he thought in his way of looking at sermons, that for the morrow must be now finished, and laid aside like a parcel for delivery the next morning. Helen went to him. He told her the rector was in the town, had called upon not a few of his parishioners, and doubtless was going to church in the morning.

"Thank you, Mr. Drew. I perfectly understand your kindness," said Mrs.

Wingfold, "but I shall not tell my husband to-night."

"Excuse the liberty, ma'am, but—but—do you think it well

for a wife to hide things from her husband?"

Helen laughed merrily.

"Assuredly not, as a rule," she replied. "But suppose I knew he would be vexed with me if I told him some particular thing? Suppose I know now that, when I do tell him on Monday, he will say to me, 'Thank you, wife. I am glad you kept that from me till I had done my work,'—what then?"

"All right *then*," answered the draper.

You see, Mr. Drew, we think married people should be so sure of each other that each should not only be content, but should prefer not to know what the other thinks it better not to tell. If my husband overheard any one calling me names, I don't think he would tell me. He knows, as well as I do, that I am not yet good enough to behave better to any one for knowing she hates and reviles me. It would be but to propagate the evil, and for my part too, I would rather not be told."

"I quite understand you, ma'am," answered the draper.

"I know you do," returned Helen, with emphasis.

Mr. Drew blushed to the top of his white forehead, while the lower part of his face, which in its forms was insignificant, blossomed into a smile as radiant as that of an infant. He knew Mrs. Wingfold was aware of the fact, known only to two or three beside in the town, that the lady, who for the last few months had been lodging in his house, was his own wife, who had forsaken him twenty years before. The man who during that time had passed for her husband, had been otherwise dishonest

as well, and had fled the country; she and her daughter, brought to absolute want, were received into his house by her forsaken husband; there they occupied the same chamber, the mother ordered every thing, and the daughter did not know that she paid for nothing. If the ways of transgressors are hard, those of a righteous man are not always easy. When Mr. Drew would now and then stop suddenly in the street, take off his hat and wipe his forehead, little people thought the round smiling face had such a secret behind it. Had they surmised a skeleton in his house, they would as little have suspected it masked in the handsome, well-dressed woman of little over forty, who, with her pretty daughter so tossy and airy, occupied his first floor, and was supposed to pay him handsomely for it.

The curate slept soundly, and woke in the morning eager to utter what he had.

CHAPTER V

THE ROAD TO OWLKIRK

Paul Faber fared otherwise. Hardly was he in bed before he was called out of it again. A messenger had come from Mrs. Puckridge to say that Miss Meredith was worse, and if the doctor did not start at once, she would be dead before he reached Owlkirk. He sent orders to his groom to saddle Niger and bring him round instantly, and hurried on his clothes, vexed that he had taken Ruber both in the morning and afternoon, and could not have him now. But Niger was a good horse also: if he was but two-thirds of Ruber's size, he was but one-third of his age, and saw better at night. On the other hand he was less easily seen, but the midnight there was so still and deserted, that that was of small consequence. In a few minutes they were out together in a lane as dark as pitch, compelled now to keep to the roads, for there was not light enough to see the pocket-compass by which the surgeon sometimes steered across country.

Could we learn what waking-dreams haunted the boyhood of a man, we should have a rare help toward understanding the character he has developed. Those of the young Faber were, almost exclusively, of playing the prince of help and deliverance

among women and men. Like most boys that dream, he dreamed himself rich and powerful, but the wealth and power were for the good of his fellow-creatures. If it must be confessed that he lingered most over the thanks and admiration he set to haunt his dream-steps, and hover about his dream-person, it must be remembered that he was the only real person in the dreams, and that he regarded lovingly the mere shadows of his fellow-men. His dreams were not of strength and destruction, but of influence and life. Even his revenges never-reached further than the making of his enemies ashamed.

It was the spirit of help, then, that had urged him into the profession he followed. He had found much dirt about the door of it, and had not been able to cross the threshold without some cleaving to his garments. He is a high-souled youth indeed, in whom the low regards and corrupt knowledge of his superiors will fail utterly of degrading influence; he must be one stronger than Faber who can listen to scoffing materialism from the lips of authority and experience, and not come to look upon humanity and life with a less reverent regard. What man can learn to look upon the dying as so much matter about to be rekneaded and remodeled into a fresh mass of feverous joys, futile aspirations, and stinging chagrins, without a self-contempt from which there is no shelter but the poor hope that we may be a little better than we appear to ourselves. But Faber escaped the worst. He did not learn to look on humanity without respect, or to meet the stare of appealing eyes from man or animal, without genuine response

—without sympathy. He never joined in any jest over suffering, not to say betted on the chance of the man who lay panting under the terrors of an impending operation. Can one be capable of such things, and not have sunk deep indeed in the putrid pit of decomposing humanity? It is true that before he began to practice, Faber had come to regard man as a body and not an embodiment, the highest in him as dependent on his physical organization—as indeed but the aroma, as it were, of its blossom the brain, therefore subject to *all* the vicissitudes of the human plant from which it rises; but he had been touched to issues too fine to be absolutely interpenetrated and inslaved by the reaction of accepted theories. His poetic nature, like the indwelling fire of the world, was ever ready to play havoc with induration and constriction, and the same moment when degrading influences ceased to operate, the delicacy of his feeling began to revive. Even at its lowest, this delicacy preserved him from much into which vulgar natures plunge; it kept alive the memory of a lovely mother; and fed the flame of that wondering, worshiping reverence for women which is the saviour of men until the Truth Himself saves both. A few years of worthy labor in his profession had done much to develop him, and his character for uprightness, benevolence, and skill, with the people of Glaston and its neighborhood, where he had been ministering only about a year, was already of the highest. Even now, when, in a fever of honesty, he declared there *could* be no God in such an ill-ordered world, so full was his heart of the human half of religion, that he

could not stand by the bedside of dying man or woman, without lamenting that there was no consolation—that stern truth would allow him to cast no feeblest glamour of hope upon the departing shadow. His was a nobler nature than theirs who, believing no more than he, are satisfied with the assurance that at the heart of the evils of the world lie laws unchangeable.

The main weak point in him was, that, while he was indeed tender-hearted, and did no kindnesses to be seen of men, he did them to be seen of himself: he saw him who did them all the time. The boy was in the man; doing his deeds he sought, not the approbation merely, but the admiration of his own consciousness. I am afraid to say this was *wrong*, but it was poor and childish, crippled his walk, and obstructed his higher development. He liked to *know* himself a benefactor. Such a man may well be of noble nature, but he is a mere dabbler in nobility. Faber delighted in the thought that, having repudiated all motives of personal interest involved in religious belief, all that regard for the future, with its rewards and punishments, which, in his ignorance, genuine or willful, of essential Christianity, he took for its main potence, he ministered to his neighbor, doing to him as he would have him do to himself, hopeless of any divine recognition, of any betterness beyond the grave, in a fashion at least as noble as that of the most devoted of Christians. It did not occur to him to ask if he loved him as well—if his care about him was equal to his satisfaction in himself. Neither did he reflect that the devotion he admired in himself had been

brought to the birth in him through others, in whom it was first generated by a fast belief in an unselfish, loving, self-devoting God. Had he inquired he might have discovered that this belief had carried some men immeasurably further in the help of their fellows, than he had yet gone. Indeed he might, I think, have found instances of men of faith spending their lives for their fellows, whose defective theology or diseased humility would not allow them to hope their own salvation. Inquiry might have given him ground for fearing that with the love of the *imagined* God, the love of the indubitable man would decay and vanish. But such as Faber was, he was both loved and honored by all whom he had ever attended; and, with his fine tastes, his genial nature, his quiet conscience, his good health, his enjoyment of life, his knowledge and love of his profession, his activity, his tender heart—especially to women and children, his keen intellect, and his devising though not embodying imagination, if any man could get on without a God, Faber was that man. He was now trying it, and as yet the trial had cost him no effort: he seemed to himself to be doing very well indeed. And why should he not do as well as the thousands, who counting themselves religious people, get through the business of the hour, the day, the week, the year, without one reference in any thing they do or abstain from doing, to the will of God, or the words of Christ? If he was more helpful to his fellows than they, he fared better; for actions in themselves good, however imperfect the motives that give rise to them, react blissfully upon character and nature. It is better to be an atheist

who does the will of God, than a so-called Christian who does not. The atheist will not be dismissed because he said *Lord, Lord,* and did not obey. The thing that God loves is the only lovely thing, and he who does it, does well, and is upon the way to discover that he does it very badly. When he comes to do it as the will of the perfect Good, then is he on the road to do it perfectly —that is, from love of its own inherent self-constituted goodness, born in the heart of the Perfect. The doing of things from duty is but a stage on the road to the kingdom of truth and love. Not the less must the stage be journeyed; every path diverging from it is "the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire."

It was with more than his usual zeal of helpfulness that Faber was now riding toward Owlkirk, to revisit his new patient. Could he have mistaken the symptoms of her attack?

CHAPTER VI

THE COTTAGE

Mrs. Puckridge was anxiously awaiting the doctor's arrival. She stood by the bedside of her lodger, miserable in her ignorance and consequent helplessness. The lady tossed and moaned, but for very pain could neither toss nor moan much, and breathed—panted, rather—very quick. Her color was white more than pale, and now and then she shivered from head to foot, but her eyes burned. Mrs. Puckridge kept bringing her hot flannels, and stood talking between the changes.

"I wish the doctor would come!—Them doctors!—I hope to goodness Dr. Faber wasn't out when the boy got to Glaston. Every body in this mortal universe always is out when he's wanted: that's *my* experience. You ain't so old as me, miss. And Dr. Faber, you see, miss, he be such a favorite as *have* to go out to his dinner not unfrequent. They may have to send miles to fetch him."

She talked in the vain hope of distracting the poor lady's attention from her suffering.

It was a little up stairs cottage-room, the corners betwixt the ceiling and the walls cut off by the slope of the roof. So dark was

the night, that, when Mrs. Puckridge carried the candle out of the room, the unshaded dormer window did not show itself even by a bluish glimmer. But light and dark were alike to her who lay in the little tent-bed, in the midst of whose white curtains, white coverlid, and white pillows, her large eyes, black as human eyes could ever be, were like wells of darkness throwing out flashes of strange light. Her hair too was dark, brown-black, of great plenty, and so fine that it seemed to go off in a mist on the whiteness. It had been her custom to throw it over the back of her bed, but in this old-fashioned one that was impossible, and it lay, in loveliest confusion, scattered here and there over pillow and coverlid, as if the wind had been tossing it all a long night at his will. Some of it had strayed more than half way to the foot of the bed. Her face, distorted almost though it was with distress, showed yet a regularity of feature rarely to be seen in combination with such evident power of expression. Suffering had not yet flattened the delicate roundness of her cheek, or sharpened the angles of her chin. In her whiteness, and her constrained, pang-thwarted motions from side to side, she looked like a form of marble in the agonies of coming to life at the prayer of some Pygmalion. In throwing out her arms, she had flung back the bedclothes, and her daintily embroidered night-gown revealed a rather large, grand throat, of the same rare whiteness. Her hands were perfect —every finger and every nail—

Those fine[1] nimble brethren small,
Armed with pearl-shell helmets all.

When Mrs. Puckridge came into the room, she always set her candle on the sill of the storm-window: it was there, happily, when the doctor drew near the village, and it guided him to the cottage-gate. He fastened Niger to the gate, crossed the little garden, gently lifted the door-latch, and ascended the stair. He found the door of the chamber open, signed to Mrs. Puckridge to be still, softly approached the bed, and stood gazing in silence on the sufferer, who lay at the moment apparently unconscious. But suddenly, as if she had become aware of a presence, she flashed wide her great eyes, and the pitiful entreaty that came into them when she saw him, went straight to his heart. Faber felt more for the sufferings of some of the lower animals than for certain of his patients; but children and women he would serve like a slave. The dumb appeal of her eyes almost unmanned him.

"I am sorry to see you so ill," he said, as he took her wrist. "You are in pain: where?"

Her other hand moved toward her side in reply. Every thing indicated pleurisy—such that there was no longer room for gentle measures. She must be relieved at once: he must open a vein. In the changed practice of later days, it had seldom fallen to the lot of Faber to perform the very simple operation of venesection,

[1] *Joshua Sylvester*. I suspect the word ought to be *five*, not *fine*, as my copy (1613) has it.

but that had little to do with the trembling of the hands which annoyed him with himself, when he proceeded to undo a sleeve of his patient's nightdress. Finding no button, he took a pair of scissors from his pocket, cut ruthlessly through linen and lace, and rolled back the sleeve. It disclosed an arm the sight of which would have made a sculptor rejoice as over some marbles of old Greece. I can not describe it, and if I could, for very love and reverence I would rather let it alone. Faber felt his heart rise in his throat at the necessity of breaking that exquisite surface with even such an insignificant breach and blemish as the shining steel betwixt his forefinger and thumb must occasion. But a slight tremble of the hand he held acknowledged the intruding sharpness, and then the red parabola rose from the golden bowl. He stroked the lovely arm to help its flow, and soon the girl once more opened her eyes and looked at him. Already her breathing was easier. But presently her eyes began to glaze with approaching faintness, and he put his thumb on the wound. She smiled and closed them. He bound up her arm, laid it gently by her side, gave her something to drink, and sat down. He sat until he saw her sunk in a quiet, gentle sleep: ease had dethroned pain, and order had begun to dawn out of threatened chaos.

"Thank God!" he said, involuntarily, and stood up: what all that meant, God only knows.

After various directions to Mrs. Puckridge, to which she seemed to attend, but which, being as simple as necessary, I fear she forgot the moment they were uttered, the doctor mounted,

and rode away. The darkness was gone, for the moon was rising, but when the road compelled him to face her, she blinded him nearly as much. Slowly she rose through a sky freckled with wavelets of cloud, and as she crept up amongst them she brought them all out, in bluish, pearly, and opaline gray. Then, suddenly almost, as it seemed, she left them, and walked up aloft, drawing a thin veil around her as she ascended. All was so soft, so sleepy, so vague, it seemed to Paul as he rode slowly along, himself almost asleep, as if the Night had lost the blood he had caused to flow, and the sweet exhaustion that followed had from the lady's brain wandered out over Nature herself, as she sank, a lovelier Katadyomene, into the hushed sea of pain-won repose.

Was he in love with her? I do not know. I could tell, if I knew what being in love is. I think no two loves were ever the same since the creation of the world. I know that something had passed from her eyes to his—but what? He may have been in love with her already; but ere long my reader may be more sure than I that he was not. The Maker of men alone understands His awful mystery between the man and the woman. But without it, frightful indeed as are some of its results, assuredly the world He has made would burst its binding rings and fly asunder in shards, leaving His spirit nothing to enter, no time to work His lovely will.

It must be to any man a terrible thing to find himself in wild pain, with no God of whom to entreat that his soul may not faint within him; but to a man who can think as well as feel, it were

a more terrible thing still, to find himself afloat on the tide of a lovely passion, with no God to whom to cry, accountable to Himself for that which He has made. Will any man who has ever cast more than a glance into the mysteries of his being, dare think himself sufficient to the ruling of his nature? And if he rule it not, what shall he be but the sport of the demons that will ride its tempests, that will rouse and torment its ocean? What help then is there? What high-hearted man would consent to be possessed and sweetly ruled by the loveliest of angels? Truly it were but a daintier madness. Come thou, holy Love, father of my spirit, nearer to the unknown deeper me than my consciousness is to its known self, possess me utterly, for thou art more me than I am myself. Rule thou. Then first I rule. Shadow me from the too radiant splendors of thy own creative thought. Folded in thy calm, I shall love, and not die. And ye, women, be the daughters of Him from whose heart came your mothers; be the saviours of men, and neither their torment nor their prey!

CHAPTER VII

THE PULPIT

Before morning it rained hard again; but it cleared at sunrise, and the first day of the week found the world new-washed. Glaston slept longer than usual, however, for all the shine, and in the mounting sun looked dead and deserted. There were no gay shop-windows to reflect his beams, or fill them with rainbow colors. There were no carriages or carts, and only, for a few moments, one rider. That was Paul Faber again, on Ruber now, aglow in the morning. There were no children playing yet about the streets or lanes; but the cries of some came at intervals from unseen chambers, as the Sunday soap stung their eyes, or the Sunday comb tore their matted locks.

As Faber rode out of his stable-yard, Wingfold took his hat from its peg, to walk through his churchyard. He lived almost in the churchyard, for, happily, since his marriage the rectory had lost its tenants, and Mr. Bevis had allowed him to occupy it, in lieu of part of his salary. It was not yet church-time by hours, but he had a custom of going every Sunday morning, in the fine weather, quite early, to sit for an hour or two alone in the pulpit, amidst the absolute solitude and silence of the great church. It

was a door, he said, through which a man who could not go to Horeb, might enter and find the power that dwells on mountain-tops and in desert places.

He went slowly through the churchyard, breathing deep breaths of the delicious spring-morning air. Rain-drops were sparkling all over the grassy graves, and in the hollows of the stones they had gathered in pools. The eyes of the death-heads were full of water, as if weeping at the defeat of their master. Every now and then a soft little wind awoke, like a throb of the spirit of life, and shook together the scattered drops upon the trees, and then down came diamond showers on the grass and daisies of the mounds, and fed the green moss in the letters of the epitaphs. Over all the sun was shining, as if everywhere and forever spring was the order of things. And is it not so? Is not the idea of the creation an eternal spring ever trembling on the verge of summer? It seemed so to the curate, who was not given to sad, still less to sentimental moralizing over the graves. From such moods his heart recoiled. To him they were weak and mawkish, and in him they would have been treacherous. No grave was to him the place where a friend was lying; it was but a cenotaph—the place where the Lord had lain.

