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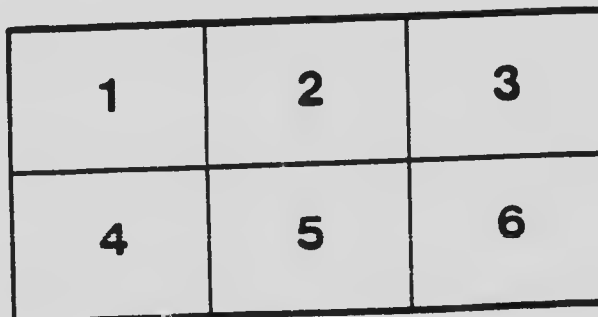
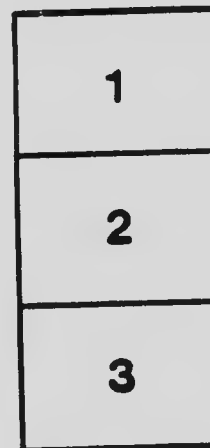
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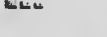
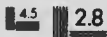
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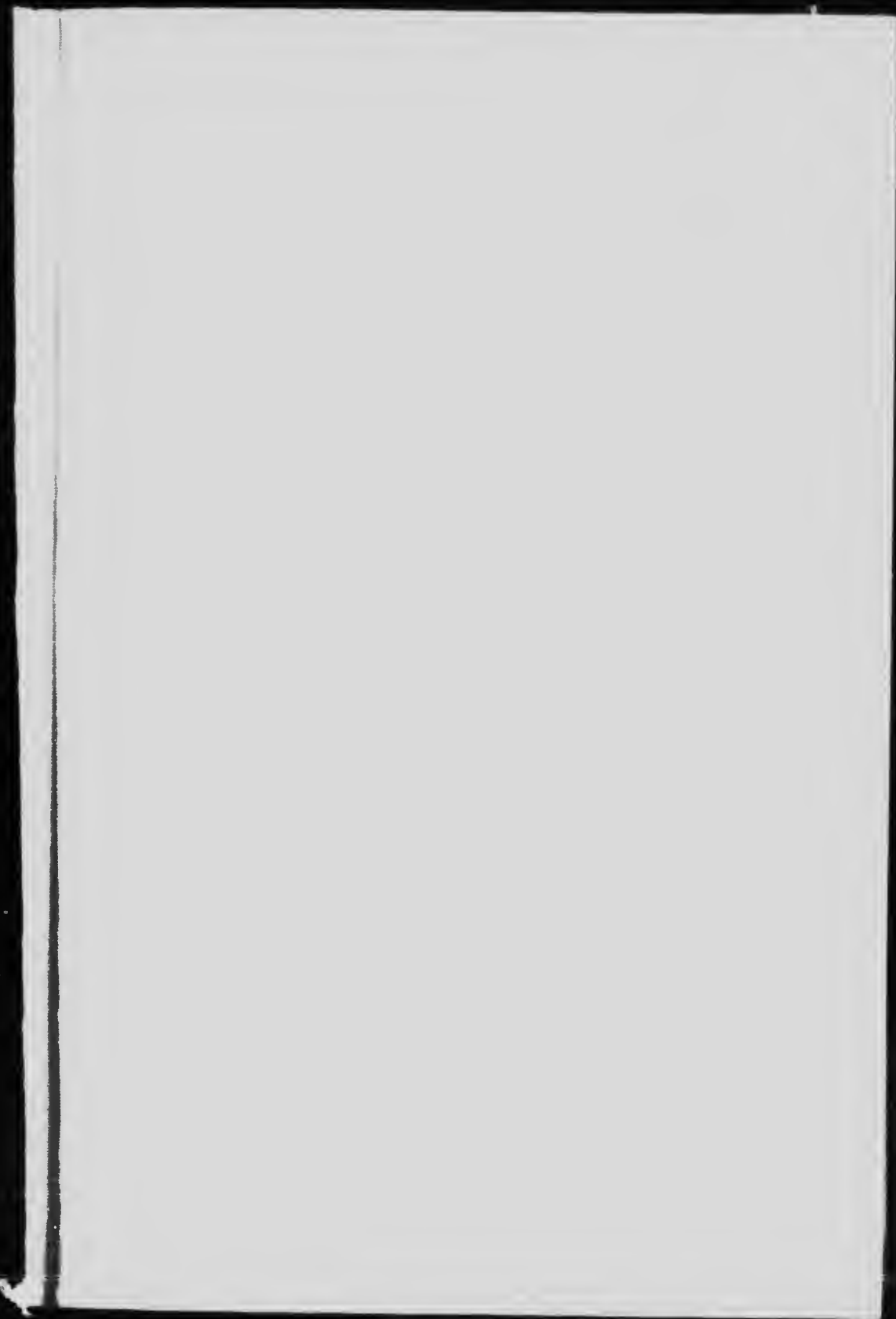


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THE SON *of*
MARY BETHEL

By ELSA BARKER



THE SON OF MARY BETHEL



The Son of Mary Bethel

By
Elsa Barker

"I know not whether this book is worth anything, nor what the world will do with it, or misdo, or utterly forbear to do, as is likeliest; but this I could tell the world: You have not had for a hundred years any book that comes more direct and flamingly from the heart of a living man. Do what you like with it."

THOMAS CARLYLE, of his French Revolution.



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NEW YORK

To the Memory of My Mother

LOUISE MARIA

*Who taught me the meaning of Faith,
Hope, and Charity—whose
other name is Love.*



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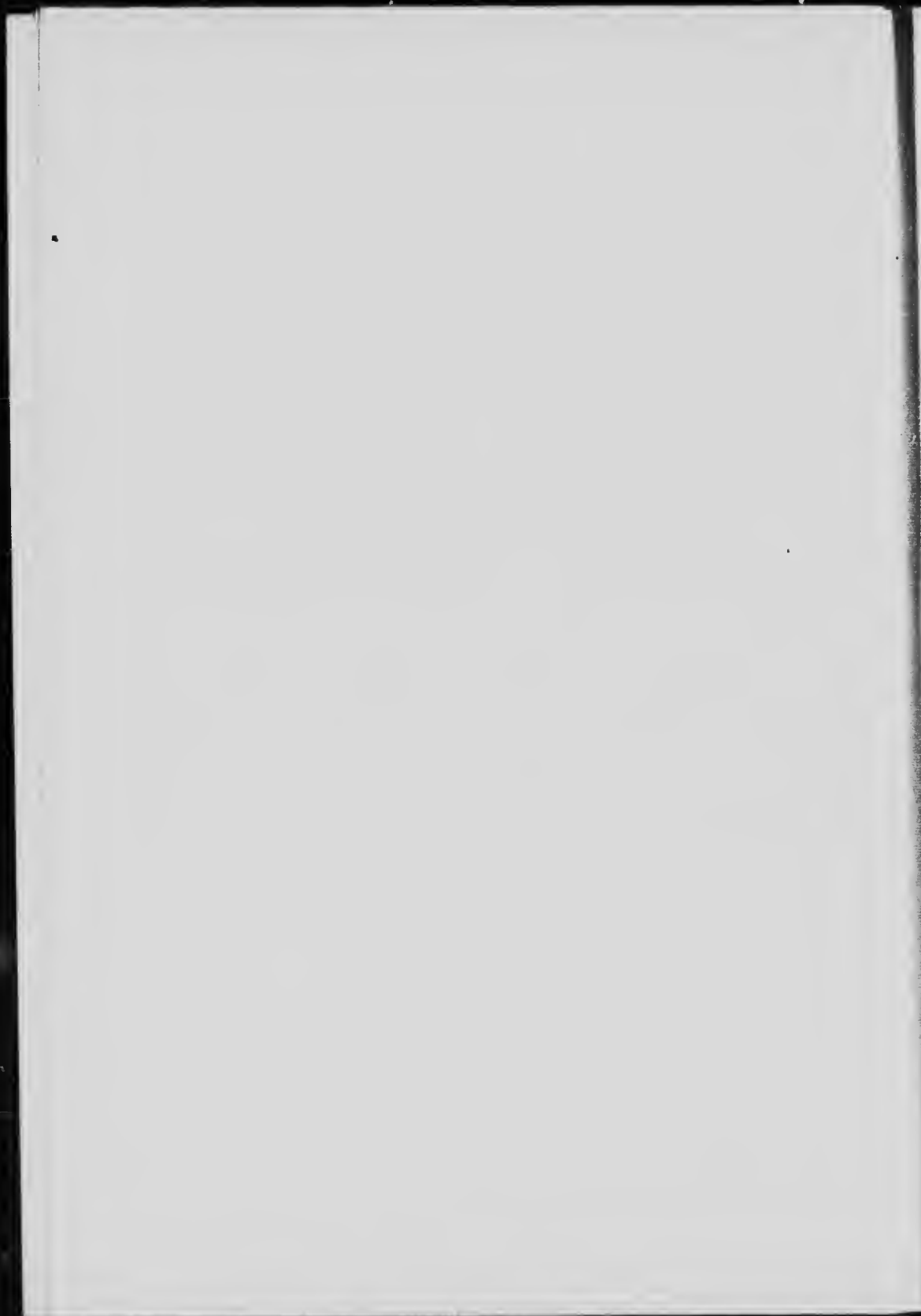
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BOOK I
THE PROMISE



The Son of Mary Bethel

CHAPTER I

HE was a strange child, given to long reveries almost from the cradle. As Mary Bethel told her husband one day when Jesse was three years old: "You would think, to see him gazing off into the sky with that rapt look in his eyes, that he was trying to remember something that happened ages before he was born." The young mother was herself a dreamer, and sometimes wrote verses in secret. Jesse was her first child, and she had searched the Scriptures for a name which should be an inspiration and a source of strength to him in after life. Mary was a religious woman who deeply realised her religion, having a larger heart and a larger brain than any of her neighbours. From an old Biblical dictionary she learned the meaning of the name Jesse, "the Lord is." So, as the existence of her Lord was very real to her, she called the child's name Jesse.

Though two other sons came later to fill her heart and to lessen her scant leisure, they seemed to be of a different spirit from the first-born. Never would she have admitted that she loved them less than him; but on the night when the swamp woods were on fire behind the house, it was the little Jesse she held close in her arms through the long hours of watching, while the two younger boys slept heavily side by side on the broad lounge at the other end of the kitchen.

The husband of Mary Bethel was a kind and quiet man of middle-age, some twenty years her senior. He was by trade a carpenter, and occasional work of building and repairing added enough to the income of their few acres to give them peace and plenty.

Two decades after the Civil War, the standard of living was simple among the farming people of Western Vermont. They were artless and full of elemental grace. The

annual flood of summer visitors from the large cities, that later brought disturbing suggestions of a more complex existence, had hardly then begun. But for the railroad and the weekly newspaper, the life of the dwellers in Nashburgh and the neighbouring towns might almost have been likened to that of the inhabitants of Palestine in the early years of our era. Extremes of poverty and wealth were practically unknown. On the table of the poorest family there was enough of wholesome if coarse food, and the most prosperous farmer and his wife sat down to eat with their farm-hands and hired girls in at least the semblance of fraternity. When in the meeting-house, those who made the profession of religion were wont to call each other "brother" and "sister." Though generally reserved for Sunday, this ancient custom was an occasional reminder of that ideal which they believed they sought to realise. Religion was much talked about, and if the tears so freely shed at the revival meetings were true testimony, it must have been at least emotionally experienced.

The books in that remote farmhouse of the Bethels were few, and mostly of a religious character; though two or three well-worn volumes of the best English poetry were on the table in the sitting-room, beside the family Bible and the album. But when Jesse was seven years old, and the two other boys five and four, a literary event occurred in the Bethel home. The child of a more prosperous neighbour gave "The Book of Wonder" to the eldest son of Mary. This precious gift was a token of appreciation of the bravery of Jesse in subduing, with his gentle voice and affectionate arms, the anger of a passing dog whose loud barks and widely displayed white teeth had alarmed not only the children but their mothers.

"The Book of Wonder" was, for Jesse, the door into another world. He was familiar with the idea of angels and other lofty supernatural beings, whose pictures were in the family Bible; they were to be regarded with awe and veneration from a respectful distance. But fairies, and brownies, and sylphs, and salamanders! Oh, these were the companions for whom his soul had yearned! No revelation of the unfamiliar splendours of foreign lands can ever mean to a grown man or woman what an illustrated book

of fairy lore and beauty may mean to an imaginative child. At the age of seven Jesse could read as well as most children of ten or eleven, and the first hours of his possession of "The Book of Wonder" were hours of such intense intellectual excitement that outwardly he was so still his mother was afraid. She was too wise to take the book away from him; though when his bedtime came there was no appeal from her decision that the wonderful thing must be put away until the morrow.

Jesse could not sleep. After lying for half an hour, he called to his mother, softly, so as not to waken the other boys:

"Mother! Mother!"

She came to the half-open door of the bedroom. It was in the middle of the summer and still only twilight, though past eight o'clock.

"What is it, child? Why are you not asleep?"

"Mother, when is Midsummer eve?"

"I don't know, Jesse: the middle of the summer, I suppose. Why don't you go to sleep?"

"But, Mother, I want to know when is Midsummer eve."

She came over to the bed and took his hand. It was hot, and vibrant with the inner force which she had grown almost to fear in him. After a moment she gently laid his hand back on the coverlet, and said in a whisper: "Do not wake the children. I will look in the almanac. I will come back and tell you."

He was sitting up in bed when she re-entered the room.

"Well, Mother?" he whispered.

"Midsummer eve is the twenty-fourth of June."

"And when is it now?"

"This is the—wait a moment—Why, this is the twenty-fourth of June."

"Oh, Mother!"

He reached up and caught her around the neck, drawing her down to him. She felt his small heart beating wildly through her thin summer dress.

"Mother," he whispered excitedly, "the Book says that on Midsummer eve, at midnight, the fairies all come out and dance upon the grass. They will come out to-night!"

They will dance upon *our* grass! Around the rose-bushes, the Book says, around and around the rose-bushes. Oh, I must see them! How long before midnight, Mother?"

"My darling! Won't you go to sleep? It is hours and hours before midnight. You can never stay awake. And if you should, you wouldn't—you might not see them."

"Yes, I will stay awake. How will I know when it's midnight?"

"The clock strikes twelve at midnight."

"The same as it does at noon?"

"Yes; but before that, you know, it will have to strike nine, and ten, and eleven, with a long, long hour between each striking. You could never keep awake."

"Will you come in and kiss me good-night, Mother, before you go to bed?"

"Yes, if you are not asleep."

"I shall not be asleep."

Before ten o'clock she came again, not thinking to find him awake, but merely to keep the letter of her promise. So still he lay, that she would have passed out again in silence had not his whisper held her.

"What time is it now?"

She told him, as she gave the good-night kiss, then went away and left him alone. He was no longer feverish, for the little hand was cool and normal, and she thought he would soon fall asleep. So she went to her own bed in the next room.

After a sound slumber Mary awoke. The clock was striking. As the last tones reverberated through the silent house, she thought she heard a sound as of a clicking latch.

Slipping quietly from the bed so as not to waken her husband, she went with bare feet into the little entry at the front of the house. The outer door which led into the garden was wide open. Noiselessly she passed to the threshold and looked out.

There in the violet moonlight stood the child, his long white nightgown sharply outlined against the dark background of currant-bushes. Suddenly she saw him bend forward, half crouching, gazing intently at something between him and the rose-bushes bordering the path. Only a minute or two he bent there, motionless, apparently spell-

bound; then, throwing up his arms exultingly, without a sound he began to walk swiftly to and fro over the damp grass, regardless of his naked feet, his scantily clad body, unmindful of everything save the unquenchable flame of his idea. At the age of seven, the son of Mary Bethel had discovered the Invisible.

After a few moments the mother went out on the doorstep and waited quietly till he should turn and see her. She feared to startle him too suddenly from his abstraction should she call his name, or by any sound apprise him of her presence. But soon he turned of his own accord and came up the path, then saw her standing by the open door. She went a few steps toward him, extending her arms to the cold little form which rushed to meet her.

"Oh, Mother, I saw the fairies! The Book is true! There *are* fairies! They were dancing and dancing over the grass around the rose-bushes, a circle of them, all in green, with silvery wings, and I think they saw me, for they all at once let go of hands, and off they were, quick as a star falls, Mother. And I am so happy that I saw them, for now I know the Book is true. And if I see them, other people can see them, too, Father and the boys, and maybe all other people."

"Yes, darling, but now come back to bed. It is cold here, and you have no shoes on."

So she led him back to his bed, and sat beside him till his enthusiasm finally forgot itself in the delicious languor of relaxing nerves and slipped into the waiting void of slumber. And by no word, nor by any too-long silence, did she give the child to feel that in the mind of his mother there could be a possible doubt that he had seen the midnight dance of the fairies around the rose-bushes on Midsummer eve.

But in the morning she advised him to let the wonder remain a secret between themselves. So she postponed the dreamer's inevitable awakening to the incredulity of a material-minded world.

CHAPTER II

EVERY summer, in a large grove some twenty miles north of Nashburgh, there was held a religious camp-meeting. As the husband of Mary Bethel was not in sympathy with these periodical expressions of collective emotion, she rarely visited the camp-ground. That she could not oftener join in the summer festival of her church was a cause of secret grief to her; but after several years of marriage to a man whose undoubted love for her had never found refreshment at the wells of understanding, and whose own tastes and limitations tended more and more, as time went on, to become the boundaries of the family's experience,—after several years of marital compliance, the indulgence of her own desires had come to be a part of the vast ocean of the unattainable, whose voice was ever calling in her ears. Before the birth of Jesse this voice had called incessantly, and she sometimes wondered if the strangeness of the child was not the answer of Nature to her ceaseless questioning. In those very words she expressed the query to herself, having more education than was usual with the women of her class. As she had no companionship of a nature to stimulate the mind, all the enthusiasm of her temperament flowed into the broad channel of religion,—all save one small stream, whose unknown way she found by means of the volumes of old poetry which lay beside the family Bible on the table in the sitting-room. But the great reality of Mary's life was an ecstatic adoration of her Creator. And every year, between haying and harvesting, when her neighbours made ready for the annual seven days at the Grove camp-meeting, her heart made ready with them; but only once during all the years of her marriage had she been able to gratify the desire.

The summer after Jesse was eight years old, it occurred one day to Mary's husband that she was looking paler and thinner than he had ever seen her; that her eyes were less

bright than usual and her step less elastic and vital. He turned the matter over in his mind for fully a week, watching her meanwhile as she busied herself about the house and garden. Then one evening after supper he followed her into the bedroom, where she had gone with a pile of freshly ironed clothes, and putting his arm around her shoulders, kissed her on the cheek. He was not given to such demonstrations, and she looked up wonderingly into his face.

"I've been thinking about you, Mary, for a week," he said. "You're looking peaked. Been working too hard, maybe. It's camp-meeting next week at the Grove. Suppose you take the oldest boy and go up there for a few days. The change will do you good. Aunt Sue Wheeler will come and look after me and the two younger children. I don't like to see you looking peaked, Mary."

She was so glad, and so surprised, that she laid her head against his shoulder and cried for a minute or two. Then she laughed. He remembered, with a pang, that he had not heard her laugh for weeks.

"You'll feel more like yourself when you come back," he said. "It will keep your spirits up while waiting for that trip to Burlington we're going to have, when we can spare the money."

"But don't you want to go with me?" she asked. "I always enjoy things more when you are there to enjoy them, too."

"No, I guess not. You know I'm not much on religion. I'll stay at home and have my fun going fishing with the little fellows. I don't mean on Sunday; I've never done that, Mary, since the boys were old enough to take notice. You go to the camp-meeting with the other women of the church, and come back with a whole flower-garden blooming in your face, like you did the other time you went, when Henry was a baby."

Going to camp-meeting involved some days of preparation. There was bedding to be washed and packed, a new straw-tick to be made ready (the straw was bought on the camp-ground at a few cents the tickfull); there was food to be cooked, fresh bread and doughnuts, pies and sponge-cake, biscuits and ginger-cookies. Mary churned the day before they went, so they could have new butter, also; and her

sweet pickles were famous even beyond the boundaries of Nashburgh.

Great was Jesse's delight at the prospect of a journey. He had never been farther from home than the little village, six miles to the south, where they sold their grain and bought their clothing, and the little mountain settlement, ten miles to the northeast, where his aunt had lived until her death, one year before. The Grove, being twenty miles away, seemed very far off to the child,—not like the wonderful places pictured in the geography, for they were beyond reach, and only to be dreamed about; but still the Grove was far enough away to make their going thither the greatest event of Jesse's eight long years of life.

The younger boys, bribed by their father's promise of twilight fishing in the creek, were quite resigned to being left at home. To them, going to camp-meeting meant nothing in particular; while going a-fishing meant hours of keen excitement, perched on the edge of the bridge-planking, their bare feet dangling; meant, if they were lucky, fine bass and bullpouts fried in corn-meal by the indulgent Aunt Sue. And Aunt Sue also had a recipe for gingerbread which was better than seven camp-meetings.

In her closet, Mary prayed for pleasant weather. Rain would have seemed the irony of Satan. And when on Thursday morning, the day they were to go, the yellow rays of the sun shining on her eyelids awoke her, she bounded out of bed with a joyous little prayer of thanksgiving. Everything had been packed and made ready the night before; and as soon as breakfast was over, her husband hitched old Topsy, the leisurely black mare, to the lumber-wagon, and loaded on the trunk, the clothes-basket of provisions, the roll of bedding, two wooden chairs, and the small can of kerosene oil which was to keep their light shining before their fellow men.

A tent was not included in their outfit, as they were going to the "Nashburgh tent," a shelter collectively owned by the church people of their township. By a curious misuse of terms, the "Nashburgh tent" was a frame building, or the mere shell of a building, where on these occasions the whole town clubbed together in the fraternity of communal housekeeping. During camp-meeting time the railroad com-

pany was indulgent to the campers, carrying without extra charge their conglomeration of luggage.

At the railway-station, two miles away, they met other families also bound for the Grove. There was a black-haired man and his wife, whom Jesse's mother called Brother and Sister Taylor, and the young Taylors, two boys about Jesse's age, his schoolfellows, heavy and indifferent children who did not care for fairy stories. And there were others whom Jesse remembered having seen in the meeting-house, but did not know by name.

When he felt the car-wheels moving under him, the child was so excited that he gripped his mother's hand, in a mute appeal—for what he did not know. She put her arm around him lovingly (somehow, she always understood), and so they rode the whole way, past farms and woods and houses, with now and then a view of the winding river between its high green banks. As they went further and further into the unfamiliar country, the child turned his great blue eyes to his mother's face.

"Does the world go on and on like this, Mother, a long, long way?"

"Yes, dear, on and on like this, all the way around the world."

"And is there no end, no place where everything stops and there isn't any world beyond?"

"There is no end."

"And if I should go on, and on, and on, where would I come to?"

"If you should go on long enough, you would come back to the place you started from."

He was silent for a time, and then he said:

"Mother, if God made the world, and the world has no end, and if I go on travelling long enough I come back to the place I started from; and if God made me, and I have no end, why, if I go on *living* long enough, won't I come back to the place I started from, and be a little boy again?"

"Grove Camp-ground!" called the conductor at the door of the car. And in the bustle of leaving the train, Mary was spared the necessity of finding an answer to the child's question.

As they stepped onto the platform,—there was no station-

building,—the scent of pine and hemlock was blown to them on the wind, blown into their consciousness, changing it, thrilling it as with something wilder and nearer to the heart of things. A joyous sense of freedom possessed them. The world of every-day was left behind, and they found themselves in a world of more subtle sounds and feelings. Old neighbours looked at each other in surprise, wondering at beauties never before observed in familiar faces. The sound of the brook over the stones was like the babble of love words in another language, heard through a veil of crystal. And though a soft breeze was blowing, the air as it caressed the cheek and dallied with the hair seemed in no hurry to pass on and leave them, but lingered, as if it found a pleasure in the contact.

It was already the third day of the meeting. As Mary and Jesse looked about them, they could hear the chatter of voices among the pine-trees to the west of the railroad. Several women in light summer dresses, bareheaded and sheltered from the sun by parasols, had come down to meet the train. One of them, a tall young lady in a blue dress, greeted the boy's mother with a kiss and seemed to have been expecting her.

"I'm glad you brought the child," she said. And Jesse's heart swelled with joy that he, too, was welcome in this strange and happy company.

The camp-ground was a natural amphitheatre, an irregular circle some twenty rods across, surrounded on two sides by walls of earth and rock, and on all sides by pines and hemlocks. Scattered here and there among the trees were the tents and summer buildings of a dozen neighbouring townships. In the centre of the open space was a great wooden platform, raised a little from the ground, and over it was a sloping roof of canvas, which left the tent open on all sides to passing breezes, though protected from the strong rays of the August sun. This platform was empty as they passed around it, the morning services not yet having begun.

They went to the building known as the "Nashburgh tent," where several women whom the Bethels knew were busy laying a long table, which extended nearly the whole length of the one room forming the ground floor. Mary

and Jesse and the tall girl in blue went up-stairs. Here was another large room, divided in the middle by white curtains made of sheets and bed-spreads.

"We women are on the right," said the girl. "I suppose you want to keep the child near you, Sister Bethel?"

"I'd rather," replied the child's mother, "if none of the other women object."

"They won't care, for he's only a little fellow. By the way, have you heard the news? I'm going to teach in your district this fall."

"Oh, I'm so glad! I wish you could board at our house; but I suppose the Taylors will board the teacher, as long as he is the committee."

"Yes, probably. Here are your things coming up the stairs now, Sister Bethel. Better put your bed next to Aunt Susan's and mine; then Jesse won't quarrel with the Smith children, who sleep over there."

"Why, Jesse never quarrels!" answered the mother.

The two women were still arranging the belongings of the Bethels when a loud sweet-toned bell went ringing by the house.

"What's that?" asked Mary, looking up from her now half-empty trunk.

"The fifteen-minutes-bell," answered Rose Thomas. "The morning service is at ten o'clock. We haven't any church-bell, so Brother Johnson goes around the circle with the hand-bell from the Centre schoolhouse."

Soon they went down-stairs, and Mary greeted other friends and neighbours. Of the five hundred persons with which the census credited their township, about one-tenth availed themselves of the camp-ground privilege. The house could not have held so many at one time; but as they came and went during the seven days of the meeting, room was always found, somehow.

As they stood waiting, Jesse's heart beat fast. Already over the place had settled that hush—that muffling of the personalities and stilling of the faces—which always lies upon an Anglo-Saxon crowd preparing for the exercise of worship. They passed out of doors and onto the platform under the great canvas. Then the whole congregation began singing "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me."

Jesse was happy, but strangely frightened—why, he did not know. He had been to church many times, often enough not to be frightened at the singing or the crowd. And he eight years old last December! He breathed deeply, trying to steady the trembling of his heart. Poor little one! His sensitively balanced being was experiencing for the first time, with overwhelming intensity, the weight of the great ocean-waves of collective religious emotion which vibrated through and over and under and around this assembly of passionate human souls. He closed his eyes, trying to shut out the world that seemed to rock and reel around him. As the last note of the song died away, his blond head fell forward on his mother's lap. He had fainted.

A large man who sat on Jesse's other side lifted the child in his arms, and, at a signal from the mother, bore him from the tent. As Mary followed, she heard a voice behind her:

"It's the glory of God, Sister Bethel! Carry him on the altar. It's the glory of God!"

Mary pressed a silencing finger on her white lips. "Take him to the house, please, and put him on the bed," she whispered to the large man. "Give me some cold water, and don't let anybody come up the stairs."

After a few moments Jesse became conscious. She told him simply what had happened, and advised him to be quiet and rest a little while. He pressed her hand, then lay looking up at the square of green waving leaves which was the window. From the near-by platform came the voice of the evangelist, exhorting sinners to repentance. To the listening child the words of the text, ever and ever repeated with monotonous insistence, came with unanswered questions, with never-to-be-forgotten summons to some undreamed-of place:

"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

He did not know the meaning of the words; but every time the voice outside repeated them, he pressed his mother's hand and closed his eyes. There was little co-ordination in the speaker's thoughts and little beauty in his discourse, but the child knew nothing of this; he heard only the voice, a mellow voice thrilling with controlled emotion, and it

seemed to be calling *him* to "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

"Mother," he whispered, after some minutes, "what is 'the marriage supper of the Lamb'?"

"The supper of the Lord in heaven," answered the mother, and there was on her face a look of ecstasy which he had never seen there.

The child was little wiser for the answer; but he grew happier with every passing moment, with every repetition of that mysterious text: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." And when the voice was silent, and the tones of the organ on the platform rolled through the window, he sat up in bed and gripped his mother's hand in both his own, crying:

"Mother, I am called . . . I am called to the supper, the marriage supper. . . . Oh, Mother!" And burying his face in her bosom, he burst into tears.

When the meeting was over the women flocked upstairs and gathered round the bed, congratulating Mary on the child's experience,—“losing his strength,” as they called it, in the vernacular of their sect,—and asking him questions he did not understand. But the wise mother knew the child was overwrought and should have quiet, so she gently asked them to leave him until dinner-time. Then they all went down-stairs to prepare the midday meal. When the two were alone again, she bent and kissed his face with a chastened and unearthly passion, her eyes uplifted, whispering something to herself which his ear could not distinguish. Soon after he fell into a light sleep.

The sound of the dinner-bell awoke him, and after Mary had bathed his face in cold water and brushed his hair, they went down-stairs. Seated beside his mother at the long table, his back against the wall, Jesse ate his dinner, vaguely wondering if the marriage supper of the Lamb was anything like this. He had never before eaten in so large a company, and the unusual surroundings took away his appetite. Though the request of the mother that the child should not be reminded of his fainting-spell had been passed along the line, still they all seemed to be looking at him strangely; and he was glad when the meal was over

and he could escape out of doors with the other children, while his mother helped the women wash the dishes.

The Taylor boys, who had come up on the train with them that morning, began to gibe him about "making a show of himself"; then his cousins, Jim and Josie Bethel, fell upon the Taylor boys and gave them a good beating before their parents could interfere. So early did he become a theme of contention among his neighbours.

Jesse went to every meeting under the great canvas, but he did not faint again. To the casual eye he seemed like all the other children, save for his great beauty and the silence which lay over him from that first day. Sometimes his face was lighted as by an inner joy; sometimes it was clouded as by feelings too remote for speech, as he listened earnestly to every word that every speaker said. It was only during the evening prayer-meetings that he seemed restless, though he was then no less attentive than at all other times. His usual early bedtime was now disregarded. As here and there in the congregation men and women arose to "give testimony" of their belief and religious experience, he moved uneasily in his chair, he drew long breaths, he rolled and unrolled the ends of his flowing necktie in supple, nervous fingers. His mother wondered at this, but on the last night of their stay she learned the cause of it.

During those four days the child had heard many sermons from many texts, and on that Sunday afternoon a grey old man had preached in a harsh voice about the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, in which liars and other sinners shall have their part.

At the prayer-meeting on Sunday night the same grey old man sat on the speakers' platform, rising from time to time to urge those present to testify to the Lord. The meeting was a long one. Many became converted that night, and literally at the eleventh hour came forward to ask prayers. It was nearly midnight when the old preacher arose for the last time and asked if there was not perchance one more who wanted to say a word.

Then arose little Jesse Bethel of Nashburgh and climbed upon his chair. His mother cast at him one startled look, but he did not notice her; he was oblivious of the scores of surprised worshippers who gazed at him; he saw noth-

ing but the grey old man on the platform, and thought of nothing but the question which was burning in his mind.

The preacher looking down saw in the torch-light the golden head and white-robed figure of the child, gleaming above the mass of upturned faces. He heard the little voice of penetrating sweetness, saying in tones as steady and unfrightened as his own:

"I have a little brother who tells lies. I have another little brother who steals walnuts.

"The preacher said this morning that folks who lie and steal will go to hell. If that is true, my little brothers will both go to hell. The preacher said that hell was full of fire. He said it was a place where thieves and liars burnt for ever.

"The other preacher said this morning that God will answer prayers. I don't tell lies, and I don't steal, because I think it silly. It must be horrible to burn for ever for such silly things as lies.

"One day my little brother burnt his hand, and he cried from dinner-time till supper-time. It hurts him to be burnt. This afternoon, after I heard the preacher preach, I lit a match and held my fingers in the flame. It hurt—it hurt a good deal; but I didn't cry. I don't think it hurts me half so much to be burnt as it hurts my little brother.

"When we are dead, if God has really put my brothers in the fire, and if He puts me up in heaven, I'm going to ask Him if He won't let me go and burn awhile in place of them. I'm going to ask him to let them go to heaven for just as long as I can stand it to be burnt.

"I want my little brothers to see heaven. They've never seen anything beautiful. They never saw the fairies. And even when they look at the moon, they just can't see how beautiful it is. They think the stars are only stars. They think the lovely sky is—Oh, just nothing at all!

"I've always had the best of everything. It isn't my fault, because I can't help it, and I don't want the best of everything; but everything I have just gets to be the best without their knowing it.

"If God should make me stay in heaven all the time, and make them stay in hell, I couldn't endure it. I've

tried to hire them not to lie and steal, I give them all my pennies; but they only take the pennies and then they don't stop doing wicked things.

"Mr. Preacher, you said this afternoon how that God told you things, and spoke to you. God will not speak to me. I've asked him now for days and days. Perhaps I'm just too small for God to bother talking to. But will you ask God, Mr. Preacher, if I can't go to hell and let my little brothers go to heaven part of the time? Please, Mr. Preacher?"

He sat down.

Not a sound was heard for several seconds; then to the right and left of him, behind and before him, the people began to cry, "Praise the Lord!" and "Glory to God!" and "Hallelujah!" And the old preacher offered up a prayer that their beloved young friend might be the means of leading the sinners to repentance. But though nursed on the milk of vicarious atonement, he did not pray that the child might be permitted to suffer in place of his brothers.

The little Jesse felt that his trust in the preacher was betrayed. With his eyes swimming in tears, he took his mother's hand and left the meeting. As they passed out with the crowd he heard a woman say:

"Sister Bethel, if I didn't remember as well's yesterday the day that child was born, I'd swear to goodness he was eighteen years old instead of eight!"

"Jesse was always forward for his age," was Mary's modest answer.

Early the next morning the child and his mother went back to Nashburgh.

CHAPTER III

A FEW miles east of Otter Creek lies the long range of the Green Mountains. Of all the earthly things his eyes had seen, these mountains were most wonderful to Jesse. Perhaps some whisper of ancestral memory was in their call to him, for four generations of his fathers had seen the sun rise behind old Thunder Mountain; four generations of his mothers had gazed upon the blue guardian of their valley, and in the vague, imaginative hours before their children's birth had questioned it in long and wordless reverie.

Three times within his memory the child had gone to visit his aunt, who lived on the north side of this mountain; but she was dead now, and there seemed to be no promise of his going there again. He grew more and more to love the face of the old Thunder Mountain, and dreamed waking dreams of some future day when he should climb its mighty shoulder, far up and over, and see with his own eyes the hidden things which lay on the farther side.

So when he heard his mother say that the new school-teacher was from over the mountain, the tall girl in blue whom he had seen at the Grove camp-meeting became a thing of wonder in his eyes.

