

"I don't understand you, Eric," answered James, with a slight shade of annoyance crossing his face. "You speak plainly, but I must confess I fail to see your ground for such a statement. I am not aware that I am doing anything of the sort."

"No," replied Ericson, "neither was I aware when I did the same thing. You say God has not the will to reveal Himself to you; then what do His promises mean? Absolutely nothing! When we say a man promises what he has the power, but not the intention to perform, it is generally understood to be equivalent to saying he does not speak the truth. God says, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.' You say He casts you out; *ergo*, God—"

"Nonsense, Eric!" interrupted James; "you know I don't mean that."

"Well, there is the fact. Whether you mean it or not, you certainly do it. You say it is decreed that you shall not find God; therefore you maintain that He has placed you here with the deliberate intention to erect between you and Heaven a barrier, over which it is utterly impossible for you to pass. What is that but robbing Him of justice, honour, and truth? In fact, you rob Him of every attribute but power. If any human king were to act as you say God acts, he would be universally execrated and hated. No, James; it must be either one thing or the other; either God has both power and will to lead you into knowledge and truth, or he is not worthy the name of God. Either He is Goodness, or He is a mere omnipotent Tyrant. Which is it?"

"Well, allowing that He is all goodness, and that the obstacle to a perfect knowledge of Him lies in myself, what difference does it make to me if I cannot discover and remove that obstacle?" demanded James, moodily.

"Every difference. By saying and believing that God has not the will to reveal Himself to you, you throw all responsibility on Him, and are careless as to the consequences; but by allowing that the obstacle is in yourself, you will never cease searching for it, and are therefore sure to find it. It makes all the difference between life and death, darkness and light." He spoke warmly, and James looked at him inquiringly.

"Do you think you know what the hindrance is, Eric?"

"Yes, I do. I believe it is the same with you as it was with me."