"Let those possessed with demons haunt the tombs," he said, as he sat down in the pulpit; "for me, I will turn my back upon them with the risen Christ. Yes, friend, I hear you! I know what you say! You have more affection than I? you can not forsake the last resting-place of the beloved? Well, you may have more

feeling than I; there is no gauge by which I can tell, and if there were, it would be useless: we are as God made us.—No, I will not say that: I will say rather, I am as God is making me, and I shall one day be as He has made me. Meantime I know that He will have me love my enemy tenfold more than now I love my friend. Thou believest that the malefactor—ah, there was faith now! Of two men dying together in agony and shame, the one beseeches of the other the grace of a king! Thou believest, I say —at least thou professest to believe that the malefactor was that very day with Jesus in Paradise, and yet thou broodest over thy friend's grave, gathering thy thoughts about the pitiful garment he left behind him, and letting himself drift away into the unknown, forsaken of all but thy vaguest, most shapeless thinkings! Tell me not thou fearest to enter there whence has issued no revealing. It is God who gives thee thy mirror of imagination, and if thou keep it clean, it will give thee back no shadow but of the truth. Never a cry of love went forth from human heart but it found some heavenly chord to fold it in. Be sure thy friend inhabits a day not out of harmony with this morning of earthly spring, with this sunlight, those rain-drops, that sweet wind that flows so softly over his grave."

It was the first sprouting of a *germon*. He covered it up and left it: he had something else to talk to his people about this morning.

While he sat thus in the pulpit, his wife was praying for him ere she rose. She had not learned to love him in the vestibule of society, that court of the Gentiles, but in the chamber of

torture and the clouded adytum of her own spiritual temple. For there a dark vapor had hid the deity enthroned, until the words of His servant melted the gloom. Then she saw that what she had taken for her own innermost chamber of awful void, was the dwelling-place of the most high, most lovely, only One, and through its windows she beheld a cosmos dawning out of chaos. Therefore the wife walked beside the husband in the strength of a common faith in absolute Good; and not seldom did the fire which the torch of his prophecy had kindled upon her altar, kindle again that torch, when some bitter wind of evil words, or mephitis of human perversity, or thunder-rain of foiled charity, had extinguished it. She loved every hair upon his head, but loved his well-being infinitely more than his mortal life. A wrinkle on his forehead would cause her a pang, yet would she a thousand times rather have seen him dead than known him guilty of one of many things done openly by not a few of his profession.

And now, as one sometimes wonders what he shall dream to-night, she sat wondering what new thing, or what old thing fresher and more alive than the new, would this day flow from his heart into hers. The following is the substance of what, a few hours after, she did hear from him. His rector, sitting between Mrs. Bevis and Mrs. Ramshorn, heard it also. The radiance of truth shone from Wingfold's face as he spoke, and those of the congregation who turned away from his words were those whose lives ran counter to the spirit of them. Whatever he uttered grew out of a whole world of thought, but it grew before them—that

is, he always thought afresh in the presence of the people, and spoke extempore.

"'*Ye can not serve God and mammon*.'

"Who said this? The Lord by whose name ye are called, in whose name this house was built, and who will at last judge every one of us. And yet how many of you are, and have been for years, trying your very hardest to do the thing your Master tells you is impossible! Thou man! Thou woman! I appeal to thine own conscience whether thou art not striving to serve God and mammon.

"But stay! am I right?—It can not be. For surely if a man strove hard to serve God and mammon, he would presently discover the thing was impossible. It is not easy to serve God, and it is easy to serve mammon; if one strove to serve God, the hard thing, along with serving mammon, the easy thing, the incompatibility of the two endeavors must appear. The fact is there is no strife in you. With ease you serve mammon every day and hour of your lives, and for God, you do not even ask yourselves the question whether you are serving Him or no. Yet some of you are at this very moment indignant that I call you servers of mammon. Those of you who know that God knows you are His servants, know also that I do not mean you; therefore, those who are indignant at being called the servants of mammon, are so because they are indeed such. As I say these words I do not lift my eyes, not that I am afraid to look you in the face, as uttering an offensive thing, but that I would have your own souls your accusers.

"Let us consider for a moment the God you do not serve, and then for a moment the mammon you do serve. The God you do not serve is the Father of Lights, the Source of love, the Maker of man and woman, the Head of the great family, the Father of fatherhood and motherhood; the Life-giver who would die to preserve His children, but would rather slay them than they should live the servants of evil; the God who can neither think nor do nor endure any thing mean or unfair; the God of poetry and music and every marvel; the God of the mountain tops, and the rivers that run from the snows of death, to make the earth joyous with life; the God of the valley and the wheat-field, the God who has set love betwixt youth and maiden; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect; the God whom Christ knew, with whom Christ was satisfied, of whom He declared that to know Him was eternal life. The mammon you do serve is not a mere negation, but a positive Death. His temple is a darkness, a black hollow, ever hungry, in the heart of man, who tumbles into it every thing that should make life noble and lovely. To all who serve him he makes it seem that his alone is the reasonable service. His wages are death, but he calls them life, and they believe him. I will tell you some of the marks of his service—a few of the badges of his household—for he has no visible temple; no man bends the knee to him; it is only his soul, his manhood, that the worshiper casts in the dust before him. If a man talks of the main chance, meaning thereby that of making money, or of number one, meaning thereby self,

except indeed he honestly jest, he is a servant of mammon. If, when thou makest a bargain, thou thinkest *only* of thyself and thy gain, though art a servant of mammon. The eager looks of those that would get money, the troubled looks of those who have lost it, worst of all the gloating looks of them that have it, these are sure signs of the service of mammon. If in the church thou sayest to the rich man, 'Sit here in a good place,' and to the poor man, 'Stand there,' thou art a mammon-server. If thou favorest the company of those whom men call well-to-do, when they are only well-to-eat, well-to-drink, or well-to-show, and declinest that of the simple and the meek, then in thy deepest consciousness know that thou servest mammon, not God. If thy hope of well-being in time to come, rests upon thy houses, or lands, or business, or money in store, and not upon the living God, be thou friendly and kind with the overflowings of thy possessions, or a churl whom no man loves, thou art equally a server of mammon. If the loss of thy goods would take from thee the joy of thy life; if it would tear thy heart that the men thou hadst feasted should hold forth to thee the two fingers instead of the whole hand; nay, if thy thought of to-morrow makes thee quail before the duty of to-day, if thou broodest over the evil that is not come, and turnest from the God who is with thee in the life of the hour, thou servest mammon; he holds thee in his chain; thou art his ape, whom he leads about the world for the mockery of his fellow-devils. If with thy word, yea, even with thy judgment, thou confessest that God is the only good, yet livest as if He had sent thee into the world to make

thyself rich before thou die; if it will add one feeblest pang to the pains of thy death, to think that thou must leave thy fair house, thy ancestral trees, thy horses, thy shop, thy books, behind thee, then art thou a servant of mammon, and far truer to thy master than he will prove to thee. Ah, slave! the moment the breath is out of the body, lo, he has already deserted thee! and of all in which thou didst rejoice, all that gave thee such power over thy fellows, there is not left so much as a spike of thistle-down for the wind to waft from thy sight. For all thou hast had, there is nothing to show. Where is the friendship in which thou mightst have invested thy money, in place of burying it in the maw of mammon? Troops of the dead might now be coming to greet thee with love and service, hadst thou made thee friends with thy money; but, alas! to thee it was not money, but mammon, for thou didst love it—not for the righteousness and salvation thou by its means mightst work in the earth, but for the honor it brought thee among men, for the pleasures and immunities it purchased. Some of you are saying in your hearts, 'Preach to thyself, and practice thine own preaching;'—and you say well. And so I mean to do, lest having preached to others I should be myself a cast-away—drowned with some of you in the same pond of filth. God has put money in my power through the gift of one whom you know. I shall endeavor to be a faithful steward of that which God through her has committed to me in trust. Hear me, friends—to none of you am I the less a friend that I tell you truths you would hide from your own souls: money is not

mammon; it is God's invention; it is good and the gift of God. But for money and the need of it, there would not be half the friendship in the world. It is powerful for good when divinely used. Give it plenty of air, and it is sweet as the hawthorn; shut it up, and it cankers and breeds worms. Like all the best gifts of God, like the air and the water, it must have motion and change and shakings asunder; like the earth itself, like the heart and mind of man, it must be broken and turned, not heaped together and neglected. It is an angel of mercy, whose wings are full of balm and dews and refreshings; but when you lay hold of him, pluck his pinions, pen him in a yard, and fall down and worship him—then, with the blessed vengeance of his master, he deals plague and confusion and terror, to stay the idolatry. If I misuse or waste or hoard the divine thing, I pray my Master to see to it—my God to punish me. Any fire rather than be given over to the mean idol! And now I will make an offer to my townsfolk in the face of this congregation—that, whoever will, at the end of three years, bring me his books, to him also will I lay open mine, that he will see how I have sought to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. Of the mammon-server I expect to be judged according to the light that is in him, and that light I know to be darkness.

"Friend, be not a slave. Be wary. Look not on the gold when it is yellow in thy purse. Hoard not. In God's name, spend—spend on. Take heed how thou spendest, but take heed that thou spend. Be thou as the sun in heaven; let thy gold be thy rays, thy angels

of love and life and deliverance. Be thou a candle of the Lord to spread His light through the world. If hitherto, in any fashion of faithlessness, thou hast radiated darkness into the universe, humble thyself, and arise and shine.

"But if thou art poor, then look not on thy purse when it is empty. He who desires more than God wills him to have, is also a servant of mammon, for he trusts in what God has made, and not in God Himself. He who laments what God has taken from him, he is a servant of mammon. He who for care can not pray, is a servant of mammon. There are men in this town who love and trust their horses more than the God that made them and their horses too. None the less confidently will they give judgment on the doctrine of God. But the opinion of no man who does not render back his soul to the living God and live in Him, is, in religion, worth the splinter of a straw. Friends, cast your idol into the furnace; melt your mammon down, coin him up, make God's money of him, and send him coursing. Make of him cups to carry the gift of God, the water of life, through the world —in lovely justice to the oppressed, in healthful labor to them whom no man hath hired, in rest to the weary who have borne the burden and heat of the day, in joy to the heavy-hearted, in laughter to the dull-spirited. Let them all be glad with reason, and merry without revel. Ah! what gifts in music, in drama, in the tale, in the picture, in the spectacle, in books and models, in flowers and friendly feasting, what true gifts might not the mammon of unrighteousness, changed back into the money of

God, give to men and women, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh! How would you not spend your money for the Lord, if He needed it at your hand! He does need it; for he that spends it upon the least of his fellows, spends it upon his Lord. To hold fast upon God with one hand, and open wide the other to your neighbor—that is religion; that is the law and the prophets, and the true way to all better things that are yet to come.—Lord, defend us from Mammon. Hold Thy temple against his foul invasion. Purify our money with Thy air, and Thy sun, that it may be our slave, and Thou our Master. Amen."

The moment his sermon was ended, the curate always set himself to forget it. This for three reasons: first, he was so dissatisfied with it, that to think of it was painful—and the more, that many things he might have said, and many better ways of saying what he had said, would constantly present themselves. Second, it was useless to brood over what could not be bettered; and, third, it was hurtful, inasmuch as it prevented the growth of new, hopeful, invigorating thought, and took from his strength, and the quality of his following endeavor. A man's labors must pass like the sunrises and sunsets of the world. The next thing, not the last, must be his care. When he reached home, he would therefore use means to this end of diversion, and not unfrequently would write verses. Here are those he wrote that afternoon.

LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE

Sometimes, O Lord, thou lightest in my head
A lamp that well might Pharos all the lands;
Anon the light will neither burn nor spread
Shrouded in danger gray the beacon stands.

A Pharos? Oh, dull brain! Oh, poor quenched lamp,
Under a bushel, with an earthy smell!
Moldering it lies, in rust and eating damp,
While the slow oil keeps oozing from its cell!

For me it were enough to be a flower
Knowing its root in thee was somewhere hid—
To blossom at the far appointed hour,
And fold in sleep when thou, my Nature, bid.

But hear my brethren crying in the dark!
Light up my lamp that it may shine abroad.
Fain would I cry—See, brothers! sisters, mark!
This is the shining of light's father, God.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MANOR HOUSE DINING-ROOM

The rector never took his eyes off the preacher, but the preacher never saw him. The reason was that he dared not let his eyes wander in the direction of Mrs. Ramshorn; he was not yet so near perfection but that the sight of her supercilious, unbelieving face, was a reviving cordial to the old Adam, whom he was so anxious to poison with love and prayer. Church over, the rector walked in silence, between the two ladies, to the Manor House. He courted no greetings from the sheep of his neglected flock as he went, and returned those offered with a constrained solemnity. The moment they stood in the hall together, and before the servant who had opened the door to them had quite disappeared, Mrs. Ramshorn, to the indignant consternation of Mrs. Bevis, who was utterly forgotten by both in the colloquy that ensued, turned sharp on the rector, and said,

"There! what do you say to your curate now?"

"He *is* enough to set the whole parish by the ears," he answered.

"I told you so, Mr. Bevis!"

"Only it does not follow that therefore he is in the wrong. Our

Lord Himself came not to send peace on earth but a sword."

"Irreverence ill becomes a beneficed clergyman, Mr. Bevis," said Mrs. Ramshorn—who very consistently regarded any practical reference to our Lord as irrelevant, thence naturally as irreverent.

"And, by Jove!" added the rector, heedless of her remark, and tumbling back into an old college-habit, "I fear he is in the right; and if he is, it will go hard with you and me at the last day, Mrs. Ramshorn."

"Do you mean to say you are going to let that man turn every thing topsy-turvy, and the congregation out of the church, John Bevis?"

"I never saw such a congregation in it before, Mrs. Ramshorn."

"It's little better than a low-bred conventicle now, and what it will come to, if things go on like this, God knows."

"That ought to be a comfort," said the rector. "But I hardly know yet where I am. The fellow has knocked the wind out of me with his personalities, and I haven't got my breath yet. Have you a bottle of sherry open?"

Mrs. Ramshorn led the way to the dining-room, where the early Sunday dinner was already laid, and the decanters stood on the sideboard. The rector poured himself out a large glass of sherry, and drank it off in three mouthfuls.

"Such buffoonery! such coarseness! such vulgarity! such indelicacy!" cried Mrs. Ramshorn, while the parson was still occupied with the sherry. "Not content with talking about

himself in the pulpit, he must even talk about his wife! What's he or his wife in the house of God? When his gown is on, a clergyman is neither Mr. This nor Mr. That any longer, but a priest of the Church of England, as by law established. My poor Helen! She has thrown herself away upon a charlatan! And what will become of her money in the hands of a man with such leveling notions, I dread to think."

"He said something about buying friends with it," said the rector.

"Bribery and corruption must come natural to a fellow who could preach a sermon like that after marrying money!"

"Why, my good madam, would you have a man turn his back on a girl because she has a purse in her pocket?"

"But to pretend to despise it! And then, worst of all! I don't know whether the indelicacy or the profanity was the greater!—when I think of it now, I can scarcely believe I really heard it!—to offer to show his books to every inquisitive fool itching to know *my* niece's fortune! Well, she shan't see a penny of mine—that I'm determined on."

"You need not be uneasy about the books, Mrs. Ramshorn. You remember the condition annexed?"

"Stuff and hypocrisy! He's played his game well! But time will show."

Mr. Bevis checked his answer. He was beginning to get disgusted with the old cat, as he called her to himself.

He too had made a good speculation in the hymeneo-money-

market, otherwise he could hardly have afforded to give up the exercise of his profession. Mrs. Bevis had brought him the nice little property at Owlkirk, where, if he worshiped mammon—and after his curate's sermon he was not at all sure he did not—he worshiped him in a very moderate and gentlemanly fashion. Every body liked the rector, and two or three loved him a little. If it would be a stretch of the truth to call a man a Christian who never yet in his life had consciously done a thing because it was commanded by Christ, he was not therefore a godless man; while, through the age-long process of spiritual infiltration, he had received and retained much that was Christian.

The ladies went to take off their bonnets, and their departure was a relief to the rector. He helped himself to another glass of sherry, and seated himself in the great easy chair formerly approved of the dean, long promoted. But what are easy chairs to uneasy men? Dinner, however, was at hand, and that would make a diversion in favor of less disquieting thought.

Mrs. Ramshorn, also, was uncomfortable—too much so to be relieved by taking off her bonnet. She felt, with no little soreness, that the rector was not with her in her depreciation of Wingfold. She did her best to play the hostess, but the rector, while enjoying his dinner despite discomfort in the inward parts, was in a mood of silence altogether new both to himself and his companions. Mrs. Bevis, however, talked away in a soft, continuous murmur. She was a good-natured, gentle soul, without whose sort the world would be harder for many. She did not contribute much

to its positive enjoyment, but for my part, I can not help being grateful even to a cat that will condescend to purr to me. But she had not much mollifying influence on her hostess, who snarled, and judged, and condemned, nor seemed to enjoy her dinner the less. When it was over, the ladies went to the drawing-room; and the rector, finding his company unpleasant, drank but a week-day's allowance of wine, and went to have a look at his horses.