Early in the first week of the fall term Rose Thomas came to spend the night at the Bethels' house. While his mother was putting the younger boys to bed, Jesse followed the teacher into the garden where she had gone to gather some late flowers, and asked her to tell him about over the mountain. She gave a brief description of the place she came from, Myra, a village where there were four churches, a town-hall, a dozen stores, a graded-school, and nearly two thousand people.

"It must be very beautiful in Myra," said the child, his blue eyes expanding with imagination.

"It isn't nearly so beautiful over there as it is here," the teacher answered.

"But I thought—Why, isn't the other side of a mountain always more beautiful than this side?"

She looked at him, perplexed for a moment; then she smiled: "The other side of a mountain *is* this side, when you are there."

It was a new idea to Jesse, and he turned it over and over in his mind. Of course the teacher meant to tell him truly about everything; but maybe she didn't know herself how wonderful it was on the other side of the mountain, any more than his brothers knew how wonderful the moon was. And he told himself that when he was older he would go over the mountain to Myra and see with his own eyes what made it beautiful.

Rose Thomas had been teaching several years and was learned in the ways of children, but Jesse puzzled her; she had never had a pupil in any way like him. His beauty was a source of wonder; and he was the most loving being, young or old, whom she had ever known. But, most of all, his questions and strange sayings kept her thinking.

One day they sat alone together in Mary Bethel's room. Rose was reading, and the child seemed to be doing nothing. The clock ticked loudly on the mantel. After a long silence, he looked up.

"Teacher, what is time?"

She hesitated a moment. Had he asked her to define "parallax," she might have done it—but time!

"Time is the measure of duration," she ventured.

"I don't know what you mean," said Jesse. "But I think there isn't any such thing as time. When we came into this room it was three o'clock, and then it was *now*; and now it's four o'clock, and it's *still now*. I think time isn't real; it's like a shadow which keeps moving along, and isn't really anything, anyway. But I wish I knew what it's the shadow of. You don't know, do you, Teacher?"

She confessed that she did not.

Another day, when they were walking together, he said to her:

"Teacher, what is the difference between you and me?"

"Why—I am a young woman, and you are a little boy."

"I think that's not much difference," Jesse replied.

"You just believe you're yourself, and I believe I'm myself." Then, after a pause, he added: "I think it wouldn't be strange if I should wake up to-morrow morning and find that I was you. I wouldn't be scared a bit, would you?"

"You mustn't think such things," said his instructress.

"Why not?" asked Jesse.

And she was silent.

So the autumn passed, and late in October Rose Thomas went back over the mountain to Myra; but the memory of Jesse Bethel went with her, and she wrote his mother a letter every few months with messages for the child.

The summer after Jesse was nine years old he made an enemy. It was the black-haired man, Thomas Taylor, whose two boys had been thrashed by Jesse's cousins at the camp-meeting the year before. The trouble came about in this way:

Many of the farmers in that section, who lived along the line of the railroad, were able to make a small profit by selling their milk to a Boston company which sent a car through on the mail-train every morning to collect it. Four of the Nashburgh farmers, among them Thomas Taylor, drove to the railway-station daily with their milk. It would have been a great saving of time and labour had one man carted the milk belonging to all four; but there was no one man in whom the other three had confidence, and so all four went daily to the station.

Early in the summer an agent from the Milk Company came up the line, stopping here and there at the larger towns to confer with the farmers who gathered by appointment to meet him. On the day of the conference in the village six miles south of Nashburgh, Jesse had gone down there with his father to buy a barrel of flour. The elder Bethel, who found his carpentry more profitable than keeping many cows, had no call to the milk meeting; but having some business with a man from the next town who was certain to be there, he went up to the hall, and Jesse went along with him.

The meeting was in full swing. The man from Boston was explaining to the rather sullen crowd of men the reasons—competition, railway extortion, ice-famine, etc.—why he was compelled to offer them a few cents less than formerly on each can of milk. There was much loud but futile argument; for every farmer knew, and knew the milk man knew, that if he refused to sell his product to the company, he would be obliged to make it into butter; and the women of those towns were tired of making butter. So the new rate was reluctantly accepted.

The question of money being settled, the man from Boston told them he had something yet to say. There was a pure food agitation going on in Massachusetts, and the week before a duly authorized committee had visited the company he represented, and had found some cans of milk below the standard. In other words, their company had got into trouble for selling watered milk. The cans condemned by this committee had been traced to the Nashburgh station, and the men from Nashburgh were requested to stand up. The agent had their names on a slip of paper, and he slowly called them off.

"Gentlemen," he said politely, "can any of you throw light upon this question?"

Apparently no one could; but involuntarily the eyes of the other three turned sideways toward Thomas Taylor, who got red in the face. The man from Boston was experienced in these cases, and from this wordless testimony he knew the guilty one. He was a sentimentalist, having found that sentiment was often useful in his business, and he now dilated on the culpability of men who sold impure milk for poor little city children to drink. Then he said:

"Will the dark man on the right kindly tell me his name?"

"Thomas Taylor," came the answer, in rather a low voice.

"Thomas Taylor, have you ever watered your milk?"

"I have not."

"Will you swear to me that you have never watered your milk?"

Now Thomas Taylor had lately been entertaining the minister at his house, and he hesitated. To put pure water

from his own good well into a can of milk was one thing, but to swear falsely was quite another thing; so he stammered, still red in the face:

"Well, I dunno. I never put in more'n a cupful."

Then, from the back seat, came the penetrating childish voice of Jesse Bethel:

"Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water'——"

The end of this quotation was drowned in a general howl of laughter. When the noise had subsided a little, and had given place to nudges and neighbourly winks and chuckles, the man from Boston said slowly and deliberately:

"The milk of Thomas Taylor will no longer be accepted by the company."

The meeting was then adjourned.

Shame-faced at the derision of his neighbours, and sullen over the loss of his profit on milk, Taylor got into his buggy and started for home. But he never heard the last of it. In rural Vermont, a joke is a joke, and a good one is an inheritance to be handed down from generation to generation.

Taylor came to writhe at the very mention of a cup of cold water, for he was invited to partake of one upon any and every occasion. And he nursed a grudge against Jesse Bethel.

CHAPTER IV

It was in September of the same year that Jesse first met Mary Magnus, Mary the Great, as she came to be called a long time afterward. But she was only a pretty little girl of eight years when she came to Nashburgh, on a visit to the Smith children who were her second cousins. Though Mary was of the same age as Susie Smith, she was half a head taller—almost as tall as the nine-year-old Jesse, and plump as a rosebud. She sat beside Susie in the schoolhouse every day for a week, and her pretty clothes set the fashion in that neighbourhood of having a double row of quilling around the bottom of small skirts, and lace around the pocket-handkerchief. By the innate right of beauty she was already a personage, and carried her little brown head high with consciousness of power. The boys had been her willing slaves since a time before she could remember. She liked boys, all boys more or less, but especially the handsome ones; and no boy had ever resisted her small, shy, daring yet appealing ways.

On the morning when she first came to the district schoolhouse, Jesse Bethel was half an hour late. The imperious little Mary, being mentally active and desirous to excel in everything, was copying a hard example in long division from Susie's arithmetic when she heard a step in the entry. Looking up, she saw in the frame of the doorway the most beautiful picture in all the world, as she told herself in after years when she had seen many of the world's beautiful pictures.

Slender and lithe and alive in every nerve, the boy seemed to be surrounded by an aura of vibrant light, as he stood there in the doorway with the rays of the morning sun behind him. His hair, worn rather long and waving round his head in golden fullness, retained the sunbeams in its meshes even after he had passed into the shadows of the schoolroom.

The little sybarite from Vergennes suddenly lost interest in long division and turned her attention to the strange boy, who, after the first look of surprise he gave her, passed quietly to his seat on the other side of the room. Out of the corners of her amber eyes she watched him; but he was the only child in the school who was not furtively watching her, and she wondered why. From that hour all other boys became as shadows to little Mary Magnus, only to emerge into the sunlight of her notice after she had made this new boy notice her.

During the noon recess those children who brought their luncheon usually passed the hour in a neighbouring pasture; the boys played ball in the centre of the field, and the girls played house on the rocks under the trees. That noontime Mary Magnus, by an artful question now and then to one girl and another, learned the name of the beautiful boy and such details of his life as had impressed themselves upon the rather unobserving young daughters of Nashburgh. She looked in vain for opportunity to speak to Jesse.

But on the following day it rained, and during the noon recess the children played in the schoolhouse. The teacher this term, a rather oldish woman with greying hair, boarded in the next house and went home to dinner in the middle of the day; so the young ones had the place to themselves. They ate their lunches from little pails, sitting on the front seats and on the long recitation bench; and during this pleasant rite the visitor from Vergennes cleverly placed herself beside the object of her interest, but for a time she seemed to be unconscious of his existence. When she had finished her sandwiches and pie, she took out of the dinner-pail a big red apple, and with a subtle smile turned to her young neighbour.

"Wouldn't you like one of my nice apples—Jesse?"

Now anything resembling generosity was the straight road to Jesse Bethel's heart, and he thanked the pretty little girl beside him with a beaming expansion of his whole person quite indescribable. He raised the apple to his lip—then his arm dropped. He blushed. He looked at Mary. Mary looked at him. Finally he whispered, wistfully:

"Would you care if I shouldn't eat the apple? Would you care if I should give it to Marty White? He hasn't anything in his dinner-pail to-day but old dry bread!"

The eyes of the emotional girl filled with tears. "Oh, how good you are!" she said. "Yes, let's give him the apple, from both of us, and (she reached into the dinner-pail) here's a doughnut, too." Her little red mouth was tremulous.

"I'll give them to him in the entry," Jesse whispered, "then the other children won't laugh and make him ashamed." He started to rise.

"Come back here afterward," she said, under her breath.

And Jesse came back. They were friends from that hour. The hunger of little Marty White was a bond for them stronger than their beauty. Between the emotion of Mary and the love of Jesse the difference was one of kind and not of mere degree; but this she learned long afterward.

When he was again beside her, Mary said playfully: "Maybe you didn't really want the apple, after all?"

"Oh, yes, I did! But when I really want anything very much myself, I like to give it to somebody else."

"I never thought of that," Mary admitted. And slowly into her undeveloped mind came a new feeling, the admiration of goodness, which is deeper and more lasting than the admiration of beauty, even in such vessels of emotion as Mary Magnus.

When they were through with their lunch the cry arose: "What shall we play?" One suggested this, another that; but Susie Smith said:

"Let's all ask Jesse to tell us fairy stories."

"Oh, do, Jesse! Jesse, do!" they all exclaimed in chorus. And Jesse did.

He had a prodigious memory, and every story in "The Book of Wonder" was stamped upon his brain from alpha to omega. He did not merely recite them in the words of the author, but gave their substance in his own delightful fashion, with illuminating touches here and there; for had he not seen fairies? Spellbound the children sat, breathing the air of undiscovered regions, seeing the marvels of the invisible. . . . Then the sudden clang of the five-

minutes-bell in the entry told them the teacher had come back. As they all arose, Mary put her little hand on Jesse's arm.

"I think," she said, slowly and deliberately, and without any of her usual coquetry, "I think, Jesse, that you are the most wonderful person I have ever seen."

"I am glad you enjoyed the stories," he answered simply. "I know many more. My mother reads them to me almost every night after I've gone to bed, those and Bible stories. But I like the fairy stories best, because the people in the Bible are always wrangling about something."

This unique view of the religious classic was lost on Mary; but the grey-haired teacher heard it, and gently reproved Jesse for irreverence.

On Friday—it was the day before Mary was to go back to her home in Vergennes—the children were all playing tag together in the pasture at noontime, when a strange thing happened. Susie Smith, "the tag," was chasing Marty White. The ragged little fellow, in trying to elude her, stubbed his toe and fell sprawling. Now they had a rule among them against "tagging" anybody who fell down, so Susie turned to chase her brother who was just behind. But suddenly she stood still, and all the other children turned, for the scream that issued from the lips of Marty was a scream of terror and not of ordinary crying.

"The spotted adder! Oh, the spotted adder!" he shrieked, as his frightened playmates gathered round. "It bit me, it bit me! . . . see, here on my arm . . . and then it crawled into that hole in the rock. . . . Oh, I shall die, I shall die! My mother says it's poison! Oh, Mother, Mother! I shall die!"

The children were all crying excitedly—all save Jesse Bethel. He did not cry. He did not even speak. He sat down on the ground beside Marty, and taking the poor bitten arm in his firm hands raised it to his mouth. Then with all the force of his young body he sucked the wound of the spotted adder, wiping his lips from time to time on his handkerchief. After some moments he laid the arm down gently, and stood up.

"I think you will not die," he said.

News travels quickly near a schoolhouse. In ten minutes the nearest neighbour had harnessed his horse and started for the doctor, and in fifteen minutes Marty's slatternly mother came and led him home. Then the teacher rang the first bell, and the children filed into the schoolhouse. Before ringing the last bell, she said to Jesse, in the presence of the others:

"Do you want to be excused for the day?"

"No, ma'am."

"Don't you think you ought to tell your mother what you have done?"

"No, ma'am."

"What made you think of sucking that snake-bite?"

"I heard my mother and Mrs. Smith talking about it one day."

But the teacher sent for Jesse's father, who came and took him home. In the excitement of the moment, the boy had forgotten that Mary Magnus was going away the next morning, and he did not say good-bye to her.

When they were on the road home, Jesse's father turned to him impatiently:

"How could you risk your life like that?"

Jesse's eyes grew bright with emotion.

"Isn't his life as good as mine?"

"There may well be two answers to that question," said the father. "Your life belongs to me and your mother."

"My life belongs to Marty White—just as much as it does to you, or to my mother," was Jesse's astonishing answer.

Back in the schoolhouse little Mary Magnus wept quietly behind her lace-edged handkerchief, and would not be comforted; for the beautiful boy had gone away without even looking at her.

CHAPTER V

EVERY year in October the railway company ran an excursion to Burlington, the largest city in the State and the seat of a small university. To spend the day in Burlington was, to a dweller in Nashburgh, an event of no less interest than is the spending of a month in Paris to a dweller in New York. Before these excursions pious parents spoke seriously to their sons and daughters of the perils and temptations of the city. Burlington is really but an overgrown village of some twenty thousand inhabitants, lying drowsily upon the margin of Lake Champlain. For all the warnings of anxious fathers and mothers, the greatest peril to the young excursionist was the possibility of falling into the lake, and the chief temptation that of losing the last train home.

When Jesse was twelve years old his father and mother decided, after long deliberation, that they could afford to go to Burlington on the excursion and take the three boys, Jesse, Fred and Henry. For the sake of economy they took their dinner in a basket, fearing the extortions of eating-house proprietors; and as a wise precaution against pickpockets who might possibly rob the father, the mother carried their return-tickets tied up in a handkerchief secreted in her bosom. At any rate, if they should lose their money, they could get home in safety.

Jesse, who was already well advanced in elementary algebra and knew more about geography than did his teacher, reminded his father that Burlington was only one two-hundredth part as large as London, and that the distance from Nashburgh to Burlington was only about one six-hundredth part of the circumference of the earth. Though pleased at the prospect of going on the excursion, he was not overwhelmed by the vastness of the enterprise. Was he not going to New York some day? He had learned much since the time, four years before, when "over the mountain to Myra" had seemed a long journey. Nevertheless, he intended some time to go to Myra.

The day in Burlington proved far more interesting than he had hoped. The view of Lake Champlain surprised him with its beauty, and his visit to the university and hospital suggested many questions which their most learned professors would not have attempted to answer.

It was a large crowd which gathered at the railway-station for the return train at six o'clock. From half the length of the State they had come; for the round-trip fare was low, and the year had been a profitable one for farmers. Several families from Nashburgh were among the excursionists; and when the father and mother of Jesse discovered, on the way back to the station, that he was not with the two younger boys, they assumed that he was just behind, with the Smith children and the school-teacher. Not until they looked for him again at the station, and had questioned the teacher, were they seriously alarmed. They gazed at each other with wide eyes: Jesse was lost.

Then arose a babel among their friends and neighbours. One had seen the boy last an hour ago, one had seen him two hours ago, the teacher had seen him half an hour ago, talking to a tall man in a big building. Which building? She could not say, there had been so many buildings.

As they were discussing the matter, they heard the whistle of the train. Mary Bethel was cool and quiet, though her face was pale as she asked her neighbour, Mrs. Smith, to take the two younger boys home with her and keep them for the night. She and her husband would remain in Burlington till they should find the lost child.

The train pulled out of the station with all the chattering crowd on board, and the father and mother of Jesse stood for a minute or two staring after it. Then they found the station-master, told him their trouble, and asked him what to do. He telephoned for them to various offices, and pointed out the way to the police-station. But in none of these places was there knowledge of a lost child.

Worn and half discouraged, they went at last to a hotel, there to sit patiently on a bench outside the telephone office, waiting for the news which seemed so long in coming.

About eight o'clock the telephone clerk, a pale young man with eye-glasses, came out to them.

"Cheer up," he said; "your boy is found, safe and well."

Then, for the first time, Mary Bethel broke down and cried.

"He's up at the hospital," the clerk added, "and the Superintendent says for you to go up there and get him. You'd better take a hack; it's pretty far to walk."

At that hour the missing boy was holding a sort of reception in the operating-room at the medical college, surrounded by several of the doctors and professors of the university. He was seated in the midst of them upon the table, questioning them and answering their questions.

Jesse did not see his parents when they came to the door; and they stood there for some minutes, listening in surprise to the dialogue between their incomprehensible first-born and the group of bearded men.

"I'm glad I came up here to-day," the boy was saying, "because I never realised before how wonderful we are inside of us. I think that skeleton you showed me was more beautiful than a rose-bush full of blossoms. Do you know why a skull laughs?"

"No. Tell us, Jesse."

"It's laughing at all the people who are afraid to die. I think I'll never be afraid of anything again, when a man who has had his flesh all eaten off by worms can take it as a joke."

"How did you like the man you saw in the dissecting-room, the one with his muscles all exposed?" a grey old doctor asked. "That fellow was a truckman, Jesse, and only a little while ago he could shoulder a trunk that weighed three hundred pounds, and carry it up four flights of stairs—with those same muscles."

"Oh, I think he didn't carry trunks with muscles!" replied Jesse. "It was the man's soul which could lift three hundred pounds."

"But you have a soul, Jesse. Can you lift trunks with it?"

"When I get big I'm going to lift the mortgage off our farm with it, and that weighs more than half a hundred trunks."

They all began to laugh, but Jesse stopped them with his lifted hand.

"You think I've made a pun, and so you laugh at it; but puns are really far more serious than sermons."

"Why, how is that?" they asked.

"I'll tell you," answered the boy; "I found it out myself only last year. When I first learned that one word could mean two or three things, I puzzled over it. It was as if a man had two or three souls. That would be interesting, but not the least bit funny; and I couldn't see even then why people laughed at puns. But one day I heard my mother reading in the Bible, and she read something about, 'In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God.' And then I saw it."

"I know you will pardon our stupidity," said one of the professors, with mock gravity; "but really, Jesse, we don't see this great truth even yet."

"Why, it's so plain," the boy responded. "In the beginning the Word was God,—that is, the great big Word which we don't know,—and then it divided itself into all the little words we do know, just as God must have divided himself in making us. Some words are simple and mean only one thing; those are like the simple people who have only one way of thinking, like my father. Other words are not so simple and have many meanings; those are like the people who lead double lives and live in two worlds. I don't mean deceitful people only, though they are double, also; I mean those who seem simple to the simple ones, but who really live in another world as well as this one—people like my mother and me, who have a double meaning."

They sat and stared at him.

Finally a foreign-looking man, the Professor of Philosophy, rose slowly from his chair and came over to the boy, where he sat upon the operating-table.

"My young friend," he said, "will you let me give you a piece of advice?"

"Of course," replied Jesse, "and thank you."

The man smiled. "Well," said he, "I hope you will remember what I say. You are evidently a born mystic. Now if, when you are older, you should come to think you

have a message for your fellow men, put it in simple language. Now I know perfectly the meaning you intended to convey by your extraordinary dissertation on puns, or metaphors; but I'll wager a month's salary, against one of your indigestible Yankee doughnuts, that not one of my learned associates here"—waving his hand at the crowd of men—"not one of these doctors or professors can tell what you mean, my dear young Jesse. So take the advice of an old man who is experienced in teaching: If you want to instruct others, be simple."

"Thank you, again," the boy answered. "I'll remember all my life what you have said."

Just then one of the men caught sight of the father and mother standing in the doorway, and with a nod invited them to enter. As they came forward Jesse also saw them, and slipping off the table, he stood waiting.

"Jesse, my child!" said the mother. "How could you treat us in this way? How could you separate yourself from us? We have been looking for you more than two hours, half crazy with anxiety."

"You should have gone home," replied Jesse, "and left my ticket with the station-master. You must know by this time that I have need of going to many places where you cannot follow, and need of doing many things which must be strange to you."

Mary made no answer; but she pondered long on the boy's words, and in after years they came back to her with new and overwhelming meaning.

CHAPTER VI

THE summer after Jesse was fourteen he came to realise that he had learned everything the teachers in their simple district school could give him. He had long had a secret wish to prepare for the State university; but his parents were too poor even to send him to the small high school in the neighbouring village. Mary Bethel, always ambitious for her son, wanted him to apply for a position as teacher in some district school; but the boy would not. When pressed to give a reason, he said simply:

"I will not teach in any of these schools, because I would not be allowed to teach the children truth."

"Why, Jesse!" exclaimed his mother, in surprise. "I don't know what you mean."

"I will not teach in schools," he went on, "because I would have to teach old doctrines which I know to be untrue; would have to give false reasons for a hundred things, and keep the one true reason to myself. When I first realised I couldn't have an education like that of those men I met in Burlington, my heart was heavy. But now I believe I know a better way to knowledge than their way. I'll buy what books I can afford, and be my own teacher. I think, no matter what school I should go to, I would find that the teachers with their greater education were really like the teachers in our little school at Nashburgh. They would take me just so far, and then I would have to go the rest of the way myself. They would teach me a great many facts and also a great many falsehoods, and I should have to sift their teaching all the time. So, Mother, I've decided to find my own path to knowledge. It will be a new path, all my own; and not until I have found it and have walked the whole way myself, will I try to show the way to others. But when I find it, Mother, when I really find it, I'll make the whole world follow me!"

His face was lighted by an inner glory, a dream, a destiny too high and far away to share with anyone as yet.

His mother kissed him, with a voiceless prayer that he might be protected from all dangers.

The next day he asked his father, who was now an old man weary with much labour, to teach him his own trade of carpentry and building. That spring the men of Nashburgh had voted to erect a new schoolhouse, the old one being too dilapidated for profitable repair. The father of Jesse was the only carpenter and builder in the neighbourhood, so he was given the contract for the new schoolhouse; and it was on this work that the boy learned his trade.

From early morning until dark they worked, the father and the son, although the old man had to take long resting spells because his strength was failing.

"This is my last big job, Jesse," he said one evening, as they were slowly walking home together. "Many's the house I've built in my day, and many's the house I've repaired; but this new schoolhouse is my last one. I'll probably live on awhile yet, maybe several years; but I'm not the man I was even this time last year. I'm glad you wanted to learn my trade, because it's going to be better for you than teaching school would have been. There's money in it, Jesse. I'll make enough on this job of the schoolhouse to settle the old Johnson note which has been hanging over us for three years. The reason I've been so poor all my life, and had to mortgage the farm, was because there isn't work enough in a little place like this to keep a carpenter working more than a month or two in the year, on an average, with now and then a little fiddling job of repairing which doesn't keep us all in shoe-leather. When I'm dead, boy, instead of struggling along here, trying to keep up the interest on the mortgage, you'd better take your mother and the boys somewhere else—I don't know where, but somewhere where there's building going on. If I can live a few years more, till you're a little older, Jesse, I won't worry about you all on my death-bed. You're taking to the trade like a duck to water. I suppose you'd have beaten me at anything you undertook, you're such a smart one. But what I started to say was this: When I'm dead, let the old farm go. It's mortgaged now to Taylor for half it's worth, and I had to bor-

row another fifty from him last November; though I haven't dared to tell your mother, she worries so. But sell the farm, Jesse, sell it, and go to some place where you can work at your trade."

"I will, Father," the boy promised. "But don't say anything to Mother about dying. It would make her feel bad."

"All right, I won't. And I'm going to depend on you to look after her till the boys get big enough to help. Then you let them do it for awhile. Don't let 'em be lazy and shove off all the burdens on your shoulders. I know 'em; they're just like your uncle Frank. But you're different, Jesse; and I'm prouder of you every day." And the undemonstrative old man put his arm around Jesse's shoulders. It was the first time he had offered him a caress since his last birthday, seven months before.

The building of that schoolhouse was one long joy to Jesse. His father taught him every detail of the fascinating business: how to lay the foundations—though for this work they had a mason to help; how to follow the building plans, so that each part was accurately joined to all the adjacent parts, as the bones and muscles, arteries and sinews of the body are made to work harmoniously together; how the "raising" should be superintended; the perfect way to lay the floor, to frame the windows, to lath and plaster, to erect the chimney—though here again the mason came to help. The boy learned all these things, and with his strong young hands he rendered able service in a score of ways.

There is a joy and a sense of personal power in the higher forms of manual labour which mere scholars never understand. To create something with the hands should be a part of the education of every citizen of earth, however rich, however learned, however far removed from the necessity of labour. To plan an object, great or small, and then to execute the plan with masterly precision and to the smallest detail, should be one of the privileges which go with life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. So Jesse told himself, as he hammered away on the new schoolhouse. He was glad that he had chosen to be a carpenter instead of a district school-teacher.

Now less than fifteen years old, he was tall and strong as many boys of seventeen; though slenderly and finely built, and still possessing the extraordinary beauty which had singled him out in childhood from the mass of ordinary boys. Indeed, that beauty had grown deeper and stranger with every passing year. It was a haunting beauty, and the secret of its power was something other than the mere charm of harmonious lines and colours. Truly, to use an old but never-worn expression, the boy's soul looked out of his eyes. Gentle spirits were made happy by a glance from those blue eyes; but hypocrites and evil-doers feared their penetrating gaze, which seemed to unclasp safely-guarded motives, to challenge statements of uncertain truth. So, while Jesse easily made friends who loved him with peculiar and passionate devotion, there were others in his little circle of acquaintances who cherished for him an unreasoning hostility. Foremost among these unfriendly ones was the man who owned the mortgage on his father's little farm, that dark and purple-faced man, Thomas Taylor, whom Jesse's quotation of Scripture regarding the cup of cold water had covered with ridicule at the milk dealers' meeting five years before.

He was no longer called "Brother Taylor" by the members of the church; for he was now a backslider, dallying with spiritualism, openly challenging the authority of religious dogmas, and supposed to be living on terms of illegal intimacy with the spiritualistic housekeeper who had managed his home since the death of his wife three years before. But, being the richest farmer in Nashburgh, he still retained a certain authority among his neighbours, many of whom owed him money. Though Nashburgh, like other farming districts, was a hotbed of malicious gossip, a man who owned property there would have had to be proved guilty of extraordinary crimes before being really ostracised by his neighbours. They might believe him worthy to be hanged; but, so long as he paid his taxes regularly and hired men in haying and harvesting, no one would have the initiative to twist a rope. Even the hard-faced spiritualistic housekeeper at the Taylor farm was civilly spoken to by the women, if by chance they met her in the road. But behind her back they referred to her in good

old Saxon terms, out of the Bible, and charged her with the backsliding of the man who presumably paid her big wages.

As the work went busily on at the new schoolhouse, the neighbours made a habit of dropping in occasionally to see how things were progressing. One afternoon in August the burly figure of Thomas Taylor appeared in the uncased doorway. The old builder, Jesse's father, was taking a short rest; while the boy was standing on a plank supported by two saw-horses, nailing on a window-casing. The men talked in a friendly way about the crops and the weather.

During a lull in the conversation, Jesse's father went into the half-finished entry to get something out of his coat-pocket. While his back was turned, Taylor moved lumberingly about the place; and when within a few feet of the saw-horse nearest the door, he stumbled and fell forward against the horse, knocking it from under the plank on which Jesse was standing. Quick as a cat, the boy sprang onto the window-ledge and saved himself a fall. Then, sliding down to the floor, he stood opposite Taylor, who was picking up his straw hat which had fallen from his head.

"Stumbled over that blamed timber," Taylor muttered; "guess I must be gettin' old and clumsy."

Jesse, who had often caught the side-glance of malignity which Taylor gave him, knew well that his stumbling against the saw-horse was no accident; but that he had purposely exposed him to a dangerous fall. He threw back his beautiful head and looked at Taylor, their eyes on a level. Then, with a slow, peculiar smile he said:

"The man who fills his field with traps, should walk warily when he goes about after sundown."

Without a word, Taylor turned on his heel and left the schoolhouse.

That evening Jesse was sitting under the grape-vines watching the moon rise, when Marty White came down the road and stopped at the gate to speak with the younger boys who were lounging on the fence.

"Have you heard the news?" asked Marty. "Thomas Taylor stumbled and fell down his cellar stairs a little while ago. He's broke his arm."

The heart of the listening Jesse seemed to stand still. Was it possible that such things could really happen? He stared into the face of the moon which had risen blood-red over the mountain. Out of the maze of his thoughts three questions shaped themselves with startling vividness:

Could he really see into the future, and had his words to Taylor in the afternoon been a true prophecy?

Could the word of a human being, spoken in a moment of strong feeling, bring an event to pass?

Was there a law of cause and effect, a law of justice, that measured out to evil-doers retribution in the very degree and kind of their offending?

He sat so long under the grape-vines that his mother came at last and urged him to go to bed, that he might get rest and strength for the next day's labours.

The last nail was driven in the schoolhouse only two days before the opening of the fall term, in September. As his father had let out their harvesting on shares that year, on account of the more profitable building work, Jesse was now free for a time to read and dream and think. He had, of course, to help about the daily chores of the farm; but these duties were light and left him abundant leisure. Among other books, he read the Bible through from beginning to end; and he read carefully the weekly newspaper, and the one popular monthly magazine which they could afford to take. He studied the world as it was, and meditated on the world as it ought to be. One day he said to his mother:

"It seems to me that our souls have made small progress in the last two thousand years, for all the beauty of the religion we profess. Do not almost all men lie? Do they not hate their enemies instead of loving them? Does he not prosper most who most oppresses the poor? And is not the man who is most honoured among his fellows always the one who has deceived them most? Mother, the world is ripe for revolution, a religious revolution, a great awakening of the spiritual life. The old religion has failed. We need a new one. Sometimes I wonder—I wonder——"

"What do you wonder, my darling? You make me almost afraid when you have that expression in your eyes!"

He did not look at her, but out, far out over the summit of old Thunder Mountain.

"Sometimes I wonder if I am not the one who shall bring to the world the faith it needs."

The heart of the mother throbbed with sudden prescience of impending destiny. She drew Jesse to her bosom, as if to guard him from the unimaginable future that already reached for him with long, insistent arms. They sat together in silence for an hour, the boy's face lighted by his kindling thought, the mother's lighted by her thought of him.

The following winter Jesse made a strange discovery. His father had been tortured for weeks with the pains of rheumatism, and one day the boy said:

"Father, let me rub the arm that hurts you so. I feel that I might ease you, if I should try."

The old man stretched out his right arm, discoloured and swollen from finger-tips to elbow; and the boy began to rub it with his hands, first gently, then more firmly, his heart filled with the loving hope to relieve suffering. After a few minutes he laid the arm back tenderly upon his father's knee.

"I think it will not pain you so much now," he said.

The father looked at him a moment, lifted the afflicted arm, and with his other hand carefully felt of it in every part. Then his eyes slowly turned to his son's face.

"It's strange," he said, "it's mighty strange; but you've taken all the pain away. I've not been easy in that arm one minute for a month, and now—I wouldn't know I had an arm. It's strange, it's mighty strange."

That night the old man had the first long sleep which he had known for weeks. And in the morning also he was free from pain.

The next afternoon the doctor came. This case of rheumatism had given him much thought, because the weak condition of the patient's heart had limited his choice of medicines. He listened with keen interest to the father's story of the boy's success where his own science had failed;

he wiped his spectacles, nodded his head, and stroked his long grey beard.

"There are those born who have that power," he said, "and science is beginning to take note of it. Unfortunately, most of those who have the gift of natural healing are classed with quacks and charlatans, because so few of them are regularly qualified physicians. Young man," he added, turning to Jesse, "why don't you study medicine?"

"If I can really ease pain with my hands," the boy replied, "why do I need to study medicine?"

The doctor went away without leaving any prescription, merely telling them to let him know if the rheumatism should reappear. But there was no occasion to send for him again that winter.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN spring came round again the mother feared that Jesse was not well. He did not complain of anything; but he was preternaturally quiet and given to long reveries, to long gazing at old blue Thunder Mountain in the day-time and at the starry skies in the evening. Once at twilight she found him sitting alone under the grape-vines, and on going up behind him and putting her arm around his neck, she was grieved to see that the eyes he raised to hers were full of tears.

"My boy!" she whispered, "is anything the matter?"

"No, Mother, nothing."

"Then why those tears? And why are you so silent and sad of late?"

"I am not really sad, Mother. But my heart is very full of something, and I don't quite know what it is that troubles me. I am not unhappy, and yet I am never at rest. I seem to be always waiting for something that does not come. In the morning I long for the night, and at night I long for the morning."

He sat looking at her for some moments, as if there were something he wanted to say; he opened his lips, then closed them again.

"What is it, Jesse?" she asked. "You can tell your mother anything. Is there something you want to do?"

"Do you think that Father would object if I should go up there"—he pointed east toward the blue mountain—"if I should go up there and stay a few days all alone? It's an unusual thing to do, and I cannot well explain to him my reason, for I'm not sure of the reason myself; but I know that I have to go. Will you explain it to Father?"

"But what would you eat, my boy? And where would you sleep? There's hardly a soul living up there!"

"I know there is solitude, and that is why I want to go. And there's something else up there: I don't know what it is, but it's the answer to a question. You can give me

some bread and a few boiled eggs in my pocket, and I can sleep under the trees. You know I've often slept outdoors in summer, since I was old enough to have my own way a little."

"And you shall have your way in this, my boy. I'll arrange everything with your father; you shall go whenever you like."

And he went the next day.

On the third evening he returned. His mother saw him coming along the road with head erect and shoulders square. Her heart leaped with gladness, and she went out to meet him.

"It's all right, little Mother," he said, bending to kiss her, for he was nearly as tall as his father, "It's all right now. I found the answer to my question."

"Can't you tell your mother what it was?" she asked.

"I'd rather not," he answered. "I really don't think I could make anyone understand. I had to make a sacrifice, and went up onto the mountain to do it, like the old fellows in the Bible,—only their sacrifices were different from mine. And I'm not going to be sad any more. It's wonderful how happy we are when we have sacrificed happiness!"

Puzzled by his words, but full of joy at having him again at home, she drew him into the house and made him eat some supper. Without evasion, he answered all the questions of his father and the boys: how the trees looked on the mountain, whether it was cold at night up there, whether he saw anybody, whether there were blackberry bushes, and all the other things that arose in their simple minds in connection with his sojourn on the mountain. There was no need of evasion, for the only questions he could not have answered were questions they could not have asked. So they passed a happy evening together, Jesse and his family; and the next morning he arose early and went singing about the business of the farm.

