

whilst the whitewash of her place of worship was echoing to the metre of doxologies, her precious boy was telling himself that the doctrine of the Christian Trinity was merely a crude expression of the sublime and satisfactory truth that the so-called Father is pure unconditioned Abstraction; that the so-called Son is Abstraction made real by Self-negation, and that the so-called Spirit is Negation again negated, which manages thus to make itself the perfect Sum-total of existence.

Having gone up to Oxford bursting with these sublime secrets, the young man had grown gradually tired of keeping his mind tortured with the one gymnastic attitude which enabled him to receive their consolations; and he presently forgot the Absolute in an enthusiasm for religious Art, which he found to be a better language for the unextinguished piety of his nature, and which surrounded his inner life with an atmosphere of congenial mysticism. He subsequently travelled in Italy, where he collected a few fine pictures; and finally, on the death of a cousin, to whom he was engaged to be married, and to whose memory he was inviolably constant, he had retired with his mother to a cottage in North Wales, where he taught the principles of art and the practice of carving to the villagers, and joined in his mother's devotions with so much filial sympathy that he sometimes could hardly tell how his own creed differed from hers. His philosophy in fact had by this time left but two traces on his character: it had sublimated the creed of his childhood from a statement into a symbol of truth, and thus seemed to have placed it for ever beyond the reach of criticism; and it had made him indifferent to the discoveries and insensible of the claims of science.

His friend's document, therefore, with its dry and methodical references to modes of thought and to aspects of things which he himself had disregarded, did little at first but cause him a shock of puzzled surprise. He looked round him again at the bedroom and its gilded bedstead; and contrasting his friend's description of his dissatisfaction with life with the delicate appreciation shown by him of all the arts of living, he