They neighed a welcome the moment his boot struck the stones of the yard, for they loved their master with all the love their strong, timid, patient hearts were as yet capable of. Satisfied that they were comfortable, for he found them busy with a large feed of oats and chaff and Indian corn, he threw his arm over the back of his favorite, and stood, leaning against her for minutes, half dreaming, half thinking. As long as they were busy, their munching and grinding soothed him—held him at least in quiescent mood; the moment it ceased, he seemed to himself to wake up out of a dream. In that dream, however, he had been more awake than any hour for long years, and had heard and seen many things. He patted his mare lovingly, then, with a faint sense of rebuked injustice, went into the horse's stall, and patted and stroked him as he had never done before.

He went into the inn, and asked for a cup of tea. He would have had a sleep on Mrs. Pinks's sofa, as was his custom in his study—little study, alas, went on there!—but he had a call to make, and must rouse himself, and that was partly why he had sought the inn. For Mrs. Ramshorn's household was so well ordered that

nothing was to be had out of the usual routine. It was like an American country inn, where, if you arrive after supper, you will most likely have to starve till next morning. Her servants, in fact, were her masters, and she dared not go into her own kitchen for a jug of hot water. Possibly it was her dethronement in her own house that made her, with a futile clutching after lost respect, so anxious to rule in the abbey church. As it was, although John Bevis and she had known each other long, and in some poor sense intimately, he would never in her house have dared ask for a cup of tea except it were on the table. But here was the ease of his inn, where the landlady herself was proud to get him what he wanted. She made the tea from her own caddy; and when he had drunk three cups of it, washed his red face, and re-tied his white neck-cloth, he set out to make his call.

CHAPTER IX

THE RECTORY DRAWING-ROOM

The call was upon his curate. It was years since he had entered the rectory. The people who last occupied it, he had scarcely known, and even during its preparation for Wingfold he had not gone near the place. Yet of that house had been his dream as he stood in his mare's stall, and it was with a strange feeling he now approached it. Friends generally took the pleasanter way to the garden door, opening on the churchyard, but Mr. Bevis went round by the lane to the more public entrance.

All his years with his first wife had been spent in that house. She was delicate when he married her, and soon grew sickly and suffering. One after another her children died as babies. At last came one who lived, and then the mother began to die. She was one of those lowly women who apply the severity born of their creed to themselves, and spend only the love born of the indwelling Spirit upon their neighbors. She was rather melancholy, but hoped as much as she could, and when she could not hope did not stand still, but walked on in the dark. I think when the sun rises upon them, some people will be astonished to find how far they have got in the dark.

Her husband, without verifying for himself one of the things it was his business to teach others, was yet held in some sort of communion with sacred things by his love for his suffering wife, and his admiration of her goodness and gentleness. He had looked up to her, though several years younger than himself, with something of the same reverence with which he had regarded his mother, a women with an element of greatness in her. It was not possible he should ever have adopted her views, or in any active manner allied himself with the school whose doctrines she accepted as the logical embodiment of the gospel, but there was in him all the time a vague something that was not far from the kingdom of heaven. Some of his wife's friends looked upon him as a wolf in the sheepfold; he was no wolf, he was only a hireling. Any neighborhood might have been the better for having such a man as he for the parson of the parish—only, for one commissioned to be in the world as he was in the world!—why he knew more about the will of God as to a horse's legs, than as to the heart of a man. As he drew near the house, the older and tenderer time came to meet him, and the spirit of his suffering, ministering wife seemed to overshadow him. Two tears grew half-way into his eyes:—they were a little bloodshot, but kind, true eyes. He was not sorry he had married again, for he and his wife were at peace with each other, but he had found that the same part of his mind would not serve to think of the two: they belonged to different zones of his unexplored world. For one thing, his present wife looked up to him with perfect admiration,

and he, knowing his own poverty, rather looked down upon her in consequence, though in a loving, gentle, and gentlemanlike way.

He was shown into the same room, looking out on the churchyard, where in the first months of his married life, he sat and heard his wife sing her few songs, accompanying them on the little piano he had saved hard to buy for her, until she made him love them. It had lasted only through those few months; after her first baby died, she rarely sang. But all the colors and forms of the room were different, and that made it easier to check the lump rising in his throat. It was the faith of his curate that had thus set his wife before him, although the two would hardly have agreed in any confession narrower than the Apostles' creed.

When Wingfold entered the room, the rector rose, went halfway to meet him, and shook hands with him heartily. They seated themselves, and a short silence followed. But the rector knew it was his part to speak.

"I was in church this morning," he said, with a half-humorous glance right into the clear gray eyes of his curate.

"So my wife tells me," returned Wingfold with a smile.

"You didn't know it then?" rejoined the rector, with now an almost quizzical glance, in which hovered a little doubt. "I thought you were preaching at me all the time."

"God forbid!" said the curate; "I was not aware of your presence. I did not even know you were in the town yesterday."

"You must have had some one in your mind's eye. No man could speak as you did this morning, who addressed mere

abstract humanity."

"I will not say that individuals did not come up before me; how can a man help it where he knows every body in his congregation more or less? But I give you my word, sir, I never thought of you."

"Then you might have done so with the greatest propriety," returned the rector. "My conscience sided with you all the time. You found me out. I've got a bit of the muscle they call a heart left in me yet, though it *has* got rather leathery.—But what do they mean when they say you are setting the parish by the ears?"

"I don't know, sir. I have heard of no quarreling. I have made some enemies, but they are not very dangerous, and I hope not very bitter ones; and I have made many more friends, I am sure."

"What they tell me is, that your congregation is divided—that they take sides for and against you, which is a most undesirable thing, surely!"

"It is indeed; and yet it may be a thing that, for a time, can not be helped. Was there ever a man with the cure of souls, concerning whom there has not been more or less of such division? But, if you will have patience with me, sir, I am bold to say, believing in the force and final victory of the truth, there will be more unity by and by."

"I don't doubt it. But come now!—you are a thoroughly good fellow—that, a blind horse could see in the dimmits—and I'm accountable for the parish—couldn't you draw it a little milder, you know? couldn't you make it just a little less peculiar—only the way of putting it, I mean—so that it should look a little more

like what they have been used to? I'm only suggesting the thing, you know—dictating nothing, on my soul, Mr. Wingfold. I am sure that, whatever you do, you will act according to your own conscience, otherwise I should not venture to say a word, lest I should lead you wrong."

"If you will allow me," said the curate, "I will tell you my whole story; and then if you should wish it, I will resign my curacy, without saying a word more than that my rector thinks it better. Neither in private shall I make a single remark in a different spirit."

"Let me hear," said the rector.

"Then if you will please take this chair, that I may know that I am not wearying you bodily at least."

The rector did as he was requested, laid his head back, crossed his legs, and folded his hands over his worn waist-coat: he was not one of the neat order of parsons; he had a not unwholesome disregard of his outermost man, and did not know when he was shabby. Without an atom of pomposity or air rectorial, he settled himself to listen.

Condensing as much as he could, Wingfold told him how through great doubt, and dismal trouble of mind, he had come to hope in God, and to see that there was no choice for a man but to give himself, heart, and soul, and body, to the love, and will, and care of the Being who had made him. He could no longer, he said, regard his profession as any thing less than a call to use every means and energy at his command for the rousing of men

and women from that spiritual sleep and moral carelessness in which he had himself been so lately sunk.

"I don't want to give up my curacy," he concluded. "Still less do I want to leave Glaston, for there are here some whom I teach and some who teach me. In all that has given ground for complaint, I have seemed to myself to be but following the dictates of common sense; if you think me wrong, I have no justification to offer. We both love God,–"

"How do you know that?" interrupted the rector. "I wish you could make me sure of that."

"I do, I know I do," said the curate earnestly. "I can say no more."

"My dear fellow, I haven't the merest shadow of a doubt of it," returned the rector, smiling. "What I wished was, that you could make me sure *I* do."

"Pardon me, my dear sir, but, judging from sore experience, if I could I would rather make you doubt it; the doubt, even if an utter mistake, would in the end be so much more profitable than any present conviction."

"You have your wish, then, Wingfold: I doubt it very much," replied the rector. "I must go home and think about it all. You shall hear from me in a day or two."

As he spoke Mr. Bevis rose, and stood for a moment like a man greatly urged to stretch his arms and legs. An air of uneasiness pervaded his whole appearance.

"Will you not stop and take tea with us?" said the curate. "My

wife will be disappointed if you do not. You have been good to her for twenty years, she says."

"She makes an old man of me," returned the rector musingly. "I remember her such a tiny thing in a white frock and curls. Tell her what we have been talking about, and beg her to excuse me. I *must* go home."

He took his hat from the table, shook hands with Wingfold, and walked back to the inn. There he found his horses bedded, and the hostler away. His coachman was gone too, nobody knew whither.

To sleep at the inn would have given pointed offense, but he would rather have done so than go back to the Manor House to hear his curate abused. With the help of the barmaid, he put the horses to the carriage himself, and to the astonishment of Mrs. Ramshorn and his wife, drew up at the door of the Manor House.

Expostulation on the part of the former was vain. The latter made none: it was much the same to Mrs. Bevis where she was, so long as she was with her husband. Indeed few things were more pleasant to her than sitting in the carriage alone, contemplating the back of Mr. Bevis on the box, and the motion of his elbows as he drove. Mrs. Ramshorn received their adieux very stiffly, and never after mentioned the rector without adding the epithet, "poor man!"

Mrs. Bevis enjoyed the drive; Mr. Bevis did not. The doubt was growing stronger and stronger all the way, that he had not behaved like a gentleman in his relation to the head of the church.

He had naturally, as I have already shown, a fine, honorable, boyish if not childlike nature; and the eyes of his mind were not so dim with good living as one might have feared from the look of those in his head: in the glass of loyalty he now saw himself a defaulter; in the scales of honor he weighed and found himself wanting. Of true discipleship was not now the question: he had not behaved like an honorable gentleman to Jesus Christ. It was only in a spasm of terror St. Peter had denied him: John Bevis had for nigh forty years been taking his pay, and for the last thirty at least had done nothing in return. Either Jesus Christ did not care, and then what was the church?—what the whole system of things called Christianity?—or he did care, and what then was John Bevis in the eyes of his Master? When they reached home, he went neither to the stable nor the study, but, without even lighting a cigar, walked out on the neighboring heath, where he found the universe rather gray about him. When he returned he tried to behave as usual, but his wife saw that he scarcely ate at supper, and left half of his brandy and water. She set it down to the annoyance the curate had caused him, and wisely forbore troubling him with questions.

CHAPTER X

MR. DRAKE'S ARBOR

While the curate was preaching that same Sunday morning, in the cool cavernous church, with its great lights overhead, Walter Drake—the old minister, he was now called by his disloyal congregation—sat in a little arbor looking out on the river that flowed through the town to the sea. Green grass went down from where he sat to the very water's brink. It was a spot the old man loved, for there his best thoughts came to him. There was in him a good deal of the stuff of which poets are made, and since trouble overtook him, the river had more and more gathered to itself the aspect of that in the Pilgrim's Progress; and often, as he sat thus almost on its edge, he fancied himself waiting the welcome summoms to go home. It was a tidal river, with many changes. Now it flowed with a full, calm current, conquering the tide, like life sweeping death with it down into the bosom of the eternal. Now it seemed to stand still, as if aghast at the inroad of the awful thing; and then the minister would bethink himself that it was the tide of the eternal rising in the narrow earthly channel: men, he said to himself, called it *death*, because they did not know what it was, or the loveliness of its quickening energy. It fails on

their sense by the might of its grand excess, and they call it by the name of its opposite. A weary and rather disappointed pilgrim, he thus comforted himself as he sat.

There a great salmon rose and fell, gleaming like a bolt of silver in the sun! There a little waterbeetle scurried along after some invisible prey. The blue smoke of his pipe melted in the Sabbath air. The softened sounds of a singing congregation came across gardens and hedges to his ear. They sang with more energy than grace, and, not for the first time, he felt they did. Were they indeed singing to the Lord, he asked himself, or only to the idol Custom? A silence came: the young man in the pulpit was giving out his text, and the faces that had turned themselves up to Walter Drake as flowers to the sun, were now all turning to the face of him they had chosen in his stead, "to minister to them in holy things." He took his pipe from his mouth, and sat motionless, with his eyes fixed on the ground.

But why was he not at chapel himself? Could it be that he yielded to temptation, actually preferring his clay pipe and the long glide of the river, to the worship, and the hymns and the sermon? Had there not been a time when he judged that man careless of the truth who did not go to the chapel, and that man little better who went to the church? Yet there he sat on a Sunday morning, the church on one side of him and the chapel on the other, smoking his pipe! His daughter was at the chapel; she had taken Ducky with her; the dog lay in the porch waiting for them; the cat thought too much of herself to make friends with her

master; he had forgotten his New Testament on the study table; and now he had let his pipe out.

He was not well, it is true, but he was well enough to have gone. Was he too proud to be taught where he had been a teacher? or was it that the youth in his place taught there doctrines which neither they nor their fathers had known? It could not surely be from resentment that they had super-annuated him in the prime of his old age, with a pared third of his late salary, which nothing but honesty in respect to the small moneys he owed could have prevented him from refusing!

In truth it was impossible the old minister should have any great esteem for the flashy youth, proud of his small Latin and less Greek, a mere unit of the hundreds whom the devil of ambition drives to preaching; one who, whether the doctrines he taught were in the New Testament or not, certainly never found them there, being but the merest disciple of a disciple of a disciple, and fervid in words of which he perceived scarce a glimmer of the divine purport. At the same time, he might have seen points of resemblance between his own early history and that of the callow chirper of divinity now holding forth from his pulpit, which might have tended to mollify his judgment with sympathy.

His people had behaved ill to him, and he could not say he was free from resentment or pride, but he did make for them what excuse lay in the fact that the congregation had been dwindling ever since the curate at the abbey-church began to speak in such

a strange outspoken fashion. There now was a right sort of man! he said to himself. No attempted oratory with him! no prepared surprises! no playhouse tricks! no studied graces in wafture of hands and upheaved eyes! And yet at moments when he became possessed with his object rather than subject, every inch of him seemed alive. He was odd—very odd; perhaps he was crazy—but at least he was honest. He had heard him himself, and judged him well worth helping to what was better, for, alas! notwithstanding the vigor of his preaching, he did not appear to have himself discovered as yet the treasure hid in the field. He was, nevertheless, incomparably the superior of the young man whom, expecting him to *draw*, the deacons of his church, with the members behind them, had substituted for himself, who had for more than fifteen years ministered to them the bread of life.

Bread!—Yes, I think it might honestly be called bread that Walter Drake had ministered. It had not been free from chalk or potatoes: bits of shell and peel might have been found in it, with an occasional bit of dirt, and a hair or two; yes, even a little alum, and that is *bad*, because it tends to destroy, not satisfy the hunger. There was sawdust in it, and parchment-dust, and lumber-dust; it was ill salted, badly baked, sad; sometimes it was blue-moldy, and sometimes even maggoty; but the mass of it was honest flour, and those who did not recoil from the look of it, or recognize the presence of the variety of foreign matter, could live upon it, in a sense, up to a certain pitch of life. But a great deal of it was not of his baking at all—he had been merely the distributor—

crumbling down other bakers' loaves and making them up again in his own shapes. In his declining years, however, he had been really beginning to learn the business. Only, in his congregation were many who not merely preferred bad bread of certain kinds, but were incapable of digesting any of high quality.

He would have gone to chapel that morning had the young man been such as he could respect. Neither his doctrine, nor the behavior of the church to himself, would have kept him away. Had he followed his inclination he would have gone to the church, only that would have looked spiteful. His late congregation would easily excuse his non-attendance with them; they would even pitifully explain to each other why he could not appear just yet; but to go to church would be in their eyes unpardonable—a declaration of a war of revenge.

There was, however, a reason besides, why Mr. Drake could not go to church that morning, and if not a more serious, it was a much more painful one. Some short time before he had any ground to suspect that his congregation was faltering in its loyalty to him, his daughter had discovered that the chapel butcher, when he sent a piece of meat, invariably charged for a few ounces beyond the weight delivered. Now Mr. Drake was a man of such honesty that all kinds of cheating, down to the most respectable, were abominable to him; that the man was a professor of religion made his conduct unpardonable in his eyes, and that he was one of his own congregation rendered it insupportable. Having taken pains to satisfy himself of the fact, he declined to deal with him

any further, and did not spare to tell him why. The man was far too dishonest to profit by the rebuke save in circumspection and cunning, was revengeful in proportion to the justice of the accusation, and of course brought his influence, which was not small, to bear upon the votes of the church-members in respect of the pastorate.

Had there been another butcher in connection with the chapel, Mr. Drake would have turned to him, but as there was not, and they could not go without meat, he had to betake himself to the principal butcher in the place, who was a member of the Church of England. Soon after his troubles commenced, and before many weeks were over he saw plainly enough that he must either resign altogether, and go out into the great world of dissent in search of some pastorless flock that might vote him their crook, to be guided by him whither they wanted to go, and whither most of them believed they knew the way as well as he, or accept the pittance offered him. This would be to retire from the forefront of the battle, and take an undistinguished place in the crowd of mere camp-followers; but, for the sake of honesty, as I have already explained, and with the hope that it might be only for a brief season, he had chosen the latter half of the alternative. And truly it was a great relief not to have to grind out of his poor, weary, groaning mill the two inevitable weekly sermons—labor sufficient to darken the face of nature to the conscientious man. For his people thought themselves intellectual, and certainly were critical. Mere edification in holiness was not enough for them. A

large infusion of some polemic element was necessary to make the meat savory and such as their souls loved. Their ambition was not to grow in grace, but in social influence and regard—to glorify their dissent, not the communion of saints. Upon the chief corner-stone they would build their stubble of paltry religionism; they would set up their ragged tent in the midst of the eternal temple, careless how it blocked up window and stair.