In June of that year he again saw Mary Magnus, the pretty Mary of Vergennes, now a tall and rounding girl of over fourteen. It was the first time she had been in Nashburgh since she was eight years old and had sat for

a week beside her second cousin, Susie Smith, in the little old schoolhouse. This weather-beaten relic was no longer in its former place, but had come down in the world to serve humbly as a sheep-barn for Olin Madison, the most comfortably placed farmer in the town, with the sole exception of Thomas Taylor.

Mrs. Olin Madison was a proud woman, with ideas beyond the humble life she lived as a Nashburgh farmer's wife. Though she had but little intellect, she had towering ambitions for her two tall sons, David and Theodore, both students in the high school of the next village. Mrs. Madison was not a church-member; she considered the emotional form of religion which flourished in that region as being rather undignified. Had there been a church with a pipe-organ within easy distance, she might have paid it her respects occasionally on Sunday morning.

After high school closed in June her two sons were at home; and as Mary Magnus was the daughter of a man of wealth, when Mrs. Madison learned of her arrival at the Smiths' she decided to have a croquet-party for the young people. As one could not have a party without guests, she was obliged to ask the less important boys and girls of the place.

She really felt rather kindly toward her neighbours, in a cool and negative way; though she would have sacrificed the reputation of any one of them for the intense pleasure of rolling a morsel of gossip under her tongue. Pride and curiosity were her chief faults, with a little spice of scorn thrown in to season the mixture. But, all in all, she meant to be a good woman. Had she been born a duchess, she might have been quite simple, as then there would have been no need of self-assertion; had she lived in a place where anything worth talking about ever happened, she might have had other things to think of than her neighbours' weaknesses. And she was a good mother, making many personal sacrifices to educate her sons, doing her own housework and wearing her old clothes. Was her motive love, or ambition? The two are often one, even in the heart of a mother.

Mrs. Madison received her young guests on the verandah. She was a tall woman, and for all her fifty-five years,

preserved an almost girlish slenderness. She wore a grey dress of some thin material which matched in shade her fluffy iron-grey hair.

Jesse arrived early, with his two brothers. All women liked him for his gentleness and beauty, and Mrs. Madison was extremely affable that day. She praised him for his work on the new schoolhouse which raised its white form on a near-by hill; but when she told him, with a little smile of condescension, that he was too bright a boy to choose carpentry for a life work, he knew she was comparing him with her own beloved sons who had not yet chosen their careers, but were expected by everyone to do something brilliant for themselves and their parents.

In little groups the young people came to the croquet-party. There were the three sons of Mary Bethel; the three Brown girls who lived a mile away on the North Road, shy and nervous girls who blushed when anyone spoke to them; Jesse's four cousins, two boys and two girls, ranging in age from Jim, who was seventeen, to Ruth, who was thirteen; Stephen and Susie Smith, Mary Magnus, and the younger of Thomas Taylor's boys.

Mary Magnus was the last to come, with Susie Smith. Jesse was surprised to see how beautiful she had grown—she who had always been beautiful.

Mrs. Madison greeted her with effusion, kissing her on the cheek. Even plain little Susie came in for a caress, the first she had ever received from that source in all her fourteen years of life in Nashburgh.

"You two girls come right into my bedroom and take your hats off," said the hostess. The other girls had left their hats in the sitting-room. This was Mrs. Madison's way of showing special honour to a distinguished guest.

"Hadn't we better keep our hats on?" asked Mary, who had already begun to care for her complexion. "Isn't it sunny on the lawn?"

"Oh, no! The house shades half of it, even so early in the afternoon, and the thick leaves of the trees shade the other part. You'll feel so much more at home with your hats off."

"It was nice of you to ask us," declared Mary, as she

settled a rose on one side of her dark hair. "I do so love croquet!"

"So does David, my son," said David's mother. "He was delighted when he heard you were coming to Nashburgh. There is so little society here for a young man!"

"I remember David well," returned Mary Magnus; "he was the largest boy in school when I visited my cousin Susie six years ago. I suppose he doesn't go to school here still," she added, shaking out the ruffles of her sheer white dress and giving her blue sash a little twist.

"Oh, dear, no! He graduates from the high school next year. He'll go to the university, I suppose."

Then Mrs. Madison took them out on the lawn, where the other young people were standing around in groups, laughing and talking. Her sons immediately came forward to meet the new girl. The two boys were near enough alike to be twins, though there was more than a year's difference in their ages. Mary thought them stolid-looking and uninteresting. She knew so many young men that she was rather fastidious.

Then several other boys came bashfully forward to meet her, and last came Jesse. She greeted him as an old friend.

"How divinely tall you've grown!" she exclaimed, looking up at him with her head on one side, and so exaggerating the difference in their height. "You're a young man now, Jesse, instead of the thoughtless little boy who went away that day without bidding me good-bye."

"Did I do that? Probably I never thought of it," he answered, with delightful though unflattering candour. Then he added: "You know that was a day of excitement—for Marty White and my mother, at least."

"I've thought of it a thousand times," Mary declared. "However did you have the courage to do it?" She was referring to the snake-bite.

"Courage is a large word," said Jesse, "and that was really a very small snake."

Mrs. Madison was moving about, explaining to her guests that they were to play progressive croquet, with four croquet-sets, the successful couples moving up to the

next set, as from table to table in progressive euchre. Then came the question of choosing partners.

Olin Madison, husband and father, was distinguished in his household for always disarranging the plans of his wife by clumsily trying to help her. He now jokingly suggested that, as it was leap-year, the girls should choose their own partners.

"Always let the pretty creatures have their own way," he said, "especially where the boys are concerned."

His proposition being hailed with laughs of delight from both boys and girls, Mrs. Madison could not well object, though she had other plans; and that night her husband was roundly scolded for his interference.

With much laughter it was agreed that the girls should aim at a distant ball, the one who hit it having first choice among the boys for partner, and the others coming after in the order of their nearness to the goal. Mary Magnus was the only girl who hit the ball.

"Choose your partner," cried Olin Madison, and other voices echoed him.

Now Mary was a well-trained girl, and knew that she should have chosen the elder son of her hostess; but she was wilful, and rather superior at this rustic party, so she chose according to her own sweet inclination. Walking straight over to Jesse Bethel, she said:

"Will you play with me, Jesse?"

"I hoped you would choose me," he answered, "when I saw the way you took that ball at a distance of thirty feet." Then, as an afterthought, he added: "But I'd be glad to play with you, anyway, if you never hit a ball, because I like you."

Mary opened her eyes wide. He certainly was different from everybody else, she thought, even in his way of saying pleasant things.

The other girls chose partners, in the order of their skill at the first shot; and plain little Susie, being second-best, chose David Madison whom she secretly admired. As there were sixteen players but only seven girls, two of the boys were obliged to play together, one of them having a handkerchief tied around his sleeve, "to make him a girl," as they expressed it. The two boys who played together

were the ones left over after the choice of partners, those whom no girl had taken; they were Jesse's cousin, Jim Bethel, and the Taylor boy.

"Remember how I licked you that time when we all went to camp-meeting at the Grove?" asked Jim, as he tied the handkerchief around his partner's arm.

"You couldn't do it now," was the answer.

"Oh, yes, I could, if you should pitch on Jesse as you did then!"

"There's provocation enough to-day," responded the Taylor boy, looking across the lawn to where Jesse and Mary Magnus were standing together. "That cousin of yours has always got everything I wanted for myself, even the prize for speaking pieces in school."

"Jesse didn't care anything about that prize; he'd much rather you'd have had it—he said so."

"I know it," muttered the other, "and that's one reason the more why I hate him."

"Oh, come now! You know he's my cousin——"

"All right; I won't say any more." And he turned to take his mallet from David Madison.

They divided themselves into four groups, four players to each croquet-set, and then began their friendly battle for the prizes.

Mary and Jesse won every game for an hour. As they began at the first set, there they remained, the losing players passing down, while the successful couple from the set below moved up to play with them. After a time Jesse began to feel half guilty at their success. He said to Mary, very low, so that no one else could hear him:

"Hadn't we better lose this game? It doesn't seem kind to win everything."

"Why not?" she asked, with a toss of her pretty head. "I play a game for the game's sake." Then, with a quick little smile and a glance from her brown eyes, "If you play badly now, and let them win, you'll be cheating me."

"I wouldn't do it unless you were willing," he replied; "but I would like to let my cousin and Joe Taylor win. You know the girls all passed them by in choosing partners."

They began to play, Mary opening the game brilliantly;

but after the second shot she murmured to him: "Yes, Jesse, let us lose the game." And they lost it, passing down to the next set.

"Let's do it again," he whispered.

"Yes, Jesse." And they lost again. To watch the pleasure of their adversaries in winning was better for them than another notch on their card. But when they again passed down to the third set below, Mary said:

"Now, Jesse, let's really play to win. I'm getting restless."

"I think you've only won these last three games," he whispered to her, with a gentle look which made her ashamed.

Slowly his meaning sank into her mind, and she stared at him, her memory going back to their first talk, six years before, and to the apple which he had given to Marty White—her first and only gift to him passed on to another without a thought of regret. Her eyes filled with tears. He saw them, and his face grew soft.

"I didn't think you cared so much about winning," he breathed.

"Oh, it wasn't that, believe me, Jesse! I was thinking of something which happened a long time ago."

"I think now," he said, "that I also want to win. Let's play as we never played before."

And they did, winning every game for the rest of the afternoon. The prizes were pathetically cheap, a nickel-plated pencil for Jesse, and for Mary a little pocket-book of imitation leather which she secretly resolved to give to her mother's maid.

Then they went in to supper, which was served in the cool dining-room of the farmhouse. They found their places marked by little cards, Mrs. Madison having recently learned this custom from a book on the etiquette of entertaining. Mary, who was always observant, noticed that the plates were bottom side up and the knives in the wrong place, and she wondered who had taught Mrs. Madison to set a table in that way. She never thought of criticising the table at her cousin's house, because there they made no pretences to elegance.

Mary sat between Mr. Madison and David, who now

had the desired opportunity to talk with her; though he was still a little piqued at her having chosen Jesse as a partner instead of him.

"Have you ever been in New York, Miss Mary?" David asked, by way of opening the conversation.

"Oh, yes, many times! My mother buys my clothes there, and when I'm very good and obedient, she lets me go with her—but not always."

"Then you're not always good and obedient?"

"Oh, dear, no! I hate obedience. I want to have my own way, and when I'm not allowed to have it, I make a fuss."

"Do you think that is proper?" asked David. There are young souls who love propriety, even in these revolutionary days.

"Proper?" said Mary. "What's that?"

David got a little red, and hesitated in replying. He wanted to tell her that it was proper to choose the son of your hostess to play with you, instead of another fellow; but he knew it would not be proper to say that to a guest, so he compromised by saying:

"Why, er—it seems to me that it's proper to do what's expected of us. Don't you think so?"

She laughed, a merry little gurgle good to hear. "But," she replied, "people always expect me to do whatever I like."

"I fear you're sadly spoiled," he said, in a grave tone which sounded almost fatherly; then, in quite another manner, he added: "Maybe it's because you are so beautiful."

"Maybe," she answered.

"Then you really know how beautiful you are?"

"I've been told so all my life. But, David," her tone grew serious, "I'd rather be good like Jesse Bethel than to be as beautiful as Cleopatra." And she told him about the games they had lost on purpose.

"I think that was rather stupid," was David's comment. "A game is a game. But you seem to like Jesse very much."

"Oh, I think he's the most beautiful being I ever saw—and the best! Just look at him now."

Jesse was far down on the other side of the table. He

was seated between Susie Smith and one of the Brown girls, and was telling them a story. David and Mary could not hear what he was saying, because of the chatter of their neighbours; but they could see his face, which would have been a study for the master-painters of the Renaissance. Oval, and rather pale save for a faint pink on the cheeks, his face was of an almost feminine transparency; while on the chin and far back at the sides: soft gold-coloured down was beginning to show the promise of his dawning manhood. Under the waving red-gold of his hair his eyes shone calm and blue, "like pansies in an alabaster vase," Mary told herself.

She watched him for a little while in silence, unconscious of everything else; then, with a start, she turned again to David, who had just asked her something—what, she did not know.

"You call me beautiful," she said; "but beside a face like that mine is like a lump of dough. Can't you see, David, how unlike all other human faces that one is?"

"I think he looks like a woman," David answered, rather crossly.

"Maybe, though I hadn't thought of it before. His face is like a man's, and like a woman's, too; only he's more beautiful than any man, and lovelier than any woman."

David turned suddenly and looked into her eyes. "It seems that you've lost your wits over Jesse," he said.

"What do you mean, David?"

He laughed, rather unpleasantly.

Then she also turned suddenly and looked at him. They were silent for a moment, studying each other.

"I think you don't understand about Jesse," Mary said quietly. "I don't think any of us do. But he's not like us."

"What do you mean?" David returned.

"I don't know myself just what I mean; but you'll see some day."

Just then Mrs. Madison rose from the table, and all the young people followed her out on the lawn, where they had walnuts and maple-sugar candy. And after a little while they began to go away.

When Mary gave her hand to Jesse in token of parting,

she said: "I'm going home to-morrow morning; but if you are ever in Vergennes, will you come to see me?"

"I surely will," he answered.

"You promise?"

"I promise."

"Good-bye, Jesse."

"Good-bye, Mary."

CHAPTER VIII

SLOWLY the months went by, unmarked by any special happening, but full of quiet work and thought and reading. Though Jesse could buy few books, he had the catalogue of a series of inexpensive reprints of the world's classics, and when at intervals a half-dollar could be spared from the slim family purse, he sent for another volume. He read a little science, a little philosophy, a little poetry, a little history, bringing to each new subject a boundless enthusiasm and a point of view unique in its originality. In philosophy he accepted nothing unconditionally, nothing on mere authority; but questioned every statement of every author, seeking for the kernel of unassailable truth in the harvest of assumptions. History he read with some reservations, science with questioning interest, while poetry filled him with rapture. It was a strange and uneven culture he was gradually acquiring, a culture which broadened his horizon without lessening the originality of his viewpoint. Many things which were mere commonplaces in the schools he knew not at all; while many other things the schools knew not he learned from deep and solitary experience, having no confidant except the blue old distant mountain and the stars. And more and more, as time went on, did his vague conviction grow that he was called to some peculiar service in the regeneration of the world. The oldest book and the most recent newspaper were of equal interest to him, and he was too keen-sighted to escape the cruel facts of modern human life.

Sometimes as he drove his father's two old cows to pasture, he mused on the personality of God; as he made the garden, he weighed the inequalities of wealth; as he tapped the maple-trees in spring, he considered the beliefs of old pantheists; as he did small odd-jobs of carpentry for the neighbours, he questioned how the Egyptian pyramids were builded, and evolved a theory of his own about them which was as good as any other theory and simpler than most.

And as he read and thought and studied, four stupendous questions gradually took form within his mind: "What is God?" "What am I?" "What are my relations to God?" "What are my relations to my fellow men?" So far, he had not found a satisfactory answer to any of these problems. The platitudes of the stock religious writers left him cold, and the books of the more mystical religious writers had not been added to his slender library. Of the speculations of modern psychologists he knew almost nothing at this period of his growth, and he had seen only fragments of the sociological writings of the time. Not having access to the world's accumulated knowledge, out of himself he sought to bring the wisdom that should answer his four questions.

The summer Jesse was sixteen he made another discovery of unusual power within himself. His cousin Jim, who was a little older than he, was a locally famous colt-breaker, already known for miles around as the most skillful master of unmanageable horses that could be found anywhere in that part of the State.

One morning when Jesse went to see Jim, he found the big fellow in a bad humour.

"It's that infernal colt of Thomas Taylor's that ails me," said Jim, in answer to Jesse's question. "I've had him now quite a spell, and I can't do a thing with him. He's a devil—like his master. I wouldn't tell anybody except you, Jesse, but I'm actually afraid of the beast. I suppose I've got to tackle him again this morning, though."

"Better wait awhile," advised Jesse. "You can't do anything with a horse, or a man either, so long as you're afraid of him. Suppose you let me try?"

"You!" Jim's tone was one of scornful amusement.

"Why, what do you know about horses?"

Jesse only said: "Let me see this fellow. I think maybe you don't understand him."

"Come on, then," Jim assented. "He's in the south stall. Don't think, though, I'm going to let you break your pretty neck fooling with that devil. But in case he breaks *my* neck, you may as well be there to see it, I suppose."

The two boys went to the stable.

"Shall I take him out?" asked Jesse.

Jim laughed again. "Not if I know it," he said, grimly. "You stay here in the yard, and I'll bring him out."

Jim disappeared through the doorway of the stable. Jesse stood alone, watching the leaves of the apple-trees in the orchard move softly in the breeze. "How beautiful the whole world is!" he whispered to himself.

Jim and the colt came plunging into the yard.

"Maybe you think you'd like to bit him, and bridle him, and mount him!" satirically cried the colt-breaker, as he tugged at the halter. Then, as the horse gave another leap, "Hi, there, you devil! Stand still, will you?"

Jesse went over and closed the gate, also the stable door. "Now let the horse loose," he said, "and listen to me."

Jim released the animal, which gave a nervous leap and then stood still, as if he also was watching the leaves of the apple-trees in the orchard move softly in the breeze.

"I'm listening," answered Jim.

Jesse smiled. "I suppose," he said, "when Taylor brought that horse here, he told you that he was a devil. I suppose you've told the horse he was a devil every time you've been near him since that day. Poor horse! No wonder he believes he is a devil. Jim, whatever infernal spirit there may be in that dumb friend of ours, Taylor and you created it. Isn't he a beauty? Look at his splendid head, look at his intelligent eyes, look at the long curve of his great back. He's an animal made to love and serve a gentle master. Now I'm going to bit that horse, and I'm going to bridle him, and I'm going to mount him; and you're going to stand still where you are and leave us alone. What's his name?"

"Fred."

"The name of my brother!" Jesse smiled again. "Well, the horse is also my brother."

He walked over to the noble animal and offered him a handful of grass which he had pulled by the way. The horse nibbled the grass daintily from Jesse's hand, while with the other hand the young man stroked his broad, intelligent head. Then Jesse laid his palms one on each side of the long face and looked the animal straight in his

brown, serious eyes. For a moment he closed his own eyes and whispered softly, "Good Fred, dumb brother, friend."

He turned away, and the horse followed him. He walked around the stable-yard, the animal coming along behind like a dog behind its master; and when he stopped, the warm nose was nuzzling the back of his neck. Then he picked up the bridle, and the horse opened his mouth willingly for the bit. Jesse buckled the straps, talking to him meanwhile in low tones.

"Now, my friend," he said, when everything was ready, "I'm going to mount you and ride you around the yard."

A quick leap, and he was astride the horse's back; a nervous start, a reassuring word, and they were off in a slow walk.

"Open the gate, Jim," said Jesse, without raising his even voice, and the gate was opened. Then he rode the horse at a walk down the road for about a quarter of a mile, turned quietly, and came galloping back to the stable-yard, where Jim was still standing with open mouth and staring eyes.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" exclaimed Jim.

Jesse said, smiling: "Come, and I will introduce you to my new friend." He took Jim's hand and rubbed the horse's face with it, and the horse nuzzled Jim's neck with his nose.

"Good Fred, kind Fred," Jesse murmured, as he stroked the animal and looked deep into his eyes. "My cousin is going to mount you now and ride you a little way."

Jim mounted without trouble, and rode down to Taylor's house and back, while Jesse waited for them in the stable-yard. When they had put the horse in the stall again, Jim scratched his head and stood looking at Jesse.

"I wonder," he said, "why you didn't ride that colt down to Taylor's yourself. I wonder why you turned him around just before you got in sight of the house."

"You know quite well why," Jesse answered.

"Do you mean that Taylor hates you and would be mad to see you on his horse?"

Jesse's face fell, and he looked at Jim with eyes full of pain. He said, very softly:

"No, that was not the reason."

Jim flushed to the forehead, then quickly his big hand went out to his cousin's slender hand with a full heart-clasp.

"Jesse," he cried, in a voice choked with feeling, "there's not another fellow in the world that's good enough to lick your shoes!"

CHAPTER IX

SPIRITUALISM was rampant through New England in those days, and the winter Jesse was seventeen everyone in Nashburgh was talking about the phenomena which followed a certain travelling medium who came occasionally to one of the neighbouring towns. Thomas Taylor was the only man in Nashburgh who openly avowed the beliefs of the strange cult; but Jesse's father also had a passionate curiosity in the matter, and if it had not been for the entreaties of his religious wife he would have gone to every meeting of the spiritualists. Even as it was, he went occasionally in spite of her objections.

One afternoon around Christmas-time, Mary Bethel was sitting quietly beside the kitchen fire doing the family mending, when her husband startled her by announcing that he was going that night to a seance to be held in the next town.

"Oh, I beg of you, do not go!" cried Mary. "You know how I feel about it."

"It's all prejudice," declared the old man, "all nonsense, the way you go on. Haven't I a right to a little amusement in my old age? I'll take Jesse along to drive the horse and to keep me out of mischief."

The mother looked appealingly at the son. He smiled back at her, saying:

"If Father wants to go, why don't you let him go and find out for himself what sort of thing this is? You will never keep a can of gunpowder from exploding by merely sitting on the lid. Let him go to-night, Mother, and I'll go with him. We may both learn something. A lion and a horse need different food, yet they are both good healthy animals. If God is everywhere, as you believe, He will very likely be at that meeting; and I think you can trust Him to take care of Father and me—for a few hours, anyway."

They started after an early supper, as the ride was long and the hour of the meeting half past seven. The sleigh-bells jingled musically as they went over the white road; and the full moon, rising in the eastern sky, cast long shadows from the skeleton arms of the trees which seemed to reach for the travellers with bony, wavering fingers. The old man moved restlessly in his seat; he was more excited and alert than Jesse had ever seen him. As they turned the last corner, a few rods from their destination, he laid his hand on Jesse's arm.

"You won't be scared, will you, if you see your grandfather? I saw him once, at a seance this same medium gave last fall. But you mustn't tell your mother, and you mustn't be scared yourself, no matter what you see."

"Why shouldn't I tell my mother?"

"Because she's afraid now to go up-garret after dark. I don't see why folks should be any more afraid of friends after they're dead than they were of 'em alive."

"And do you really believe," Jesse asked, "that you saw the spirit of my grandfather?"

"I do," declared the old man, with conviction. "He shook hands with me, and one of his thumbs was gone, just as I remember him when I was a boy. And he told me things nobody knows but him and me."

Jesse made no answer, and they drove into the yard. Half a dozen sleighs were there before them; half a dozen horses stood, well-blanketed, facing the east, watching the moon with vague and wandering eyes. The Bethels hitched their horse to the fence beside the others. then went together into the house.

In the large sitting-room nearly a score of persons were assembled; some of them were young, some middle-aged, some old. Among them were Thomas Taylor and the hard-faced woman, his housekeeper. In spiritualistic circles she was more at home than among the stern moralists of Nashburgh.

There was a large coal-stove in the room, the ceiling was low and the air stifling. The men and women chatted together about indifferent things; there was nothing awe-inspiring in this little group of commonplace persons, met together to question the insoluble mystery of life and

death. A fat woman in black at the other end of the room laughed much; she was the medium. Two others came in after Jesse and his father, acquaintances of theirs, and the four men nodded to each other and talked about the weather. After awhile the fat medium arose and left the room.

"It's half past seven," said the man of the house, a grizzled farmer of middle-age. "Wonder if any more'll come."

"Better wait a few minutes," advised Thomas Taylor, and his housekeeper echoed: "Yes, better wait a few minutes."

They talked less after the medium went out, and slowly the hands of the old clock on the mantel moved up to a quarter of eight.

"She's coming now," said a muffled voice behind Jesse, and the medium re-entered the room. She walked heavily, as in a kind of haze, and another voice said:

"She's going to the cabinet."

The cabinet was a small structure in one corner, covered with white sheets. As the medium disappeared between the curtains, the grizzled man of the house closed and locked the door of the room.

"Now, friends," he said, "all of you set around in a circle and take hold of hands. I'm going to set here, next the cabinet."

When they were all arranged to his satisfaction, he said to a tall girl, his daughter, "Mandy, play something on the organ."

Then he explained to the assembled company: "That's to get the room harmonious, so's the spirits can work better."

The girl left her place in the circle and went to the cottage-organ, a cheap and wheezy instrument, and played "Home, Sweet Home." When she was through playing and had returned to her seat, her father leaned over and blew out the lamp which stood on the table behind him. There was a dead silence for some minutes. Jesse could hear his own heart beat, though it beat regularly and no faster than usual. He was not in the least nervous.

Then there was a rustling sound from somewhere, and a thin, high voice cut the stillness:

"Good evening, friends," it said, "I'm glad to be with you. Yes, it's little Bright-eyes. Oh—h-h-h! What a beautiful light . . . right there, in the east! It twinkles and twinkles, just like a star. And it moves. . . . Oh-h-h! It's stopped now; it stands right there. See! see!"

They strained their eyes through the darkness, and saw—or thought they saw—a bright light, a twinkling light, on the east side of the room. Jesse saw it also, though as he was sitting on the east side of the room, he had to raise his eyes toward the ceiling.

"Yes, Bright-eyes, we see it," said a deep voice. "But what does it mean?"

"It means—But I'm only a little Indian girl, I don't know what it means. It has too big a meaning for me. Oh-h-h!" The voice sank to a shrill whisper, then rose again. "I think it has something to do with that young man there, the one right under it."

"Do you mean me?" asked Jesse, as he seemed to be right under the strange light.

"Yes, you, you," answered the voice, excitedly. "Oh, but you're a strange young man! I don't think I understand—no, no—I won't—" The voice shrilled, faltered, and was gone.

"Strange!" said a man beside Jesse. "She's never behaved like that before."

"Hush-sh! Here's another," someone said.

Again came that peculiar rustling sound, and then a second seemingly supernatural voice was heard. It was a bass voice this time, but muffled, as if it spoke through layers of wool:

"Good evening, all. Yes, it's Doctor Ebenezer. How do you do? What was the matter with Bright-eyes? She came back to us with such a queer expression on her little copper face. She must have seen something. . . . What's that? . . . No, it can't be! . . . *In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti . . . Spiritus sancti . . .*"

Then silence. The second voice, or spirit, or whatever

it might be, was also gone. Not a soul in the room could have told the exact meaning of the Latin words, though they had a familiar sound to some of them. No one dared to speak; they all sat, staring into the darkness. Then came strains of music, soft thrilling strains, like those of a guitar; and here and there about the room innumerable little lights flashed for a second and went out again. A voice like that of a child began to sing in a language no one understood—only a line or two, then it also sank to silence.

In the unnatural stillness one or two persons caught their breath with a quick sigh which sounded loud as a sob, so tense was the atmosphere of expectation. Then came the vibration of a heavy body moving along the floor: the medium was coming out of the cabinet. They heard her voice, almost but not quite a natural tone:

"It's only me, sit still. There's something here which seems to send the spirits all back. I'll try to tell you what it is, if you'll be quiet."

There was another silence, of perhaps a minute, and then the voice of the medium again, speaking this time in a natural tone.

"There's a very beautiful person here. In the darkness I see your souls instead of your bodies, but this person's body and soul both are beautiful. The spirits say that *your* spirit—you there toward the east I'm talking to—that your spirit has been the master of millions of theirs, and will be again, as soon as it's freed from the body. Oh, but you have a hard work to do in the world! Yet you will be strong enough to do it. I'm talking to that young man over there. Do you understand what I say?"

"I understand," Jesse answered.

The medium then said she could do nothing more that night; there were no materialisations nor attempts at materialisations; the lamp was relighted, and the seance broke up.

As they were driving home across the moonlit snow, the father said to Jesse: "I wish you'd tell me what that was all about—if you know yourself."

"Father," he replied, "I don't want to talk about it now. I know what that woman meant; but I don't know how she could possibly herself have any knowledge of the

matter. I must study it all out. Until I do, please don't speak to me about it; and, above all, don't mention it to Mother."

The father was silent for a time, and then he said:

"You're a strange boy, Jesse. You have always puzzled me, yes, ever since you were a baby. But if it's really true that you're going to do some great work in the world, something too big for a man like me to understand, I give you my blessing, boy. And whatever you are, or whatever you're going to be, your old father's blessing can't help but do you good."

"Oh, Father, I thank you!" Jesse answered, his voice unsteady with emotion.

That night, as he lingered in the region of inner light and elusive forms which the consciousness always passes through on the way to the region of sleep which lies immediately beyond, he was startled and thrown back again, wide awake, by the sound of his own voice, saying with unmistakable distinctness:

"God is the Power, and I am the expression of the Power."

He sat up in bed and looked around in the darkness. Had he been dreaming? Or had his lips been merely passive instruments for the delivery of a message from his inner to his outer self? He repeated the words, his heart beating wildly with the realisation of their significance in the development of his thought: "God is the Power, and I am the expression of the Power."

Why, here was the answer to the first two of his four great questions: "What is God?" and "What am I?" In the consideration of this strange midnight message from the Unknown, his imagination caught fire. He realised himself as the expression of the Power of God, as the hand which could move the lever of the divine engine, as the eye which pierced the fog of the world's future, as the form of the unimaginable Word.

CHAPTER X

IN the month of June, a year and a half later, the father of Jesse went out to investigate for himself the mystery beyond the door of death. While sitting quietly one evening with his family, he fell from his chair to the floor; and after the three frightened sons had carried him to his bed, their hearts were torn by seeing their helpless old father in the grasp of violent convulsions which seemed to be trying to tear the spirit from his body.

One of the younger boys was sent to summon the doctor, and the other ran to a neighbour's house for assistance; while Jesse and his mother removed the garments from the moveless and unconscious man and laid him between the sheets of the wide bed in which Jesse and the other sons were born.

Stunned by the unexpected blow, and powerless before this experience which comes to every soul as new, and yet is old as life itself, Jesse sat and gazed upon his father's face. His mother and the neighbour, Mrs. Smith, moved quietly about the room from time to time, doing those little services which seem so necessary in the hour when the grim messenger waits outside the door, and which are so pathetically futile to prevent the inevitable entrance.

When the doctor came, they knew by his manner as he crossed the threshold that he brought no hope to them. He only asked them a few questions, gave some simple directions and a little medicine.

"There is nothing else to be done," he said, in that quiet tone which doctors use when they realise that their skill is useless. "I have known for a long time that he would finally go in this way; it is almost always so with his disease. The end may come in a day, perhaps; there will be no lingering, at his age. Do not be alarmed if he should have another convulsion, but let us hope for the best. I will come again in the morning." And he went away.

Jesse and his mother watched together in silence through the long night. Toward morning the boy said:

"Mother, do you think he knows what is going on around him?"

"No, my boy, your father will never speak to you again, will never know if you should speak to him. I asked the doctor at the outside door as he was going away, and he says that your father is in the coma that precedes death"

The coma that preceded death! Jesse mentally repeated the words, weighing their meaning. Was there also a coma that followed death? he asked himself, or—and here his mind moved cautiously—could they be right, the people of that town with their extraordinary belief in the future of the human spirit? It fascinated the man who now lay helpless in the coma that precedes death? He could not determine by any process of reasoning that was satisfactory to him, and what would be the immediate future of the soul which waited here the moment of its passing.

He looked across to where his mother sat with her eyes closed, her lips moving in prayer. He knew the questions troubling her simple and deeply religious mind. According to the tenet she believed in, the soul which died without accepting God would never taste the joys of the hereafter reserved for the beloved of God. And his father was dying without that acceptance. How would it be with him in the event that his mother's belief were true? But was it true? Somehow, for all his church training, he doubted that his kind old father's soul was going to the torment. Then where was it going? Would it go to the God who had no existence for him, the God in whom he had no faith? That would be as if a son who denied the paternity of his father should yet demand inheritance from that father. But, even so, could not the father forgive, if his love were great enough?

Then to his mind, so striving to perceive a glimmer in the darkness, came again those potent words which he had carried in vivid remembrance for eighteen months: "God is the Power, and I am the expression of the Power." Surely, the expression of the Power included the power of forgiveness.

He bowed his face upon the helpless hand of the dying man, and, in the name of that Power of which he was the expression, he forgave his father's unbelief.

They who shall deem this spiritual act of faith and love a baseless, blasphemous presumption, should remember that the ministers of the most powerful church on earth do this thing every day. Truly, "Perfect love casteth out fear," even the fear of seeming presumption.

The next day, at sunset, the father of Jesse passed from breathing oblivion into that deeper and breathless sleep which waits for every man. Two days later he was buried in the little graveyard shaded with pine-trees, where three generations of the Bethels were hidden away from the too inquisitive eyes of the sun and moon.

During the two days when the body lay in the house, Jesse had moved about in a haze. Not until they came back from the graveyard after the burial did he fully realise that his father's chair was empty, his father's voice for ever silent. It all seemed so incredible that he still half doubted the evidence of his senses, the evidence of his memory of the last three days and nights. Still moving in that haze which sometimes hangs over the imaginative minds of the young in times of grief or change, Jesse went to his bed the night after his father's funeral. In the middle of the night he opened his eyes in the darkness, startled wide awake by a strange dream.

He had seemed to be in a house similar to the one in which he lived with his family. Several women sat by the window sewing on garments of various kinds, some plain, some ornamental; and they were all talking together of commonplace things. He spoke to them of uncommon things, of beauty and aspiration; but they only stared at him, and went on sewing and chattering.

He passed out into a field where men were making hay. They were also talking together of small and sordid matters. He spoke to them of large pure purposes, of faith and social destiny; they also stared at him, even as the women had done, and went on making hay.

Lonely and sad at heart, he turned away down a narrow lane between irregular lines of ancient trees. Then, looking up, he saw standing before him a tall figure wrapped

in a long hooded garment, its face covered by a veil. It beckoned him to follow.

Walking behind this figure, he passed into a large building, like a church, an old building; but instead of pews, the floor space was filled with cheap modern chairs set regularly in rows. Passing down the middle aisle, they ascended the stairs before the altar, and turning to the right, went through a small side-room like a chapel, and out by a door at the back.

Here everything was changed; here was the side of a mountain, steep and wooded. The air was pure and rather cold; it smelt of pines. On before him passed the tall figure, and Jesse followed. There was no path, though footprints here and there showed that the way had been already travelled by someone. It was very steep, thick brush impeded his progress, rough stones cut his feet, and brambles tore his clothes. Now and then he had to climb over the trunk of a fallen tree, and in one place a sheer cliff rose, up which he worked his hard way, finding a perilous foothold by crevices and jagged points of rock. This cliff surmounted, he came to a small level space a little further on, and here the guiding figure stopped and waited for him. They were still only on the side of the mountain, but the summit was invisible, lost in grey cloud and mist. And then he heard a voice which said:

"The foot of mortal can ascend no further. Look up! Behold the iron face of the Law, on which no man may look and live."

He raised his eyes to the zenith, and there above him was the awful Face, hard, black, shining with its own effulgence; and in the eyes, which were as balls of fire, there was no pity and no love, only implacable judgment, stern, forbidding. He gazed and gazed, until the terror of the thing drew all his strength away, and he sank backward on the ground, still gazing, until his eyes grew dim and merciful unconsciousness came with its veil to cover him.

