

"Why, no!—they say she isn't. Isn't strong, I mean. Never mind! What were we talking about?"

"People and Scripture, don't you know. Things being actual. . . ."

"I know. I was just going to tell you what dear old Gus—my friend—won't forgive me for. I'll risk it. Only don't you make copy of it. . . . Very well!—mind you don't. . . . It was this. Some years ago I was urging him to marry, and he pleaded in extenuation of his celibacy that he wished to model his life on Our Lord's in every point within his power. 'It's all very fine,' I said. 'But why do you suppose the Apostles did not model their lives on Our Lord's? Do you mean that they all led celibate lives?' Gus said this was almost an insinuation that Our Lord was or had been married. I'm sorry to say I couldn't help saying, 'Can you produce a single particle of direct evidence that Our Lord was not a widower when John baptized Him?' Gus hardly spoke to me all that day. But what hurt him was the realism of the expression 'widower.' The case was exactly on all fours with your wife's."

They were just in sight of the Rectory, and Challis had to get back in time for dinner. So he shook hands with his friend, remarking: "You will go on blowing me up another time." Athelstan Taylor replied with a cordial handshake. "You deserve it, you know!" and pulled out his watch. "I shall be in time for Mrs. Silverton," said he. But who and what that lady was this story knoweth not, neither whence she came nor whither she went. But she occurs in the text for all that.

Challis wandered back, having intentionally allowed himself time to do so, keeping out of the direct path to avoid meeting people. He liked his own company best.

His talk with Athelstan Taylor, which else could claim little place in the story, had had a curious effect on him. It had brought back vividly his early days with his wife. As he sauntered on with his eyes on the ground, choosing rather destructively special whitey-green heads of new young fern to crush down, or cutting here and there an inoffensive flower with his stick, his ears heard nothing of the wind-music in the trees, his eyes saw nothing of the evening