Now last week Mr. Drake had requested his new butcher to send his bill—with some little anxiety, because of the sudden limitation of his income; but when he saw it he was filled with horror. Amounting only to a very few pounds, causes had come together to make it a large one in comparison with the figures he was accustomed to see. Always feeding some of his flock, he had at this time two sickly, nursing mothers who drew their mortal life from his kitchen; and, besides, the doctor had, some time ago, ordered a larger amount of animal food for the little Amanda. In fine, the sum at the bottom of that long slip of paper, with the wood-cut of a prize ox at the top of it, small as he would have thought it at one period of his history, was greater than he could imagine how to pay; and if he went to church, it would be to feel the eye of the butcher and not that of the curate upon him all the time. It was a dismay, a horror to him to have an account rendered which he could not settle, and especially from his new butcher, after he had so severely rebuked the old one. Where was the mighty difference in honesty between himself and the offender? the one claimed for meat he had not sold, the

other ordered that for which he could not pay! Would not Mr. Jones imagine he had left his fellow-butcher and come to him because he had run up a large bill for which he was unable to write a check? This was that over which the spirit of the man now brooded by far the most painfully; this it was that made him leave his New Testament in the study, let his pipe out, and look almost lovingly upon the fast-flowing river, because it was a symbol of death.

He had chosen preaching as a profession, just as so many take orders—with this difference from a large proportion of such, that he had striven powerfully to convince himself that he trusted in the merits of the Redeemer. Had he not in this met with tolerable success, he would not have yielded to the wish of his friends and left his father's shop in his native country-town for a dissenting college in the neighborhood of London. There he worked well, and became a good scholar, learning to read in the true sense of the word, that is, to try the spirits as he read. His character, so called, was sound, and his conscience, if not sensitive, was firm and regnant. But he was injured both spiritually and morally by some of the instructions there given. For one of the objects held up as duties before him, was to become capable of rendering himself *acceptable* to a congregation.

Most of the students were but too ready to regard, or at least to treat this object as the first and foremost of duties. The master-duty of devotion to Christ, and obedience to every word that proceeded out of His mouth, was very much treated as a thing

understood, requiring little enforcement; while, the main thing demanded of them being sermons in some sense their own—honey culled at least by their own bees, and not bought in jars, much was said about the plan and composition of sermons, about style and elocution, and action—all plainly and confessedly, with a view to pulpit-*success*—the lowest of all low successes, and the most worldly.

These instructions Walter Drake accepted as the wisdom of the holy serpent—devoted large attention to composition, labored to form his style on the *best models*, and before beginning to write a sermon, always heated the furnace of production with fuel from some exciting or suggestive author: it would be more correct to say, fed the mill of composition from some such source; one consequence of all which was, that when at last, after many years, he did begin to develop some individuality, he could not, and never did shake himself free of those weary models; his thoughts, appearing in clothes which were not made for them, wore always a certain stiffness and unreality which did not by nature belong to them, blunting the impressions which his earnestness and sincerity did notwithstanding make.

Determined to *succeed*, he cultivated eloquence also—what he supposed eloquence, that is, being, of course, merely elocution, to attain the right gestures belonging to which he looked far more frequently into his landlady's mirror, than for his spiritual action into the law of liberty. He had his reward in the success he sought. But I must make haste, for the story of worldly success is always

a mean tale. In a few years, and for not a few after, he was a popular preacher in one of the suburbs of London—a good deal sought after, and greatly lauded. He lived in comfort, indulged indeed in some amount of show; married a widow with a large life-annuity, which between them they spent entirely, and that not altogether in making friends with everlasting habitations; in a word, gazed out on the social landscape far oftener than lifted his eyes to the hills.

After some ten or twelve years, a change began. They had three children; the two boys, healthy and beautiful, took scarlatina and died; the poor, sickly girl wailed on. His wife, who had always been more devoted to her children than her husband, pined, and died also. Her money went, if not with her, yet away from him. His spirits began to fail him, and his small, puny, peaking daughter did not comfort him much. He was capable of true, but not yet of pure love; at present his love was capricious. Little Dora—a small Dorothy indeed in his estimation—had always been a better child than either of her brothers, but he loved them the more that others admired them, and her the less that others pitied her: he did try to love her, for there was a large element of justice in his nature. This, but for his being so much occupied with *making himself acceptable* to his congregation, would have given him a leadership in the rising rebellion against a theology which crushed the hearts of men by attributing injustice to their God. As it was, he lay at anchor, and let the tide rush past him.

Further change followed—gradual, but rapid. His congregation began to discover that he was not the man he had been. They complained of lack of variety in his preaching; said he took it too easy; did not study his sermons sufficiently; often spoke extempore, which was a poor compliment to *them*; did not visit with impartiality, and indeed had all along favored the carriage people. There was a party in the church which had not been cordial to him from the first; partly from his fault, partly from theirs, he had always made them feel they were of the lower grade; and from an increase of shops in the neighborhood, this party was now gathering head. Their leaders went so far at length as to hint at a necessity for explanation in regard to the accounts of certain charities administered by the pastor. In these, unhappily, *lacunae* were patent. In his troubles the pastor had grown careless. But it was altogether to his own loss, for not merely had the money been spent with a rigidity of uprightness, such as few indeed of his accusers exercised in their business affairs, but he had in his disbursements exceeded the contribution committed to his charge. Confident, however, in his position, and much occupied with other thoughts, he had taken no care to set down the particulars of his expenditure, and his enemies did not fail to hint a connection between this fact and the loss of his wife's annuity. Worst of all, doubts of his orthodoxy began to be expressed by the more ignorant, and harbored without examination by the less ignorant.

All at once he became aware of the general disloyalty of his

flock, and immediately resigned. Scarcely had he done so when he was invited to Glaston, and received with open arms. There he would heal his wounds, and spend the rest of his days in peace. "He caught a slip or two" in descending, but soon began to find the valley of humiliation that wholesome place which all true pilgrims have ever declared it. Comparative retirement, some sense of lost labor, some suspicion of the worth of the ends for which he had spent his strength, a waking desire after the God in whom he had vaguely believed all the time he was letting the dust of paltry accident inflame his eyes, blistering and deadening his touch with the efflorescent crusts and agaric tumors upon the dry bones of theology, gilding the vane of his chapel instead of cleansing its porch and its floor—these all favored the birth in his mind of the question, whether he had ever entered in at the straight gate himself, or had not merely been standing by its side calling to others to enter in. Was it even as well as this with him? Had he not been more intent on gathering a wretched flock within the rough, wool-stealing, wind-sifting, beggarly hurdles of his church, than on housing true men and women safe in the fold of the true Shepherd? Feeding troughs for the sheep there might be many in the fields, and they might or might not be presided over by servants of the true Shepherd, but the fold they were not! He grew humble before the Master, and the Master began to lord it lovingly over him. He sought His presence, and found Him; began to think less of books and rabbis, yea even, for the time, of Paul and Apollos and Cephas, and to pore and ponder

over the living tale of the New Covenant; began to feel that the Lord meant what He said, and that His apostles also meant what He said; forgot Calvin a good deal, outgrew the influences of Jonathan Edwards, and began to understand Jesus Christ.

Few sights can be lovelier than that of a man who, having rushed up the staircase of fame in his youth—what matter whether the fame of a paltry world, or a paltry sect of that world!—comes slowly, gently, graciously down in his old age, content to lose that which he never had, and careful only to be honest at last. It had not been so with Walter Drake. He had to come down first to begin to get the good of it, but once down, it was not long ere he began to go up a very different stair indeed. A change took place in him which turned all aims, all efforts, all victories of the world, into the merest, most poverty-stricken trifling. He had been a tarrer and smearer, a marker and shearer of sheep, rather than a pastor; but now he recognized the rod and leaned on the staff of the true Shepherd Who feeds both shepherds and sheep. Hearty were the thanks he offered that he had been staid in his worse than foolish career.

Since then, he had got into a hollow in the valley, and at this moment, as he sat in his summer-house, was looking from a verge abrupt into what seemed a bottomless gulf of humiliation. For his handsome London house, he had little better than a cottage, in which his study was not a quarter of the size of the one he had left; he had sold two-thirds of his books; for three men and four women servants, he had but one old woman and his own daughter

to do the work of the house; for all quadrupedal menie, he had but a nondescript canine and a contemptuous feline foundling; from a devoted congregation of comparatively educated people, he had sunk to one in which there was not a person of higher standing than a tradesman, and that congregation had now rejected him as not up to their mark, turning him off to do his best with fifty pounds a year. He had himself heard the cheating butcher remark in the open street that it was quite enough, and more than ever his Master had. But all these things were as nothing in his eyes beside his inability to pay Mr. Jones's bill. He had outgrown his former self, but this kind of misery it would be but deeper degradation to outgrow. All before this had been but humiliation; this was shame. Now first he knew what poverty was! Had God forgotten him? That could not be! that which could forget could not be God. Did he not care then that such things should befall his creatures? Were they but trifles in his eyes? He ceased thinking, gave way to the feeling that God dealt hardly with him, and sat stupidly indulging a sense of grievance—with self-pity, than which there is scarce one more childish or enfeebling in the whole circle of the emotions. Was this what God had brought him nearer to Himself for? was this the end of a ministry in which he had, in some measure at least, denied himself and served God and his fellow? He could bear any thing but shame! That too could he have borne had he not been a teacher of religion—one whose failure must brand him a hypocrite. How mean it would sound—what a reproach to *the cause*, that the congregational

minister had run up a bill with a church-butcher which he was unable to pay! It was the shame—the shame he could not bear! Ought he to have been subjected to it?

A humbler and better mood slowly dawned with unconscious change, and he began to ponder with himself wherein he had been misusing the money given him: either he had been misusing it, or God had not given him enough, seeing it would not reach the end of his needs; but he could think only of the poor he had fed, and the child he had adopted, and surely God would overlook those points of extravagance. Still, if he had not the means, he had not the right to do such things. It might not in itself be wrong, but in respect of him it was as dishonest as if he had spent the money on himself—not to mention that it was a thwarting of the counsel of God, who, if He had meant them to be so aided, would have sent him the money to spend upon them honestly. His one excuse was that he could not have foreseen how soon his income was going to shrink to a third. In future he would withhold his hand. But surely he might keep the child? Nay, having once taken her in charge, he must keep the child. It was a comfort, there could be no doubt about that. God had money enough, and certainly He would enable him to do that! Only, why then did He bring him to such poverty?

So round in his mill he went, round and round again, and back to the old evil mood. Either there was no God, or he was a hard-used man, whom his Master did not mind bringing to shame before his enemies! He could not tell which would triumph the

more—the church-butcher over dissent, or the chapel-butcher over the church-butcher, and the pastor who had rebuked him for dishonesty! His very soul was disquieted within him. He rose at last with a tear trickling down his cheek, and walked to and fro in his garden.

Things went on nevertheless as if all was right with the world. The Lythe flowed to the sea, and the silver-mailed salmon leaped into the more limpid air. The sun shone gracious over all his kingdom, and his little praisers were loud in every bush. The primroses, earth-born suns, were shining about in every border. The sound of the great organ came from the grand old church, and the sound of many voices from the humble chapel. Only, where was the heart of it all?

CHAPTER XI

THE CHAMBER AT THE COTTAGE

Meanwhile Faber was making a round, with the village of Owlkirk for the end of it. Ere he was half-way thither, his groom was tearing after him upon Niger, with a message from Mrs. Puckridge, which, however, did not overtake him. He opened the cottage-door, and walked up stairs, expecting to find his patient weak, but in the fairest of ways to recover speedily. What was his horror to see her landlady weeping and wringing her hands over the bed, and find the lady lying motionless, with bloodless lips and distended nostrils—to all appearance dead! Pillows, sheets, blankets, looked one mass of red. The bandage had shifted while she slept, and all night her blood had softly flowed. Hers was one of those peculiar organizations in which, from some cause but dimly conjectured as yet, the blood once set flowing will flow on to death, and even the tiniest wound is hard to stanch. Was the lovely creature gone? In her wrists could discern no pulse. He folded back the bed-clothes, and laid his ear to her heart. His whole soul listened. Yes; there was certainly the faintest flutter. He watched a moment: yes; he could see just the faintest tremor of the diaphragm.

"Run," he cried, "—for God's sake run and bring me a jug of hot water, and two or three basins. There is just a chance yet! If you make haste, we may save her. Bring me a syringe. If you haven't one, run from house to house till you get one. Her life depends on it." By this time he was shouting after the hurrying landlady.

In a minute or two she returned.

"Have you got the syringe?" he cried, the moment he heard her step.

To his great relief she had. He told her to wash it out thoroughly with the hot water, unscrew the top, and take out the piston. While giving his directions, he unbound the arm, enlarged the wound in the vein longitudinally, and re-bound the arm tight below the elbow, then quickly opened a vein of his own, and held the syringe to catch the spout that followed. When it was full, he replaced the piston, telling Mrs. Puckridge to put her thumb on his wound, turned the point of the syringe up and drove a little out to get rid of the air, then, with the help of a probe, inserted the nozzle into the wound, and gently forced in the blood. That done, he placed his own thumbs on the two wounds, and made the woman wash out the syringe in clean hot water. Then he filled it as before, and again forced its contents into the lady's arm. This process he went through repeatedly. Then, listening, he found her heart beating quite perceptibly, though irregularly. Her breath was faintly coming and going. Several times more he repeated the strange dose, then ceased, and was occupied in binding up

her arm, when she gave a great shuddering sigh. By the time he had finished, the pulse was perceptible at her wrist. Last of all he bound up his own wound, from which had escaped a good deal beyond what he had used. While thus occupied, he turned sick, and lay down on the floor. Presently, however, he grew able to crawl from the room, and got into the garden at the back of the house, where he walked softly to the little rude arbor at the end of it, and sat down as if in a dream. But in the dream his soul felt wondrously awake. He had been tasting death from the same cup with the beautiful woman who lay there, coming alive with his life. A terrible weight was heaved from his bosom. If she had died, he would have felt, all his life long, that he had sent one of the loveliest of Nature's living dreams back to the darkness and the worm, long years before her time, and with the foam of the cup of life yet on her lips. Then a horror seized him at the presumptuousness of the liberty he had taken. What if the beautiful creature would rather have died than have the blood of a man, one she neither loved nor knew, in her veins, and coursing through her very heart! She must never know it.

"I am very grateful," he said to himself; then smiled and wondered to whom he was grateful.

"How the old stamps and colors come out in the brain when one least expects it!" he said. "What I meant was, *How glad I am!*"

Honest as he was, he did not feel called upon to examine whether *glad* was really the word to represent the feeling which

the thought of what he had escaped, and of the creature he had saved from death, had sent up into his consciousness. Glad he was indeed! but was there not mingled with his gladness a touch of something else, very slight, yet potent enough to make him mean *grateful* when the word broke from him? and if there was such a something, where did it come from? Perhaps if he had caught and held the feeling, and submitted it to such a searching scrutiny as he was capable of giving it, he might have doubted whether any mother-instilled superstition ever struck root so deep as the depth from which that seemed at least to come. I merely suggest it. The feeling was a faint and poor one, and I do not care to reason from it. I would not willingly waste upon small arguments, when I see more and more clearly that our paltriest faults and dishonesties need one and the same enormous cure.

But indeed never had Faber less time to examine himself than now, had he been so inclined. With that big wound in it, he would as soon have left a shell in the lady's chamber with the fuse lighted, as her arm to itself. He did not leave the village all day. He went to see another patient in it, and one on its outskirts, but he had his dinner at the little inn where he put up Ruber, and all night long he sat by the bedside of his patient. There the lovely white face, blind like a statue that never had eyes, and the perfect arm, which now and then, with a restless, uneasy, feeble toss, she would fling over the counterpane, the arm he had to watch as the very gate of death, grew into his heart. He dreaded the moment when she would open her eyes, and his might no longer wander

at will over her countenance. Again and again in the night he put a hand under her head, and held a cooling draught to her lips; but not even when she drank did her eyes open: like a child too weak to trust itself, therefore free of all anxiety and fear, she took whatever came, questioning nothing. He sat at the foot of the bed, where, with the slightest movement, he could, through the opening of the curtains, see her perfectly.

By some change of position, he had unknowingly drawn one of them back a little from between her and him, as he sat thinking about her. The candle shone full upon his face, but the other curtain was between the candle and his patient. Suddenly she opened her eyes.

A dream had been with her, and she did not yet know that it was gone. She could hardly be said to *know* any thing. Fever from loss of blood; uneasiness, perhaps, from the presence in her system of elements elsewhere fashioned and strangely foreign to its economy; the remnants of sleep and of the dream; the bewilderment of sudden awaking—all had combined to paralyze her judgment, and give her imagination full career. When she opened her eyes, she saw a beautiful face, and nothing else, and it seemed to her itself the source of the light by which she saw it. Her dream had been one of great trouble; and when she beheld the shining countenance, she thought it was the face of the Saviour: he was looking down upon her heart, which he held in his hand, and reading all that was written there. The tears rushed to her eyes, and the next moment Faber saw two fountains of

light and weeping in the face which had been but as of loveliest marble. The curtain fell between them, and the lady thought the vision had vanished. The doctor came softly through the dusk to her bedside. He felt her pulse, looked to the bandage on her arm, gave her something to drink, and left the room. Presently Mrs. Puckridge brought her some beef tea.