Then slowly the haze of his weakness passed away. And he saw again the iron Face, but now how changed! It smiled, it softened, glowing with unearthly beauty, and the eyes were tender as a mother's looking on the loved face

of her child. Dizzy with ecstasy he closed his eyes, and when he opened them again the Face was gone.

He rose from the damp ground and looked about him. The tall figure of the guide was gone; he was alone on the side of the mountain, and the wind blew cold upon him, keen with the odour of pines.

Down the mountain again he went, back to the valley where the people made hay and sewed their garments and talked of sordid things. Passing along the road, he was pointed at and ridiculed, for the sharp rocks and brambles of the immortal mountain had torn his clothes, and somewhere on the way he had lost both his shoes. He was footsore and weary, and knew not where to go.

That was the end of the dream, and he had opened his eyes in the darkness, startled wide awake by the strangeness of it.

On the following night he had another dream.

He seemed to be wading in snow, making his way slowly up a long hill toward the small back-door of a great building. A strong and icy wind blew in his face, and now and then he stumbled in the deep drifts, falling, only to pick himself up again and struggle on and upward. When after a long time he reached the door, someone standing there said, "You are waited for." But no one opened the door. He shook it, he beat his hands upon it; but no answer came from the inside. Finally he threw himself against the door with all his force, and it gave way before him; but the room in which he found himself was empty. It was a large room with a waxed and shining floor, a ball-room, and at one end were the chairs and musical instruments of an orchestra; but the musicians were not there, the chairs were empty.

Passing on into another large room at the right, he saw a table dressed as for a banquet; but no man was there. At the side of this room and on the front of the building was a great doorway. He went through it and stood again in the open air, at the top of a wide flight of marble steps. On this side of the building it was summer: before him lay a garden, with trees and flowers and winding walks. Slowly he descended the broad stairs; they were

covered from top to bottom with a crimson carpet which clung to his feet at every step, clung so tenaciously that he had to shake it off as he stood upon each stair before he could pass down to the next one.

When he reached the ground, he turned to the right and found himself near a little company of gay people who laughed and chatted together under the shade of a tree. They glanced at him indifferently, but paid no further attention. He was lonely, and yearned for the company of these graceful and well-dressed men and women who seemed to have so little need of him.

But he passed around them and stood before the other half of the wide building's front, for only half of it was taken up by the red-carpeted steps down which he had come to the garden. He found himself facing the other half of the building's front—but how strangely it was built! Parallel with the marble steps, and under the eastern half of the wide portico, the wall fell sheer to the ground, some forty feet. But, instead of a wall of stone, it was a corrugated wall of dark stained leather, padded in ridges large as pillows—great rolls, lying one above another, each roll corresponding to a step in the adjacent stairway.

Slowly it dawned upon his consciousness that he must climb this ladder of slippery leather rolls; that he must reach the top and stand in the portico above the highest branch of the tree in whose cool shade the careless people prattled on, indifferent to his presence. And he began to climb. There was no foothold save in the folds between the hard and slippery leather cushions; there was nothing for his hands to grasp except the slippery cushions straight above his head. Slowly, with beating heart and aching limbs, he made his hard way upward. He had forgotten there was anyone below that watched him; he was only conscious of the height he struggled toward, the end to be achieved, the difficult and perilous ascent.

At last he gained the level marble slab above the highest rung of the rolling ladder; at last he stood up straight and drew a long breath. A great joy filled his soul. Glancing down, he saw the men and women under the tree whom he had forgotten. They were now looking up at him with wide eyes of amazement, and their faces were

alight with enthusiasm. Then they raised their arms to him in supplication; they yearned to him with tears of adoring love.

And he awoke.

Again, on the third night, he had yet another dream. He seemed to be lying in a place he knew near the summit of old Thunder Mountain. It was the hour of dawn, and the air was musical with the voices of awakening birds. Lying there, still with happiness, he saw again before him the veiled figure of his first strange dream, the one who had led him up the mountain and shown him the two visions of the dual face of the Law.

The presence now spoke to him, saying: "Faith in the Higher shall give to the lower all the powers of both."

He rose to his feet, and bowing low to the ethereal visitor, asked that he might behold its face.

Then, without a word, the presence drew aside its veil and stood revealed before the startled dreamer.

The eyes which looked into Jesse's were *his own eyes*, the face he saw was his own face—his own, and yet how different! Had the morning taken human form and appeared before him, it could not have been more beautiful than this unearthly semblance of his earthly self.

Again the presence spoke to him, saying: "I am the Higher, and you are the lower; but we are one."

Filled with wonder, he awoke. It was really the hour of dawn, as in the dream. He arose and crossed the room to a mirror which hung on the wall, that he might look again into his own eyes, as he had done in the dream. The mirror faced the uncurtained eastern window; and as he stood there, the sun came up over the top of the blue mountain and was reflected behind him in the glass, like a halo around his hair. And from that hour he knew with an absolute knowledge that he was one of those who have to walk alone in the waste places of the world, who walk alone though multitudes surround them; that he was one whom the iron-visaged Law had chosen for its minister and interpreter. And as he was young and full of the love of life, the knowledge was a burden of joy and pain almost too heavy to be borne.

CHAPTER XI

BEING the eldest son of a widowed mother, Jesse had now to face the question of the material welfare of the family. His father's little farm was mortgaged for about half its small value. His two younger brothers, one fifteen years of age and one sixteen, could not be depended on to give him any substantial help for a time, at least; so upon his shoulders lay the responsibility of providing for his mother, and of so guiding the course of the younger boys that they should become self-supporting and helpful in their turn.

On the fourth morning after the funeral he called a family council. They sat around the square dinner-table in the old kitchen, the mother and the three boys. Jesse had now taken the foot of the table and sat in the chair left vacant by the father; Fred sat on Jesse's right and Henry on his left, and Mary Bethel sat opposite Jesse. He had brought pencil and paper, his father's old account book and the little black tin box from the top shelf of the parlour closet, in which the father had kept his business papers for forty years and more. When they were seated, Jesse was the first to speak.

"Mother," he said, "and you also, Fred and Henry, I think we should now talk over together the questions of the future. We know that Father died heavily in debt, and we may take it for granted that Taylor is going to make it as hard as he can for us in the matter of the mortgage. I had a talk yesterday with Olin Madison, and I think we should ask him to be administrator of the estate. My first idea was that Mother should be administratrix, in order to save the fees; but I think, on account of Taylor, that we should have a man who knows more about such business than we do."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the mother. "I'm sure Mr. Madison will not charge us much, and I know nothing whatever of business."

"There's a legal fee," said Jesse, "which he will prob-

ably accept. It will not be much, so let us call that settled. And now I want to tell you about a talk I had with Father the summer we built the schoolhouse. He made me promise that when he died we would sell this place, pay off the mortgage, and leave Nashburgh."

His mother gasped. "Leave Nashburgh! Oh, Jesse! And where would we go?"

"That we have to decide. Father said I would never be able to make enough at my trade to support us, and keep up the mortgage interest, if we should stay in this dull place. He made me promise, Mother. He wouldn't talk with you about it, because he knew how you worried over things. Mr. Smith has a note of Father's for a hundred dollars which he never mentioned to you, and there are other debts."

The mother's eyes were swimming in tears. "If we leave here," she said, "we won't have any home at all. How shall we live, Jesse?"

He leaned across the table and clasped the hand which she held out to him. "Mother, dearest," he said, "we will rent a little house in some village where I can get carpentry work, and maybe the boys can take care of a small market-garden before and after school hours."

"You want them to keep on going to school?" asked the mother, in surprise. "Why, Jesse, you yourself haven't been to school since the winter you were fourteen!"

"Yes, Mother, but I am different. I study all the time when I'm not working; I read and study all the time. It isn't necessary that I should go to school. But the boys ought to be taught a little while longer, because they can't teach themselves."

"I don't go to any village school," declared Fred, the second boy. "They'd only point me out as a gawk and a know-nothing. I'm sixteen years old now, and I'm going to work with Jesse. Let Henry go to school."

So that point also was settled.

"And what shall I do to earn money?" Mary asked, the thought of being a burden to her boys making her heart heavy.

"You will keep house for us," Jesse answered quickly. "We couldn't afford to pay our board anywhere; but if

we have a little garden and keep one of the cows, we can live very economically, and still have a home together. You will do more than your share, Mother, if you look after the house."

"I'm going to learn to be a carpenter," said Fred, "then there'll be two of us earning money. Oh, we'll be all right! Now don't you worry, Mother, any more."

"And I'll go to school another year, and take care of the garden and the cow," said Henry. "Yes, we shall be all right."

"But where shall we go?" was the mother's trembling question. "Where shall we find a home?"

Jesse drew a deep breath. He looked from his mother to the boys, then back again to his mother. Then he said—the memory of his childhood's wish still vivid in his mind:

"We will go over the mountain to Myra."

The details of settling the estate and disposing of the farm dragged over several months. As Jesse had anticipated, Thomas Taylor made them as much trouble as he could about the mortgage; but Olin Madison, the friendly administrator, so managed the whole business that they were sure of having a little money in the end. Meanwhile Jesse looked about him for a chance to earn something during the final weeks of their stay in Nashburgh. Thus it happened that he again saw Mary Magnus of Vergennes.

A builder of that city had advertised for carpenters in a Burlington paper, and Jesse had gone up to Vergennes to apply in person for work. Though the builder wanted older and more skilled men than Jesse, he took a fancy to the young man and hired him at sight. Before Jesse had been half a day employed, he discovered that there were many matters of detail about the trade of carpentry which his old-fashioned father had not taught him. These details he set himself to master with the same persistency he exercised in the pursuit of all his objects: from the knowledge that is hidden away in books, to that experience in the handling of material things which fits a man to struggle with and conquer his physical environment.

Being so occupied, it was nearly a week before he remembered that Mary Magnus lived somewhere in Vergennes, and that he had promised her three years before that if he should ever be in her city he would go to see her. His employer, to whom he applied for direction to the house of the Magnus family, was much impressed by the fact that his handsome young workman was on terms of friendship with the daughter of the richest man in the city.

"Well, well!" the old fellow exclaimed, scratching his grizzled head and looking at Jesse out of the corner of his shrewd blue eyes. "So you know Mary Magnus? And you mean to go and call on her? Well, I'll be blessed! She's the handsomest and proudest girl in Vergennes, and hardly a young fellow here is elegant enough to suit her taste. Why, folks say the inside of their house is like a palace, with rugs from Turkey, and china from France, and pictures from all over. Mary is seventeen or eighteen now, I reckon; and already there's a string of fellows after her from New York to Montreal, and I dunno but from farther off than that. Say, boy, I like you, you know, and I'll give you an old man's advice: be mighty sure she wants you to come, before you go to call on Mary Magnus."

"She asked me to come and see her," said Jesse simply, "and I shall go this evening."

"Good luck to you, then! Heaven knows you're good-looking enough to turn the head of any giddy girl."

"Do they call Mary Magnus a giddy girl?" asked Jesse.

"Oh, yes! She's wild as a hawk, for all her pride and her money. But she has a good heart, though, a kind heart. There's many a poor child in Vergennes that's walking around in shoes bought out of Mary Magnus's pocket-money."

Jesse's heart swelled. She was good, then, as well as beautiful, this little friend of his. He was not much impressed by the old builder's warning of the elegance in the house of Magnus. Mary was simply Mary, whether she lived in a palace or in a cabin; of that he felt quite sure. Her manners in Nashburgh had been charming. He did

not know enough of life to realise where a subtle difference might lie between Mary in Nashburgh and Mary in Vergennes; and so great was the charm of his personality, and so great the power and dignity of his growing soul, that he was really never to know that difference.

He went to see her that evening. Imposing the outside of the house certainly was, judged by Vermont standards of comparison. And when Jesse, having given his name to the maid who answered his ring, was ushered into the house, he found himself for the first time in his life in a really beautiful room. Subdued in colour and harmonious in every part, the room made on him an impression of pleasure which he did not analyse, a quiet pleasure, yet different from that he found in the woods or under the stars. He did not examine the room in detail; but he saw a grand piano, strange soft-toned rugs, and outlined in vivid relief against a dark curtain at the back a marble head and shoulders which gave him a new feeling of enjoyment. He did not know that it was a copy of the Hermes of Praxiteles; it simply made on him an impression of harmonious being.

Up-stairs in her own room, Mary Magnus sat reading a novel when Jesse's name was announced by the maid: "Jesse Bethel, of Nashburgh." Yes, she would be down in a moment. The maid went away, and Mary crossed the room to the cheval-glass to smooth her hair. What was he like, she wondered, after three years of growth? Why, he was eighteen now, really a man! She remembered vividly his appearance at fifteen, as she saw him last in Nashburgh, at the croquet-party given by the eccentric woman with the two stolid sons—she had forgotten the name. Would he find her much changed? Then she smiled, the smile of conscious beauty which is never in doubt of its own power over the eyes of others. The rose-coloured gown she wore was becoming, lending a little of its brighter tone to the soft rose-colour of her cheeks, and subtly calling attention to the darkness of her hair and eyes.

She went down the broad stairs and paused for a moment in the door of the drawing-room. He was standing by the mantel opposite, tall, slender, beautiful in his simple

dark blue garments; the same Jesse she had known before, but magnified by the magic of manhood. The slight beard, allowed to grow naturally, made him seem older than he really was.

They stood for a second looking at each other; then both put out their hands, and they met in the centre of the room.

"I am so glad to see you, Jesse!"

"I am so glad to see you, Mary!"

"When did you come to the city?"

"About a week ago."

"So long? And you have not been to see me till to-night!"

"I have been busy; I know you will pardon me."

She led the way to a little sofa, and they sat down together.

"Tell me what you're doing in Vergennes," she said.

"I'm working for Peter Mack, the builder."

"Working? At what?"

"Carpentry; I learned my father's trade."

"And you are a carpenter? How strange—how strange and interesting!" She looked at him with a curious smile, which he could not have interpreted.

"Yes, I find it interesting," he answered. "And what are you doing, Mary?"

"I'm keeping rather quiet this summer. Mother is not well, and we're not having any company. She isn't dangerously ill, but too much exhausted to go anywhere, and very nervous. Maybe we will take her to California for the winter, if she is well enough to travel. I wanted to go to Egypt; but our New York doctor, who was here last week, says that California is best for Mother. Father doesn't want to leave the bank this year for such a long time, so Mother and I will go alone, with a nurse, and maybe with a young doctor here whom Mother has taken a fancy to. Were you ever in California?"

He smiled. "I've never been anywhere, Mary. But in the fall we are going to leave Nashburgh. My father died in June."

"Oh, Jesse, I'm so sorry!" There were quick tears in her eyes.

"We are going to sell the farm and go over the mountain," he went on. "I can get work over there, and there's no work in Nashburgh."

"And you are going to work at carpentry to support your mother and brothers?"

"Yes. Fred will be able to help me a little, perhaps."

"Jesse, how great you are!" She looked at him with eyes full of admiration. "How wonderful you are!"

He was puzzled by her enthusiasm. "Is there anything wonderful in a young man's taking care of his mother?" he asked.

"I suppose not," she replied; "but all the young men of your age whom I know are a heavy expense to their parents, always getting in debt and writing home for money."

"Tell me about them," he said. "I like to learn about all kinds of people."

She told him stories of several rich young men whom she knew, students at this college and that. From her words he gathered ideas of the lives of these young spendthrifts, as he felt inclined to call them, ideas of their selfishness and general inutility in the great work of noble living. What she said tallied well with much that he had read about the sons of wealthy parents; and in his mind he classed them all together as the selfish rich. He felt no envy of them, only pity, touched with a noble scorn.

"What are you going to do with *your* life, Mary?" he asked.

"I hardly know, Jesse; I'm still so young. I've never been sent to school like other girls; but have had governesses, and tutors, and music-teachers, and teachers of this and that, since I can remember, my lessons constantly interrupted by journeys here and there. I've been allowed to go about in society like a girl of twenty for the last year. No wonder I don't know just where to find myself. But you, Jesse, what are you going to do with your life?"

He looked at her, leaning forward, and a flame slowly kindled in his mysterious eyes. "I wonder if you would understand," he murmured, half to himself.

"Yes," she whispered eagerly, "I shall understand anything you tell me. You are going to do something great,



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I know. I've always known it. You are different from everybody else in the world. You make me feel—Oh, I can't tell what you make me feel whenever I am with you!"

"Then you believe in me, Mary; you believe But what am I saying? You really know nothing about me, and I can tell you nothing. My time is not yet come. I am only Jesse, the carpenter, to you and to everyone else, until the time comes when I shall find my way up the mountain where the face of the Law shall be revealed to me, the iron face of the Law that is terrible and beautiful, that no man may look upon and live; for when a man looks on it he is outside of and beyond mere personal life. And after that I must make my way up the hill of the world's desire, and through the mansion of the world's revelry and feasting, and find it empty of music and empty of companionship. I must do down the broad stairs of the palace of the world's desire, and the scarlet softness which covers the hard stones will cling to my feet and impede my passing, and I shall have to shake it off. And in the garden of the world the careless ones will give no heed to me, and I shall walk there lonely. And I must climb the slippery ladder which is almost impossible to climb, the ladder whose every rung is made of a slain desire,—must climb up, and up, from the ground of loneliness to the high place on the other side of the palace of life—the side of real and immortal joys. And when I stand at the top of the perilous ladder, and have forgotten myself in the rapture of the vision, then the ones below who were indifferent shall call to me to help them, shall reach to me with love with love."

He was speaking, half to himself, of the truths revealed to him in the dreams which followed his father's death,—things of which he had spoken to no one, but had carried in his heart as too secret and too sacred to share with any other. He was speaking of them to this girl whom he had not seen for years—this girl of whom he knew so little, and from whom he was separated by all those artificial barriers which make the world of caste and privilege.

And she? She did not understand with the mind, but she had the deeper understanding of the heart. She gazed

at him, speechless in the face of some unknown power which transcended her experience of the sublime and beautiful.

When a moment later he arose to go, she clung to his hand, asking for a promise that he would come to see her again the following evening. He thanked her and asserted; then, after a quick good-night, passed out of the great house into the quiet, dimly-lighted street. For an hour or more he walked about under the stars, then turned down the little by-street to the lowly cottage where he was making his temporary home with the family of one of his fellow workmen.

CHAPTER XII

"Do you care for music? Shall I play for you?" asked Mary the next evening, when Jesse came again to see her.

"Yes, I believe I love music better than anything else in the world—except, possibly, my blue mountains."

She began to play, and after the first moment Jesse realised that he had never before heard real music. He was in heaven, listening to the voices of immaterial beings; he was face to face with the Ideal, which spoke to his soul in this wordless language which he understood, but could not have translated into the set forms of earthly speech. Dreams and hopes and wistful yearnings after joys he had never known came to him in the music; dim memories of all the ages of the past, prevision of the unaccomplished ages of the future. Hidden somewhere in these moving tones was the answer to every question of his heart; this music was the voice of the one Friend for whom his loneliness was ever crying. Impalpable intelligences came and mixed their thought with his; bodiless feelings surged against him in the familiar intercourse of sound with hearing. As the last notes died away, his soul reached for them through the air and sighed to let them go.

He had listened with closed eyes, but now he opened them and saw Mary standing before him. He was so grateful to her for the wonders she had revealed to him, that he had no thought to thank her; it would have seemed like thanking the moon for shining, or a bird for singing. As she stood there, all in white, under the light of the chandelier, she seemed to him like one of those unearthly beings which had spoken to him in the music. He had forgotten, for the moment, who she was and how she came to be there in his presence. With a start, he forced his consciousness back to the limitations of time and place, to a realisation of his surroundings.

"How marvellous it seems," he said, when he found

voice, "how marvellous it is that you can have the power to bring such wonder, such beauty, such superhuman feelings, out of yourself—your little self which was a child only a short while ago—out of yourself!"

"Oh, but I don't bring the music out of myself, Jesse!" she replied. "I am only an emotional machine with limber fingers, a machine the composer and creator of the music uses to express *his soul* to yours. That is what my German piano-teacher said; but he also said that I played well, that I was a good emotional machine, and that my fingers were good hammers." She laughed. "He was such a funny man, Herr Hartmann!"

"And he taught you to play like that?"

"Yes."

"I would like to meet him," said Jesse.

"He isn't here any more," Mary answered. "Father sent him away."

"Sent him away!" Jesse echoed, "when he could teach you such things."

"Oh!" Mary blushed. "It was this way," she stammered a little, "Herr Hartmann made love to me, and Father was angry."

"Made love to you?" He was dazed for a moment; it was the first time he had realised that she was now a woman, not the child he used to play with in Nashburgh. So Mary was a young woman now, and men made love to her! Somehow, the idea worried him.

Just then the door-bell rang, and through the open window came the mingled voices of several young people, laughing and talking. Jesse rose at once to go, and Mary did not try to detain him. But she said, as they went together to the door of the drawing-room:

"Will you come to see me on Thursday evening?"

"Yes," he answered.

In the hall he passed two young men and two young women, preceded by an older woman with grey hair. As he was going out, he heard a voice say:

"We came early, thinking you might like to go with us to the Boardmans."

The thought came to him that if these other callers were early, he must have called very early indeed. She had

asked him to come again on Thursday, and this was Tuesday evening. He wondered what she meant to do on Wednesday. Would she play for him again the next time he came? Then, walking alone under the stars, his favourite way of passing an evening, he tried to recall the impression so recently made on him by that entrancing music. But only a vague remembrance of mingled thought and feeling came in answer to his call. So he asked himself, as many others have asked before, if music were not really the language of the soul, the wordless message to the world from the realms of the Spirit. What a power was there, he thought, for those who knew how to invoke this voice of the Unseen! What possibilities were in this universal language to appeal to the souls of men and women!

On Thursday evening, when he went again to see Mary in accordance with his promise, she met him in the door of the drawing-room. Her first words were:

"Will you come up to the library and meet my father? He has been away for a few days or you would have met him before. She seemed to be rather nervous; her manner was less quiet than usual.

He followed her up-stairs to a large room at the front of the house. He could see through the open door that the walls of the room were lined with books. At the sight his heart beat faster, and his mind, ever responsive to the least stimulus of eye or brain, glowed at the vision of these rows on rows of volumes, the embodied thought and feeling of generations of seekers for intellectual and moral beauty.

A large man, with iron-grey hair and strong, smooth-shaven face, was standing by a desk in the centre of the room. Jesse acknowledged the introduction to Mary's father with that instinctive courtesy which was the aroma of his soul, the very quintessence of manner which came to him by nature, and which any amount of formal training could not have made more perfect.

The banker offered Jesse a chair which stood at the right of his desk, while Mary seated herself demurely on the other side of her father. He asked the young man about his work in Vergennes, what kind of an employer

he found Peter Mack, how they were getting on with the building, and so forth.

"My daughter tells me that you are a great reader," he said, after a few minutes' conversation about these other things; "she says that you have read much more than she has."

"I am older than she," said Jesse modestly.

The banker laughed. "I think you are more studious than my pleasure-loving little girl. Are you reading anything in particular just now?"

Jesse mentioned the name of the book he was then studying, a history of Vedic India.

Now the one great enthusiasm of Herman Magnus was India: the history, the religions, the people of that mysterious peninsula, whose civilisation was supreme and ancient when Europe was a waste of barbarism. At Jesse's mention of the subject, the face of his host lighted with interest; he leaned forward in his chair, and looked at the young man with quite another expression than the one of perfunctory and studied politeness which had made his handsome, strongly-chiselled face seem cut from ivory. He began to speak of a journey which he had made through India seven years before, and of a certain Maharajah who had entertained him for a week with royal and incredible magnificence. He told about the temples he had visited, the stories he had heard of holy men, the magical doings of a certain wonder-worker whom he had encountered at Bombay. He dilated on the beauties of the Taj-Mahal, and reminded Jesse that this comparatively modern structure, this thing of yesterday as measured by the Indian standard, was older than almost anything in our country.

He went to one of the great book-cases and brought out a volume of coloured plates, views and details of that marvel of Agra of which he had been speaking. Then, laying this volume on the floor, he brought another, Moor's "Hindu Pantheon," and briefly explained to Jesse certain differences between the Vedic and the modern gods of India. He opened a drawer of his desk and took out a handful of little bronze figures, Buddhas and Shivas; he carefully unrolled the tissue wrappings of a dried natural leaf, which he told Jesse was a leaf of the sacred Bo-tree;

he showed him a rosary of tulsi-beads which a Krishna yogi had given him in Calcutta.

Jesse was so absorbed that he could not have told afterward whether this extraordinary man had been talking to him for fifteen minutes or for two hours. But at last Herman Magnus glanced at his watch.

"Please excuse me," he said; "but I have been so interested that I have made myself late for an important engagement. No, do not go away," as Jesse rose also to take his leave; "stay and talk with Mary for an hour. She has little enough to interest her these days of her mother's illness, poor child! And I hope you will come to this house whenever it pleases you, so long as you are in our city. If I have any books here which you desire to read, you are welcome to take them, merely giving Mary the titles of those you select, that I may know where they are."

He shook hands with Jesse warmly, kissed Mary on the cheek, and went away.

As soon as the street door had closed after him, Mary began to jump about the room like a delighted child of ten. She laughed, she clapped her hands; then, seeing the puzzled look on Jesse's face, she came over to him, laid her two little flowers of hands on his shoulders and looked seriously into his face.

"My friend," she said, "whatever you may do in future, whatever conquests you may make of people or things, you will never do anything half so extraordinary as what you have done to my father this evening. He is literally charmed with you—he who cannot endure any of my young men friends!" She looked up at him archly, taking away her hands from his shoulders and half turning aside.

"I've a great mind to tell you something," she said; "you are so sensible that you will understand. Well, when I told my father how you had been coming to see me in the evening, how we had talked alone together, neither he nor Mother knowing anything about you, he was furious. Oh, he is dreadfully stern, this gentle parent of mine! He demanded that you should be shown to him, as an old King of Babylon, if Babylon had kings, might have demanded your beautiful head, Jesse. I was frightened half to death when you came this evening, and I brought you right up

to Father's study." She drew a deep sigh of relief, that ended with a laugh. "Father didn't understand how anybody of your profession, or trade, or whatever it's called, could be so colossally my superior as he now realises that you are. He will be quoting you to me now as an example, whenever I'm idle or stupid. Oh, Jesse, how very wonderful you are!" Her face softened, all the merriment went out of it, and a wistful something he could not have named passed like a shadow into her dark eyes.

"Do you want to make me very happy?" he asked, half hesitating to express his dearest wish.

"Yes."

"Play for me again, as you did the other night. It is ecstasy for me."

They went down to the drawing-room, and she played more wonderfully than before, haunting music full of ineffable desires and melancholy.

When the time came for Jesse to go home, Mary detained him for a few minutes by the reminder that he was to choose a book or two from her father's library. Of course, after the talk on India, he chose a volume about that country of strange ways and strange religions. Embodied in this volume was a translation of the Bhagavad-Gita, that deathless little Indian classic, which has been to generation after generation of high souls as a finger pointing the way to a path too steep and perilous to be trodden by any feet save those of the immortals.

And he chose also another little book of ancient time, the Tao-te-King of Lao-tsze, old philosopher of China, whose half-veiled words have influenced those whose unveiled words have influenced the ages.

Far into the night and every night he read these mystic books; he even gave up walking under the stars; and all day long when busy about his work he thought of them. His subtle poet's mind went deep into their mysteries. At last the boy stood face to face with those whom he felt to be his spiritual brothers; and though the centuries divided them, yet were they of one family, true sons of the all-seeing Father.

At first his fellow workmen were inclined to chaff him on his abstraction; but as he did his work better than they

did theirs, and was always ready with a gentle word and a smile, they began to respect him and even to silence their own chatter that he might have peace for his thoughts, which, as they somehow perceived, were too high for their dull comprehension. His natural reticence grew deeper day by day. There was no one about him to whom he might speak his thoughts; even his mother, had she been with him now instead of miles away, would not have understood him any longer. Another door had been opened for him into the celestial mansion; but he could not take his loved ones with him, for the place—while warm enough for him whose body and soul were burning with the unquenchable inner flame—would have been too high and cold for their cold natures, a place too far from the domestic hearth-fire where they were wont to warm themselves. At times he felt almost too much alone, and he would encourage his fellow workmen to talk to him about their small affairs, merely that he might feel closer to them. The time was to come when his inner fire would be hot enough to warm himself and every other being who came near him; but that time was not yet. At this period of his life he was still only a boy, and he sometimes suffered from spiritual growing-pains.

One night he sat reading his two ancient books. He was now sufficiently familiar with them to turn from one to the other, seeking in the old philosopher of China the answer to some question awakened in his mind by the sage of India, going to the latter for the parallel of some illuminating paradox which in the former had startled him to his feet. He had come to feel the underlying unity in all philosophies; had come to feel that Truth is a gem with many faces, and that from the one white jewel may sparkle myriad-tinted lights.

In the book of the wise one of China he read: "By non-action there is nothing that may not be done." "There is a purity and quietude by which one may rule the world." "To act and expect not. . . . This is called sublime virtue."

In the book of the wise one of India he read, as being the words of the god: "Perform thou that which thou hast to do, at all times unmindful of the event; for the

man who doeth that which he hath to do, without attachment to result, obtaineth the Supreme. . . . There is nothing in the three regions of the universe which it is necessary for me to perform, nor anything possible to obtain which I have not obtained, and yet I am constantly in action."

In the one book he read: "The name which can be named is not the Eternal Name." In the other he read: "I am the Ego that is seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all existing things. . . . But what, O Arjuna, hast thou to do with so much knowledge as this? I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself, and remain separate."

Again, in the first he found: "The sage wears a coarse garment and hides his jewel in his bosom." And in the other, these were the words of the god: "Among the wise of secret knowledge I am their silence."

He closed his books and sat a long time in meditation on the mystery of mortal life, the never-answered questions of the before and after. He had seen little of the world, as yet; but that little had been enough to show him that all beings ever swing like pendulums between the opposites of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, good and evil, desire and disappointment. They come into the world in pain, where for a little time they laugh in the sunshine and weep in the shadow, and then they die in pain and the grave receives them, to make room for others, who in their turn are born in pain, who laugh and weep awhile, who die in pain, and the grave receives them, to make room again for others. And so on and on, from everlasting unto everlasting. Why? Whence? Whither?

And then and there he vowed himself anew to the great quest. Somewhere, surely, among the mountains of the world was the well of understanding. Surely he should find it if he sought without ceasing; and, having found, he would give all the world to drink of the well, and they would follow him and love him for ever. He remembered the words of the old philosopher of China: "If, for the sake of dignity, one seek to make himself ruler of the world, he may be permitted to rule it temporarily; but if

for love, one seek to make himself ruler of the world, he may be entrusted with it for ever."

With heaving bosom and eyes suffused with tears, he threw himself face downward on the floor of his narrow room and prayed:

"Power of the Universe, Thou who art the source, the restless stream, the endless ocean of existence, reveal to me the secret of Thy being. Thou who art One and everlasting, whose purpose is the tendency of all our purposes, make known to me—mere drop among Thy myriad drops—the meaning of myself."

CHAPTER XIII

FOR more than a week Jesse had not thought of Mary Magnus, so absorbed was he in the books which her father had lent him; but one day he saw her driving by in her little pony phaeton, and promised himself that he would go that very night to call on her again. He had not meant to stay away so long; but the nights were all too short for his reading and meditation, and from seven in the morning until six in the evening he hammered and sawed and planed for Peter Mack, the builder.

It was a lovely August night, warm and softly scented. The full moon was just rising over the mountain as he went down the street to Mary's house. At the door he called for both the father and the daughter; but the maid said:

"Mr. Magnus is away from home; Miss Mary is in the garden. Will you go out there?"

He found her sitting in a hammock hung between two drooping maple-trees, idly swinging herself with one red-slippered foot. Her face, uplifted to the rising moon, was wistful and rather sad; but when she caught sight of him a light came into her eyes which was not borrowed from the moon, and as she rose and gave him her hand, it seemed to him that she was all a-tremble.

"You have been a long time away," she said.

"Yes, I have been reading your father's books. See, I have brought them back."

"My father is in Boston to-night. He said that I might give you the books."

She felt the tremour of gladness in his voice as he thanked her.

"Have the books meant so much to you?" she asked.

"Oh, very much! I find myself in them—in both of them. I do not find myself in many modern books."

She motioned him to a seat beside her in the wide hammock.

"I think you love my father's books better than me," she said.

He turned to her in distress and self-reproach.

"I have been neglectful of your friendship, Mary. Will you forgive me?"

"What else can I do but forgive you?"

"I did not know that you would really miss me. If I had known——"

"You did not know!"

"Believe me, I did not."

"I think your heart is rather cold, dear Jesse, for all your gentleness."

But when she looked at him she saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"Oh, I didn't mean that!" she cried, breathlessly. "Indeed, I didn't, Jesse." She caught his long cool hand in both her hot little hands. "Don't mind what I said, dear friend. I think the moon has turned my brain to-night."

"But you did mean it, Mary. Have I really failed in friendship? No one ever told me that before."

"No, no, a thousand times, no. I am foolish; it is nothing, indeed, it is nothing." She was wiping her eyes on her wisp of a handkerchief before he realised that she was crying.

Then his great tenderness overcame him, his great pity for every hurt thing under heaven. He took her quivering hand between his quiet palms and looked her deep in the eyes. In the one long look she gave him in return she told him everything without a word. He understood that Mary the woman loved him the man—loved *him!* The shock of the revelation made his face turn white. Something at last which she saw in his eyes made her drop her own and cover her bowed face with her hands. Gently he laid his hand on her dark curls.

"Why do you hide your face from me, Mary?"

"Because I am ashamed."

"Why are you ashamed that I should know——" he hesitated.

"Say it, Jesse."

He was silent. She raised her head and looked at him again.

"No, you dare not say it; but I dare. It is something I have never said to any man, though many have said it to me. Yes, I love you, Jesse. I have loved you since that day, nine years ago, when you came late to school and stood in the doorway with the morning sunlight making a halo around your head. I shall love you till I die."

He opened his lips—then closed them, knowing not what to say.

"You are so different from all other men, Jesse. I could not speak like this to any other man; but I'm not afraid in the least to let you know—everything, everything! At first I was afraid that you would know, but now—now—Jesse!"

"Yes, Mary."

"Do you love me a little, just a little?"

He drew a long deep breath, that seemed to catch in his breast and choke him. Then he said:

"Mary, little Mary, I think that no one else in the whole world will ever love you as much as I do; but——"

She held her breath while he hesitated for his words.

"But," he went on, "you will never be satisfied with the *kind* of love I give you, no matter how great the quantity. I would suffer for a week to save you a moment's pain; but I cannot give you the love which belongs to you. I cannot, Mary, I cannot! It is only when a man is willing to be nothing that he becomes as great as anything and everything. It is only the man who can live without love who shall show the world a better way of loving. It is not till you have found the One, that the many can find you."

"Jesse, I do not understand."

"Listen, then. I can never love any woman as she wishes to be loved; yet I shall love every woman in the world better than any other human being loves her. No, do not turn your face away. You must try to understand me. He who would think *for* others must cease, for a time, to think *of* others. He who would love the whole world must not love any individual *too exclusively*."