CHAPTER XII

THE MINISTER'S GARDEN

Up and down the garden paced the pastor, stung by the gadflies of debt. If he were in London he could sell his watch and seals; he had a ring somewhere, too—an antique, worth what now seemed a good deal; but his wife had given him both. Besides, it would cost so much to go to London, and he had no money. Mr. Drew, doubtless, would lend him what he wanted, but he could not bring himself to ask him. If he parted with them in Glaston, they would be put in the watchmaker's window, and that would be a scandal—with the Baptists making head in the very next street! For, notwithstanding the heartless way in which the Congregationalists had treated him, theirs was the cause of scriptural Christianity, and it made him shudder to think of bringing the smallest discredit upon the denomination. The church-butcher was indeed a worse terror to him than Apollyon had been to Christian, for it seemed to his faithlessness that not even the weapon of All-prayer was equal to his discomfiture; nothing could render him harmless but the payment of his bill. He began to look back with something like horror upon the sermons he had preached on honesty; for how would his inability

to pay his debts appear in the eyes of those who had heard them? Oh! why had he not paid for every thing as they had it? Then when the time came that he could not pay, they would only have had to go without, whereas now, there was the bill louring at the back of the want!

When Miss Drake returned from the chapel, she found her father leaning on the sun-dial, where she had left him. To all appearance he had not moved. He knew her step but did not stir.

"Father!" she said.

"It is a hard thing, my child," he responded, still without moving, "when the valley of Humiliation comes next the river Death, and no land of Beulah between! I had my good things in my youth, and now I have my evil things."

She laid her hand on his shoulder lovingly, tenderly, worshipfully, but did not speak.

"As you see me now, my Dorothy, my God's-gift, you would hardly believe your father was once a young and popular preacher, ha, ha! Fool that I was! I thought they prized my preaching, and loved me for what I taught them. I thought I was somebody! With shame I confess it! Who were they, or what was their judgment, to fool me in my own concerning myself! Their praise was indeed a fit rock for me to build my shame upon."

"But, father dear, what is even a sin when it is repented of?"

"A shame forever, my child. Our Lord did not cast out even an apostle for his conceit and self-sufficiency, but he let him fall."

"He has not let you fall, father?" said Dorothy, with tearful

eyes.

"He is bringing my gray hairs with sorrow and shame to the grave, my child."

"Why, father!" cried the girl, shocked, as she well might be, at his words, "what have I done to make you say that?"

"Done, my darling! *you* done? You have done nothing but righteousness ever since you could do any thing! You have been like a mother to your old father. It is that bill! that horrid butcher's bill!"

Dorothy burst out laughing through her dismay, and wept and laughed together for more than a minute ere she could recover herself.

"Father! you dear father! you're too good to live! Why, there are forks and spoons enough in the house to pay that paltry bill! —not to mention the cream-jug which is, and the teapot which we thought was silver, because Lady Sykes gave it us. Why didn't you tell me what was troubling you, father dear?"

"I can't bear—I never *could* bear to owe money. I asked the man for his bill some time ago. I could have paid it then, though it wouldn't have left me a pound. The moment I looked at it, I felt as if the Lord had forsaken me. It is easy for you to bear; you are not the one accountable. I am. And if the pawnbroker or the silver-smith does stand between me and absolute dishonesty, yet to find myself in such a miserable condition, with next to nothing between us and the workhouse, may well make me doubt whether I have been a true servant of the Lord, for surely such

shall never be ashamed! During these last days the enemy has even dared to tempt me with the question, whether after all, these unbelievers may not be right, and the God that ruleth in the earth a mere projection of what the conscience and heart bribe the imagination to construct for them!"

"I wouldn't think that before I was driven to it, father," said Dorothy, scarcely knowing what she said, for his doubt shot a poisoned arrow of despair into the very heart of her heart.

He, never doubting the security of his child's faith, had no slightest suspicion into what a sore spot his words had carried torture. He did not know that the genius of doubt—shall I call him angel or demon?—had knocked at her door, had called through her window; that words dropped by Faber, indicating that science was against all idea of a God, and the confidence of their tone, had conjured up in her bosom hollow fears, faint dismays, and stinging questions. Ready to trust, and incapable of arrogance, it was hard for her to imagine how a man like Mr. Faber, upright and kind and self-denying, could say such things if he did not *know* them true. The very word *science* appeared to carry an awful authority. She did not understand that it was only because science had never come closer to Him than the mere sight of the fringe of the outermost folds of the tabernacle of His presence, that her worshipers dared assert there was no God. She did not perceive that nothing ever science could find, could possibly be the God of men; that science is only the human reflex of truth, and that truth itself can not be measured by what of it

is reflected from the mirror of the understanding. She did not see that no incapacity of science to find God, even touched the matter of honest men's belief that He made His dwelling with the humble and contrite. Nothing she had learned from her father either provided her with reply, or gave hope of finding argument of discomfiture; nothing of all that went on at chapel or church seemed to have any thing to do with the questions that presented themselves.

Such a rough shaking of so-called faith, has been of endless service to many, chiefly by exposing the insecurity of all foundations of belief, save that which is discovered in digging with the spade of obedience. Well indeed is it for all honest souls to be thus shaken, who have been building upon doctrines concerning Christ, upon faith, upon experiences, upon any thing but Christ Himself, as revealed by Himself and His spirit to all who obey Him, and so revealing the Father—a doctrine just as foolish as the rest to men like Faber, but the power of God and the wisdom of God to such who know themselves lifted out of darkness and an ever-present sense of something wrong—if it be only into twilight and hope.

Dorothy was a gift of God, and the trouble that gnawed at her heart she would not let out to gnaw at her father's.

"There's Ducky come to call us to dinner," she said, and rising, went to meet her.

"Dinner!" groaned Mr. Drake, and would have remained where he was. But for Dorothy's sake he rose and followed her,

feeling almost like a repentant thief who had stolen the meal.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HEATH AT NESTLEY

On the Monday morning, Mr. Bevis's groom came to the rectory with a note for the curate, begging him and Mrs. Wingfold to dine at Nestley the same day if possible.

"I know," the rector wrote, "Monday is, or ought to be, an idle day with you, and I write instead of my wife, because I want to see you on business. I would have come to you, had I not had reasons for wishing to see you here rather than at Glaston. The earlier you can come and the longer you can stay the better, but you shall go as soon after an early dinner as you please. You are a bee and I am a drone. God bless you.

JOHN BEVIS."

The curate took the note to his wife. Things were at once arranged, an answer of ready obedience committed to the groom, and Helen's pony-carriage ordered out.

The curate called every thing Helen's. He had a great contempt for the spirit of men who marry rich wives and then lord it over their money, as if they had done a fine thing in getting hold of

it, and the wife had been but keeping it from its rightful owner. They do not know what a confession their whole bearing is, that, but for their wives' money, they would be but the merest, poorest nobodies. So small are they that even that suffices to make them feel big! But Helen did not like it, especially when he would ask her if he might have this or that, or do so and so. Any common man who heard him would have thought him afraid of his wife; but a large-hearted woman would at once have understood, as did Helen, that it all came of his fine sense of truth, and reality, and obligation. Still Helen would have had him forget all such matters in connection with her. They were one beyond obligation. She had given him herself, and what were bank-notes after that? But he thought of her always as an angel who had taken him in, to comfort, and bless, and cherish him with love, that he might the better do the work of his God and hers; therefore his obligation to her was his glory.

"Your ponies go splendidly to-day, Helen," he said, as admiringly he watched how her hands on the reins seemed to mold their movements.

They were the tiniest, daintiest things, of the smallest ever seen in harness, but with all the ways of big horses, therefore amusing in their very grace. They were the delight of the children of Glaston and the villages round.

"Why *will* you call them *my* ponies, Thomas?" returned his wife, just sufficiently vexed to find it easy to pretend to be cross. "I don't see what good I have got by marrying you, if every thing

is to be mine all the same!"

"Don't be unreasonable, my Helen!" said the curate, looking into the lovely eyes whose colors seemed a little blown about in their rings. "Don't you see it is my way of feeling to myself how much, and with what a halo about them, they are mine? If I had bought them with my own money, I should hardly care for them. Thank God, they are *not* mine that way, or in any way like that way. *You* are mine, my life, and they are yours—mine therefore because they are about you like your clothes or your watch. They are mine as your handkerchief and your gloves are mine—through worshiping love. Listen to reason. If a thing is yours it is ten times more mine than if I had bought it, for, just because it is yours, I am able to possess it as the meek, and not the land-owners, inherit the earth. It makes *having* such a deep and high—indeed a perfect thing! I take pleasure without an atom of shame in every rich thing you have brought me. Do you think, if you died, and I carried your watch, I should ever cease to feel the watch was yours? Just so they are your ponies; and if you don't like me to say so, you can contradict me every time, you know, all the same."

"I know people will think I am like the lady we heard of the other day, who told her husband the sideboard was hers, not his. Thomas, I *hate* to look like the rich one, when all that makes life worth living for, or fit to be lived, was and is given me by you."

"No, no, no, my darling! don't say that; you terrify me. I was but the postman that brought you the good news."

"Well! and what else with me and the ponies and the money and all that? Did I make the ponies? Or did I even earn the money that bought them? It is only the money my father and brother have done with. Don't make me look as if I did not behave like a lady to my own husband, Thomas."

"Well, my beautiful, I'll make up for all my wrongs by ordering you about as if I were the Marquis of Saluzzo, and you the patient Grisel."

"I wish you would. You don't order me about half enough."

"I'll try to do better. You shall see."

Nestley was a lovely place, and the house was old enough to be quite respectable—one of those houses with a history and a growth, which are getting rarer every day as the ugly temples of mammon usurp their places. It was dusky, cool, and somber—a little shabby, indeed, which fell in harmoniously with its peculiar charm, and indeed added to it. A lawn, not immaculate of the sweet fault of daisies, sank slowly to a babbling little tributary of the Lythe, and beyond were fern-covered slopes, and heather, and furze, and pine-woods. The rector was a sensible Englishman, who objected to have things done after the taste of his gardener instead of his own. He loved grass like a village poet, and would have no flower-beds cut in his lawn. Neither would he have any flowers planted in the summer to be taken up again before the winter. He would have no cockney gardening about his place, he said. Perhaps that was partly why he never employed any but his old cottagers about the grounds; and the result was

that for half the show he had twice the loveliness. His ambition was to have every possible English garden flower.

As soon as his visitors arrived, he and his curate went away together, and Mrs. Wingfold was shown into the drawing-room, where was Mrs. Bevis with her knitting. A greater contrast than that of the two ladies then seated together in the long, low, dusky room, it were not easy to imagine. I am greatly puzzled to think what conscious good in life Mrs. Bevis enjoyed—just as I am puzzled to understand the eagerness with which horses, not hungry, and evidently in full enjoyment of the sun and air and easy exercise, will yet hurry to their stable the moment their heads are turned in the direction of them. Is it that they have no hope in the unknown, and then alone, in all the vicissitudes of their day, know their destination? Would but some good kind widow, of the same type with Mrs. Bevis, without children, tell me wherefore she is unwilling to die! She has no special friend to whom she unbosoms herself—indeed, so far as any one knows, she has never had any thing of which to unbosom herself. She has no pet—dog or cat or monkey or macaw, and has never been seen to hug a child. She never reads poetry—I doubt if she knows more than the first line of *How doth*. She reads neither novels nor history, and looks at the newspaper as if the type were fly-spots. Yet there she sits smiling! Why! oh! why? Probably she does not know. Never did question, not to say doubt, cause those soft, square-ended fingers to move one atom less measuredly in the construction of Mrs. Bevis's muffetee, the sole knittable thing her

nature seemed capable of. Never was sock seen on her needles; the turning of the heel was too much for her. That she had her virtues, however, was plain from the fact that her servants staid with her years and years; and I can, beside, from observation set down a few of them. She never asked her husband what he would have for dinner. When he was ready to go out with her, she was always ready too. She never gave one true reason, and kept back a truer—possibly there was not room for two thoughts at once in her brain. She never screwed down a dependent; never kept small tradespeople waiting for their money; never refused a reasonable request. In fact, she was a stuffed bag of virtues; the bag was of no great size, but neither were the virtues insignificant. There are dozens of sorts of people I should feel a far stronger objection to living with; but what puzzles me is how she contrives to live with herself, never questioning the comfort of the arrangement, or desiring that it should one day come to an end. Surely she must be deep, and know some secret!

For the other lady, Helen Lingard that was, she had since her marriage altered considerably in the right direction. She used to be a little dry, a little stiff, and a little stately. To the last I should be far from objecting, were it not that her stateliness was of the mechanical sort, belonging to the spine, and not to a soul uplift. Now it had left her spine and settled in a soul that scorned the low and loved the lowly. Her step was lighter, her voice more flexible, her laugh much merrier and more frequent, for now her heart was gay. Her husband praised God when he

heard her laugh; the laugh suggested the praise, for itself rang like praises. She would pull up her ponies in the middle of the street, and at word or sign, the carriage would be full of children. Whoever could might scramble in till it was full. At the least rudeness, the offender would be ordered to the pavement, and would always obey, generally weeping. She would drive two or three times up and down the street with her load, then turn it out, and take another, and another, until as many as she judged fit had had a taste of the pleasure. This she had learned from seeing a costermonger fill his cart with children, and push behind, while the donkey in front pulled them along the street, to the praise and glory of God.

She was overbearing in one thing, and that was submission. Once, when I was in her husband's study, she made a remark on something he had said or written, I forget what, for which her conscience of love immediately smote her. She threw herself on the floor, crept under the writing table at which he sat, and clasped his knees.

"I beg your pardon, husband," she said sorrowfully.

"Helen," he cried, laughing rather oddly, "you will make a consummate idiot of me before you have done."

"Forgive me," she pleaded.

"I can't forgive you. How can I forgive where there is positively nothing to be forgiven?"

"I don't care what you say; I know better; you *must* forgive me."

"Nonsense!"

"Forgive me."

"Do get up. Don't be silly."

"Forgive me. I will lie here till you do."

"But your remark was perfectly true."

"It makes no difference. I ought not to have said it like that. Forgive me, or I will cry."

I will tell no more of it. Perhaps it is silly of me to tell any, but it moved me strangely.

I have said enough to show there was a contrast between the two ladies. As to what passed in the way of talk, that, from pure incapacity, I dare not attempt to report. I did hear them talk once, and they laughed too, but not one salient point could I lay hold of by which afterward to recall their conversation. Do I dislike Mrs. Bevis? Not in the smallest degree. I could read a book I loved in her presence. That would be impossible to me in the presence of Mrs. Ramshorn.

Mrs. Wingfold had developed a great faculty for liking people. It was quite a fresh shoot of her nature, for she had before been rather of a repellent disposition. I wish there were more, and amongst them some of the best of people, similarly changed. Surely the latter would soon be, if once they had a glimpse of how much the coming of the kingdom is retarded by defect of courtesy. The people I mean are slow to *like*, and until they come to *like*, they *seem* to dislike. I have known such whose manner was fit to imply entire disapprobation of the very existence of

those upon whom they looked for the first time. They might then have been saying to themselves, "*I* would never have created such people!" Had I not known them, I could not have imagined them lovers of God or man, though they were of both. True courtesy, that is, courtesy born of a true heart, is a most lovely, and absolutely indispensable grace—one that nobody but a Christian can thoroughly develop. God grant us a "coming-on disposition," as Shakespeare calls it. Who shall tell whose angel stands nearer to the face of the Father? Should my brother stand lower in the social scale than I, shall I not be the more tender, and respectful, and self-refusing toward him, that God has placed him there who may all the time be greater than I? A year before, Helen could hardly endure doughy Mrs. Bevis, but now she had found something to like in her, and there was confidence and faith between them. So there they sat, the elder lady meandering on, and Helen, who had taken care to bring some work with her, every now and then casting a bright glance in her face, or saying two or three words with a smile, or asking some simple question. Mrs. Bevis talked chiefly of the supposed affairs and undoubted illness of Miss Meredith, concerning both of which rather strange reports had reached her.

Meantime the gentlemen were walking through the park in earnest conversation. They crossed the little brook and climbed to the heath on the other side. There the rector stood, and turning to his companion, said:

"It's rather late in the day for a fellow to wake up, ain't it,

Wingfold? You see I was brought up to hate fanaticism, and that may have blinded me to something you have seen and got a hold of. I wish I could just see what it is, but I never was much of a theologian. Indeed I suspect I am rather stupid in some things. But I would fain try to look my duty in the face. It's not for me to start up and teach the people, because I ought to have been doing it all this time: I've got nothing to teach them. God only knows whether I haven't been breaking every one of the commandments I used to read to them every Sunday."

"But God does know, sir," said the curate, with even more than his usual respect in his tone, "and that is well, for otherwise we might go on breaking them forever."

The rector gave him a sudden look, full in the face, but said nothing, seemed to fall a thinking, and for some time was silent.