"What are you going to do, Jesse? What is your life going to be?"

He went on, as if he had not heard her question:

"The desires of *self* are not confined to the body, nor even to the mind; they knock at the doors of the soul also. Would you accept the bliss of paradise for self, and leave the suffering world unaided?"

"I don't know, Jesse. But what of you? Must you live your life all alone?"

"He who is willing to stand alone has the gods and the ages for company. Only through isolation does the soul reach union."

"You seem so far away, Jesse, when you speak like that."

He turned again to her, and spoke in his usual manner. "You say you love me, Mary. *That* is my real self, which I have just been showing you. Do you love *that*?"

"Yes, even that—because it is you. But I don't understand."

They were both silent for a time; then she said, slowly, and as if every word hurt her:

"I think, Jesse, that you have broken my heart."

"Don't say so, Mary, please don't! I never dreamed that I could cause you pain. Why, you have been so kind to me, and your father—"

"My father gave you the books which kept you ten days away from me!"

It was true, and he made no answer.

Again she was silent for a moment, then her manner changed. A touch of wildness, of recklessness, came over her. She laughed, and her laughter hurt him more than her tears.

"And what shall I do with *my* life?" she said. "You have broken my heart. Do you know what that means? Oh, I would have done anything for you—everything! My father adores me and would have made any sacrifice to give me happiness, after he had stormed awhile. I could have brought you the world, Jesse. We are rich, rich, rich! In this little town we don't spend the *interest* on our income. Do you know enough of life to realise what that means? My father could buy Peter Mack, your employer, as he would buy a bunch of bananas. I saw you there this afternoon, as I drove by, bruising your beautiful hands in the service of that vulgarian. You are

so great, my Jesse! I have heard people speak of the dignity of labour; *you are* the dignity of labour. You are so superior to everybody that you could go in your working-clothes into the presence of a king, and he would never know that you were not dressed in purple and fine linen. And I loved you!"

Her voice sank to a low cry at the last words. Then she laughed again, and a shiver of pain passed over him.

"What shall I do with my life?" she repeated. "I cannot live like all these stupid, stolid women. Can I marry some heavy blockhead and bear him babies, spending my time between nurseries and tea-parties, church-fairs and dressmakers, Paris and Vergennes? Oh, I shall go to the devil, Jesse, I know I shall! For you I could have been anything, a saint, a housewife, whatever you wanted me to be. But now? Oh, the world is wide and the world is gay, and I have money, and beauty, and wit, and somewhere I shall find forgetfulness. There is wine and song and a world of men, such as they are."

"Mary, you are breaking my heart."

She laughed.

"Have you a heart?"

He rose, white and quivering with pain.

"Good-bye, Mary."

She clutched his hands, all the mockery of her last words giving way to terrible tears and sobs that tore his heart to hear.

"Don't leave me, Jesse! Don't go away like that! Forgive me, for I am insane—out of my mind, and I don't know what I'm saying. I suffer so, I suffer so!"

He sat down again beside her, and she bowed her head upon his knees and sobbed there. Once, years before, his mother had cried her heart out on his breast; but her crying was not like this of Mary's, it had not hurt him so. He looked out over the purple whispering trees, stirred by the night wind. How tremulously alive the world was—how responsive to happiness and pain! The breeze upon his face was soft as Mary's hair. He lightly touched one loose dark lock which lay across his arm.

"Oh, Mary, little Mary! Do not weep so. Your tears are drops of blood upon my soul."

Her sobbing ceased, and she lay quite still.

Somewhere off in the darkness a cricket was calling ceaselessly, insistently. There seemed to be no other sound. In the expectant hush, something opened—like a window—in his consciousness, and he perceived with startling vividness a new and hitherto undreamed-of world, lying just outside the small but intense sphere wherein he had lived alone for eighteen years. The perception was not joy, it was not suffering, but something too still to be either suffering or joy; it seemed as if he saw into the rarefied crystalline atmosphere surrounding the soul of the world. In that moment of clear sight he had forgotten where he was; but a long sigh from Mary brought him back to the groping earth.

"What shall I say to you, little sister? You have given me a pearl, a wonderful pearl, and——"

"And you don't want it, Jesse. So, as I can't give it to anyone else, I'll crush it, grind it to powder. No, I cannot give it to anyone else, my pearl; but I have other jewels—rubies red as my blood, topazes yellow as the eyes of my cat, sapphires blue as your eyes, Jesse, and opals full of fire and moonlight, tears and evil. Oh! I will lavish all the vari-coloured jewels of my heart and soul on others, on anybody, everybody; for I have crushed my one white pearl, and nothing else has any value for me."

"When you talk like that, you make me afraid."

"Afraid, Jesse?"

"Afraid for you, Mary."

"Oh, do not trouble about me!"

He looked far out over the purple trees. "I am going home the day after to-morrow," he said.

"The sooner the better, Jesse."

"Why, Mary!"

"Yes, the sooner the better, my friend. I shall find it easier to live when you are gone."

"You hate me so?"

"Hate you? I could never hate you; but when you are here, I hate everything else."

"Do you want me to leave you now?"

"Yes. I would like to be alone for a little while."

He arose and stood before her, tall and dark against the moonlight. There was a brief silence, then she said:

"Jesse, when my little brother died, before they covered his face I kissed him. It is a fearfully beautiful thing to kiss the dead. I think I wish to kiss you—before you are covered out of sight for ever."

She arose from the hammock, and he bent toward her. Taking his face between her now cold hands, she looked a long time into his eyes. But she did not kiss him.

"No, you are not dead, Jesse; but vividly, terribly *alive*. Good-bye."

She withdrew her hands from his face. Then, without a word, he turned and went away.

An hour later the young workman with whom Jesse lived, coming through his little orchard on the way home, saw a motionless figure lying on the grass, long and slender, its arms extended straight out in the form of a cross. Coming nearer he saw that it was Jesse.

"Why, man," he said, "what are you doing here?"

Jesse opened his eyes and gazed at his friend, and in the moonlight his face was like that of a spirit.

"I am trying to remember something," was all he said. And the man went away and left him there.

CHAPTER XIV

Two days later, when Jesse stepped off the train at the Nashburgh station, he felt a hand clutching his arm. Turning, he looked into the drawn face of Marty White.

"Jesse, are you my true friend?" the boy asked, in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes. What is the matter?"

"I'll tell you as we're going down the creek road, where nobody can hear. It's something awful, Jesse."

They passed the few scattered houses beyond the station, and crossing the old wooden bridge, turned north along the river. Jesse did not say a word, but waited for Marty to speak. After a few rods, he heard the boy sobbing. Then he put his strong arm around the bent shoulders of his friend.

"What is it, Marty? Is your mother dead?"

"No, no; but I wish she was, before she finds out what I've done. I wish I was dead, too."

"Tell me all about it."

"Oh, you'll turn against me, maybe! I wouldn't blame you if you should; but, somehow, I know you won't, Jesse, will you?"

"No."

"Not when I tell you I'm a thief?"

Jesse tightened his arm around Marty's shoulder. "If that is true," he said, "it seems to me that you need my friendship more than ever."

"God knows I do! Oh, how could I ever have done it! How could I ever have done it!"

"Temptation," Jesse said.

"Temptation? Oh, you don't know what temptation is, Jesse!"

"Perhaps I do."

"I stole one of Olin Madison's cows," Marty confessed, "and I drove her in the night to Wheelerville and sold

her for twenty dollars to the fellow from New Hampshire that's leased the Croly farm."

Jesse drew a long breath. "When was that?" he asked.

"Night before last."

"Night before last. . . . Does Olin Madison know?"

"He'd have me arrested if he knew. He's notified the constable, and they're looking everywhere. They'll find out the truth, Jesse, I'm afraid; because, as I was coming out of the village after selling the cow, I met Thomas Taylor driving in, and——"

Jesse cut him off: "Have you spent the money?"

"Of course. Do you think I'd have stolen if it hadn't been a matter of life and death?"

Jesse made no answer, and the two walked on in silence for half a mile. When they came to the gate of Marty's neglected dooryard, Jesse said:

"Go to Wheelerville to-morrow, buy back that cow—here's twenty-five dollars, and turn her loose in Olin's pasture to-morrow night. If Olin were like some men, I would advise you to go to him, tell the truth, and pay for the cow; but you could never make him understand. And, then, he would tell everybody. Open confession may be good for the soul everywhere; but open confession is not good for the reputation—in Nashburgh. If you return the cow, he will only lose the value of a few pails of milk; and I'll see that he gets that back at the auction of our farm-things in the fall. . . . No, don't thank me, Marty."

"I can't," said the boy, "for my heart's too full. We don't thank folks for saving our lives, we just love them. I'd have killed myself, I know I would, if I had been found out and sent to jail. But, Jesse, aren't you afraid to trust me with this twenty-five dollars? Aren't you afraid I'll——"

Jesse bent quickly and kissed the boy's rough cheek.

Marty clung to him a moment, while the tears rolled down his face. "Oh, Jesse, you aren't just human; you're something more. I'll be your dog for this."

"Be my friend instead. You had better start early in the morning for Wheelerville. Remember that you have

an errand for me with Brown the carpenter, on the other side of the village. Ask him if there's any building going on over there. Good-night."

Jesse was not easy in his mind. He had chosen what seemed to him the least of the many evils growing out of Marty's theft; yet he felt that, somehow, he had done wrong in trying to do right. He began to realise that the line dividing right and wrong was not so sharply defined as he had been led to suppose; began to realise the complexity of the human problem. And what if Marty should be found out, after all? Men offering cows for sale do not spring out of the ground; men offering to buy back to-day at an advance the thing they sold two days before, excite curiosity if not suspicion.

Jesse knew that he should have won Marty's consent to his going to Olin Madison, telling the truth and offering to pay for the cow. In all his life before he had never had to keep an incriminating secret. His own words to Marty came back to mock at him: "Open confession is not good for the reputation—in Nashburgh." Oh, to recall that heedless speech!

That night he laid down a rule for himself which he was able to live by all his life: "Guard your speech within your mouth as a sword within the scabbard, and only draw it forth when certain of your purpose." Jesse thought out many puzzling things before he went to sleep that night.

"He who deviates from the straight path learns, at least, that the path is straight," he wrote down in his note-book the next day.

On the second morning Jesse found Marty waiting for him on the door-step when he came out, a little after sunrise.

"It's all right," the boy said, in a low tone. "I put the cow back in the pasture this morning before daylight. I told the man my mother felt so bad about my selling her pet cow that I wanted to buy her back again. He dickered awhile, and finally gave her to me for twenty-two. Here's the three dollars change. And the carpenter says there isn't any building going on over there now; but if there should be any, he will let you know. I told the other man my name was Reed, and that I came from Bartown. He's

a stranger in these parts, so he won't remember; but I'll fight shy of Wheelerville from now on to the day of judgment."

"That's a very wise idea," Jesse assented.

After Marty went away Jesse sat down on the well-curb, in the fresh morning air. The story of the grief of the fictitious mother of the fictitious Reed from Bartown over the sale of the family cow, made his eyes twinkle. "Tragedy and comedy," he murmured to himself, "truly they are the right and left sides of the mirror of human life."

That afternoon he went down to see Olin Madison about some trifling matter in relation to the Bethel estate, and heard from the farmer a highly-coloured account of the theft and final restitution of the cow.

"Sure's you're born," said Olin, ending his narrative, "when I went out to the pasture before breakfast, there stood old Betsy a-looking over the bars, lashing her tail at a fly, as unconcerned and smiling-like as if I hadn't been scouring the neighbourhood after her for days. I dunno's I ever wished before that animals could talk; but if that old cow of mine could tell the story of her adventures for the last three days and nights, 'twould make the history of old Ethan Allen look like a dish o' soap-grease. All yesterday and the day before I was so darned mad I went around cussing up hill and down dale, till my wife said she'd go away on a visit if I didn't shut up. But when I saw old Betsy standing there this morning, a-lashing her tail at the flies, I was so took back—I broke my galluses.

"Do you know," he went on, "I've been thinking it all over, and I don't believe anybody stole that cow. I believe 'twas all a put-up game of some of them station fellows, just to pay me back for putting water in their cider barrel the day of the circus. Gosh! but they got the laugh around on me all right, if 'twas them; got the laugh on me and the constable that threatened to arrest them all at the circus for rowdying around the cider barrel. I'll bet I won't hear the last of stolen cows till all my unborn grandchildren have cut their wisdom-teeth. It'll be like Thomas Taylor's cup of cold water, which you handed out to him at the milk meeting when you were a little fellow."

Jesse walked slowly home along the yellowing September road. He had saved his friend from disgrace, and yet he felt that he had done his friend an injury. He who had apparently separated the cause from the effect for a friend's sake, now owed that friend the true teaching: That cause and effect can never really be separated; and that he who seeks to remedy one evil by the commission of another, will eventually have to reckon with the full results of both.

A line from the Bible kept running through his mind: "And the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Could it be that the stars in their courses fought for the *triumph* of all his purposes? Or was it only the potency of his will which moved the minds of others in some mysterious way? He had wished to save Marty White from punishment for his theft, and now the very man from whom the poor boy dreaded punishment declared the whole affair a practical joke by some unknown but amiable rascal. And Jesse's mother had not asked him why he brought home so little money from Vergennes.

When, in the fulness of time, he should attempt the great but still vague and unoutlined project of his life, would all his difficulties melt away like this? Would he be able to achieve so easily the vast, undreamed-of things? Then a sadness came over him, and his eyes filled with tears. Somehow, his lovely visions of the future were often clouded; but often again they shone with diamond clearness, filling his soul with such wild joy that he longed to cry out to a listening universe the message which he himself yet only half understood.

About midway between his home and Olin Madison's, on a knoll beside the road, stood two brother trees, an oak and a maple; their spreading branches intertwining made one continuous shade. Since childhood Jesse had loved to sit on the ground between these trees, drawing into his being their mingled influences. It seemed to him that the maple-tree was like the softness of his nature, the oak-tree like his austerity.

Walking home that afternoon from Olin Madison's he stopped at the two trees, and, sitting down between them, looked dreamily out across the many-tinted marshes toward

the red, descending sun. How many centuries, how many centuries of centuries, had the sun gone down in splendour or in cloud behind the mountains of the world? How many men, how many races of men, had gazed like him at that stupendous orb since human life began? No wonder that in former ages they had worshipped the sun as God; no wonder that his progeny of planets, including our green earth, should yearn to him as father, source, sustainer. All this he was to the body, this vast, material sun; but hidden behind the veil of his unendurable glory, as sight is hidden in the eye, was the *unmaterial* source and father and sustainer, the essential, immanent One.

Then suddenly it came to him that not only was he the offspring of that inconceivable One, but that he *was* that One, he, now known as Jesse Bethel; and, being the One, he was immortal and indomitable, had always been and always would be. This, then, was the elusive mystery which had beckoned him for years beyond the outposts of thought: how the One, to realise Itself, becomes the many; how every one of that multitudinous many is essentially the One, containing all Its powers.

He sprang to his feet, and stretching out his arms to the universe, shouted aloud with joy and consciousness of power: "*I myself am God!*"

He beheld a light unseen before upon the surface of all things; he felt a power unknown before in the inmost deeps of himself, in the deeps of everything. And in the exaltation of the hour it seemed to him that his body was free as air, that his thought was limitless, that his rapture filled all space, that his love went out like light in all directions. No wonder the earth was beautiful to him with more than earthly beauty, for did he not see it with the eyes of its Maker? No wonder his will could bring seemingly impossible things to pass, when he was God. No wonder his body seemed light and free as ether, for was it not the vehicle of the immortal Wanderer? No wonder his thought knew no limit, when He who was himself was the untrammelled Thinker. No wonder his rapture filled all space to running over, for was not space so vast because no smaller compass could contain the vastness of God's joy? No wonder his love went out like light in every direction,

for was not God's love the omnipresent flame, the very source of light?

All the rest of the short way home he kept repeating, "I myself am God. . . . I myself am God. . . ."

When still a few rods from the house, he saw his brothers standing in the dooryard. If he should tell them what he had discovered, what answer would they make? When he came up to them, they mentioned the price which the travelling chicken-dealer had just offered for their flock. This did not seem to be the time to tell them the great secret.

He went into the kitchen to find his mother. She was darning a stocking by the window, and looked up to remind him that they had waited supper for him more than half an hour; that the wood-fire had gone out, and the tea was almost cold. Perhaps he could tell her to-morrow . . . certainly not to-night.

But on the following day the threshers came; and the noisy trampling of the horses in the treadmill, with his mother's anxiety as to the amount of oats which they would have to sell, made such a confidence impossible. On the second day the administrator of his father's estate, Olin Madison, came to discuss with them many details of the approaching auction. And all of the third day a multiplicity of small material cares absorbed his mother's mind. So Jesse kept his secret, unshared with anyone; and he was destined so to keep it for many a long year.

CHAPTER XV

It was arranged that Jesse should precede his family over the mountain to Myra, and find a little house for them, so that the mother would not be obliged to leave her old home in any racking uncertainty as to what awaited her at the end of the journey. After Jesse was gone they would sell everything at auction except their household furniture and one cow; and when he should send them word to come, they would follow him into the future.

It was a perfect morning in late September when he bade good-bye to the home of his childhood. While his brother Henry was harnessing old Topsy to take him to Wheelerville, Jesse went into the orchard north of the house and walked about alone among the trees. Every spot was sacred with some memory. Under the old sweet apple-tree he had read many a wise and wonderful book; behind the trellis of the grape-vines he had hidden himself to weep on the day when his father bluntly told him that the story of Jacob's ladder was no more true than the story of Jack and the Beanstalk; in the cornfield, on the other side of the fence, he had searched for brownies all alone in the grey dawnlight, while his brothers slept; down the old stone outside-steps into the cool summer-cellar he had gone on many a scorching afternoon, to dream of ancient catacombs and to enjoy the damp, delicious dread of the shadow-haunted underground.

All these dear and intimate things would nevermore be anything but memories. Even should he return in future years, should he revisit the old scenes, they would not be the same; the transforming hands of strangers would give the place a new, an alien look; maybe they would paint the weather-beaten, blue-grey, nature-tinted clapboards of the old house, overlaying the rough beauty of age with the slick surface of modern ochre or white-lead.

He went into the kitchen to say good-bye to his mother.

She was packing a substantial luncheon for him, and turned from tying the package to take him in her arms. Choking back the tears, she gave him motherly admonitions about his health, and made him promise to write to her as soon as he arrived in Myra.

"All ready now!" called Henry from the dooryard.

After a long kiss for his mother and a hearty handshake for Fred, Jesse sprang into the buggy.

"G'wan!" said Henry to old Topsy, who started leisurely down the hill, and Jesse Bethel's boyhood receded into the past.

At nine o'clock that morning his brother bade him good-bye at Wheelerville, the village at the foot of the mountain. With a knapsack on his back and in his heart the joy of the unknown, Jesse turned his face toward the eastern sun. There was a stage-route from Wheelerville to Myra, fifteen miles over old Thunder Mountain; but Jesse chose to travel this mystic road in solitude, going as a pilgrim on foot, with freedom to muse or worship by the wayside as he should be impelled.

The crisp autumnal air gave wings to his spirit. He fancied that the scent of pine and hemlock was the incense rising from the censers of an invisible priesthood whose temple was this mountain of mysterious visions; that the sound of the mountain river, which shrilly whispered from the bottom of the gorge a hundred feet below the road, was the ceaseless inarticulate ritual of adoration offered by rainbow-robed communicants to the god of woods and waters. Instinctively he knew that this day's journey meant more to him than a mere change of physical environment. A subtle but mighty power was expanding within him, raising his body to a new stature, his mind to a higher potency. He was no longer the boy Jesse, of Nashburgh, following uncertainly in the footsteps of his elders; in a day he seemed to have become a man, seemed to be marking out already a path for himself of his own choosing, a different and more difficult and straighter path than any trodden by the downward-gazing souls he knew.

Somewhere in the great world there must be those who gazed up instead of down, those who questioned the sky for other meanings than weather-omens for their crops. In

all his short life, until recently in Vergennes, he had never known anyone except his mother for whom the value of a dream in the life-scales weighed more than an acre of land. The solemn-faced ministers of his mother's denomination spoke the language of the spiritual life; but they spoke it as the boys at the Nashburgh schoolhouse used to recite the passages from Julius Cæsar in the Fifth Reader on recitation days, with more lung-power than understanding. It swept over him suddenly, walking the silent mountain road, how utterly alone in the world he was.

About half-way up the side of old Thunder Mountain there is a spring of never-failing water. On the hottest day in summer it gushes cool and keen from the mossy rocks beside the road; on the coldest day in winter it trickles under the ice. Nearing the spring, Jesse was surprised to see a man leaning over it, drinking from the hollow of his hand. Suddenly the man stood up, and his tall, gaunt figure, clad in grey, scanty garments of strange cut, was outlined vividly against the background of pine-trees. His black hair came to his shoulders. At the sound of Jesse's footsteps he turned, as if to disappear among the trees; but something in the young man's face held him.

"May I drink of your spring?" Jesse asked.

"It is not my spring. It is free to everyone."

"All the more yours for that reason," was Jesse's smiling answer.

"If you have learned that, then indeed are you wiser than most men," the stranger said, with stern, unsmiling lips. He seemed to be in the middle twenties, though his thin face was marked by deep lines, and his eyes blazed with the fire of the fanatic.

"Your home is in these mountains?" Jesse asked, as he held his cup under the running water.

"I have no home, nor do I know the need of one."

"Maybe the world is your home."

"The world is a jungle of wild beasts; my second dearest wish is to escape from it."

"And your first dearest wish?"

"Shall I tell that to a stranger?"

"Pardon me," said Jesse, gently.

The man looked over the tops of the trees. "You speak

the language of the world," he said. "He whom I seek shall speak the language of the spiritual life."

"If he should speak the language of some other planet, the people of the world would hardly learn of him," was Jesse's answer.

"His words shall move the world." The enthusiast uncovered his head.

"And how will you know when you find the one whom you seek?"

"I shall know him by the glory of his countenance."

"And will he speak the word of love?"

"He will speak the word of power."

"The two are one," said Jesse.

"I have not found it so," the man replied.

Jesse looked long at him. Perhaps that is the lesson your teacher has for you."

"I do not know what his lesson will be. I shall know him by the glory of his countenance," the man repeated.

"Will you not tell me your name?" Jesse asked.

"My name is John. I have no other." But he did not ask the name of his companion in return.

"Have you sought long for this teacher?"

"No; but I shall seek him long—until I find him."

"You will find him when the time is ripe," said Jesse.

"Take my good wishes with you, my prayers."

"Thank you," responded the stranger, almost warmly. Then he turned abruptly and went on down the mountain road.

Jesse sat for a long time on the rocks beside the spring. The chance encounter with this extraordinary man had moved him more deeply than the meeting with any human being had ever done before. Alien and unsocial though the stranger was, Jesse felt less alone in the world for knowing that he lived in it. He, too, questioned the skies for other meanings than weather-omens; he, too, was possessed by an idea, had given himself, without fear or reservation, to the quest of the unseen. What matter though their ways were different ways? One sought in the solitude of the mountain the master with the shining countenance who should speak to him the word of power; the other sought in the depths of his own soul, amid the noises and emotions of every-day human life, the will of that God

who was himself; but surely they two would meet again at the goal. Would it be after many years? For some reason, Jesse thought more of the intensity of the strange pilgrim's quest than of the unknown master for whom he waited. Jesse was not looking for a master. "I am the God that shall answer my own prayer," was written in his book of meditations. But that he was really the one who should fulfil the quest of the wandering John did not enter his mind at that time.

Half a mile further on he met two wood-cutters walking beside a load of logs, and stopped to speak with them.

"Do you know anything about a strange-looking man with long black hair, dressed in grey, who passed along this road about an hour ago?" he asked.

"Oh!" exclaimed the woodman who was driving the team, "you must mean John the Hermit. No, I don't know anything about him; nobody does. I never saw him till this summer, and don't know where he came from. Once or twice he's been down to Wheelerville. Some folks think he's inspired, like those old fellows in the Bible; but most folks think he's crazy."

"The usual fate of wise men," said Jesse, half to himself.

"He's wiser than I am, anyway," said the woodman, "for he seems to know how to live without working. Git up, ponies!" The horses started; and with a courteous "good afternoon," Jesse walked on.

At the highest point in the road which wound round the shoulder of the mountain he paused again, to eat his luncheon. The sun was now at the meridian, and he was half-way to Myra. To the west of him lay, far down, the fertile valley of the Otter Creek, the theatre of all his past; to the east of him, about seven miles away, lay Myra, the unknown village of his childhood's dreams, the scene of his immediate future. Something was waiting for him there, some revelation which should answer the great question he was always asking—as to the real nature of the mission that was calling him. Would it come soon, or after many years?

He sat thinking for an hour beside the road, then rose and rapidly descended the eastern slope of the mountain.

CHAPTER XVI

It was in the middle of the afternoon when he saw the church-spires of Myra rising over the tree-tops. A thrill passed through him, his step quickened. But when he came to the cinder-path at the end of a long street shaded on both sides by elm and maple-trees, he went more slowly. A little further on he met two middle-aged men in frock-coats and silk hats. There was something so majestic in the bearing of the young workman, that the two instinctively made way for him, lifting their hats; then they looked at each other as if they wondered why they had done it. They were the two wealthiest men of Myra.

When he reached the main street of the village, Jesse enquired the way to the home of Rose Thomas, the school-teacher "from over the mountain" who had taught in Nashburgh ten years before. They had not met since he was eight years old. She lived in a little white house on a quiet side-street, and when Jesse went up the path to the door he saw her standing in the porch, tall and slender and still dressed in blue, as in the old days; but the soft hair round her placid face was now thickly sprinkled with grey, and there were shadows under her eyes and at the corners of her mouth.

"Do you remember me, Miss Thomas?" Jesse held out his hand.

She looked at him a moment, then a smile of wondering surprise lighted her face. "Why, is it—yes, it must be Jesse Bethel, of Nashburgh! I would have known you anywhere, and yet—how changed you are! Come right into the house, and tell me about your mother."

He followed her into the plain little sitting-room. The windows were open, and the white muslin curtains fluttered in the breeze.

They talked of the old days, of the Nashburgh children, now grown men and women, of Jesse's carpentry work, and of his plans for the future of his little family.

"I often think of the strange questions you used to ask me," she said, with a puzzled smile. "Have you found out yet what time is the shadow of?"

"No. Have you?"

She shook her head. "I remember also how you used to think that the other side of a mountain was always more beautiful than this side. Now you are on the other side, do you find it so?"

"I find beauty everywhere, everywhere."

"And are you still asking questions?"

"Yes, but I have to find the answers for myself."

Jesse enquired of her about a boarding-place where he could live until his family came; but she would not hear of his staying anywhere but in her home. Was he not one of her children? Her mother, who was down in the village, would return in a little while. Surely, he would stay with them? And so he promised, thanking her with a loving smile.

She remembered the little boy who used to rescue captured flies from the cruel fly-paper where they struggled helplessly, washing their sticky legs in warm water and setting them free. She remembered the little candy-box filled with cotton, where he had nursed a sick and broken bird until its half-glazed eyes grew bright again and it flew away to join its little mates. She remembered how one day he had reproved her timidly for striking the hands of disobedient Marty White with her wooden ruler, saying: "God doesn't punish you when you are disobedient. For God said, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and I saw you stone a harmless little garter-snake to death, only yesterday." She had not killed a snake since that day, though the region around Myra was infested with them. All these things she recalled to his memory, as they sat quietly together in the little muslin-curtained room, waiting for her mother's return.

When at last the old lady came, she was delighted with Jesse. She made hot biscuits for his supper with her own skilful hands, and drew generously on her store of honey and fruit-cake.

That night he wrote a long letter to his mother, adding as a postscript: "Do not fear the future, nor the inhospit-

rality of strange places. Had your spirit been afraid of change, you had never dared the immense uncertainty of being born."

The next morning he went out to look for a home for his family, and walked directly, as if guided thither, to a small unoccupied house on the outskirts of the village. He found the owner, inspected the premises, engaged them for a year with privilege of indefinite renewal, and wrote again to his mother about the result of the morning's quest, all in the space of an hour.

That afternoon he found work on a large office building which was being erected on the main street of the town, and the second morning saw him busy at his trade, just forty hours after his arrival in Myra.

Ten days later his mother and the boys came, and their life flowed on as calmly and simply as in Nashburgh.

"How easy it is to change your place in the world—if only you're not afraid," said Mary Bethel one day, with a fond look at Jesse.

"Do you know, Mother," he answered, "that the philosophers say there is only one constant thing in the universe, and that is—constant change?"

A strange light came into Mary's eyes. "I suppose it's almost wicked to say so," she said, "but it seems to me sometimes that I learn more from you than I learn out of the Bible."

During the first year of his stay in Myra, Jesse was much alone in his leisure hours. He had a room to himself in their little house; and as he was the bread-winner of the family, his right to solitude in the evening was never questioned. That winter he read the Bible again from beginning to end, making a special study of the Psalms, the Proverbs, Isaiah, and Job.

In the Psalms he marked many passages, including these:

"Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

"Thy gentleness hath made me great."

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

"Be still, and know that I am God."

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul."

"Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created."

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

Among the Proverbs he underscored this one for his special meditation: "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well."

And this verse from the eighteenth chapter reminded him of Lao-tsze: "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility."

The Book of Job, from the thirty-eighth chapter to the end of the forty-first, affected him so powerfully that he was never able to read it without falling on his face in humility and adoration before the Lord that answered out of the whirlwind. In those four chapters he found what seemed to him to be the most sublime poetry he had ever read. Surely, he thought, the language of man here reached its apogee, never again to be approached until the great incalculable cycle of genius swings round the zodiac of Time.

Here are a few fragments from that masterpiece, which Jesse read over and over:

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"

"Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

"Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?"

"Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

"Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?"

"When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it,

"And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors,

"And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

"Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place?

"Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?

"Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the door of the shadow of death?

"Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all.

"Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof,

"That thou shouldst take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldst know the paths to the house thereof?

"Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great?

"Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,

"Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?

"By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth?

"Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder;

"To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man;

"To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?

"Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?

"Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?

"The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?

"Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?

"Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?

"Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?

"Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?

"Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?

"Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven,

"When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together?

"Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south?

"Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?

"Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?"

CHAPTER XVII

ONE evening in the following January, about a month after his nineteenth birthday, Jesse received a strange and half-incoherent letter from Mary Magnus. It was post-marked Los Angeles, California; but there was no address enclosed to which he might reply. Here is the letter:

"Jesse, incomprehensible one: I, too, can talk philosophy, like you, even when the waves of emotion are breaking over my heart: *The inevitable always comes to pass*. Have you learned that, I wonder, in your studies of old books? I have learned it of life, red life; I learned it even to-night.

"It is three o'clock in the morning now; but sleep is far from my eyelids. Maybe I shall sleep to-morrow—next week—it is no matter. But to-night I must write to you. I can see you in imagination, bending your beautiful still face over this letter. Will it be so still when you have read it all? For I have things to tell you which I believe no girl ever wrote to one like you before. Girl, did I say? It seems to me I should be called a woman now, though I am still so young.

"Surely my faith in you is a great faith—my faith in your sympathy and understanding, at least. For I think you are not really so cold and far-off as you seem. The incomprehensible one you are to me, and will ever remain; but I am not afraid to have you comprehend *me*. You must be very great to have left me with that feeling, after all your—no, I started to say your cruelty, but you have never been cruel to me. Perhaps it was I, after all, that was cruel to you. Who knows? for are you not the incomprehensible one?"

"Oh, Jesse!—turn away your face while I say it, for I cannot bear your eyes—I *have given myself to a man*. Do you know what I mean? No, I am not married, nor shall I ever marry. *I will not*. Oh, yes, the man loves me! But—can you understand this?—I do not love him, not as I understand love, and I am not unlearned. Of course I do not really mean that I do not love him, for I do—yes, very much. But I think you understand.

"What is my life going to be? I do not know. Perhaps I was never destined to be good, perhaps I shall be very bad;

but, somehow, I do not feel bad at all—not even to-night. On the contrary. . . . But maybe you will *not* understand this. Do you? If so, you are, indeed, very great; but I always knew that you were very great.

“Pardon the blots on this letter, Jesse. I have been crying since the first word. I don’t know why I am crying; for I am not sorry at all—I am glad. The inevitable always comes to pass.

“What are you doing now, I wonder? Are you still studying that old Chinaman with the unrememberable name? I never could study Chinamen, not even dead ones, so I study live Caucasians. (This is not meant in recklessness, but seriously.)

“What puzzles me most is that I do not feel at all wicked. I expected to feel wicked. Why, I even said a prayer a little while ago, for the first time in weeks and weeks; but perhaps that was because I was going to write to you. I think—really I do—that if I could have seen you sometimes and had you talk your beautiful thoughts to me, I could have been good. I don’t mean merely not bad, but truly good, actively good. I’ve always given away half my pocket-money, and to-morrow I’m going to buy a soft new mattress for an old sick woman whom our doctor visits for charity.

“Oh, Jesse, Jesse! I have been so unhappy! Can you imagine what it is to have one face always between you and the sunlight—a face which is not for you? I have tried so hard to forget. Perhaps now I shall be able to forget—now I have built a solid wall between me and the cause of my unhappiness. For this is a solid wall—O, an impenetrable wall!—and this letter is the last great stone in it. Yes, now when I have made it impossible that you should ever love me, perhaps I shall be able to forget you.

“Why have I done this thing? *Because I must love somebody.* I must be loved by somebody, must feel something near me. My heart is too full, my love is a burden too heavy to carry.

“Do not write to me—do not answer this letter. There is nothing you can say that will not be more cruel than silence.

“MARY.”

The letter dazed him. Three times he read it over, then burnt it. He had been afraid for Mary ever since that summer night in her father’s garden; things she had said still haunted him with dark premonitions. After burning the letter he sat a long time with his head between his hands. His pity and grief were coloured by a touch of virgin shame, new and unwelcome. With all his

subtlety for analysis, he did not try to analyse the feeling. But he did not murmur any cant phrases about virtue and self-control; his mind was of a different order, and he knew the meaning of virtue and self-control, known least by those who talk about them most.

CHAPTER XVIII

EVERY Sunday afternoon during the winter Jesse went to see Rose Thomas, if only for a little while. She was teaching in a small town a few miles away, but came home to Myra at the week's end; and he enjoyed his hours with her more than those spent with any other person. Her pale face, under the prematurely greying hair, had still the soft contours of youth; but about the corners of her mouth and in her eyes there was a wistful sadness, a shadow as of some secret grief. Like most New England women, she was rather reticent of her deeper feelings, and her talks with Jesse were generally about impersonal things. Ardent and faithful as she was in her religion, she had confessed to him that often doubts assailed her as to certain dogmas of the church. Among other things, the doctrine of vicarious atonement puzzled her; it failed to tally with her ideas of individual responsibility. There was a touch of hardness in her nature, an exaggeration of the sense of justice, not uncommon in conscientious persons who have never known the need of real forgiveness. Her only serious failing seemed to be an occasional lack of charity in judgment. Jesse perceived this flaw in his old friend, even as others did; but seeing deeper than they, he knew the hidden cause—some secret disappointment, some long and patient hope yet unfulfilled.

One Sunday afternoon in early spring he asked Rose to go with him after the trailing arbutus, then beginning to show its hopeful stars among the withered leaves. She was delighted, having few pleasures and fewer outings; and they gaily started for the woods, like two children, in the softening April air. In an hour they had filled their baskets with the pink and white waxen blossoms; but having no mind to return so early to the village, they found a large flat rock in an open space flooded with sunshine, and sat down for a tal

"When will your school be out, Miss Rose?" asked Jesse, as he spread a shawl for her on the rock.

"The middle of June; then I shall be at home with mother, till I have to go back in the fall."

"What a pity it is," he said, "that you have not a place in the graded school of Myra. I know two or three of the teachers here, and they have neither your knowledge nor your experience. Why is it, Miss Rose?"

She flushed, and a look that was half pain, half resentment, came into her gentle eyes. "I don't know," she answered, in a low tone. "I have made application more than once; but I am always set aside for younger women. I shall not apply again, unless—unless I change my mind."

They were only a few simple words, but in them was the history of a soul. To the country schoolma'am, an appointment in the graded school of Myra meant the goal of a life's ambition. Jesse felt in the space of a heartbeat all the sadness of the years of waiting to this woman who had nothing else to wait for; he realised the bitterness of hope deferred, the bitterness of seeing younger and prettier women in the place which she felt to be hers by right of service and essential fitness. Poor Rose Thomas! He felt a tightening in his throat, and he did not look at her, but out across the leafless trees. He knew, rather than saw, that her eyes were full of tears; and he understood the pride, the reticence of the heart that seeks to hide its grief from even the eyes of those it loves most.

Suddenly there swept over him the most powerful personal desire that he had ever known, the desire that this patient, half-embittered, love-cheated woman at his side should have—*should have*—the one thing which yet remained for her of hope and pride and satisfaction.

"*You must have it!*"

In the rush of emotion he sprang to his feet, and stood with his back to her, looking straight out into space. He had no realisation of what he was doing, knew naught but his indomitable desire. The woman gazed up at him in wonderment. His whole body seemed to expand. Outlined against the western sky, he seemed the centre of a great effulgence that radiated from him, as light from a midic-flame. She passed her hand across her eyes, think-

ing the appearance was some freak of defective vision; but the illusion still remained, the light was still around him.

She called to him:

"Jesse."

He seemed not to hear her, and again she called:

"Jesse."

Still he did not move, but stood like one transfixed, gazing straight out. Then slowly the effulgence round his body faded, his form relaxed; and, after a moment, he turned and sat down beside her on the rock. He spoke of the beauty of the western sky in a voice so gentle that it was a revelation even to Rose, who knew his gentlest moods. The force of his thought had been an arrow aimed straight, and the bow-string was vibrant still.

She made no reference to his moment of abstraction, said not a word about the luminous ovoid she had seen around him. He was to her an extraordinary being, a being in whose presence any strange thing might happen; and though they spoke now only of impersonal subjects—the sky, the early spring, the arbutus in the baskets at their feet—the eyes she turned to his were full of vague questioning. They sat for some time longer on the rock in the sunshine; then Rose remembered that she had promised her mother to get their supper at five o'clock, and they started homeward.

That evening about eight o'clock Jesse was sitting with his mother beside the grate-fire. The two younger boys were down in the village. Mary Bethel was bending over the fragrant arbutus which Jesse had brought home to her, touching the green leaves softly and inhaling the fragrance of the blossoms. She was happy. On week-days Jesse usually read alone in his own room until bedtime; but Sunday evenings he always gave to his mother, and she looked forward to those hours of quiet communion the whole week long. That evening he had been reading aloud one of her favourite Bible stories, the story of Ruth and Naomi.

Suddenly the outer door was opened, without even an announcing knock, and Rose Thomas burst into the room, breathless from running. Mother and son both sprang to their feet, startled, fearing they knew not what; but one

look into her face reassured them. Her eyes were alight with a flame of joy they had never before seen there. She threw her arms about them both, laughing, crying, half-hysterical.

"They've given me the school," she cried, "the fourth grade, over both the Manning girls, and I'm so happy—I'm so happy!"

Jesse drew Rose into a chair beside the table. "Tell us all about it," he said, quietly.

Rose wiped the tears from her eyes; her voice was unsteady, her sentences broken by little catches of the breath.

"I heard about it this evening, right after supper. Judge Evans came over to see me, with the principal. The teacher there now is going to be married, she sent in her resignation one day last week. They had a talk this afternoon, the school board, I mean,—an informal talk, it being Sunday. They didn't know whom to have, when suddenly someone suggested me—me—and like a flash they all agreed to it. There wasn't even any opposition from anybody. And they're going to have a regular meeting tomorrow and appoint me."

"I am so glad," said Mary Bethel, her soft eyes full of sympathetic tears. "Oh, Rose, I am so glad!"

"You don't know what it means to me," the teacher went on. "I've wanted this for years, have asked for it till I was ashamed to ask again. And now, to be put in the fourth grade at the very beginning! They might have advanced the Manning girls and made me begin with the little children, and they didn't, they didn't. It's unheard of—it's a miracle!"

"Miracles don't happen in our days," smiled Mary Bethel, shaking her head.

"Oh! don't they?" Rose leaned forward in her chair, grasping the arm of Mary, and speaking with subdued excitement. "I tell you it's a miracle. And *he* did it—he—Jesse, your son! He did this thing for me."

"Why, what do you mean?" Mary gasped.

Rose told her, in quick, broken sentences, of the talk between her and Jesse that very afternoon; told her of Jesse's fiery declaration that she *must* have the school; told of his

leaping to his feet as he said it, and how he stood there tall and straight and vibrant, with the golden light all round his form; how she had called to him twice without his hearing her.

"He did it," she declared, again, "he did it with his mind, his will. *You can't make me believe he didn't!*"

Mary gazed in bewilderment from one to the other. "Why—how——" she began, "I don't understand. . ."

But Jesse had suddenly left the room, closing the door behind him. He went out under the night sky, his heart pounding in his breast, his breath quick, beads of sweat standing cold on his forehead. He knew it was true; knew that the great dynamo of his will had moved those absent men, driving them in the direction of his thought. *And he had not realised that he was doing it.* He had known the depth of his unselfish desire, but had not known its potency. The case of Marty White, back there in Nashburgh, came to his memory now; he recalled the unexpected outcome of that threatening incident, when he had put his mind against it. Then also he had been moved by love, moved to desire the seemingly impossible for one he loved.

Could such power really be his? The answer followed the question as light follows flame: Such power was his. Inexplicable as it might seem, this mighty engine of destiny was hidden in his heart. And the power was his to use—in any way he chose. Again the words which had so mightily affected him years before came back with new and deeper meanings: "God is the Power, and I am the expression of the Power."

Half an hour later Jesse returned to the room where the two women sat together. He was very quiet, and in a low, firm tone he charged them that they should tell no one of the occurrence of the afternoon. They promised, and the promise was kept for a long time; though this was one of the stories widely told of him in after years.

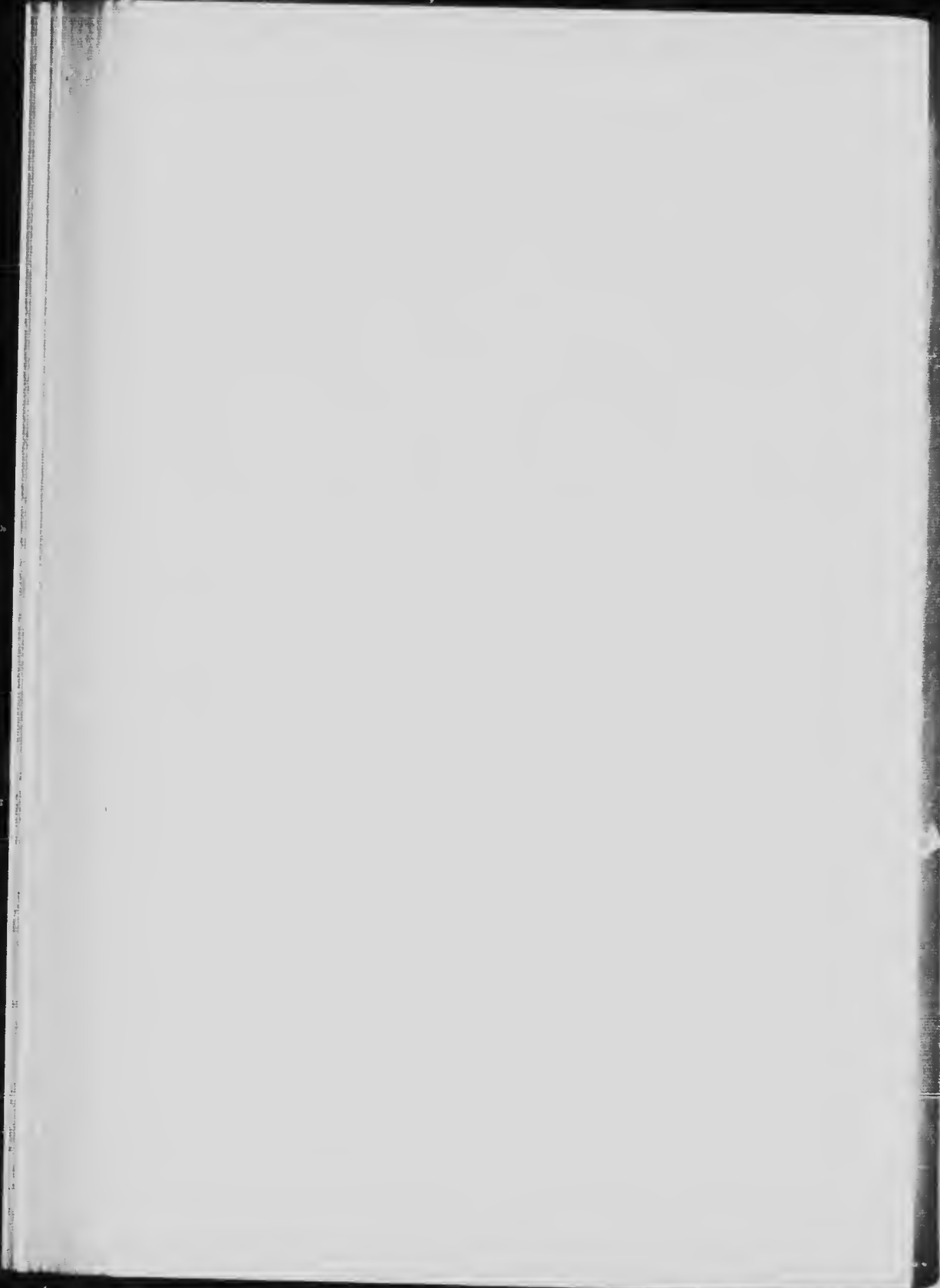
Walking home with Rose that evening, after a little silence he turned to her suddenly:

"Has what you believe to have happened this afternoon any influence on your doubts regarding the theory of vicarious atonement?"

"How strange!" she exclaimed. "I was asking myself that very question, before you spoke."

"You know," he went on, "that though we seem to ourselves to be separate, we are really all one, you and I and everybody living. And we are always suffering, and enjoying, and achieving, and atoning, not only for ourselves but for one another."

BOOK II
THE PREPARATION



CHAPTER XIX

FOR several years Jesse lived quietly with his family in Myra, working at his trade in the daytime and in the evening studying and reading many books. At this period of his life he was almost a recluse, going about but little among his fellows. It was only in after years that he began to frequent the places where men and women congregated, testing his philosophy by practical application, viewing his reflection in the eyes of varied individuals. During the early months in Myra he used to go to church with his mother on Sunday morning; but as time went on he gradually discontinued these visits to the temples of conventional worship. The two younger boys were now self-supporting, the first a carpenter with Jesse, the other a clerk in one of the village stores. Thus relieved of a part of his burden, Jesse even accumulated a little money, the savings from his meagre wages; only a few hundred dollars, but the money was his own, to be used for any purpose he might deem important.

In January of the year after his twenty-third birthday, Jesse told his mother one morning that he had decided to go down to New York for three months, to read in the great library; and that he would return about the first of April, in time for the busy season of spring work with the village carpenters. Mary was surprised, even vaguely alarmed; but to oppose Jesse's will was beyond her courage. He had done his duty by her, and his right to choose his future way was not to be questioned.

"I shall miss you sadly, dear," was her answer to his strange announcement. New York seemed very far away to Mary Bethel. She made no reference to what seemed to her a reckless expenditure of money, for was not the money Jesse's own? Indeed, she prided herself a little on her reticence in this regard. To the imaginative woman there was a tremulous satisfaction in the idea of her dear one's seeing something of the great outer world.

"I wish I were going with you," she said wistfully, a day or two later.

He looked long at her, answering nothing. But that evening he followed her into the kitchen where she was preparing their supper.

"Little mother," he said, putting his arms around her shoulders, "I've been considering what you said this morning. You shall come down for a week at the end of my stay in New York, and we will return together."

Mary wept with joy, as she had wept that time, nearly fifteen years before, when her husband had followed her into the bedroom to say that she could go to the Grove camp-meeting and take Jesse.

On the railway journey between Myra and New York, many persons wondered who was the tall and singularly beautiful young man who seemed to be so busy with his thoughts and with the whirling view outside the carriage window.

During the afternoon one of Jesse's fellow travellers made overtures to acquaintance. He was a young man of the small, dark, nervous type of city clerk, well-dressed and rather commonplace, the kind one meets by thousands in the business quarters of the city.

"It's tiresome riding all day long," he observed, slipping into the seat beside Jesse, who welcomed him with a friendly smile.

"I do not find it so. But I never find anything tiresome, not even my daily work."

"You are an unusual man, to enjoy work. But your business may be a specially pleasant one."

"I am a carpenter," was Jesse's answer.

The stranger turned to look at him. "Pardon me," he said, "but you are not the usual type of working-man."

Jesse smiled. "Is there a type, then? I have never found two individuals alike, either among workingmen or others."

In answer to his companion's inquiry, Jesse told the purpose of his visit to New York and the probable length of his sojourn, adding: "You know the city well, while I

know it not at all; perhaps you can advise me where to go on my arrival, some quiet place within my means."

The young man looked at him a moment, then said, with sudden conviction: "Why don't you come and board with my mother and me? We have an extra room in our flat, a small one, but sunny and pleasant. You're just the sort of man I'd like to have around." He mentioned as the price of the room a modest sum, judged by New York standards of comparison, and one which did not seem unreasonably large to Jesse.

"Is your home within walking distance of the large library?" he asked.

"Yes, ten minutes' walk," the young man answered, naming a street in the Washington Square district.

"Thank you," said Jesse, "I will come, with pleasure."

He had none of the countryman's distrust of the city or the men of the city, and he knew the human soul too well to fear anything from the steady brown eyes of his new acquaintance.

"It's strange," he said, half to himself, "but the thing I need always comes to me." Then he added, "By the way, you haven't told me your name. I am Jesse Bethel."

"And I am Lawrence Lane."

Jesse knew in figures the magnitude of New York; but he was nevertheless impressed by the mile after mile of closely-built streets their train passed through before reaching the Grand Central Station. In every one of these innumerable houses were human beings like himself, sad or happy or indifferent, swarming in the monstrous ant-hill called the Empire City. What knew they of him—what cared they? He was glad to have Lawrence Lane beside him, glad that he had a home to go to in this teeming maze.

The bustle about the station filled him with vague excitement. He smiled, remembering the rough platform at the Grove camp-ground, where he had experienced a similar feeling at the age of eight. How different the two scenes! His reminiscent thoughts were scattered by the business-like voice of his companion.

"We'll take the Sixth Avenue Elevated down-town, and you can send for your trunk in the morning. I've been

away nearly a week on business for the firm I work for, and Mother will be watching for me from the window. She always thinks I've been run over by a car if I'm ten minutes late in getting home. It's the way of mothers."

"Very like my own," said Jesse. He was glad to be going to a place where a mother watched for her son from the window.

Mrs. Lane, after the moment of surprise at seeing Jesse, gave him a kind and almost motherly welcome. All women loved him, at first for his beauty, afterward for the sweet and gentle sympathy radiating from him.

"I'm glad, indeed, to have you with us," she said, as she helped him to the plain, substantial dinner of her own cooking. "Since the girls went away, we've been rather lonesome, George and I. My two daughters," she explained, "are visiting my sister in Chicago; they won't be home until spring. That is how we came to have an extra room this winter."

That night, after Jesse went to bed, Mrs. Lane and Lawrence talked him over in the little sitting-room.

"How strange and wonderful he is!" the mother said. "Really, he's the handsomest human being I ever saw in my life. And you say he's a carpenter? Well, well! He might be a prince. He has charming manners, too, so simple, so courteous. We hear a lot about gentlemen, the kind that never soil their hands; but this young man is my idea of a gentleman. Did you notice how respectfully he listened to every word I said? Did you see how he held the door open for me, as if I were a queen?"

"I wonder where he got such ways," said George.

"He got them out of his lovely heart, that's where he got them." And Mrs. Lane, half-embarrassed by her own enthusiasm, kissed her son good-night and went off to bed. The next day she wrote to her daughters in Chicago:

"We have let your room to the most extraordinary person, a young man from Vermont whom Lawrence picked up on a railway train. I believe he is a prince in disguise; but he calls himself a carpenter; and his hands, though beautifully shaped, are the hands of a man who has done manual labour. If you girls were at home, you wouldn't

look twice at any of your young men friends, after seeing him. I am really glad you are not here; for I wouldn't want to have your hearts broken, nor see you tearing each other's hair.

"Strange, isn't it? but I somehow feel that what I have just said is rather cheap—being about him. He is just different, that's all; but you won't understand, because you have never seen him. He almost makes me believe in your Aunt Jane's pet theory of Reincarnation. I wonder what he was—*when he was on earth before.*"

CHAPTER XX

At breakfast the next morning Jesse expressed a wish to see something of the city itself, before beginning his regular reading in the Library. He would spend two or three days in sightseeing, then settle down to a routine of study, varied by occasional pleasure-trips.

"I wish I could go about with you to-day," said Lawrence, who left the house for business at half past eight every morning and did not return until dinner-time, at six in the evening. "But maybe Mother can go."

Jesse looked at Mrs. Lane and waited, his eyes alight with questions.

"Of course I'll go," she said, flushing with pleasure. "We'll start out as soon as I've washed the breakfast dishes."

They took the Fifth Avenue stage from Washington Square to Central Park, for Mrs. Lane wanted Jesse to see the fine houses along the handsomest street in New York. She was a little proud to be in the company of this young man whom everybody followed with their eyes.

"An artist," they heard a woman whisper to her companion, as they passed along the street.

The Washington Arch, at the head of the square, roused Jesse's enthusiasm; it was the first really beautiful thing in stone that he had ever seen. But the sky-questioning Flatiron Building, at the corner of Twenty-third Street, made him shudder; and the other office buildings along the Avenue, the many-windowed hotels and the houses of the millionaires, seemed very large to his unaccustomed vision. There was something in these miles of multiple glassy-eyed stone monsters which saddened him. His thoughts were for the people who dwelt therein.

"When they have climbed to the top of their tallest tower," he said, "are they any nearer heaven?"

"The prophets tell us that heaven is in the heart," she ventured timidly.

"It is also in the eye," he answered. "I see no beauty

of earth, no vision of heaven, in these transplanted marble-quarries."

But when they came to the great Cathedral he expressed a wish to enter it, and they got down from the stage.

"This is nearer to beauty," he said; "this has at least a meaning. If one does not find God here, one finds the desire for God."

"What strange things you say, Jesse! I may call you Jesse, may I not?"

"Of course. You will love me better if you call me Jesse."

She patted the strong young hand he gave to help her up the steps. "I think everyone who comes near you will love you always," she said.

"Love me—or hate me. Some will hate me. Where the light is strongest, there are the shadows deepest."

A wave of awe swept over the soul of the young man as he entered the vast, lofty, echoing, empty place. It was the first time he had ever been in a great church. He stood a while near the door, looking far up among the pointed arches, letting the power and mystery of it all have full sway over his feelings. His eyes filled with tears, tears of pity and love for the souls who raised this fane to the glory of the Unseen, for those who dreamed and wept and prayed under these yearning arches.

His companion touched him on the arm. "Here is a copy of the Sistine Madonna," she said.

"Why, the face is like that of my mother when I was a little boy!"

They sat down in one of the pews, far back, and for a time neither spoke a word. Then Jesse said, in the low voice one instinctively uses under Gothic arches:

"I have discovered, sitting here, where the great cathedral builders found their model: in the aisles of the primeval forest. Others must have seen the thing I see and spoken of it—you know I am not learned in architecture. In these innumerable points are the interlacing arms of many trees. The mystery that hovers there above—vast, dark, overpowering with suggestions of vague dangers—is the menace of the unseen dwellers in primeval tree-tops, the menace of the shadow, of the night, beautiful and terrible to those

who lived at the mercy of the unknown, those whose home was under the arches of the forest. Their memories are in our souls, memories of the infancy of the Race; their fears are hidden in the folds of our brains. Their dread of the beings in the dark waving tree-tops ten thousand, a hundred thousand, maybe a million years ago, we feel to-day when resting under this many-pointed roof. Our reason tells us that these points are of motionless cold stone; but, gazing long, we seem to see them move, they sway to and fro, and we hear the wind whistling through them. Hark! Why do you start at that sound? It is only a slamming door in the chapel off there; but when you heard it, your heart beat fast, your enemy of a million years ago was upon you."

The woman was gazing at Jesse as at some being from another sphere.

"Come down farther," he said, "yes, to the very front pew."

She followed him, and they sat down again. They were now within thirty feet of the high altar, yet how far away it seemed! The six great unlit candles, each one as tall as a man, stood like sentinels on guard before the saintly figures in the reredos. Again they were silent for a time, then Jesse whispered:

"Look up—far up: Do you see the white dove hovering there? It is of stone, and yet its wings seem tremulous; they are vibrant with the prayers that have risen to it, as to the visible Holy Spirit. No wonder its wings seem to be quivering; for prayer, if ardent enough, can make the very rocks tremble. Have you learned that, dear friend?"

She put her hand under his, timidly, as if for protection from something. He smiled at her, as one smiles at a little child to give it confidence. Then he went on:

"One should be very careful what one prays for, when all alone in a place like this—because the prayer might be granted. On Sundays, when the church is full of people with conflicting desires, the forces are scattered; but when all alone here, one has at one's command a mighty engine of will, the cumulative power that multitudes of souls have left behind them. It is the variance of the many wills

that makes them impotent. Why, fill this church, this arched primeval forest of unfeeling stone,—fill it with men and women moved by one idea, one hope, one desire, and such a command would go up to the Arch-Magus of the universe as would lift this roof and send it flying like a handful of withered leaves.”

“Come away,” she whispered, “O Jesse, come away! I cannot endure it any longer!”

They passed out into the bright winter sunshine, out and away from the mysterious place; and not until they had walked several blocks in the crisp air was she quite herself again.

At the Metropolitan Art Museum they had luncheon, and spent the afternoon among the pictures and statuary. Jesse enjoyed most the Greek casts and the modern landscapes. He sat a long time before the pedimental figures of the Parthenon; he felt the kinship between himself and these harmonious beings, the broken ideals of a younger and purer age. Their poise, their expression of controlled power, spoke to all that was strongest in his nature.

“Had I chosen to work in matter instead of in spirit, I would have made such things as these,” he said. He seemed unconscious of the stupendous claim his words would have implied to any artist who might have heard them. And he added, after a moment: “But I have chosen the more difficult medium; for the spirit of man, responsive to impression as it may seem, is really far less yielding than marble.”

The next day they went to several places, including Riverside Drive, the Battery, and the Stock Exchange.

From the visitors' gallery of the Exchange, Jesse looked down upon the howling, tossing maelstrom, whose every wave was a human soul borne round and round by the irresistible current of greed. It was nearly three o'clock, the last few minutes of an excited day, and the roaring mass below him seethed more wildly with every passing second. The noise was deafening. Even in the gallery, conversation in ordinary tones was impossible; and the two visitors stood there without speech, gazing and listening,

as the minute-hand of the great clock moved slowly toward the hour.

Suddenly a gong sounded above the din of human voices; then gradually the passionate roar of the great multiple-mouthed Demon of Trade changed to the fitful, rattling murmur of individual tongues in conversation. The raging atoms of the *One*—the Demon—had rebecome the many.

Though Jesse's time in the Exchange was brief, some fifteen minutes by the great clock, it was enough: hours would not have given him a better understanding of the spirit of it all, nor deepened the impression of its utter futility in the ultimate purposes of life. Seated in the elevated train on the way home, he said to his companion:

"How much more involved is their religious symbolism down there than was that of the wiser ancients!"

"Religious symbolism? I don't understand?" And Mrs. Lane looked inquiringly at Jesse.

"Yes," he said, with a whimsical smile, "I have read of wars between ancient tribes to settle the question whether the symbol of their god, painted on their foreheads, should be painted up-and-down or cross-wise. But these modern idolators war with one another for the changing of those figures which are merely the symbol of a symbol. The God of Wealth, called by many names since first the mind of man conceived the idea of owning things,—the God of Wealth is symbolised for them by the mine, the company, the railroad. But they do not worship the mine, the company, the railroad; they worship the symbol of these symbols, and they seem to change it every day, every moment. At a quarter before three, 99 $\frac{3}{4}$ was the symbol of a certain avatar of their god; at three o'clock they changed the symbol to 100, and to-morrow morning they will change it again. But however they change the symbols, the god remains the same; he is one and eternal, but he has more than the 'ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah.' Yes, I repeat, their religious symbolism is involved. I suppose those men whom I saw—and heard—in the temple yonder may be called the priests of the faith. Their devotion is evidently sincere, though their rites of worship are distressingly noisy."

CHAPTER XXI

THAT night, when Lawrence came home to dinner, his mother beckoned him into the kitchen and carefully closed the door. She stopped to pour some hot water from the tea-kettle into a dish of vegetables boiling on the fire, then motioned her son to a chair on one side of the deal table, and sat down herself on the other side.

"Well!" she exclaimed. "Have you any idea of the sort of man that is living with us here?"

"Why, don't you like him?" he asked.

"Like him? I should say I do! But have you any idea what he is? Of course you haven't; how could you? But I want to tell you that he is the most remarkable human being it has ever been my lot to meet. I never read in any book such things as he says, offhand, as if they were nothing at all—and he talking to a stupid old woman like me! Take my word for it, that young man is going to do something which will make the world open its eyes. I don't know what, and I don't know how nor when; but you will have reason some day to remember my words."

"I am glad you like him," said Lawrence, his imagination kindling at her words, for the spark which had lighted his early youth had not been altogether smothered by his seven years' grind in a business office; and there was something in the personality of this chance-met stranger that tugged at his thoughts all day long.

A few minutes later, when the three were seated at the table in the dining-room, Lawrence said:

"I have a little surprise for you—two theatre tickets," and he displayed the small pieces of cardboard. "The boss gave them to me, so they must be good seats. His wife is sick, and they couldn't use them. You and Jesse can have these, Mother, and I'll get another seat in the balcony, and meet you at the door when the play is over."

But Mrs. Lane had promised to spend the evening with

a friend who had a new-born baby, so she told the two young men to go to the theatre.

The seats proved to be good ones, in the fifth row of the orchestra, and the play was a classic which Jesse had always desired to see. In the middle of the first act he missed some of the lines through the rustling of a party of young people that came in late and settled themselves in one of the boxes on the right, only a few feet away from him; but after the momentary disturbance, he thought no more about them.

When the act was over and the lights went up, Jesse looked around him. It was a brilliant audience, the first-night audience of a famous English star, and the house was full of men and women in evening dress; but though Jesse was all unconscious of it, his vivid, singular appearance attracted much attention. People all over the house were whispering together about him. Who was he? Some celebrity, no doubt, and what a wonderful head!

The roving eyes of Lawrence Lane discovered the interest that centred about Jesse, and a thrill of pride lifted the narrow chest of the clerk.

"I've been trying to feel sorry for the sickness of my employer's wife which was the cause of our having these seats," he said; "but I really can't, you know. I wonder how he came to offer them to me instead of to one of his friends; he never did such a thing before."

Jesse smiled. "Who can say?—an impulse, a wandering thought, maybe. Only this morning I was wishing that I might see a really great drama."

"I like the audience quite as well as the stage," said Lawrence. "Look, Jesse, what a handsome woman that is in the box at the right, the one in the pale yellow dress."

Jesse looked. He caught his breath—for it was Mary Magnus. She sat within ten feet of him, beautiful and proud, as if no shadow of pain had ever touched her. Around her form fell the soft folds of a classic gown; her arms and shoulders were bare and unmarred by any jewel, but round her black hair was a Greek fillet of diamonds.

It was nearly five years since that evening in her father's garden, when she had opened her strange heart to him and

wept her terrible tears. It was four years that month since he had received her letter from California, with its wild and naked revelations. Time had deepened her dark beauty, had given a surer poise to the head, a steadier look to the eyes. Gazing at her, there gradually grew in him a consciousness of some unusual power in this woman. What was it? . . . Something more subtle than her beauty, more potent than her charm. . . . Suddenly it flashed upon him; it startled him, for the idea was one which he could not have shared with the mental and ethical children surrounding him. He was a fearless thinker, a man so pure in heart that he could look upon impurity without shuddering. The power he realised in Mary Magnus was her *fearlessness*, her consistency, in daring to put in practice her own convictions. Could it be that a great sinner and a great saint were made of the same material? The idea was new to him; but he followed it to the end, as he was wont to follow every new idea. He told himself that fearlessness, that rarest quality of the soul, was a basic quality in the character of those who could touch either extreme of the long ethical ladder. What might she not become, this woman who dared to be herself, if once that self were firmly rooted in the Spirit! The idea made him catch his breath. It should be—it must be. It was in accordance with the Law of Life; for power is power, and needs but to be wisely directed.

At that moment the orchestra began to play. After the first few bars the music seemed familiar to Jesse; somewhere he had heard it before. Then he remembered: this was the music she had played for him that night in Vergennes when the possibilities of tone were first revealed to him.

Before this, the woman in the box had sat silent and impassive, paying but slight attention to the chattering group surrounding her; but she now leaned slightly forward in her chair, looking out at the sea of faces in the body of the house with searching, restless eyes. Then she saw Jesse. All the bright colour went suddenly out of her face; her eyelids fluttered, and she put out her hands as if groping in darkness. After a moment she rose unsteadily, and turned toward the back of the box.

Jesse saw a tall man putting a cloak around her shoulders; he saw the questioning looks in the faces of the other women as they turned to her. Mary leaned toward them and said something; then, followed by the tall man, she passed quickly from the box, down the side-aisle and out of the house, without looking back.

CHAPTER XXII

THE next morning Jesse began his work in the great Library. He explained to the Librarian that he wanted to study the history of the world's chief religions; that he would be in New York only three months, but could read the greater part of every day.

"The time is short," said the Librarian; "but I will help you all I can. You have read much already, I suppose? Where do you want to begin?"

"I have read only a little, and I will begin with Egypt."

He was directed to the reading-room, where he saw a crowd of men, young and old, well-dressed and shabby, poring over piles of books. Books, books, books! The heart of Jesse beat hard. Here was the opportunity he had so long needed, the privilege to examine the records of the world's life. He thought of the library of Herman Magnus, in Vergennes, which had once seemed to him so important. What were those few thousands of volumes compared with the million in this great dusky place? He would begin with Egypt, the land of the thrice great one—Hermes Trismegistus; then he would pass to India, the cradle of religions and philosophies; then to China, land of Lao-tsze, father and master of the paradox; then down through the centuries. Only three months! It seemed like a day in the building of the pyramids. *But he knew exactly what he sought*, and that knowledge would shorten the labour. There was no time for ornamental detail; no embroidery of theory upon the fabric of the fact was necessary here,—only the knowledge of how the spiritual idea had taken concrete form in the history of the world. He had no need to ask *what* the masters had taught, but only *how* they had taught. The spiritual idea was already his own; a lifetime of reading would not change nor improve it; but as he had studied what his father and other carpenters knew of the science and art of building, so he would

now study what history knew of the science and art of teaching the knowledge of God. At this period of his life he was very reticent concerning his plans and purposes; and there was one idea, one realisation—the greatest of all—of which he never spoke to anyone.

Jesse's thoughts were interrupted by the return of the Librarian, directing an attendant laden with many books.

"This will do for a beginning," he said. "Do you read the European languages?"

"No."

"That is unfortunate; out there is much in English. One of the best books on the subject is not here; I have it in my own private library at home. . . . Yes, I will bring it down for you to-morrow."

Jesse's smile of thanks lighted the room, and the Librarian warmed to him at once. This man was a scholar of unusual attainments, quick to observe and to smile at ignorant presumption, but the most helpful man in New York to any serious student.

"I have some other rare books which are not in the Library," he added. "Perhaps—but you had better go through these first." Then he went away and left the young man to his reading.

That afternoon, in passing through the entrance hall, Jesse again met the Librarian. A lot of heavy cases were being carried into the building—more books, to be added to the million already there.

"I have been thinking," said Jesse, "what a perfect illustration this place is of the interdependence of spirit and matter. The souls of two or three hundred thousand men, their lives, their wrestlings with the unseen, the very beatings of their hearts, their messages to us who come after,—all and each of them dependent on a few sheets of flimsy paper, that a spark from a lighted match in the hand of a child could reduce to nothing in a few minutes. And yet I have read the words of men who prate of matter's being an illusion; have read their preposterous statements printed on paper, a form of matter; read them with the aid of my two eyes, another form of matter. Verily, a most convincing illusion, this mysterious matter, which they deny. According to them, if a man's

head is real, his feet must be an illusion. Outside the endless universe they place their changeless God, and out of endless change they make—nothingness, an illusion.

"I am a carpenter," Jesse went on, "and the spirituality of such men seems to me about as useful as a ridge-pole without a roof."

The Librarian went on to his desk, stopping to say to one of his assistants: "There's a young carpenter in the reading-room who talks like a philosopher, and looks like—well, I won't say what, but just go in and look at him. He's sitting under the clock."

The next morning, in glancing over the newspaper, Jesse saw in a list of departing travellers for Europe the name of Mary Magnus. He wondered if she had gone away to avoid the possibility of meeting him again. Did she regret the confidence she had given him in her strange letter four years before? Or did she regret the acts which were the basis of that confidence? If she was afraid to meet his eyes, how little she must realise the gentleness of his judgment; how little she must realise the unalterable nature of his friendship. He was sorry to learn that she had gone away; but he said to himself, "Mary will come to me some day of her own accord, whatever her motive, whatever her feeling. The fearless soul which could send me such a letter will serve of its own choice the fearless faith I have to give the world."

A few evenings later a strange thing happened. Jesse was passing through Washington Square about nine o'clock, when a young woman spoke to him. A loaded wagon was passing by at the moment, and he did not catch her words.

"I beg your pardon," he said, courteously.

She repeated her remark.

"I do not understand——"

As he stood under the electric street-lamp he removed his hat, and the white light, falling straight down, was like a nimbus of glory around his ineffably beautiful head. The girl's eyes widened and stared; her face turned so pale that the dashes of rouge on her cheeks were like two blood spots; then suddenly she gave a wild scream, and, turning, fled away into the night.