"There's one thing clear," he resumed: "I've been taking pay, and doing no work. I used to think I was at least doing no harm—that I was merely using one of the privileges of my position: I not only paid a curate, but all the repair the church ever got was from me. Now, however, for the first time, I reflect that the money was not given me for that. Doubtless it has been all the better for my congregation, but that is only an instance of the good God brings out of evil, and the evil is mine still. Then, again, there's all this property my wife brought me: what have I done with that? The kingdom of heaven has not come a hair's-breadth nearer for my being a parson of the Church of England; neither are the people of England a shade the better that I am one of her land-owners.

It is surely time I did something, Wingfold, my boy!"

"I think it is, sir," answered the curate.

"Then, in God's name, what am I to do?" returned the rector, almost testily.

"Nobody can answer that question but yourself, sir," replied Wingfold.

"It's no use my trying to preach. I could not write a sermon if I took a month to it. If it were a paper on the management of a stable, now, I think I could write that—respectably. I know what I am about there. I could even write one on some of the diseases of horses and bullocks—but that's not what the church pays me for. There's one thing though—it comes over me strong that I should like to read prayers in the old place again. I want to pray, and I don't know how; and it seems as if I could shove in some of my own if I had them going through my head once again. I tell you what: we won't make any fuss about it—what's in a name?—but from this day you shall be incumbent, and I will be curate. You shall preach—or what you please, and I shall read the prayers or not, just as you please. Try what you can make of me, Wingfold. Don't ask me to do what I can't, but help me to do what I can. Look here—here's what I've been thinking—it came to me last night as I was walking about here after coming from Glaston:—here, in this corner of the parish, we are a long way from church. In the village there, there is no place of worship except a little Methodist one. There isn't one of their—local preachers, I believe they call them—that don't preach a

deal better than I could if I tried ever so much. It's vulgar enough sometimes, they tell me, but then they preach, and mean it. Now I might mean it, but I shouldn't preach;—for what is it to people at work all the week to have a man read a sermon to them? You might as well drive a nail by pushing it in with the palm of your hand. Those men use the hammer. Ill-bred, conceited fellows, some of them, I happen to know, but they know their business. Now why shouldn't I build a little place here on my own ground, and get the bishop to consecrate it? I would read prayers for you in the abbey church in the morning, and then you would not be too tired to come and preach here in the evening. I would read the prayers here too, if you liked."

"I think your scheme delightful," answered the curate, after a moment's pause. "I would only venture to suggest one improvement—that you should not have your chapel consecrated. You will find it ever so much more useful. It will then be dedicated to the God of the whole earth, instead of the God of the Church of England."

"Why! ain't they the same?" cried the rector, half aghast, as he stopped and faced round on the curate.

"Yes," answered Wingfold; "and all will be well when the Church of England really recognizes the fact. Meantime its idea of God is such as will not at all fit the God of the whole earth. And that is why she is in bondage. Except she burst the bonds of her own selfishness, she will burst her heart and go to pieces, as her enemies would have her. Every piece will be alive, though,

I trust, more or less."

"I don't understand you," said the rector. "What has all that to do with the consecration of my chapel?"

"If you don't consecrate it," answered Wingfold, "it will remain a portion of the universe, a thoroughfare for all divine influences, open as the heavens to every wind that blows. Consecration—"

Here the curate checked himself. He was going to say—"is another word for congestion,"—but he bethought himself what a wicked thing it would be, for the satisfaction of speaking his mind, to disturb that of his rector, brooding over a good work.

"But," he concluded therefore, "there will be time enough to think about that. The scheme is a delightful one. Apart from it, however, altogether—if you would but read prayers in your own church, it would wonderfully strengthen my hands. Only I am afraid I should shock you sometimes."

"I will take my chance of that. If you do, I will tell you of it. And if I do what you don't like, you must tell me of it. I trust neither of us will find the other incapable of understanding his neighbor's position."

They walked to the spot which the rector had already in his mind as the most suitable for the projected chapel. It was a bit of gently rising ground, near one of the gates, whence they could see the whole of the little village of Owlkirk. One of the nearest cottages was that of Mrs. Puckridge. They saw the doctor ride in at the other end of the street, stop there, fasten his horse to

the paling, and go in.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GARDEN AT OWLKIRK

No sooner had Faber left the cottage that same morning, than the foolish Mrs. Puckridge proceeded to pour out to the patient, still agitated both with her dream and her waking vision, all the terrible danger she had been in, and the marvelous way in which the doctor had brought her back from the threshold of death. Every drop of the little blood in her body seemed to rush to her face, then back to her heart, leaving behind it a look of terror. She covered her face with the sheet, and lay so long without moving that her nurse was alarmed. When she drew the sheet back, she found her in a faint, and it was with great difficulty she brought her out of it. But not one word could she get from her. She did not seem even to hear what she said. Presently she grew restless, and soon her flushed cheek and bright eye indicated an increase of fever. When Faber saw her, he was much disappointed, perceived at once that something had excited her, and strongly suspected that, for all her promises, Mrs. Puckridge had betrayed the means by which he recovered her.

He said to himself that he had had no choice, but then neither had the lady, and the thing might be hateful to her. She might

be in love, and then how she must abominate the business, and detest him! It was horrible to think of her knowing it. But for knowing it, she would never be a whit the worse, for he never had a day's illness in his life and knew of no taint in his family.

When she saw him approach her bedside, a look reminding him of the ripple of a sudden cold gust passing with the shadow of a cloud over still water swept across her face. She closed her eyes, and turned a little from him. What color she had, came and went painfully. Cursing in his heart the faithlessness of Mrs. Puckridge, he assumed his coldest, hardest professional manner, felt her pulse with the gentlest, yet most peremptory inquiry, gave her attendant some authoritative directions, and left her, saying he would call again in the afternoon.

During seven days he visited her twice a day. He had good cause to be anxious, and her recovery was very slow. Once and again appeared threatenings of the primary complaint, while from the tardiness with which her veins refilled, he feared for her lungs. During all these visits, hardly a word beyond the most necessary passed between them. After that time they were reduced to one a day. Ever as the lady grew stronger, she seemed to become colder, and her manner grew more distant. After a fortnight, he again reduced them to one in two days—very unwillingly, for by that time she had come to occupy nearly as much of his thoughts as all the rest of his patients together. She made him feel that his visits were less than welcome to her, except for the help they brought her, allowed him no insight into

her character and ways of thinking, behaved to him indeed with such restraint, that he could recall no expression of her face the memory of which drew him to dwell upon it; yet her face and form possessed him with their mere perfection. He had to set himself sometimes to get rid of what seemed all but her very presence, for it threatened to unfit him for the right discharge of his duties. He was haunted with the form to which he had given a renewal of life, as a murderer is haunted with the form of the man he has killed. In those marvelous intervals betwixt sleep and waking, when the soul is like a *camera obscura*, into which throng shapes unbidden, hers had displaced all others, and came constantly—now flashing with feverous radiance, now pale and bloodless as death itself. But ever and always her countenance wore a look of aversion. She seemed in these visions, to regard him as a vile necromancer, who first cast her into the sepulcher, and then brought her back by some hellish art. She had fascinated him. But he would not allow that he was in love with her. A man may be fascinated and hate. A man is not necessarily in love with the woman whose form haunts him. So said Faber to himself; and I can not yet tell whether he was in love with her or not. I do not know where the individuality of love commences—when love begins to be love. He must have been a good way toward that point, however, to have thus betaken himself to denial. He was the more interested to prove himself free, that he feared, almost believed, there was a lover concerned, and that was the reason she hated him so severely for what he had done.

He had long come to the conclusion that circumstances had straitened themselves around her. Experience had given him a keen eye, and he had noted several things about her dress. For one thing, while he had observed that her under-clothing was peculiarly dainty, he had once or twice caught a glimpse of such an incongruity as he was compelled to set down to poverty. Besides, what reason in which poverty bore no part, could a lady have for being alone in a poor country lodging, without even a maid? Indeed, might it not be the consciousness of the peculiarity of her position, and no dislike to him, that made her treat him with such impenetrable politeness? Might she not well dread being misunderstood!

She would be wanting to pay him for his attendance—and what was he to do? He must let her pay something, or she would consider herself still more grievously wronged by him, but how was he to take the money from her hand? It was very hard that ephemeral creatures of the earth, born but to die, to gleam out upon the black curtain and vanish again, might not, for the brief time the poor yet glorious bubble swelled and throbbed, offer and accept from each other even a few sunbeams in which to dance! Would not the inevitable rain beat them down at night, and "mass them into the common clay"? How then could they hurt each other—why should they fear it—when they were all wandering home to the black, obliterative bosom of their grandmother Night? He well knew a certain reply to such reflection, but so he talked with himself.

He would take his leave as if she were a duchess. But he would not until she made him feel another visit would be an intrusion.

One day Mrs. Puckridge met him at the door, looking mysterious. She pointed with her thumb over her shoulder to indicate that the lady was in the garden, but at the same time nudged him with her elbow, confident that the impartment she had to make would justify the liberty, and led the way into the little parlor.

"Please, sir, and tell me," she said, turning and closing the door, "what I be to do. She says she's got no money to pay neither me nor the doctor, so she give me this, and wants me to sell it. I daren't show it! They'd say I stole it! She declares that if I mention to a living soul where I got it, she'll never speak to me again. In course she didn't mean you, sir, seein' as doctors an' clergymen ain't nobody—leastways nobody to speak on—and I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir, but my meanin' is as they ain't them as ain't to be told things. I declare I'm most terrified to set eyes on the thing!"

She handed the doctor a little morocco case. He opened it, and saw a ring, which was plainly of value. It was old-fashioned—a round mass of small diamonds with a good-sized central one.

"You are quite right," he said. "The ring is far too valuable for you to dispose of. Bring it to my house at four o'clock, and I will get rid of it for you."

Mrs. Puckridge was greatly relieved, and ended the interview by leading the way to the back-door. When she opened it, he saw

his patient sitting in the little arbor. She rose, and came to meet him.

"You see I am quite well now," she said, holding out her hand.

Her tone was guarded, but surely the ice was melting a little! Was she taking courage at the near approach of her deliverance?

She stooped to pick a double daisy from the border. Prompt as he generally was, he could say nothing: he knew what was coming next. She spoke while still she stooped.

"When you come again," she said, "will you kindly let me know how much I am in your debt?"

As she ended she rose and stood before him, but she looked no higher than his shirt-studs. She was ashamed to speak of her indebtedness as an amount that could be reckoned. The whiteness of her cheek grew warm, which was all her complexion ever revealed of a blush. It showed plainer in the deepened darkness of her eyes, and the tremulous increase of light in them.

"I will," he replied, without the smallest response of confusion, for he had recovered himself. "You will be careful!" he added. "Indeed you must, or you will never be strong."

She answered only with a little sigh, as if weakness was such a weariness! and looked away across the garden-hedge out into the infinite—into more of it at least I think, than Faber recognized.

"And of all things," he went on, "wear shoes—every time you have to step off a carpet—not mere foot-gloves like those."

"Is this a healthy place, Doctor Faber?" she asked, looking haughtier, he thought, but plainly with a little trouble in her eyes.

"Decidedly," he answered. "And when you are able to walk on the heath you will find the air invigorating. Only please mind what I say about your shoes.—May I ask if you intend remaining here any time?"

"I have already remained so much longer than I intended, that I am afraid to say. My plans are now uncertain."

"Excuse me—I know I presume—but in our profession we must venture a little now and then—could you not have some friend with you until you are perfectly strong again? After what you have come through, it may be years before you are quite what you were. I don't want to frighten you—only to make you careful."

"There is no one," she answered in a low voice, which trembled a little.

"No one—?" repeated Faber, as if waiting for the end of the sentence.

But his heart gave a great bound.

"No one to come to me. I am alone in the world. My mother died when I was a child and my father two years ago. He was an officer. I was his only child, and used to go about with him. I have no friends."

Her voice faltered more and more. When it ceased she seemed choking a cry.

"Since then," she resumed, "I have been a governess. My last situation was in Yorkshire, in a cold part of the county, and my health began to fail me. I heard that Glaston was a warm place,

and one where I should be likely to get employment. But I was taken ill on my way there, and forced to stop. A lady in the train told me this was such a sweet, quiet little place, and so when we got to the station I came on here."

Again Faber could not speak. The thought of a lady like her traveling about alone looking for work was frightful! "And they talk of a God in the world!" he said to himself—and felt as if he never could forgive Him.

"I have papers to show," she added quietly, as if bethinking herself that he might be taking her for an impostor.

All the time she had never looked him in the face. She had fixed her gaze on the far horizon, but a smile, half pitiful, half proud, flickered about the wonderful curves of her upper lip.

"I am glad you have told me," he said. "I may be of service to you, if you will permit me. I know a great many families about here."

"Oh, thank you!" she cried, and with an expression of dawning hope, which made her seem more beautiful than ever, she raised her eyes and looked him full in the face: it was the first time he had seen her eyes lighted up, except with fever. Then she turned from him, and, apparently lost in relief, walked toward the arbor a few steps distant. He followed her, a little behind, for the path was narrow, his eyes fixed on her exquisite cheek. It was but a moment, yet the very silence seemed to become conscious. All at once she grew paler, shuddered, put her hand to her head, and entering the arbor, sat down. Faber was alarmed. Her hand

was quite cold. She would have drawn it away, but he insisted on feeling her pulse.

"You must come in at once," he said.

She rose, visibly trembling. He supported her into the house, made her lie down, got a hot bottle for her feet, and covered her with shawls and blankets.

"You are quite unfit for any exertion yet," he said, and seated himself near her. "You must consent to be an invalid for a while. Do not be anxious. There is no fear of your finding what you want by the time you are able for it. I pledge myself. Keep your mind perfectly easy."

She answered him with a look that dazzled him. Her very eyelids seemed radiant with thankfulness. The beauty that had fixed his regard was now but a mask through which her soul was breaking, assimilating it. His eyes sank before the look, and he felt himself catching his breath like a drowning man. When he raised them again he saw tears streaming down her face. He rose, and saying he would call again in the evening, left the room.

During the rest of his round he did not find it easy to give due attention to his other cases. His custom was to brood upon them as he rode; but now that look and the tears that followed seemed to bewilder him, taking from him all command of his thought.

Ere long the shadow that ever haunts the steps of the angel, Love, the shadow whose name is Beneficence, began to reassume its earlier tyranny. Oh, the bliss of knowing one's self the source of well-being, the stay and protector, the comfort and life, to such

a woman! of wrapping her round in days of peace, instead of anxiety and pain and labor! But ever the thought of her looking up to him as the source of her freedom, was present through it all. What a glory to be the object of such looks as he had never in his dearest dreams imagined! It made his head swim, even in the very moment while his great Ruber, astonished at what his master required of him that day, rose to some high thorny hedge, or stiff rail. He was perfectly honest; the consequence he sought was only in his own eyes—and in hers; there was nothing of vulgar patronage in the feeling; not an atom of low purpose for self in it. The whole mental condition was nothing worse than the blossom of the dream of his childhood—the dream of being *the* benefactor of his race, of being loved and worshiped for his kindness. But the poison of the dream had grown more active in its blossom. Since then the credit of goodness with himself had gathered sway over his spirit; and stoical pride in goodness is a far worse and lower thing than delight in the thanks of our fellows. He was a mere slave to his own ideal, and that ideal was not brother to the angel that beholds the face of the Father. Now he had taken a backward step in time, but a forward step in his real history, for again another than himself had a part in his dream. It would be long yet, however, ere he learned so to love goodness as to forget its beauty. To him who *is* good, goodness has ceased to be either object or abstraction; it is *in* him—a thirst to give; a solemn, quiet passion to bless; a delight in beholding well-being. Ah, how we dream and prate of love, until the holy fire of the

true divine love, the love that God kindles in a man toward his fellows, burns the shadow of it out!

In the afternoon Mrs. Puckridge appeared with the ring. He took it, told her to wait, and went out. In a few minutes he returned, and, to the woman's astonishment, gave her fifty pounds in notes. He did not tell her he had been to nobody but his own banker. The ring he laid carefully aside, with no definite resolve concerning it, but the great hope of somehow managing that it should return to her one day. The thought shot across his heaven—what a lovely wedding present it would make! and the meteor drew a long train of shining fancies after it.

CHAPTER XV

THE PARLOR AT OWLKIRK

When he called, as he had said, in the evening, she looked much better, and there was even a touch of playfulness in her manner. He could not but hope some crisis had been passed. The money she had received for the ring had probably something to do with it. Perhaps she had not known how valuable the ring was. Thereupon in his conscientiousness he began to doubt whether he had given her its worth. In reality he had exceeded it by a few pounds, as he discovered upon inquiry afterward in London. Anyhow it did not much matter, he said to himself: he was sure to find some way of restoring it to her.

Suddenly she looked up, and said hurriedly:

"I can never repay you, Dr. Faber. No one can do the impossible."

"You can repay me," returned Faber.

"How?" she said, looking startled.

"By never again thinking of obligation to me."

"You must not ask that of me," she rejoined. "It would not be right."

The tinge of a rose not absolutely white floated over her face

and forehead as she spoke.

"Then I shall be content," he replied, "if you will say nothing about it until you are well settled. After that I promise to send you a bill as long as a snipe's."

She smiled, looked up brightly, and said,

"You promise?"

"I do."

"If you don't keep your promise, I shall have to take severe measures. Don't fancy me without money. I *could* pay you now —at least I think so."

It was a great good sign of her that she could talk about money plainly as she did. It wants a thoroughbred soul to talk *just* right about money. Most people treat money like a bosom-sin: they follow it earnestly, but do not talk about it at all in society.