Her life was changed from that hour. "I have had a vision," was the only explanation she would give to her mocking and incredulous companions, and their ribald laughter had no effect on her. The next day she went to work as a waitress in a cheap restaurant; and whenever in future she was not able to earn her bread, she went without it. But all this Jesse never knew.

One afternoon in the early part of February Mrs. Lane went to spend the night with a friend in Brooklyn, leaving her son and Jesse alone together. They ate the dinner, cold but plentiful, which the mother had left on the table for them; then Jesse proposed a walk in the fresh night air. He had noticed that Lawrence was pale that evening, and thought that a brisk half-hour of exercise would bring the healthy colour back to his face.

"I've been working harder than usual," Lawrence said, as they walked up the avenue. "My head is heavy, and there's a buzzing in my ears. Sister Martha says that I stay in the house too much; but then, Martha's always troubling herself about something or other. She's so different from Mary, who seems to care for nothing but reading and dreaming. I think you'd like Mary. Yes, and you'd like Martha, too. They're both good girls; but Mary suits me better, because she lets me alone, and Martha doesn't."

When they reached home Lawrence flung himself down on the lounge in the sitting-room, and Jesse sat in a chair beside him. A real friendship had sprung up between these two young men, so different in every way. The volatile nature of Lawrence,—one day nervous to the point of irritability, the next day listless to the point of inertia,—found in the sweet, poised nature of Jesse a strength whereon it joyed to lean. He had always been rather solitary in his ways, having few companions and no intimates, seeming to prefer his own lonely and aimless musings to the vulgar or insipid pleasures dear to his fellow clerks. Mrs. Lane had said one day to Jesse that he was the only intimate friend her son had ever made.

Lying on the lounge that evening, idly smoking his cigarette, Lawrence confided to Jesse his plans for the

future. He was not satisfied with the limited spaces of a small city flat, with one-quarter of his salary going out each month for rent; he longed for the greater freedom of the semi-country, where he could have a little house and garden of his own. Every year he was laying aside a small amount of money, and when he should have enough to buy a plot of ground and build a house, the venture was to be made.

"I've already chosen the neighbourhood," he said, with more enthusiasm than Jesse had ever seen him show before. "You have never been across the Fort Lee Ferry and along the top of the Palisades; but that is the place I mean to live in, some day. It's near enough to the city for me to reach the office in a reasonable time; it's far away enough to be beyond the noise, the dust, and the tiresome brick and granite, and to have green trees and grass—long grass that a fellow can tangle his feet in."

Jesse smiled in loving sympathy. "I hope you may have the home you desire," he said, "and have it soon. One green tree with a bird's nest in it is more of a home than a palace full of princes."

Then Jesse rose and went into the bedroom to get a book of nature poems; there was a lyric in it which he wished to read to Lawrence.

Returning to the sitting-room, he was startled to see his friend lying apparently unconscious, with half-open glassy eyes and ash-coloured face. Save for a drawn, anxious expression, his countenance was that of the dead. Jesse took his hand; it lay cold and flaccid in his grasp. Could this be death? What sudden change had passed over this man, a moment ago in perfect health, that he should wear the mask of the grave? Bewildered by the unexpected visitation, Jesse stood over him. But something, a subtle perception he could not have analysed, made him feel that this semblance of death was only a semblance, and gave him the will to end the ghastly stillness.

Firmly he placed his hand upon the head of the unconscious man.

"Lawrence," he said, in a commanding voice, "Lawrence."

The body stirred, the eyes opened wider, the lips con-

tracted, and the light of consciousness came suddenly back to the grey face.

"Why . . . why . . . what is the matter?" Lawrence stammered. "Did you speak to me?"

Jesse drew up a chair and sat down beside him, taking one of the listless hands between his own and rubbing it.

"You are all right again now," he said, convincingly. "No, do not close your eyes; keep them open, and look at me."

"It seems so strange," the other murmured, half-absently. "I thought . . . why are you rubbing my hands?"

"You may sit up now," said Jesse, and Lawrence sat up.

"I am going to get you a glass of water. Do not lie down—no, I forbid you."

Lawrence drank the water, then Jesse made him rise and walk about the room. After a few minutes of this exercise he let him sit down again.

"Now, Lawrence," Jesse said, "tell me what happened after I left the room the first time."

"Why . . . what were we talking about?"

"The home on the Palisades which you hope to have some day."

"Oh, yes! And you said something about a green tree with a bird's nest in it. I must have been thinking of the bird's nest, and then . . . I wasn't thinking of anything."

"Yes, I understand," replied Jesse; then, perceiving that his friend was now in a normal state, he told him the whole story.

"That's very strange," the young man muttered, "very strange. I'm sure I never had an attack like that before. And—Oh, Jesse!—I'm so glad Mother wasn't here! Now promise me that you won't tell Mother, nor anybody else."

And Jesse promised. But from that night he kept his friend in the open air during the greater part of his leisure time; and often, on Sundays, took him away from the city, down by the winter sea. Though neither of them ever referred to the strange cataleptic seizure, Lawrence understood that Jesse was acting the part of a wise physician, and yielded to him accordingly.

CHAPTER XXIII

DURING the remainder of Jesse's stay in New York, his days were mostly spent in the Library. He read not only the history of religions, but the history of nations, and their poetry. The ease and quickness with which he mastered the contents of any book were a source of wonder to his friend the Librarian. Given a capacious memory and an ardent, selective interest in the story of the world, one may learn much in even so short a time as three months, especially when one has constantly beside one a man who knows practically everything, and such a man was that Librarian. But never a word did Jesse speak to him of the great plan which dominated all his studies; no proof of his natural healing power did he vouchsafe to anyone in New York, except Lawrence Lane. With unerring instinct for the inevitable sequence of events, he knew that the time for these things was not yet come. This was his receptive period, the period of gestation for his destined work; the birth-time would be several years away. Not yet were his powers developed to the full. Many times still must the circling seasons, passing round the globe, mellow his soul with toil and silence and meditation. At that early stage of his progress, had he hinted to anyone of the dizzy mountain peak that was the goal of his daring, whose faith would have been strong enough to speed him on the way? Who would not have retarded him by the drag of pardonable doubt? "To know, to dare, to act, and to be silent": this was the discipline which should perfect his destiny.

And not only did he study books; he studied men also, going alone into the poorest and most dangerous quarters of the city, inviting the confidence of those whom misery and injustice had robbed of confidence in all, even God. To the knowledge of beauty and joy he added the knowledge of wretchedness, without which no man may aspire to master-wisdom.

True to his promise, Jesse sent for his mother to meet him in New York for the last week of his sojourn.

Mary Bethel, following the minute directions given in his letter, passed with trembling heart along the crowded platform of the station, through the gates, and into the outstretched arms of her waiting son. The three long months of his absence had been shortened for her by visions of this hour; for now was to come the realisation of her years of longing to behold the wonders of the great outer world.

"You'll give your mother every hour of these seven days, won't you, my son?" she pleaded, as they passed along the noisy street toward the train which was to take them to Mrs. Lane's.

"Yes, Mother, every hour."

"And shall I see all the great things you have written me about, and all the things in the New York book you sent me?"

"All these and more, dear heart."

"I wish your father could have lived to see you a grown man, taking your mother on journeys to the city, and making friends for her among strange people. How proud he would be! Is this Mrs. Lane a haughty woman? Will she think me countrified and awkward?"

Jesse smiled down at her.

"Why, Mother, she is as simple and unassuming as you are, and not nearly so good-looking. There, you're smiling now, and I like to see it; your smile is like sunlight on a bed of pansies."

"You say such lovely things, Jesse! I'm always wondering how a simple woman like me could ever have been the mother of a man like you."

"Why, it's because you are simple and like a child that you could be my mother. An artificial and worldly woman would never have a son like me."

"I fear I don't know much about the world."

"So much the better, Mother."

As they climbed the stairs of the elevated railway Mary Bethel clung to Jesse's arm. It was six o'clock in the evening, and the stairs and platforms were crowded with people.

"Here everybody seems to wear their best clothes all the time," she whispered to him, as they stood waiting for the down-train.

"You look very nice yourself, Mother. That must be a new dress, for I don't remember having seen it before, and your hat is becoming; those blue flowers make you look young. I showed Mrs. Lane your picture the other day, and she said your face was like the face in a famous painting. She is pleased that you are coming to visit her."

So with sweet and graceful words Jesse put his mother entirely at her ease. With his sure intuition of the human heart, he had observed that when men and women are shyly pleased with themselves, others are almost certain to be pleased with them, and they to be pleased with others. By the time they reached the little house near Washington Square, Mary Bethel felt that she was going to an old friend whom she had known for a lifetime. And Mrs. Lane's enthusiastic welcome confirmed the impression. Jesse's friend received his mother with a sisterly kiss on the cheek, and gave her own room to her, taking the smaller one usually occupied by Lawrence, who was to sleep for a week on the couch in the sitting-room.

Jesse was even more lovable than usual that evening, his smile, his wit, his affectionate glance, playing from one to another of his charmed companions. The two middle-aged women and the young man hung upon his words, and seemed in spirit to be hanging about his neck. Mary Bethel realised the change, the growth in power and dignity, which had expanded the personality of her son in these three months of their separation. The growth had been continual for years; but being with him every day, she had not realised it. Now when she saw it, she was pleased, a little awed, and tremulously happy.

"There will be two lonely people in this house when your son leaves us," Mrs. Lane said to Mary Bethel, as the four sat around the dinner-table. "He has been to us like a visitor from another planet."

Mary smiled. "That is what I used to tell my husband about him when he was a baby."

Jesse sat between the two women, and he laid an arm tenderly about the shoulders of each.

"I am happy that you two love each other, because you both love me," he said. "Love is a limitless ocean; the heart-cups of all humanity may be filled to overflowing with its waters, without lowering its tides by so much as a hair's breadth; the more you take from it, the more returns to it again. Is that not so, Lawrence?"

"According to mathematics," Lawrence began; but his mother shook her finger at him.

"Jesse knows the higher mathematics of the soul, which makes your accurate figuring seem only half true, after all."

Lawrence smiled across the table at Jesse. He could no more have been jealous of his mother's love for this great friend than he could have begrudged her praises of the morning sun that lighted her chamber. Even at the early age of twenty-three, Jesse inspired an unquestioning devotion in those whom he gathered to his heart. Jealous among themselves they might be of the love which he gave to each and all of them; but jealous of the love which he inspired—never. A slight superiority in a fellow being may arouse resentment; a great superiority may be accepted like a fact in nature, a mountain, a cataract, or a star.

"I will go even farther in the higher mathematics of love," said Jesse, smiling back at Lawrence: "The more love we give away, the more we have to keep; the more we scatter our love among a myriad dear ones, the more concentrated is our love."

"If Jesse should tell my mother that the sun moved round the earth," laughed Lawrence, "she would dispute all the astronomers on the strength of his bare assertion."

"And the statement would be relatively true," Jesse insisted. "A relative truth depends upon the angle from which we view a fact. From the standpoint of the earth, the sun moves; from the standpoint of the solar system, it does not. I had not gone far in my observations of the universe before I discovered that everything has two sides; that a fact may be true to itself and seemingly false in relation to something else; that a thing, in effect, is both what it is to itself and what it appears to be to others—to each and all of the others. For instance: To you who love me, I am one who speaks with the authority of knowl-

edge; to my friend the learned Librarian, I am a young workingman from the country, with the habit of silence and a taste for books. Now each of these minor truths is a part of the great truth of Jesse Bethel."

"And what is that great truth about you?" urged his mother. "Tell us, Jesse."

His eyes deepened until they seemed like wells of fathomless blue water reflecting the fire of an invisible sun.

"Is it not enough that you love me and that I love you?" he asked. "Trust me a little longer to keep in silence the whole truth about myself."

They gazed at him in bewilderment. Never before had he spoken directly to anyone of a guarded secret that he might not share. With the intuition of love they recognised that the seed of some stupendous thing was germinating in their presence. They were all suddenly silent; an uneasy seriousness, like a premonition, made them turn and furtively question each other with their eyes. For a moment Jesse seemed lost in thought; then, glancing up, and seeing the look on their faces, he was overpowered by the isolation of one who inspires a respect that merges into awe. He shuddered slightly. Oh! not yet had he to bear the burden of his unique destiny—not yet!

He clapped his hands together, as if to break the spell that lay upon him; he laughed lightly, and rising from the table began to gather the dishes near him into a neat pile.

"Let us be children together for this evening," he said, "and we will begin by helping Mrs. Lane to clear away the dinner things. Lawrence, you and I will carry the dishes into the kitchen, Mrs. Lane shall wash them and Mother wipe them, and you and I will put them back into the cupboard."

With the sound of laughter and the clatter of plates the merry work went on. Then Jesse proposed that they should all take a walk up Broadway, that his mother might see the brilliant lights and the crowds of gaily-dressed people.

They went into a confectioner's place and ate ice-cream; they joined the crowd in a theatre lobby; they examined the giant presses through the windows of a great newspaper building; they looked into the shop-windows; they

had coffee in a blue and white tiled restaurant, and then rode home in a surface-car at half past ten, tired and happy. In amusing his mother Jesse was able to forget, for the time being, the weight of his great secret.

For a week he gave almost every hour to her who had given so many hours to him. Mary Bethel saw as much of New York as a woman of moderate means can see in seven days. She, too, like Mrs. Lane on the first day of her sightseeing with Jesse, observed the looks of wondering admiration that followed him wherever he went. His presence was, in a way, a protection to her shyness; he was so interesting that no one looked beyond him to her.

"It makes no difference what we wear," said Mrs. Lane to her one day as they were putting on their hats for a visit to the Park. "We are like two inconspicuous blades of grass which grow beside a rose-bush." And the heart of Jesse's mother swelled with loving pride.

At last the hour of farewell came. On a fresh, sunny morning in early April, Mrs. Lane went with them to the station, and her gentle blue eyes were full of tears all the way from Washington Square to Forty-second Street.

"Oh! shall I never see you again?" she whispered, as she clung to Jesse's hand at the foot of the car-steps.

"Have you not promised to visit us in the summer of next year?" he smiled at her. "And don't you mean to keep your promise?"

"Yes, yes; but, somehow—Oh, it is so hard to let you go!" And she put her motherly arms about his neck and kissed him with a sobbing good-bye.

When the train had started, Jesse turned to his mother: "I could not give a reason for the impression; but I also feel that Mrs. Lane and I will never meet again."

"Do you think she is going to die?"

"I cannot tell." But he did not say that such was not his impression.

Mary was silent for some time. Then she put out her hand and touched Jesse.

"I wonder if you will think me nervous or fanciful," she ventured. "Maybe I am both; but through all my pleasure in this great city has run a feeling of dread, of

dread for you. Something—I don't know what, but some great awful thing—has been hovering over me all the while. I have wakened three times with a terrible dream—that I had lost you for ever among those crowds. Once I got up at dawn and went into your room to make sure that you were really there, the dream was so vivid."

"It may be so," he answered.

"Then promise me, Jesse, that you will never go down there again!"

"I cannot promise you that, Mother."

"But why? What is New York to you? It is not your home; you do not belong there."

"A part of my life belongs there, is inevitably there."

"I do not understand. . . . Oh, Jesse, you frighten me! Why are your eyes so strange?"

He stroked the faithful hand which lay on his arm.

"Don't you agree with me that one should not be a coward and run away from one's destiny?"

"Oh, I don't know anything about destiny! I only know that I dread the thought of your going again to that terrible city. Suppose some awful thing should happen to you there?"

"Well, suppose it should, little Mother. *The price of the song is the singer.*"

CHAPTER XXIV

AFTER the death of Mrs. Lane, in the following summer, Lawrence brought his two sisters to Myra for a fortnight's visit to Mary Bethel and Jesse.

The two girls were very unlike. Martha, the elder by two or three years, was a staid and almost matronly young woman, and in her mourning garments appeared older than she really was. Her dark hair was parted and worn in waveless bands on each side of her face, and her steady grey eyes regarded the world as if it were an inexperienced child which it was her duty to approve, or reprimand, or otherwise guide in the way it should go.

Mary Lane was slighter and fairer than her sister, and her yellow-brown hair curled softly over a forehead which concealed more intellect than practical judgment. She regarded herself—not the world—as the inexperienced child, and she went to wise and beautiful books for instruction to an extent which called forth the constant warnings of Martha that she would spoil her eyes. When Mary was extremely rebellious, for her, she would gently reply, "To what better purpose could I use my eyes?"

Mary had not been more than five minutes under the same roof with Jesse Bethel before she perceived that here at last was the fellow dreamer for whom her loneliness had always been yearning.

"You also love books, don't you?" she shyly observed, on the morning of her arrival, glancing longingly at Jesse's well-filled shelves.

"Yes," he answered, "better than anything else in the world, except my fellow beings."

"And you really love your fellow beings?"

"Deeply. Don't you?"

"Y-yes," she hesitated, "when they don't weary me."

"The books you enjoy were all written by your fellow beings," Jesse answered her.

"Oh!" and her blue eyes opened wide. "But I've never known any of *that* sort of people."

"Then rejoice, little sister, for you have met one of that sort now," declared Lawrence, who was also in the room. "Jesse talks in the way those authors of yours write, only better. I'd rather listen to him than to read Epictetus."

Mary made no answer, and Jesse could not. The time had not yet come when he had so far sacrificed himself that he could exalt himself, as an illustration of the principles he taught. The price of that privilege he was not yet rich enough to pay. So he was modestly silent when admiring friends compared him to the great ones of the past whom he knew to be his spiritual kindred.

During this visit Lawrence told Jesse that he had selected the site for his future suburban home, had bought the land and was gradually paying for it. An uncle of his had joined in the venture, and when the lot was paid for they were going to build a house.

"Shall you have a tree with a bird's nest in it?" Jesse asked.

Lawrence started at the veiled reference to his cataleptic seizure of the year before. "Oh, Jesse! You won't say anything to either of the girls about that, will you?"

"Of course not, without your assent. Have you had a recurrence of the trouble?"

"No. But if I ever should, I pray God you may be there to bring me out of it! I often wake in the night shivering with fear."

"I add my prayer to yours," Jesse declared fervently, his eyes deepening and darkening with the force of his feeling. "But do not think about it, Lawrence, and do not permit yourself to shiver with fear at the thought. The thing we fear is a tyrant possessing our souls, and if we fear it hard enough we draw it toward us through the power of attraction by opposites. Still, I think you should tell your sisters, as a precaution against——"

"Oh, no!" cried Lawrence. "Martha would make my life a burden to me by her ceaseless admonitions, and the knowledge would make Mary unhappy."

"The right of decision is unquestionably yours," Jesse returned; "my duty—my privilege, even—is limited to the offering of counsel."

One afternoon when Martha went upstairs to the room the two girls occupied together, she found her sister in tears. Going to the bed where Mary was lying, face downward, she placed her motherly hand on the girl's forehead. Mary was gentle and subdued, even in weeping; to have torn her sister's heart by distressing sobs would have seemed to her unkind. But Martha felt, by the quivering of the slight form on the bed, that whatever emotion Mary might be struggling with, it was something out of the ordinary course of her quiet, book-filled life.

"What is the matter?" asked Martha sympathetically, for she deeply loved her dreamy sister.

"I don't know," was Mary's answer, though her tears trickled afresh over Martha's hand.

"You can't possibly be crying about nothing. Why do you tremble so?"

"I don't know."

Martha pressed a soft kiss on the girl's cheek, and went downstairs to consult with Mary Bethel.

"I never knew my sister to act like this before," she said, after telling the older woman all she knew about the matter. "Can it be possible that she is going to have an illness?"

"I do not think so," replied the mother of Jesse.

"Then why does she quiver so? and why does even my touch seem to hurt her? I have never understood my sister, though she is dearer to me than anything else in the world; that is why I have come to you now. Did you ever cry like that when you were a girl? I'm sure I never did." And the usually stolid Martha rocked rapidly backward and forward in her little wicker chair.

Mary Bethel, who was sitting opposite, slowly threaded a needle and sewed several stitches in the cambric garment she was making for her eldest son, before answering her puzzled guest. Finally she said:

"I don't think you can help the girl any by making yourself unhappy about her. A long time ago—it seems to me now a very long time ago—I was myself much like this other Mary. She reminds me of my own youth continually. And there was a season in my life, when I was about her age, that I used to cry myself to sleep every

night. And all day long, as I went about my duties, the tears were waiting for the night behind my eyes. But no one ever knew anything about it. A few years later I married, and my husband always told me that I was a good wife and mother. I am sure I have been happy—yes, happier than any other woman I know. So, if I were you, I wouldn't trouble about my sister, and, above all, I wouldn't tell any one else that I had found her crying; for she would not want them to know."

"Probably you are right," Martha reluctantly admitted; "but still I don't understand."

Then she rose quickly and went out into the yard, to warn Lawrence that he would catch cold if he sat on the wet grass, for it had been raining.

When she was gone, Mary Bethel's hands lay motionless in her lap, against the soft garment she was making, and her glance turned to the open window—turned to the place, a short distance away, where Jesse was standing bareheaded beneath a tree, talking to Lawrence and Martha, his face alight with the beauty of some flaming thought.

The mother knew why the girl upstairs had stolen away to weep alone; but she would not betray her secret to the unimaginative sister, and she had wisely provided against Martha's inadvertently betraying it by making a matter of household curiosity the mystery of Mary's tears.

Soon the three who had been talking in the yard came together through the doorway of the room where the mother sat. Jesse was between the brother and sister, a fraternal arm thrown lightly about the shoulders of each.

"Does anyone know where Mary is?" he asked. "I haven't seen her for an hour."

"Mary is lying down," replied Martha. "She often takes a nap in the afternoon."

A few days later came the end of Lawrence's vacation, and he and his sisters returned to New York.

CHAPTER XXV

FOR five years longer Jesse lived quietly, and meditated, and worked at his trade as carpenter in Myra. He saved some money, and began building independently, thus winning for himself abundant leisure for study, and some degree of material prosperity. Those five years were the period of his greatest growth, in mind, in faith, in consciousness of power. His very presence seemed to radiate light as he passed along the streets of the little village of his adoption. None guessed the secret or his influence, but everybody felt it. The beautiful man who dwelt so silently among them was ever in the thoughts of these people; without knowing why, they found their minds reverting to him at all times and seasons. The young women and maidens dreamed about him and grew pensive at the mention of his name; the old women and the mothers of little children whom he loved were open in their enthusiasm for him; the young men came to him for advice and sometimes for assistance; the old men counselled with him in the management of their affairs. So those five years went by.

One day in the spring after Jesse was twenty-nine he told his mother that he had decided to go to Capronville, a prosperous village some forty miles to the south-west, on the Nashburgh side of the mountain. Jesse's two brothers were now married and settled comfortably in Myra, and he advised his mother to give up her house and go to live with Henry and his family, who had long wanted her. Timidly she expressed a wish to go with Jesse to Capronville, but he told her gently that he must be alone for a while.

"The time is drawing near," he said, "when I shall begin to preach to others the great truth which has informed my secret thoughts for years, and I need to make solitary preparation."

It was the first time he had spoken to her of preaching, and she gazed at him in astonishment.

"Why, Jesse, are you going to be a minister? You surprise me. A minister!"

"Yes, Mother; but not the minister of any church. My ministry will be the preaching of myself, and I shall found a church."

"A church!" she echoed. "But where will you found it, Jesse?"

"I will found my church in the hearts of men."

"God be with you!" exclaimed the mother fervently, her voice choked with emotion.

"God is always with me and within me, and that is a part of the message that I have for men."

"I remember, dear," she said, "when you were a little boy, how you wept at the Grove camp-meeting because God would not speak to you. God must have spoken to you, Jesse."

"Yes. And now I must speak. But first I want to go away for a while and strengthen my spirit for the task." Then he charged her that she should keep silent about the matter until he gave her leave to mention it.

To one other person only in Myra did Jesse confide the secret of his plans. He told Rose Thomas, the teacher of his childhood, all that he had told his mother. She did not seem to be surprised; had he announced to her a project for making himself King of England, she would have bidden him Godspeed with perfect faith in the certainty of his achievement. Could not the man who, as she firmly believed, had performed the impossible in giving her a place in the school of Myra, do any other thing he chose to do? Such was the reasoning of Rose Thomas. The doubts and cavillings soon to beset his pathway were never to come from women; they gave him their sure belief and help from the beginning, their intuitive and volatile minds being quick to recognise and respond to the call of beauty and faith.

"Sometime I shall want you to help me, Rose," he said.

"Whenever you send for me, I shall be ready."

"Would you be willing to leave all and follow me?"

"Yes."

"Would you leave even the school which means so much to you?"

"Did you not give me the school, by the power of your will and your love for me?"

"And would you leave your mother?"

"Are you not leaving yours?"

"When I am ready I will call you," he said. "Meantime tell no one of our talk this evening." And he passed out from her presence.

The next day Jesse went to Capronville. He did not cross the mountain by the way he had come eleven years before, passing through Nashburgh and thence south by the railroad, as he might have done; for he had no time at that time to revisit his native town. Instead, he took the longer route, going by the railroad from Myra on to Bellows Falls, then turning north again on the west side of the mountains.

Capronville was a town where he had never been, and in which he knew no one; that was a reason why he chose it as the scene of his first efforts to make real the lime dream of his life. It was a village about the size of Myra, on the bank of a stream which furnished water-power for several small mills. Not far from the village was a narrow lake only a few miles long. So much Jesse knew about the place; and for the rest he trusted to that power which guided all his movements, the inner monitor whose voice was heard in the silence. That he should find friends in Capronville and willing listeners to his word, he never doubted. His was the faith that brings all things to pass.

Leaving his belongings at the station, Jesse walked slowly through the village on the afternoon of his arrival. He seemed to be going nowhere in particular, seemed to have endless time in which to find a lodging for the night. He had a dislike for hotels, and never stayed in one if he could avoid it. Though he was now well provided with money, he was looking for some simple home which should invite him by its atmosphere of peace to dwell therein.

On the outskirts of the town he saw a large white

house which pleased him. It was more spacious than the lodging he had had in mind; but intuition was of more authority with him than preconceived ideas; and he lifted the latch of the gate.

A middle-aged man with a strong bearded face met him on the verandah. The blue eyes of the stranger were keen but kind, his figure was short and square, his general bearing upright and self-confident. He gave his hand to Jesse with more of warmth than is usual with New Englanders at a first meeting.

"Can I find lodging in your house?" Jesse asked, with an irresistible smile.

"You can find lodging and a hearty welcome," answered the man, setting the door of his house wide open. "We are rather a large family, but there is room for you. Probably you dislike hotels, the same as I do. Give me either a home or the open sky, I say; but no man's inn for me."

He led the way to a large, well-furnished room on the second floor.

"I may be with you for some time," said Jesse.

"The longer the better," replied the man. "I knew at the first glance that you and I had business with each other."

"My business is to preach the truth," said Jesse.

"And mine is to listen to the truth, though there be few that speak it."

Again they measured each other with their eyes, and there was sealed between them a wordless compact which should survive all things.

"My name is Jesse Bethel."

"And mine is Peter Bond."

"A strong name for a strong man," was Jesse's comment, and the two clasped hands the second time.

That evening at the supper-table Jesse met the numerous family of Peter Bond: his wife, his mother-in-law, his younger brother Andrew, and a merry group of children who called him father. Never had Jesse been more pleased with any man than with this man. His blunt but kindly speech, the steady look in his eyes under their shaggy brows, the quiet strength in his compact body, all these were the

basis of a confidence which Jesse had never before given to a stranger. Here was a man on whom he could depend in any emergency, one whose stubborn loyalty would not be shaken by any wind that might blow around him.

Jesse's effect on the family of this new-found friend was something unparalleled in their lives. Peter had simply told them that he had given the spare-room to a stranger; and when Jesse appeared at the supper-table, the full power of his personality burst on them suddenly. The children gazed at him in admiration undisguised, their little eyes wide open, their soft mouths parted. Peter's wife "forgot her manners," as her eldest child reminded her after the meal, for she was too much surprised at the remarkable appearance of her guest to say anything whatever in response to her husband's introduction. They were simple people, those men of the lumber-mills of Capronville and their families. Peter's brother Andrew was silent throughout the supper, but he hardly took his eyes from Jesse's face; and the wife's mother, a large and placidly-smiling woman of sixty, sustained with Peter the family's share of the table-talk on that first night. Jesse said little about himself in the beginning, but asked many questions regarding the village and its people.

"I own the lumber-mill down yonder," Peter said, pointing with his thumb at a large wooden building on the river bank a few rods away, "and Andrew and I run it, with a man or two to help us in the busy season."

"We've lived here many years," said the mother-in-law, divining Jesse's unspoken question.

"Then you doubtless know everybody in the town."

"Guess I do," answered Peter, "and many in the neighbouring towns. The village wasn't so large when we came, just a small settlement, with a few stores and one meeting-house."

"Are there many churches here now?"

"Yes, five, and all of them pretty flourishing."

"The people are prosperous, then?"

"Yes, indeed." There was a touch of civic pride in Peter's voice. "The Caprons here are one of the richest families in the State. The fine things in their house would

furnish a museum. The town is named after them, you know,—Capronville."

"It's not the fine things in a man's house, but the fine things in his heart which exalt him," Jesse replied. "It's not having a town named after you, but being yourself named after a great cause which honours you in the eyes of God. The most beautiful thing in the world is always invisible."

The eyes of Peter's eldest child, a boy of ten years, grew large with wonder.

"Do you mean," he asked eagerly, "that there's anything we can't see that's more beautiful than you are?"

"Yes, little one," Jesse answered. "Do you love roses? A rose is fair to look upon, but the perfume of the rose, the sweetest part of it, was never seen by any man; so it is with the perfume of the heart."

The little boy came over to Jesse's chair and leaned lovingly against him. The father would have chided his familiarity; but Jesse put his arm about the child, and said:

"As the perfume of a rose to the air of the garden, so is the love of a child to the breath of God."

Then one by one the four younger children left their places and gathered around Jesse; they sat upon his knee, they hung about his neck. The eyes of the mother filled with tears of happiness, and the strong face of Peter grew soft. The four grown people gazed in silence at the beautiful picture made by the children in the arms of the stranger; and from that hour this family gave to Jesse the love that knows no shadow of change for ever.

CHAPTER XXVI

ANDREW BOND was a year younger than Jesse; he was about the same height, but bony and muscular, with a thin, clean-shaven face, and shy, soft eyes. He was unmarried, and, as Peter jokingly said, "too bashful to pay attention to the girls." But Jesse, who saw to the deeps of the young man's nature, knew that when Andrew found the girl he was dreaming about, his shyness would fall from him like a garment.

The next afternoon Jesse was standing on the back verandah, soon after the noonday dinner, gazing at the blue, winding river, upon whose glassy surface the virgin green of the May trees threw tender, flickering reflections. Oh, Nature's blue and green—divinest of all colours, most soothing to the tired eyes of men! Do they seem so lovely to us, blue and green, because they are the hues of earth and sky, of Nature's robe and veil? Or did our universal mother choose them from a hundred colours unknown to our narrow sight, because they were the loveliest of all?

Andrew came out on the verandah and stood beside Jesse, and the two looked in silence at the river. After a time Andrew said, in a low voice:

"Pretty, isn't it?"

"Then you, too, realise how beautiful it is? And does your brother Peter?"

"He never speaks of it."

"That proves nothing. Some worship beauty with ecstatic words, others with silence; but none can say which feels it most."

"Where did you learn all the wonderfully true things you say?" asked Andrew. "I never knew a man who speaks as you speak."

"I listen to my heart in the silence," Jesse replied.

"If I should listen to mine, would I hear such things?"

"You might."

"I'm surer of hearing them, I guess, if I listen to you," Andrew said. "I'm not working at the mill this afternoon. Shall we take a walk about the village, and maybe into the open fields on the other side?"

"You have spoken my wish," Jesse answered. "How did you guess it?"

"I don't know."

"Perhaps you heard it by listening in silence."

"Can such things be?"

"Such things are."

The two men strolled down the unpaved road toward the centre of the village. They passed an apple orchard, all pink and white with blossoms, and Andrew, leaning over the fence, broke off two sprays of the fragrant loveliness, one for himself and one for Jesse, and they fastened them in the lapel of their coats.

"Whenever a man has pleasure in a flower," said Jesse, "then God rejoices that he made it."

Andrew looked at him. "Do you never open your lips without saying something which a man remembers?"

"Why," Jesse answered, smiling, "even Moses must often have said, 'Please pass the salt,' and made commonplace remarks about the weather."

A little farther on, they passed a sullen-looking man who was mending a fence. He did not look up, and went on hammering; but glancing back, Jesse saw the man looking after him with curious interest.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"The most disagreeable man in the village," answered Andrew. "I dislike him, and he hates me."

"Try loving him for a time," Jesse suggested, with a quick glance and a smile at his companion; "perhaps he will not hate you any more."

"How could I love a man like that?" Andrew's look was incredulous. "You seem to love everybody; but is there nobody in the world who dislikes you?"

Jesse's thoughts went back to Thomas Taylor, his enemy in Nashburgh, and he answered: "Yes, there is one man who has hated me from my childhood; but he has never made me hate him. Beware of hatred, Andrew. Though your enemy should burn your house and malign you in

the ears of men, he has not really injured you—the immortal, indestructible you which dwells in the centre of your being; but if your enemy succeeds in making you hate him, then has he done you the great injury.”

“John never told me that,” said Andrew; “though he has told me many wise things.”

“John?” Jesse’s tone was full of sudden interest.

“Yes, John the Hermit. We never call him anything else. Do you know him?”

“I met him once, years ago, on the mountain a few miles from Myra; but I have not seen him since. Where is he now?”

“Somewhere around Burlington. He passes to and fro, wherever the spirit leads him; sometimes he is with his friends, sometimes alone on the mountains. John is a wonderful man.”

“Are you a friend of his, Andrew?”

“Yes, I spent a month with him last fall.”

“Do you know whether he has found the one he seeks?”

“I know that he has not; but he will search until he finds him.”

“Why do you not remain with John, if you are his pupil?”

“I stay with him sometimes; but I have my work to do, my work here at the mill.”

“But if you should find the one whom John is seeking, would you remain with him?”

“You mean, would I remain with John?”

“I mean, would you remain with the greater teacher? Would you leave your work, the mill, everything?”

A strange light came into the face of the quiet fellow, and the eyes he turned to Jesse were deep and dark.

“If I should find the great one himself,” said Andrew, “then I would follow him for ever.”

Jesse made no answer, and they walked on in silence. Not yet could he reveal himself to the pupil of John, not yet could he declare himself the one they sought; for they must recognise him of themselves. But how near now seemed the blossoming of his life’s great flower!

“Andrew,” he said suddenly “is Peter also a disciple of John?”

"No, he has never even seen him."

Jesse knew this, before he asked the question; but he often put his inner certainties to the test of speech.

"Tell me more about John," he said.