"I only pay six shillings a week for my lodgings!" she added, with a merry laugh.

What had become of her constraint and stateliness? Courtesy itself seemed gone, and simple trust in its place! Was she years younger than he had thought her? She was hemming something, which demanded her eyes, but every now and then she cast up a glance, and they were black suns unclouding over a white sea. Every look made a vintage in the doctor's heart. There *could* be no man in the case! Only again, would fifty pounds, with the loss of a family ring, serve to account for such a change? Might she not have heard from somebody since he saw her yesterday? In her presence he dared not follow the thought.

Some books were lying on the table which could not well be Mrs.

Puckridge's. He took up one: it was *In Memoriam*.

"Do you like Tennyson?" she asked.

"That is a hard question to answer straight off," he replied.—He had once liked Tennyson, else he would not have answered so.—"Had you asked me if I liked *In Memoriam*" he went on, "I could more easily have answered you."

"Then, don't you like *In Memoriam*?"

"No; it is weak and exaggerated."

"Ah! you don't understand it. I didn't until after my father died. Then I began to know what it meant, and now think it the most beautiful poem I ever read."

"You are fond of poetry, then?"

"I don't read much; but I think there is more in some poetry than in all the prose in the world."

"That is a good deal to say."

"A good deal too much, when I think that I haven't read, I suppose, twenty books in my life—that is, books worth calling books: I don't mean novels and things of that kind. Yet I can not believe twenty years of good reading would make me change my mind about *In Memoriam*.—You don't like poetry?"

"I can't say I do—much. I like Pope and Crabbe—and—let me see—well, I used to like Thomson. I like the men that give you things just as they are. I do not like the poets that mix themselves up with what they see, and then rave about Nature. I

confess myself a lover of the truth beyond all things."

"But are you sure," she returned, looking him gently but straight in the eyes, "that, in your anxiety not to make more of things than they are, you do not make less of them than they are?"

"There is no fear of that," returned Faber sadly, with an unconscious shake of the head. "So long as there is youth and imagination on that side to paint them,—"

"Excuse me: are you not begging the question? Do they paint, or do they see what they say? Some profess to believe that the child sees more truly than the grown man—that the latter is the one who paints,—paints out, that is, with a coarse brush."

"You mean Wordsworth."

"Not him only."

"True; no end of poets besides. They all say it now-a-days."

"But surely, Mr. Faber, if there be a God,—"

"Ah!" interrupted the doctor, "there, *you* beg the question. Suppose there should be no God, what then?"

"Then, I grant you, there could be no poetry. Somebody says poetry is the speech of hope; and certainly if there were no God, there could be no hope."

Faber was struck with what she said, not from any feeling that there was truth in it, but from its indication of a not illogical mind. He was on the point of replying that certain kinds of poetry, and *In Memoriam* in particular, seemed to him more like the speech of a despair that had not the courage to confess itself and die; but he saw she had not a suspicion he spoke as he did for

any thing but argument, and feared to fray his bird by scattering his crumbs too roughly. He honestly believed deliverance from the superstition into which he granted a fine nature was readier to fall than a common one, the greatest gift one human being could offer to another; but at the same time he could not bear to think of her recoil from such utterance of his unfaith as he had now almost got into the habit of making. He bethought himself, too, that he had already misrepresented himself, in giving her the impression that he was incapable of enjoying poetry of the more imaginative sort. He had indeed in his youth been passionately fond of such verse. Then came a time in which he turned from it with a sick dismay. Feelings and memories of agony, which a word, a line, would rouse in him afresh, had brought him to avoid it with an aversion seemingly deep-rooted as an instinct, and mounting even to loathing; and when at length he cast from him the semi-beliefs of his education, he persuaded himself that he disliked it for its falsehood. He read his philosophy by the troubled light of wrong and suffering, and that is not the light of the morning, but of a burning house. Of all poems, naturally enough, he then disliked *In Memoriam* the most; and now it made him almost angry that Juliet Meredith should like so much what he so much disliked. Not that he would have a lady indifferent to poetry. That would argue a lack of poetry in herself, and such a lady would be like a scentless rose. You could not expect, who indeed could wish a lady to be scientific in her ways of regarding things? Was she not the live concentration, the perfect outcome, of the vast

poetic show of Nature? In shape, in motion of body and brain, in tone and look, in color and hair, in faithfulness to old dolls and carelessness of hearts, was she not the sublimation, the essence of sunsets, and fading roses, and butterflies, and snows, and running waters, and changing clouds, and cold, shadowy moonlight? He argued thus more now in sorrow than in anger; for what was the woman but a bubble on the sand of the infinite soulless sea—a bubble of a hundred lovely hues, that must shine because it could not help it, and for the same reason break? She was not to blame. Let her shine and glow, and sparkle, and vanish. For him, he cared for nothing but science—nothing that did not promise one day to yield up its kernel to the seeker. To him science stood for truth, and for truth in the inward parts stood obedience to the laws of Nature. If he was one of a poor race, he would rise above his fellows by being good to them in their misery; while for himself he would confess to no misery. Let the laws of Nature work—eyeless and heartless as the whirlwind; he would live his life, be himself, be Nature, and depart without a murmur. No scratch on the face of time, insignificant even as the pressure of a fern-leaf upon coal, should tell that he had ever thought his fate hard. He would do his endeavor and die and return to nothing—not then more dumb of complaint than now. Such had been for years his stern philosophy, and why should it now trouble him that a woman thought differently? Did the sound of faith from such lips, the look of hope in such eyes, stir any thing out of sight in his heart? Was it for a moment as if the corner of a

veil were lifted, the lower edge of a mist, and he saw something fair beyond? Came there a little glow and flutter out of the old time? "All forget," he said to himself. "I too have forgotten. Why should not Nature forget? Why should I be fooled any more? Is it not enough?"

Yet as he sat gazing, in the broad light of day, through the cottage window, across whose panes waved the little red bells of the common fuchsia, something that had nothing to do with science and yet *was*, seemed to linger and hover over the little garden—something from the very depths of loveliest folly. Was it the refrain of an old song? or the smell of withered rose leaves? or was there indeed a kind of light such as never was on sea or shore?

Whatever it was, it was out of the midst of it the voice of the lady seemed to come—a clear musical voice in common speech, but now veiled and trembling, as if it brooded hearkening over the words it uttered:

> "I wrong the grave with fears untrue:
> Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
> There must be wisdom with great Death:
> The dead shall look me through and through.
>
> "Be near us when we climb or fall:
> Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
> With larger other eyes than ours,
> To make allowance for us all."

She ceased, and the silence was like that which follows sweet music.

"Ah! you think of your father!" he hazarded, and hoped indeed it was her father of whom she was thinking.

She made no answer. He turned toward her in anxiety. She was struggling with emotion. The next instant the tears gushed into her eyes, while a smile seemed to struggle from her lips, and spread a little way over her face. It was inexpressibly touching.

"He was my friend," she said. "I shall never have such love again."

"All is not lost when much is lost," said the doctor, with sad comfort.

"There are spring days in winter."

"And *you* don't like poetry!" she said, a sweet playful scorn shining through her tears.

"I spoke but a sober truth," he returned; "—so sober that it seems but the sadder for its truth. The struggle of life is to make the best of things that might be worse."

She looked at him pitifully. For a moment her lips parted, then a strange look as of sudden bodily pain crossed her face, her lips closed, and her mouth looked as if it were locked. She shut the book which lay upon her knee, and resumed her needlework. A shadow settled upon her face.

"What a pity such a woman should be wasted in believing lies!" thought the doctor. "How much better it would be if she

would look things in the face, and resolve to live as she can, doing her best and enduring her worst, and waiting for the end! And yet, seeing color is not the thing itself, and only in the brain whose eye looks upon it, why should I think it better? why should she not shine in the color of her fancy? why should she grow gray because the color is only in herself? We are but bubbles flying from the round of Nature's mill-wheel. Our joys and griefs are the colors that play upon the bubbles. Their throbs and ripples and changes are our music and poetry, and their bursting is our endless repose. Let us waver and float and shine in the sun; let us bear pitifully and be kind; for the night cometh, and there an end."

But in the sad silence, he and the lady were perhaps drifting further and further apart!

"I did not mean," he said, plunging into what came first, "that I could not enjoy verse of the kind you prefer—as verse. I took the matter by the more serious handle, because, evidently, you accepted the tone and the scope of it. I have a weakness for honesty."

"There is something not right about you, though, Mr. Faber—if I could find it out," said Miss Meredith. "You can not mean you enjoy any thing you do not believe in?"

"Surely there are many things one can enjoy without believing in them?"

"On the contrary, it seems to me that enjoying a thing is only another word for believing in it. If I thought the sweetest air on

the violin had no truth in it, I could not listen to it a moment longer."

"Of course the air has all the truth it pretends to—the truth, that is, of the relations of sounds and of intervals—also, of course, the truth of its relation as a whole to that creative something in the human mind which gave birth to it."

"That is not all it pretends. It pretends that the something it gives birth to in the human mind is also a true thing."

"Is there not then another way also, in which the violin may be said to be true? Its tone throughout is of suffering: does it not mourn that neither what gives rise to it, nor what it gives rise to, is any thing but a lovely vapor—the phantom of an existence not to be lived, only to be dreamed? Does it not mourn that a man, though necessarily in harmony with the laws under which he lives, yet can not be sufficiently conscious of that harmony to keep him from straining after his dream?"

"Ah!" said Miss Meredith, "then there is strife in the kingdom, and it can not stand!"

"There is strife in the kingdom, and it can not stand," said the doctor, with mingled assent and assertion. "Hence it is forever falling."

"But it is forever renewed," she objected.

"With what renewal?" rejoined Faber. "What return is there from the jaws of death? The individual is gone. A new consciousness is not a renewal of consciousness."

She looked at him keenly.

"It is hard, is it not?" she said.

"I will not deny that in certain moods it looks so," he answered.

She did not perceive his drift, and was feeling after it.

"Surely," she said, "the thing that ought to be, is the thing that must be."

"How can we tell that?" he returned. "What do we see like it in nature? Whatever lives and thrives—animal or vegetable—or human—it is all one—every thing that lives and thrives, is forever living and thriving on the loss, the defeat, the death of another. There is no unity save absolutely by means of destruction. Destruction is indeed the very center and framework of the sole existing unity. I will not, therefore, as some do, call Nature cruel: what right have I to complain? Nature can not help it. She is no more to blame for bringing me forth, than I am to blame for being brought forth. Ought is merely the reflex of like. We call ourselves the highest in Nature—and probably we are, being the apparent result of the whole—whence, naturally, having risen, we seek to rise, we feel after something we fancy higher. For as to the system in which we live, we are so ignorant that we can but blunderingly feel our way in it; and if we knew all its laws, we could neither order nor control, save by a poor subservience. We are the slaves of our circumstance, therefore betake ourselves to dreams of what *ought to be*."

Miss Meredith was silent for a time.

"I can not see how to answer you," she said at length. "But you do not disturb my hope of seeing my father again. We have

a sure word of prophecy."

Faber suppressed the smile of courteous contempt that was ready to break forth, and she went on:

"It would ill become me to doubt to-day, as you will grant when I tell you a wonderful fact. This morning I had not money enough to buy myself the pair of strong shoes you told me I must wear. I had nothing left but a few trinkets of my mother's—one of them a ring I thought worth about ten pounds. I gave it to my landlady to sell for me, hoping she would get five for it. She brought me fifty, and I am rich!"

Her last words trembled with triumph. He had himself been building her up in her foolish faith! But he took consolation in thinking how easily with a word he could any moment destroy that buttress of her phantom house. It was he, the unbeliever, and no God in or out of her Bible, that had helped her! It did not occur to him that she might after all see in him only a reed blown of a divine wind.

"I am glad to hear of your good fortune," he answered. "I can not say I see how it bears on the argument. You had in your possession more than you knew."

"Does the length of its roots alter the kind of the plant?" she asked. "Do we not know in all nature and history that God likes to see things grow? That must be the best way. It may be the only right way. If that ring was given to my mother against the time when the last child of her race should find herself otherwise helpless, would the fact that the provision was made so early turn

the result into a mere chance meeting of necessity and subsidy? Am I bound to call every good thing I receive a chance, except an angel come down visibly out of the blue sky and give it to me? That would be to believe in a God who could not work His will by His own laws. Here I am, free and hopeful—all I needed. Every thing was dark and troubled yesterday; the sun is up to-day."

"There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune," said the doctor.

"I begin to fear you mean what you say, Mr. Faber. I hoped it was only for argument's sake," returned Miss Meredith.

She did not raise her eyes from her work this time. Faber saw that she was distressed if not hurt, and that her soul had closed its lips to him. He sprang to his feet, and stood bending before her.

"Miss Meredith," he said, "forgive me. I have offended you."

"You have not offended me," she said quietly.

"Hurt you then, which is worse."

"How should I have got through," she said, as if to herself, and dropped her hands with her work on her knees, "if I had not believed there was One caring for me all the time, even when I was most alone!"

"Do you never lose that faith?" asked the doctor.

"Yes; many and many a time. But it always comes back."

"Comes and goes with your health."

"No—is strongest sometimes when I am furthest from well."

"When you are most feverish," said the doctor. "What a fool I am to go on contradicting her!" he added to himself.

"I think I know you better than you imagine, Mr. Faber," said Miss Meredith, after just a moment's pause. "You are one of those men who like to represent themselves worse than they are. I at least am bound to think better of you than you would have me. One who lives as you do for other people, can not be so far from the truth as your words."

Faber honestly repudiated the praise, for he felt it more than he deserved. He did try to do well by his neighbor, but was aware of no such devotion as it implied. Of late he had found his work bore him not a little—especially when riding away from Owlkirk. The praise, notwithstanding, sounded sweet from her lips, was sweeter still from her eyes, and from the warmer white of her cheek, which had begun to resume its soft roundness.

"Ah!" thought the doctor, as he rode slowly home, "were it not for sickness, age, and death, this world of ours would be no bad place to live in. Surely mine is the most needful and the noblest of callings!—to fight for youth, and health, and love; against age, and sickness, and decay! to fight death to the last, even knowing he must have the best of it in the end! to set law against law, and do what poor thing may be done to reconcile the inexorable with the desirable! Who knows—if law be blind, and I am a man that can see—for at the last, and only at the last do eyes come in the head of Nature—who knows but I may find out amongst the blind laws to which I am the eyes, that blind law which lies nearest the root of life!—Ah, what a dreamer I should have been, had I lived in the time when great dreams were

possible! Beyond a doubt I should have sat brooding over the elixir of life, cooking and mixing, heating and cooling, watching for the flash in the goblet. We know so much now, that the range of hope is sadly limited! A thousand dark ways of what seemed blissful possibility are now closed to us, because there the light now shines, and shows naught but despair. Yet why should the thing be absurd? Can any one tell *why* this organism we call man should not go on working forever? Why should it not, since its law is change and renewal, go on changing and renewing forever? Why should it get tired? Why should its law work more feeble, its relations hold less firmly, after a hundred years, than after ten? Why should it grow and grow, then sink and sink? No one knows a reason. Then why should it be absurd to seek what shall encounter the unknown cause, and encountering reveal it? Might science be brought to the pitch that such a woman should live to all the ages, how many common lives might not well be spared to such an end! How many noble ones would not willingly cease for such a consummation—dying that life should be lord, and death no longer king!"

Plainly Faber's materialism sprang from no defect in the region of the imagination; but I find myself unable to determine how much honesty, and how much pride and the desire to be satisfied with himself, had relatively to do with it. I would not be understood to imply that he had an unusual amount of pride; and I am sure he was less easily satisfied with himself than most are. Most people will make excuses for themselves which they would

neither make nor accept for their neighbor; their own failures and follies trouble them little: Faber was of another sort. As ready as any other man to discover what could be said on his side, he was not so ready to adopt it. He required a good deal of himself. But then he unconsciously compared himself with his acquaintances, and made what he knew of them the gauge, if not the measure, of what he required of himself.

It were unintelligible how a man should prefer being the slave of blind helpless Law to being the child of living Wisdom, should believe in the absolute Nothing rather than in the perfect Will, were it not that he does not, can not see the Wisdom or the Will, except he draw nigh thereto.

I shall be answered:

"We do not prefer. We mourn the change which yet we can not resist. We would gladly have the God of our former faith, were it possible any longer to believe in Him."

I answer again:

"Are you sure of what you say? Do you in reality mourn over your lost faith? For my part, I would rather disbelieve with you, than have what you have lost. For I would rather have no God than the God whom you suppose me to believe in, and whom therefore I take to be the God in whom you imagine you believed in the days of your ignorance. That those were days of ignorance, I do not doubt; but are these the days of your knowledge? The time will come when you will see deeper into your own hearts than now, and will be humbled, like not a few other men, by what

you behold."

CHAPTER XVI

THE BUTCHER'S SHOP

About four years previous to the time of which I am now writing, and while yet Mr. Drake was in high repute among the people of Cowlane chapel, he went to London to visit an old friend, a woman of great practical benevolence, exercised chiefly toward orphans. Just then her thoughts and feelings were largely occupied with a lovely little girl, the chain of whose history had been severed at the last link, and lost utterly.

A poor woman in Southwark had of her own motion, partly from love to children and compassion for both them and their mothers, partly to earn her own bread with pleasure, established a sort of *crèche* in her two rooms, where mothers who had work from home could bring their children in the morning, and leave them till night. The child had been committed to her charge day after day for some weeks. One morning, when she brought her, the mother seemed out of health, and did not appear at night to take her home. The next day the woman heard she was in the small-pox-hospital. For a week or so, the money to pay for the child came almost regularly, in postage-stamps, then ceased altogether, and the woman heard nothing either from or of the

mother. After a fortnight she contrived to go to the hospital to inquire after her. No one corresponding to her description was in the place. The name was a common one, and several patients bearing it had lately died and been buried, while others had recovered and were gone. Her inquiries in the neighborhood had no better success: no one knew her, and she did not even discover where she had lived. She could not bear the thought of taking the child to the work-house, and kept her for six or eight weeks, but she had a sickly son, a grown lad, to support, and in dread lest she should be compelled to give her up to the parish, had applied for counsel to the lady I have mentioned. When Mr. Drake arrived, she had for some time been searching about in vain to find a nest for her.

Since his boys had been taken from him, and the unprized girl left behind had grown so precious, Mr. Drake had learned to love children as the little ones of God. He had no doubt, like many people, a dread of children with unknown antecedents: who could tell what root of bitterness, beyond the common inheritance, might spring up in them? But all that was known of this one's mother was unusually favorable; and when his friend took him to see the child, his heart yearned after her. He took her home to Dorothy, and she had grown up such as we have seen her, a wild, roguish, sweet, forgetful, but not disobedient child—very dear to both the Drakes, who called her their duckling.

As we have seen, however, Mr. Drake had in his adversity grown fearful and faint-hearted, and had begun to doubt whether

he had a right to keep her. And of course he had not, if it was to be at the expense of his tradespeople. But he was of an impetuous nature, and would not give even God time to do the thing that needed time to be done well. He saw a crisis was at hand. Perhaps, however, God saw a spiritual, where he saw a temporal crisis.

Dorothy had a small sum, saved by her mother, so invested as to bring her about twenty pounds a year, and of the last payment she had two pounds in hand. Her father had nothing, and quarter-day was two months off. This was the common knowledge of their affairs at which they arrived as they sat at breakfast on the Monday morning, after the saddest Sunday either of them had ever spent. They had just risen from the table, and the old woman was removing the cloth, when a knock came to the lane-door, and she went to open it, leaving the room-door ajar, whereby the minister caught a glimpse of a blue apron, and feeling himself turning sick, sat down again. Lisbeth re-entered with a rather greasy-looking note, which was of course from the butcher, and Mr. Drake's hand trembled as he opened it. Mr. Jones wrote that he would not have troubled him, had he not asked for his bill; but, if it was quite convenient, he would be glad to have the amount by the end of the week, as he had a heavy payment to make the following Monday. Mr. Drake handed the note to his daughter, rose hastily, and left the room. Dorothy threw it down half-read, and followed him. He was opening the door, his hat in his hand.

"Where are you going in such a hurry, father dear?" she said.

"Wait a moment and I'll go with you."

"My child, there is not a moment to lose!" he replied excitedly.

"I did not read all the letter," she returned; "but I think he does not want the money till the end of the week."

"And what better shall we be then?" he rejoined, almost angrily. "The man looks to me, and where will he find himself on Monday? Let us be as honest at least as we can."

"But we may be able to borrow it—or—who knows what might happen?"

"There it is, my dear! Who knows what? We can be sure of nothing in this world."

"And what in the next, father?"

The minister was silent. If God was anywhere, he was here as much as there! That was not the matter in hand, however. He owed the money, and was bound to let the man know that he could not pay it by the end of the week. Without another word to Dorothy, he walked from the house, and, like a man afraid of cowardice, went straight at the object of his dismay. He was out of the lane and well into Pine street before he thought to put on his hat.

From afar he saw the butcher, standing in front of his shop —a tall, thin man in blue. His steel glittered by his side, and a red nightcap hung its tassel among the curls of his gray hair. He was discussing, over a small joint of mutton, some point of economic interest with a country customer in a check-shawl. To the minister's annoyance the woman was one of his late

congregation, and he would gladly have passed the shop, had he had the courage. When he came near, the butcher turned from the woman, and said, taking his nightcap by the tassel in rudimentary obeisance.

"At your service, sir."

His courtesy added to Mr. Drake's confusion: it was plain the man imagined he had brought him his money! Times were indeed changed since his wife used to drive out in her brougham to pay the bills! Was this what a man had for working in the vineyard the better part of a lifetime? The property he did not heed. That had been the portion of the messengers of heaven from the first. But the shame!—what was he to do with that? Who ever heard of St. Paul not being able to pay a butcher's bill! No doubt St. Paul was a mighty general, and he but a poor subaltern, but in the service there was no respect of persons. On the other hand, who ever heard of St. Paul having any bills to pay!—or for that matter, indeed, of his marrying a rich wife, and getting into expensive habits through popularity! Who ever heard of his being dependent on a congregation! He accepted help sometimes, but had always his goats'-hair and his tent-making to fall back upon! —Only, after all, was the Lord never a hard master? Had he not let it come to this?

Much more of the sort went through his mind in a flash. The country woman had again drawn the attention of the butcher with a parting word.

"You don't want a chicken to-day—do you, Mr. Drake?" she

said, as she turned to go.

"No, thank you, Mrs. Thomson. How is your husband?"

"Better, I thank you sir. Good morning, sir."

"Mr. Jones," said the minister—and as he spoke, he stepped inside the shop, removed his hat, and wiped his forehead, "I come to you with shame. I have not money enough to pay your bill. Indeed I can not even pay a portion of it till next quarter-day."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Drake, sir."

"But your bill on Monday, Mr. Jones!"

"Oh! never mind that. I shall do very well, I dare say. I have a many as owes me a good deal more than you do, sir, and I'm much obliged to you for letting of me know at once. You see, sir, if you hadn't—"

"Yes, I know: I asked for it! I am the sorrier I can't pay it after all.

It is quite disgraceful, but I simply can't help it."

"Disgraceful, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Jones, almost as if hurt: "I wish they thought as you do as has ten times the reason, sir!"

"But I have a request to make," the pastor went on, heedless of the butcher's remark, and pulling out a large and handsome gold watch: "Would you oblige me by taking this watch in security until I do pay you? It is worth a great deal more than your bill. It would add much to the obligation, if you would put it out of sight somewhere, and say nothing about it. If I should die before paying your bill, you will be at liberty to sell it; and what is over, after deducting interest, you will kindly hand to my daughter."

Mr. Jones stared with open mouth. He thought the minister had lost his senses.

"What do you make of me, sir?" he said at last. "You go for to trust me with a watch like that, and fancy I wouldn't trust you with a little bill that ain't been owing three months yet! You make me that I don't know myself, sir! Never you mention the bill to me again, sir. I'll ask for it, all in good time. Can I serve you with any thing to-day, sir?"

"No, I thank you. I must at least avoid adding to my debt."

"I hope what you do have, you'll have of me, sir. I don't mind waiting a goodish bit for my money, but what cuts me to the heart is to see any one as owes me money a goin' over the way, as if 'e 'adn't 'a' found my meat good enough to serve his turn, an' that was why he do it. That does rile me!"

"Take my word for it, Mr. Jones—all the meat we have we shall have of you. But we must be careful. You see I am not quite so—so—"

He stopped with a sickly smile.

"Look ye here, Mr. Drake!" broke in the butcher: "you parsons ain't proper brought up. You ain't learned to take care of yourselves. Now us tradespeople, we're learned from the first to look arter number one, and not on no account to forget which *is* number one. But you parsons, now,—you'll excuse me, sir; I don't mean no offense; you ain't brought up to 't, an' it ain't to be expected of you—but it's a great neglect in your eddication, sir; an' the consekence is as how us as knows better 'as to take care

on you as don't know no better. I can't say I think much o' them 'senters: they don't stick by their own; but you're a honest man, sir, if ever there was a honest man as was again' the church, an' ask you for that money, I never will, acause I know when you can pay, it's pay you will. Keep your mind easy, sir: *I* shan't come to grief for lack o' what you owe me! Only don't you go a starving of yourself, Mr. Drake. I don't hold with that nohow. Have a bit o' meat when you want it, an' don't think over it twice. There!"

The minister was just able to thank his new friend and no more. He held out his hand to him, forgetful of the grease that had so often driven him from the pavement to the street. The butcher gave it a squeeze that nearly shot it out of his lubricated grasp, and they parted, both better men for the interview.

When Mr. Drake reached home, he met his daughter coming out to find him. He took her hand, led her into the house and up to his study, and closed the door.

"Dorothy," he said, "it is sweet to be humbled. The Spirit can bring water from the rock, and grace from a hard heart. I mean mine, not the butcher's. He has behaved to me as I don't see how any but a Christian could, and that although his principles are scarcely those of one who had given up all for the truth. He is like the son in the parable who said, I go not, but went; while I, much I fear me, am like the other who said, I go, sir, but went not. Alas! I have always found it hard to be grateful; there is something in it unpalatable to the old Adam; but from the bottom of my heart I thank Mr. Jones, and I will pray God

for him ere I open a book. Dorothy, I begin to doubt our way of church-membership. It *may* make the good better; but if a bad one gets in, it certainly makes him worse. I begin to think too, that every minister ought to be independent of his flock—I do not mean by the pay of the state, God forbid! but by having some trade or profession, if no fortune. Still, if I had had the money to pay that bill, I should now be where I am glad not to be—up on my castletop, instead of down at the gate. He has made me poor that He might send me humility, and that I find unspeakably precious. Perhaps He will send me the money next. But may it not be intended also to make us live more simply—on vegetables perhaps? Do you not remember how it fared with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, when they refused the meat and the wine, and ate pulse instead? At the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. Pulse, you know, means peas and beans, and every thing of that kind —which is now proved to be almost as full of nourishment as meat itself, and to many constitutions more wholesome. Let us have a dinner of beans. You can buy haricot beans at the grocer's —can you not? If Ducky does not thrive on them, or they don't agree with you, my Dorothy, you will have only to drop them. I am sure they will agree with me. But let us try, and then the money I owe Mr. Jones, will not any longer hang like a millstone about my neck."

"We will begin this very day," said Dorothy, delighted to see

her father restored to equanimity. "I will go and see after a dinner of herbs.—We shall have love with it anyhow, father!" she added, kissing him.

That day the minister, who in his earlier days had been allowed by his best friends to be a little particular about his food, and had been no mean connoisseur in wines, found more pleasure at his table, from lightness of heart, and the joy of a new independence, than he had had for many a day. It added much also to his satisfaction with the experiment, that, instead of sleeping, as his custom was, after dinner, he was able to read without drowsiness even. Perhaps Dorothy's experience was not quite so satisfactory, for she looked weary when they sat down to tea.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PARLOR AGAIN

Faber had never made any effort to believe in a divine order of things—indeed he had never made strenuous effort to believe in any thing. It had never at all occurred to him that it might be a duty to believe. He was a kindly and not a repellent man, but when he doubted another, he doubted him; it never occurred to him that perhaps he ought to believe in that man. There must be a lack of something, where a man's sense of duty urges him mainly to denial. His existence is a positive thing—his main utterance ought to be positive. I would not forget that the nature of a denial may be such as to involve a strong positive.

To Faber it seemed the true and therefore right thing, to deny the existence of any such being as men call God. I heartily admit that such denial may argue a nobler condition than that of the man who will reason for the existence of what he calls a Deity, but omits to order his way after what he professes to believe His will. At the same time, his conclusion that he was not bound to believe in any God, seemed to lift a certain weight off the heart of the doctor—the weight, namely, that gathers partly from the knowledge of having done wrong things, partly

from the consciousness of not *being* altogether right. It would be very unfair, however, to leave the impression that this was the origin of all the relief the doctor derived from the conclusion. For thereby he got rid, in a great measure at least, of the notion —horrible in proportion to the degree in which it is actually present to the mind, although, I suspect, it is not, in a true sense, credible to any mind—of a cruel, careless, unjust Being at the head of affairs. That such a notion should exist at all, is mainly the fault of the mass of so-called religious people, for they seem to believe in, and certainly proclaim such a God. In their excuse it may be urged they tell the tale as it was told to them; but the fault lies in this, that, with the gospel in their hands, they have yet lived in such disregard of its precepts, that they have never discovered their representation of the God of Truth to be such, that the more honest a man is, the less can he accept it. That the honest man, however, should not thereupon set himself to see whether there might not be a true God notwithstanding, whether such a God was not conceivable consistently with things as they are, whether the believers had not distorted the revelation they professed to follow; especially that he should prefer to believe in some sort of *vitalic* machine, equally void of beneficence and malevolence, existing because it can not help it, and giving birth to all sorts of creatures, men and women included, because it can not help it—must arise from a condition of being, call it spiritual, moral, or mental—I can not be obliging enough to add *cerebral,* because so I should nullify my conclusion, seeing there would be

no substance left wherein it could be wrought out—for which the man, I can not but think, will one day discover that he was to blame—for which a living God sees that he is to blame, makes all the excuse he can, and will give the needful punishment to the uttermost lash.

There are some again, to whom the idea of a God perfect as they could imagine Him in love and devotion and truth, seems, they say, too good to be true: such have not yet perceived that no God any thing less than absolutely glorious in loveliness would be worth believing in, or such as the human soul could believe in. But Faber did not belong to this class—still less to that portion of it whose inconsolable grief over the lack of such a God may any day blossom into hope of finding Him. He was in practice at one with that portion of it who, accepting things at their worst, find alleviation for their sorrows in the strenuous effort to make the best of them; but he sought to content himself with the order of things which, blind and deaf and non-willing, he said had existed for evermore, most likely—the thing was hardly worth discussing; blind, for we can not see that it sees; deaf, for we can not hear that it hears; and without will, for we see no strife, purpose, or change in its going!

There was no God, then, and people would be more comfortable to know it. In any case, as there was none, they ought to know it. As to his certainty of there being none, Faber felt no desire to find one, had met with no proof that there was one, and had reasons for supposing that there was none. He had

not searched very long or very wide, or with any eager desire to discover Him, if indeed there should be a God that hid Himself. His genial nature delighted in sympathy, and he sought it even in that whose perfect operation, is the destruction of all sympathy. Who does not know the pleasure of that moment of nascent communion, when argument or expostulation has begun to tell, conviction begins to dawn, and the first faint thrill of response is felt? But the joy may be either of two very different kinds—delight in victory and the personal success of persuasion, or the ecstasy of the shared vision of truth, in which contact souls come nearer to each other than any closest familiarity can effect. Such a nearness can be brought about by no negation however genuine, or however evil may be the thing denied.

Sympathy, then, such as he desired, Faber was now bent on finding, or bringing about in Juliet Meredith. He would fain get nearer to her. Something pushed, something drew him toward the lovely phenomenon into which had flowered invisible Nature's bud of shapeless protoplasm. He would have her trust him, believe him, love him. If he succeeded, so much the greater would be the value and the pleasure of the conquest, that it had been gained in spite of all her prejudices of education and conscience. And if in the process of finding truth a home in her bosom, he should cause her pain even to agony, would not the tenderness born of their lonely need for each other, be far more consoling than any mere aspiration after a visionary comforter?

Juliet had been, so far as her father was concerned in her

education, religiously brought up. No doubt Captain Meredith was more fervid than he was reasonable, but he was a true man, and in his regiment, on which he brought all his influence to bear, had been regarded with respect, even where not heartily loved. But her mother was one of those weakest of women who can never forget the beauty they once possessed, or quite believe they have lost it, remaining, even after the very traces of it have vanished, as greedy as ever of admiration. Her maxims and principles, if she could be said to have any of the latter, were not a little opposed to her husband's; but she died when Juliet was only five years old, and the child grew to be almost the companion of her father. Hence it came that she heard much religious conversation, often partaking not a little of the character of discussion and even of dispute. She thus became familiar with the forms of a religious belief as narrow as its partisans are numerous. Her heart did not remain uninterested, but she was never in earnest sufficiently to discover what a thing of beggarly elements the system was, and how incapable of satisfying any childlike soul. She never questioned the truth of what she heard, and became skilled in its idioms and arguments and forms of thought. But the more familiar one becomes with any religious system, while yet the conscience and will are unawakened and obedience has not begun, the harder is it to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Such familiarity is a soul-killing experience, and great will be the excuse for some of those sons of religious parents who have gone further toward hell than many born and

bred thieves and sinners.

When Juliet came to understand clearly that her new friend did mean thorough-going unbelief, the rejection of *all* the doctrines she had been taught by him whose memory she revered, she was altogether shocked, and for a day and a night regarded him as a monster of wickedness. But her horror was mainly the reflex of that with which her father would have regarded him, and all that was needed to moderate horror to disapproval, was familiarity with his doctrines in the light of his agreeable presence and undeniable good qualities. Thoroughly acquainted as she believed herself with "the plan of salvation," Jesus of Nazareth was to her but the vague shadow of something that was more than a man, yet no man at all. I had nearly said that what He came to reveal had become to her yet more vague from her nebulous notion of Him who was its revelation. Her religion was, as a matter of course, as dusky and uncertain, as the object-center of it was obscure and unrealized. Since her father's death and her comparative isolation, she had read and thought a good deal; some of my readers may even think she had read and thought to tolerable purposes judging from her answers to Faber in the first serious conversation they had; but her religion had lain as before in a state of dull quiescence, until her late experience, realizing to her the idea of the special care of which she stood so much in need, awoke in her a keen sense of delight, and if not a sense of gratitude as well, yet a dull desire to be grateful.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.