"Why I saw him first last summer, when I went to Burlington on business for the mill. He has only been preaching a short time, though he has been wandering on the mountains for years. At first the people in Burlington took him for a madman; but they soon came to understand that madmen don't talk like John. He has a whole crowd of followers; but he is a hard master, lives on dry bread and fruit, mostly, and thinks other men ought to do the same. He despises pleasure of all sorts, and doesn't care for beautiful things. He would never wear apple-blossoms in his coat, as you do. In fact, he usually doesn't wear a coat, just a blanket around his shoulders when it's cold. Men have told me that he walks around in the snow sometimes with naked feet. He seems to enjoy being uncomfortable; pain is a kind of pleasure to him."

"The cups of pain and pleasure contain the same fluid," Jesse said. "I suppose John didn't tell you that."

"No. He doesn't talk like you, but his talk is great, all the same; though it's mostly about repentance, and about getting ready for some dreadful thing that's going to happen. Even the Governor is afraid of him. One day John stood in front of the Governor's house and preached in a loud voice against the sin of riches. I heard him. They say the old man didn't come by his money very honestly; but that's as may be, for I don't know anything about it. But I know that John makes people listen to him. When he stands up in the streets of a town and begins to talk, you couldn't count the people in the crowds that come out to hear. He baptises folks, too. He baptised me in the lake up there, and I've felt like another man ever since. I don't know what there is about him; but he makes men feel there's something more important in life than just to earn money and spend it on themselves."

"Shall you return to him?" Jesse asked.

"Bye and bye, when the mood is on me."

"Has John any followers in Capronville, except you?"

"No; his men are mostly from the North; he never came down here."

"I have a great interest in this man, Andrew."

"Maybe you'd like to go with me, when I go back to him?"

"I will tell you when to go," said Jesse, "and I will certainly go with you; but not yet."

"Whenever you say," Andrew assented. "I guess you'd have more influence over me than John, anyway. He's too severe for me; he won't even let his pupils marry."

"And do you want to marry?"

The young man blushed. "I haven't thought much about it. But do you think it's wrong for a man to marry?"

"No, not when his time comes. But I think your time has not come. He only is fit to marry who can be happy unmarried. He only is fit to be rich who is willing to be poor."

They went through the main streets of the village, and Andrew pointed out the more important buildings and the more important people. As always, wherever Jesse went, men and women stood still in the street and gazed after him. The place was not so small that any stranger could attract attention, and Andrew soon perceived the interest which centred in his new friend.

"They stare at you," he said, "the way they stare at John up north, only their eyes are different. They'd never call you a madman, as they call John; more likely they'd all love you, the same as our folks do."

As they climbed the long hill toward Peter's house, they again passed by the sullen-looking man who was still mending the fence. He was verging on middle-age, and could never have been handsome; but something in the deep-lined face appealed to Jesse's pity; a shadow, as of secret suffering, enveloped the man's whole being.

"Andrew," said Jesse, "that man is disagreeable because he is not happy. I'd like to see a smile on that heavy face. We will stop and speak with him."

"But," Andrew hesitated, "he and I haven't exchanged a word for six months."

"Then let your first word to him be my name; you will find it a charm against anger."

They paused before the fence, and Andrew spoke the name of his friend in introduction to Judson Carey. To his astonishment the man came forward, holding out his hand, first to Jesse and then to him.

"I saw you walking by, an hour or two ago," he said to Jesse, "and I wondered who you were. We don't see many strangers in Capronville, especially—" he hesitated for a fitting phrase—"especially like you."

"Are you a native of this place?" Jesse asked.

"No, I've been here only a couple of years; came from up north, on the other side of the lake."

Jesse noticed that the stranger's eyes were on the apple-blossoms in his coat. He detached the flowers, offering them with a smile to this man who seemed no longer to be sullen.

"Wouldn't you like to have the apple-blossoms? I will fasten them for you, and they will make your afternoon of work seem pure and lovely as a May dawn."

Jesse now saw the smile he had hoped for; it began in the eyes, where a smile should begin, and lighted the whole face.

"I really don't know," said the man, "when anybody has offered me a flower before! I thank you."

Andrew had been looking on in silence. Suddenly he said:

"Won't you come up to our house some evening, Judson? I'm sure Peter and I would both be glad to see you. We were speaking of you only the other day." Andrew was glad that he was not called upon to give the substance of the conversation referred to between himself and Peter; but any man whom Jesse seemed to like must have some sound—even though hitherto undiscovered—qualities to recommend him.

"I'll be glad to come," Judson answered pleasantly. "Now I think of it, I haven't been up to your house since I left off working in the mill."

When Jesse and Andrew were alone again, climbing the hill toward the house, Jesse said:

"You didn't tell me that Judson Carey had worked in your mill. How did he come to leave it?"

"Why, Peter discharged him. We found he wasn't over-honest."

Jesse's memory flew back eleven years, to Marty White, of Nashburgh. "I once had a friend who stole a cow," he said, "and it cost me much anxiety and some money to help him out of his trouble; but I haven't heard that he ever repeated the offence."

"Suppose he had; would you have helped him again?"

"Yes. But tell me more about Judson Carey. Is he married?"

"No, Judson is a bachelor. He cares too much about money to share it with a woman."

"By the way," said Jesse, "I wouldn't tell people, if I were you, why this man left the mill. Bad reputations have made as many dishonest men as dishonest men have made bad reputations."

CHAPTER XXVII

ONE evening, a few days later, Jesse was walking alone on the green hill beyond the village. It was a little after sunset, that vague mysterious hour which is neither night nor day, when the old and solid earth seems trying to remember the far-off, nebulous days of her youth. In the pellucid afterglow of the departed sun, the grass is greener than at midday; the world is flooded with a spiritual light, more immaterial than sunshine, more mystical than shadow, a light that seems to be diffused through alabaster. In that strange hour, to those who have the seeing eye the sylphs appear and float with airy forms a little way above the earth, and round the dark roots of old trees the gnomes foregather. If in some lonely place a man should build a fire of brushwood, and keeping very still should fix his eyes upon the leaping flames, he might see the mythical salamanders dancing in the scarlet halls and alcoves of their elemental mansions. It is the hour when Nature is least reticent of her secrets, the time when she will answer questions which would seem too daring if uttered in the noon-day. To one alone she will tell much; but if two beings, in perfect harmony with her and with each other, shall come together to the door of her unguarded tent, and holding out their palms shall ask of her the boon of hidden knowledge, of the unseen and of the future, sometimes—only sometimes—she will respond to their united prayer. It is also the hour of faith, when one believes that wonderful dreams come true, when one believes that the Ideal may leave the skies and dwell with the real on earth.

In that hour after sunset, on the green hill beyond the town, Jesse met for the first time the one whose faith in him and in his dream was to be deeper than that of any other man, one who was destined to carry the belief in him and the face-to-face remembrance of him to an almost incredible old age. He met John Dana.

Standing on the crest of the height, Jesse was impelled

to turn and look down toward the village. There he saw, on the narrow path, the slender and graceful figure of a young man, hardly more than a youth, coming quickly up the hill. The soft locks on his uncovered head seemed to have retained the sunlight that was gone, and the eager, upturned face was fair and sensitive as a woman's. He came straight to Jesse, holding out his hand as to an old friend.

"Andrew told me to come," he said, simply as a child might explain its presence. "He thought you would like to see me. I am Andrew's friend, and my name is John Dana."

That was all the introduction which began the friendship between these two. He was Andrew's friend—that seemed to be enough.

"Let us sit down," John suggested. "I ran all the way up the hill and am out of breath. How lovely the sky is to-night, and the soft light on the grass! . . . Are you glad I came?"

"More glad than I have words to speak. I think I must have been looking for you a long time."

"How bewilderingly beautiful you are!" were John's next words. "I never knew that a human being could look like both an angel and a man. I wonder . . . You are a dreamer, too?"

"A dreamer of strange dreams, yes," Jesse answered, gazing off at the distant mountains.

"Will you tell me your dreams?"

Jesse turned and looked at him. There was no barrier to confidence in that fresh and wistful face, rather an invitation to the fullest self-revealing.

"My dream," he said, "is to transform the world."

"And may I help you? I long intensely to do something beautiful! Ever since I can remember I have had a feeling which I could not tell to anyone, that I should sometime find a great work to do—a wonderful work. May I help you to transform the world?"

"I think," said Jesse, very slowly, as if weighing every word, "I think that you will help me more than any other man, more even than Peter."

"Peter?" John's voice was full of questions. "But

Peter is so matter-of-fact, so unimaginative! Will he help, too?"

"Yes, though he doesn't know it now; the time to tell him is not yet."

"But what shall we do first? and when shall we begin?" The boy's manner was all nervous eagerness. He sat looking up at Jesse, hanging on his answer.

"First I shall go to Burlington, where John the Hermit is preaching. You will go with me, and Peter, and Andrew, and Judson Carey?"

"Will Peter really go?"

"He will do whatever I tell him. You will all do whatever I tell you, from now on through my life."

John held out his small brown hand. "I will follow you to the end of the world."

"You have the perfect faith," said Jesse, "the absolute faith which carries everything before it, including the love of its teacher. Why, little one, though I have a great truth for the world, so far I have taught you nothing. I have not spoken a thousand words to you, and yet you are ready to follow me!"

"Yes. I *feel* your greatness. I couldn't express to anyone else just what I mean, though I have read many books, and those who have read fewer, fancy that I have some learning. Andrew has repeated to me some of your beautiful sayings; but it wasn't those words which made me climb the hill this evening. I think it was your spirit that drew mine. But, tell me, if I may ask you such a question, why do you want to go to John the Hermit? Do you think that he will teach you anything?"

"No."

"Then why do you want to go, and to take me—and the others?"

"We go," Jesse answered, "that John may teach those others something which they have need to know."

"And will he teach me that something, also?"

"You know it already, little one."

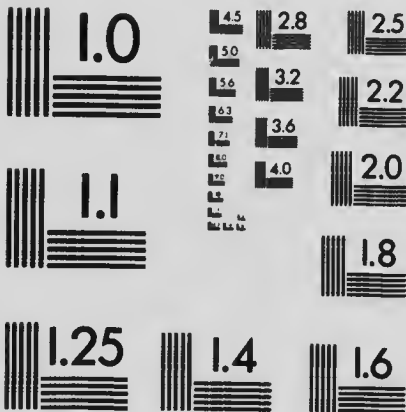
"I know——" John hesitated, his eyes wide and burning with excitement.

"You know what I am the one whom John the Hermit seeks."



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With sweet humility the boy touched with his bright head the feet of his companion. He spoke no word, but raising himself, gazed and gazed into the exalted face of Jesse.

"For a time, John, let this be a secret between us two. We will go to the Hermit three days from now."

"And what shall I call you?" John asked, in a voice that trembled.

"In the presence of the others you will call me Jesse. When we are alone together you may call me—whatever your heart prompts."

"Master!" whispered the boy, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ON a sunny morning in early June they started for Burlington, where John the Hermit was preaching: Jesse, Peter and Andrew, John and Judson Carey. At that time none of them, save John in his secret thoughts, was indissolubly linked with the new teacher. Jesse had asked each of them to go with him as one friend would ask another. Peter was surprised when Jesse first spoke of visiting the Hermit. He had heard of Andrew's sojourn with him in the autumn of the year before; but Andrew was one who seldom spoke his thoughts, and Peter did not know how deep an impression the words and person of the stern wanderer had made upon his brother.

"Of course I'll go," Peter said to Jesse, "though I've never left the mill alone before. But I'm really going more to be in your company than to hear the preaching of the Hermit."

"Nevertheless, he has a special message for you," was Jesse's puzzling answer.

The words remained with Peter; they echoed in his ears when he awoke at dawn; he thought of them at intervals all day, and after he went to bed at night. What message could the Hermit have for him? and how could Jesse know of it? Already he was aware that his strange guest was intimate with the thoughts and feelings of other men; but how could he know the future? By the time the day came for the journey, there was no one among the little band of pilgrims who looked forward with more interest than Peter to the outcome of their undertaking. A special message for him! What could it mean!

The dreamy John was all a-tremble with eagerness. He walked restlessly about the station platform while they were waiting for the train, returning now and then to Jesse's side to smile at him with an understanding faith that was beautiful to see.

Andrew stood quietly, but mixed emotions struggled in

his heart. He was going back to one whom he revered and half-feared, going with a greater teacher whom he feared not and revered even more. He knew that should the time ever come when he had to choose between them, he would follow this new friend, because he loved him more than he loved the austere dweller in the forests. How great a teacher Jesse really was he had no means of knowing at this time; but he felt in him a spiritual power which made even the power of the Hermit seem almost weakness by comparison. Jesse could read in Andrew's eyes a story that was hidden from the others, and he glanced at him from time to time with a sympathy which any spoken words, however sweet, would have made almost unendurably intense.

Judson busied himself in buying their tickets, Peter and the others having given him the necessary money. The quick, observing eyes of the young John had noticed with what exquisite tact Jesse arranged this thing, making it seem a matter of course that the formerly discredited man should be entrusted with their purses. Judson saw it, also, and in his soul resented it; though he was quick to avail himself of the offered dignity.

As Jesse gazed upon his little band of followers, his disciples (though they knew it not), his mind went back to that far time when the boy with the fiery heart, the boy that was himself, had stood alone between the oak and maple-tree beside the road in Nashburgh, and gazing on the glory of the western sun, father and sustainer of the universe, had flung his arms into the air and cried in the wild joy of sudden revelation, "I myself am God!" Could he ever make these other gods beside him realise the glory of their inheritance, their unity with him and with the Father? So full of passion was his hope, so great his dream, that his very body seemed illuminated, his eyes were like blue flames, and the four men beside him gazed in amazement at his face.

Who was this beautiful being? they suddenly wondered. How came he to be their friend? Why was he taking them on this journey? and what would the end be? There came to them, as in a flash of light, the revelation of some mysterious destiny connected with this man before them,

a destiny in which their lives would be involved. They were almost afraid, and their hearts beat fast; but deeper than the vague, instinctive dread of the unknown which made them tremble, was a high joy which filled their hearts with strength and certainty of faith. No ordinary journey was before them; this pure June day was pregnant with great meanings. They could not have put these feelings into words, for their minds were too untrained in subtle thought to formulate such vast impressions; but in the region of soul-consciousness that lies beyond the intellect, they felt these things.

All the way north on the train the atmosphere of power and mystery surrounded them. It may have been the potency of Jesse's thoughts that quickened theirs; for all the aspiration of his former years seemed to be culminating in the exaltation that now possessed and moved him. The very landscape outside the open windows of the car he saw as through a clarifying lens. Few words were spoken on that morning journey, for the awe that held their spirits also held their lips. To speak of ordinary things would have seemed a profanation of the hour, and none could speak the feelings that enthralled him; none would have dared, even had he the words.

When the train came to Nashburgh, Jesse told his four companions that they were approaching the region of his early life. Eleven years had passed since he beheld these scenes, eleven years since he went through the old wooden bridge beyond the railway-track and turned down the Creek road which led to his old home. Scarcely a thing was changed. The meadows by the river lay green and yellow in the sunlight, as of old; the winding thread of water was familiar as the sight of his own face in the mirror.

When the train stopped at the station Jesse leaned out of the window and looked along the platform. The same station-master whom he remembered was rushing here and there with papers in his hand, a little older, a little bent with eleven added years of work and waiting, but otherwise the same. On the end of the platform, by the open door of the freight-room, he saw the figure of his old enemy, Thomas Taylor. The years had hardly touched

him. He was the only one of the little group who saw and recognised Jesse. A quick look at each other, an inclination of the head in token of remembrance—that was all, and the train moved on. Among the persons who came into the car at Nashburgh there was no one whom Jesse had ever seen before. Why should Thomas Taylor have been the only one of all those old-time neighbours to recognise him on this day of destiny? He would have chosen otherwise. The incident was like a warning that here in the region of his birth he would not find the sympathy he craved. But in another moment the sight of Marty White's old house by the river drove all thought of Thomas Taylor from his mind.

Another flying mile, and over the tops of the trees he saw, on its hill, the white schoolhouse which he had helped his father to build, in the summer of his fifteenth year. Coming nearer, he saw a group of little children playing round the steps. Why, not one of these small learners in the house of his building was born when last he looked upon his handiwork! North of the schoolhouse was the pasture where he had played as a little boy; in the shadow of that elm-tree on the rocks he had sucked the snake-bite of his terrified schoolfellow, at the time when Mary Magnus was visiting the school.

But all these objects of dear memory receded in the distance, and he beheld, on a ridge of rising ground, the old grey-blue house of his birth. O wonderful, O mystical house of birth! No other pile, of wood or stone, however grand, however beautiful, can touch the soul like this. Here memory itself walks softly, with bated breath; here do the wistful first impressions of the soul return to it again in later days. The heart of Jesse grew larger, his mind clearer, the tendencies of his life more unified, for this brief glimpse of his earliest earthly home. From this bath in the pure waters of his childhood he seemed to rise refreshed for the labours of his manhood, the supernatural labours that now called him. A moment more, and the old blue-grey house, the apple-trees and the green meadow had disappeared as pictures in a dream.

CHAPTER XXIX

ARRIVED at Burlington, Jesse sent Peter to inquire where John the Hermit was preaching. They were directed to a large open space outside the town, on the border of the river; and when still far off they knew the place, because of the crowd of people that made dark the landscape.

On a natural elevation, a little hillock, the prophet stood and talked in a loud, harsh voice, and the people listened as to the word of one inspired. Truly a strange man was this who made himself the mouthpiece of the great Law, an almost incredibly strange man. He looked like some antique prophet from the borders of Asia, not like a being of our day and generation. He was of a stature beyond the usual height of man; his scanty garment of grey wool was girt about the waist with a leather strap, and his long black hair and beard, already prematurely touched with grey, fell in masses about his breast and shoulders. His great dark eyes burned with the fire of an irresistible idea, and every man or woman touched by his fiery glance felt a profound disquiet, as of a buried conscience clamouring to be heard. This was no gentle teacher of altruistic sentiments, bearing the message of love; but rather the voice of one crying in the wilderness of eternity against the vice and luxury of self-indulgent time.

Jesse and his four companions joined the crowd about the austere preacher. Instinctively the people made way for them until they stood almost in the shadow of the gaunt figure they had come to see. The long sermon was now near its end; and gathering up the forces of his spirit, the mighty speaker hurled these words at the listening multitude:

"I say to you, repent, and again, repent. And if you ask me of what sin, I say, repent the very breath of your self-seeking lives. Think you the world was made that you might hoard the fat of it, serving your body as a slave

its master? I tell you no. The hour is coming when all things shall be changed; the reign of the Spirit is even now at hand. I am the messenger of the new time. I beat upon the doors which you have locked against the coming of the morning; I beat your doors and cry, The sun is risen, come you forth and see. One will appear who shall bring all your labours for yourselves to nothing. I but prepare the road which he will travel, and woe to him that shall seek to obstruct the way.

"Yes, the sun is risen; its light shall dispel the darkness. In the new day that is coming all things will be changed. They who now sit in high places shall take lower seats; they who have no place whereon to sit shall rest on cushions taken from the others. They who now walk in crooked ways will find in the new day that those ways lead no-whither, and the rough path which now tears the feet of millions will be made smooth as the walks of a public garden. All men will share in the salvation of the world.

"Now in the morning of that time I say, Let him who has share with him who has not, and let no man eat the meat of two while one goes hungry. For there comes an hour of wrath, before the day is established, and he is wise who flees before it.

"I am the messenger that goes before the sun, but I am not the light-bearer. There comes one after me who is before me in all things, whose feet I am not worthy to touch. I baptise you in the river of repentance; he will baptise you in the ocean of the Spirit and in the fire of faith.

"Make ready for him, purging yourselves of iniquity and selfishness, that his words may find your hearts a clean and open dwelling. Long have I waited for the sun to rise; long have I walked in solitude and darkness, watching for the light that did not come.

"The sun is risen. Turn now your faces toward the East."

When the prophet ceased speaking, many crowded round him asking to be baptised. It was his custom, after the midday sermon, to lead his flock to the adjacent river and there immerse all those who professed repentance of

their sins. If any lacked the necessary courage to descend with him into the water, fully clothed, trusting their health and safety to the spiritual flame within them, they were told to go away and return when they should have overcome their hesitation. But among those who sought him in sincerity, few were without the necessary fortitude to follow him into the water; and the sight of men and women in dripping garments, walking homeward in the early afternoon through the streets of the little northern city, had become so familiar as to attract no more than a passing notice.

Since early spring the Hermit had been preaching and baptising in that region. In the summer of the year before he had begun the sounding of his call to repentance, preaching usually in the open country near one or another of the villages on the border of the river, and a few courageous ones had followed him from the first; but during the last month he had not left the neighbourhood of Burlington, and his exhortation had assumed an ardour that attracted crowds from all the towns and villages roundabout. His fame spread even to New York and Boston, and curious strangers from those distant places came to the little city on the shore of Lake Champlain to see and hear the extraordinary man who claimed to be the forerunner of some great being who should revolutionise the world.

The more conservative and wealthy classes declared him a madman; bespectacled physicians came out to hear him preach, that they might find a learned name for the malady of enthusiasm which possessed him; but to the unlearned and the simple-hearted he seemed a veritable prophet, and the common people listened to his fierce arraignments of all existing things with mingled feelings of terror, hope, self-accusation and amazement.

By his strange words and his stranger self, by the contagion of his exaltation, he had created an atmosphere of expectancy, a spiritual breathlessness, that justified his ever-repeated assertion that he was the forerunner and messenger of some great thing to come. The mental and spiritual threshings of this dweller in the wilderness had revealed grains of faith in the unseen power which he

proclaimed. Scattered all over the small State and even beyond its borders were men and women who had been baptised by the Hermit or had listened to his fiery words. The tireless messenger had done his work, had earned the rest which soon was to be his.

Jesse and his four companions joined the people who followed John the Hermit to the river where he daily baptised. They stood quietly on the outskirts of the crowd, all save Andrew, who had gone forward to greet his former teacher. They saw one person after another go down with John into the water; they saw one after another come up out of the water with a strange new light in their faces. When there were no more left who sought to be baptised, then Jesse said:

"It is our turn now; but I wish to be the last of those who receive baptism on this day. Go down before me."

The first to descend was Peter, obedient to a look from Jesse. Without a backward glance or a word, he went down into the water; when he came up, his rugged face seemed to be lighted from within, and his eyes sought Jesse's with a look of startled, half-bewildered reverence.

Then Judson went down to the prophet in the river, and they who watched saw that his face was distorted as with pain. Some words passed between him and the strange being who baptised, words that were not audible to the little group above; then he, too, disappeared beneath the surface of the water, to rise a moment later and join his waiting friends. He did not look at them, but kept his eyes upon the ground.

Then the boy whom Jesse loved, the irresistible, devoted John, after a look of deep affection at his teacher and a touch of his small hand upon his arm, went also down; when he came up, the drops of river-water on his face were mingled with the tears of emotion which welled from his sincere heart. His eyes were eloquent of the desire to lay the burden of his feeling on the great sympathetic heart which called it forth; but he stood shyly a little aside, his delicate reverence fearing to intrude upon the moment of preparation, the spiritual lonely place, in which his teacher was awaiting his own descent to the baptism. But would he go? Would he, whom the Hermit himself was waiting

for, accept baptism from the Hermit? Would it not be the other way, and Jesse baptise John? The hurried mental questions of the boy were answered the moment they arose.

Jesse was descending to the baptism, when the Hermit came up out of the water and stood beside him on the edge of the river.

"It is given me to know that I am not fit to baptise you," he said, in a gentler voice than anyone had ever heard from his stern lips. Then, to the others:

"This is he of whom I have long spoken, he who should come after me, the one greater than I. When he would come I have not known; but I have known that he would manifest himself to me when I had blazed a path for him. To that end I have walked alone in the forest; to that end I have preached repentance to all men, and have baptised as many as were ready. It is not fitting that I should baptise him."

But Jesse said, "It is my wish."

So John permitted him to take the baptism. The four men on the river bank, bewildered by the forces moving round them, beheld the two below in the water as through a mist. It seemed to them that Jesse stood in the attitude of prayer; then he passed from sight, to reappear a moment later upon the bank with John. They were startled from their abstraction by the voice of the Hermit, speaking to them:

"As he came up out of the water, I saw the Spirit upon him, and I heard a voice which verified my word that this is he."

They gazed at Jesse, seeing him in a new and clearer light. For many days now, as they told themselves, they had been privileged to walk with this wonderful man, and had not realised until this hour how great he was. They were overcome with humility. The love which they had given him before seemed so pale beside the love which they would give him henceforth, if only he would continue to be with them, to let them follow him. His new status seemed to put him far away from them at the same moment when it drew them nearer to him.

Jesse, as if divining their thought, came and laid his hand lovingly on the shoulder of each, first Peter and last

the soft-eyed John. His voice was thrilling with tenderness.

"You are my friends," he said, "my companions, and you will be with me to the end. But now I must leave you for a time, how long, I cannot say; when I return, be ready to receive me. You would better go back to Capronville, and there await my call. I am going to the mountains."

"We will be ready when you call us," Peter said.

"We will be ready," echoed the others, including Andrew.

Then, with a parting smile for all of them, Jesse turned to the Hermit and asked for direction to the mountains. The tall, gaunt man went with him a short distance down the road. At the parting of the ways the two touched hands and separated, Jesse going to the east, the Hermit going back to his own disciples.

CHAPTER XXX

JESSE found his way into the wilderness—the mountains lying east of Burlington. In his desire for solitude he avoided the noisy railway-train that would have taken him some distance on the journey, preferring to walk alone along the green country roads. He carried nothing save a change of linen and a woollen coat to protect him from the dampness of the night. The way was not long; twenty miles or so would bring him to the very heart of the wilderness. He went slowly, for he did not seek weariness, only solitude; and he paused to rest or meditate whenever the Spirit prompted him. That night he slept under the open sky, and the great mountain only a few miles away seemed to send down to him refreshing draughts of its own purity and peace.

Oh, that first night under the stars, with the little sickle moon for a signal of change in the west, and in the east, felt but unseen in the darkness, the calm, immovable mountain! That night was for Jesse a pause between two eternities. Strange memories came to him of things he had never known in this brief life, vague memories that whispered at the door of his consciousness and stole away again without fully revealing what they had come to say. Where in the long past, the unimaginable past, had he lain under the stars on such a night as this, with the labours of a superhuman mission just ahead of him? Where had he heard before the voice of the Spirit that called him into the wilderness? It seemed that he had known it all, had lived it all.

He gazed at the moon in the west. It must have been walking an incalculable time in the path around the earth, watching and listening; the book of its memory must be written full of secrets beyond telling. The Spirit that was himself had also an immortal past as well as an immortal future; there could never have been a time when he, as It, was not; there could never be a time when he, as

It, should cease to be. And Oh, those multitudes of other men who were one with him in the Spirit!

In a pool beside him he saw the moon reflected. In how many pools, on the curve of the world, did that one moon this night reflect itself? And the light that swam in beauty on the surface of this little sheet of water was present also with the others—with all the myriad others. So the one Spirit shone in the pools that were human hearts, innumerable, near and far away, on the great curve of time. The secret of his mission stood revealed, in the symbol before his eyes.

At dawn he arose from a brief sleep and continued his journey up the mountain, and long before midday he was high in the cool green solitude. The peace of the night before was with him still; he was enjoying temporarily the pause of equilibrium before his battle with the forces that now stood balanced on opposite sides of the great wheel of life. He found a place, in the curve between two hills, which seemed to be nature's parallel of his own interior state; and there he sat motionless for hours, going in memory over the stages of his progress since the will toward life, of the Spirit that was himself, had encased him in this form of matter which he was to study and subdue, ever reaching toward the mystery above, ever questioning the mystery below.

He thought of his intellectual growth, from the first formulation of speech to express the feeling of the groping inner self, to the words of wisdom which that enlightened inner self now used for the instruction of others. He thought of the plan of his mission and his steady movement in that one direction; of the gradual development of his powers, from the first startling realisation in early youth that he could cure pain and bring strange things to pass by the exercise of his will. He meditated on the loving-kindness that had grown with the years until it made his heart almost too full for endurance—his aspiration to be a bond or mediator between the unknown Spirit above and the groping human hearts below; meditated on the difference between the unselfish and immortal love and the selfish and transitory love which is a mere broken reflection of its pure prototype. He considered the engine of spiritual

power that had made him the conqueror of his environment, overcoming all obstacles in the way of his progress to the present hour; considered the ceaseless labour necessary to preserve great works from destruction—the continued effort that should hold his message balanced, as in a pair of scales, between the ideal and the real, making practical for human uses the divine wisdom of love and justice. He thought of the prudence that he, the pilgrim of eternity, must exercise upon the perilous path which he had chosen. prudence of action, prudence of speech, prudence of silence. His lamp must be kept ever-burning, his staff must be ever in his hand.

In this period of balance he saw life as a stupendous paradox, wherein the two extremes, ever opposite and ever struggling, constantly change places with each other, for the reason that they are essentially one. The paradox had always appealed to him, but now he saw it in all its naked beauty. He felt the rush of extremes toward one another, the affinity of antipodes, the struggle and the union. The very evils that he fought against seemed here to take their rightful place on the revolving wheel of necessity; for without evil, how should we measure good? Without the knowledge of darkness, who would desire the light? Without the universe of matter, how would the Spirit realise itself? But he saw that this was only true from the standpoint of the universal; from the standpoint of the human, evil must be fought, darkness must be overcome and matter sublimated, for that is the work of the Spirit which man is. He told himself that only he who acknowledges evil can transcend it; that until man has begun to conquer the tendencies that draw the soul down, he has not acquired the impetus of positive virtue for the upward climb. The supremacy of will is ours when we can command the nature-powers below us, for the one that commands is above, and we are It. When we reach up to our greater Self, we must bring something else at least a part of the way with us. But the things which we command and lift are also ourselves; for are not all things one, even good and evil? So the strongest and most independent ego is capable of the tenderest fraternity.

He saw, as through a telescope, the far-reaching effect

of every thought and action; saw, as through a microscope, the infinitesimal cause of great events. He realised duration, the eternal action in time, as a revolving wheel, without beginning or end; and days, years, centuries, ages, men and women, love and hate, pleasure and pain, life and death, were as particles of dust upon the whirling spokes of it. Its motion was according to the Great Law that establishes and *is itself* the necessary course of things.

He came to see this Law as inherent in nature and in the Spirit—a certainty which may be used at will by him who aspires; came to see the knowledge of this Law as the forefinger of God, pointing the way to power undreamed of by the groping souls of men.

All day Jesse sat in the curve between the two hills, all day he meditated; and when the night came down he fell asleep like a tired child in the lap of Nature, his mother. So passed the first day of his solitary initiation in the wilderness. He had many stages to go through, some brief like this first one of balance and assent to all existing things, some longer and more difficult, some full of bitter travail. He fell asleep, knowing that the morrow would bring sterner labours to the spirit.

He awoke the next morning with a fuller consciousness of freedom than he had ever before known—of freedom and strength; nevertheless, he knew them to be still untested, for the acid of experience had not touched them. In that hour of dawn freshness, he felt that he could grasp the upper and lower jaws of the mighty lion of life, forcing them apart or pressing them together according to his will. In his hand lay the destiny not only of himself but of others, and the vitality of innumerable lives seemed to be concentrated in him. He realised himself as a repository of the powers of Divinity, his personality as a transitory receptacle of the eternal seed—a mould wherein the fluid of the Spirit had been poured, to be held by him as a sacred trust, and finally to be restored to the original Source, richer for all the varied experiences of the form which had held it.

Every breath he drew seemed charged with all the powers of the universal life. It came to him suddenly that this breath of his, this breath of every being, was corre-

spondent to the forces of attraction and repulsion inherent in all things. Why could not one who understood the law of its control draw to himself any object of desire, drive from himself all things he did not want, as man draws into himself the oxygen necessary to sustain life, and drives from himself the devitalised residue of air for which he has no use?

At that moment, as if in answer to his question, one of the timid wild deer that walk those mountains came to the edge of the open space wherein he sat; and though its furtive eyes perceived him, he held those eyes with his own. Then gradually he drew the shy creature toward him by the power of attraction which he had just discovered. Holding it still with his eyes, he put out his hand and pulled the leaves from a shrub, offering the tempting greenness to the deer, which came softly, unresistingly forward and nibbled the leaves from his hand. Then, turning, it bounded back to its mate, which had appeared at the edge of the clearing as if calling to it to return to the safety of the deeper forest.

On the opposite side of the clearing appeared a great bear, one of the species common in that section, the terror of the people from the plains below who occasionally go up the mountain to gather the wild berries that grow there in profusion. The dangerous animal looked at the man before him with a growing interest; but Jesse, in the fearlessness of that hour of strength, would not have trembled before a lion from the jungles of lower Asia. He calmly regarded the bear, and reversing the power which he had used to attract the deer, he drove the monster from his presence, never to return.

A few moments later he saw a rattlesnake come gliding into the circle wherein he sat; it raised its flat head and looked at him with cold, unpleasant eyes. Conquering an instinctive repugnance and remembering the essential fraternity of all living things, he endeavoured to draw the serpent toward him as he had drawn the harmless deer, making it also harmless by his sympathy. But quickly the rattler turned and darted away through the grass.

Jesse sat quietly and considered the matter. Why, when he could attract the timid deer, could he not attract the

far less timid serpent? And the answer came: The tendency of his inherited human repulsion to the reptilian form of life, meeting the action of his will, had added to the inevitable reaction its own inertia. He solved many problems based on this principle in its relation to human life, finding the answer to questions which had puzzled him for years.

Then, having studied the will to attraction and repulsion, and having seen how it affected both animal and human social life, he pondered its application to inorganic matter. These thoughts were in his mind as he composed himself to sleep that night.

Rising at dawn, he bathed in the mountain river, then looked about him for the means of testing an idea which had flashed through his mind on waking. High on the bank of the stream he saw a large boulder. How many centuries had it stood there, waiting in silence the word of permission to lave its hot face in the waters below? Jesse climbed the bank and stood behind the rock. Believing firmly that he who could change the inclination of the animal, of conscious matter, could change the *position* of this unconscious matter, he threw the full force of his body, his will, his *breath and his word*, against the boulder. With a grating sound which seemed the hoarse laughter of the elemental powers of Nature, it plunged forward and down into the river, throwing back to him as if in gratitude a shower of refreshing spray.

CHAPTER XXXI

AFTER the moving of the rock there came to Jesse an accession of the consciousness of power; he felt able to do anything, even the seemingly impossible.

During the afternoon of that day he picked up a small white stone and sat holding it in his hand for a long time. An idea—a possibility—had taken possession of his imagination. Could he do the thing which he had in mind? He gazed at the stone, concentrating his thought upon the task he purposed to accomplish. Then he raised it to his lips, and sounded over it a long musical syllable that rang and reverberated among the trees of the silent mountain. He looked again at the stone: *it had turned a rich violet colour.* So it was true! Superhuman powers *were* given to man, to be commanded under certain supernormal conditions.

Knowing well that every attainment has its peculiar price, he asked himself what he would have to pay for this power over Nature. Even with the question came the answer: only by the complete consecration of his personality, and his rights as an individual, could a man safely claim and exercise such powers. When he stretched out his hand to enfold that stone and raise its nature, he had to transcend his own mere human nature. On the cross of Nature desire must be transformed, that the spirit may be lifted up, and draw all men unto it. He who exposes himself to the subtler forces of Nature is safe only if his heart be pure of any taint of selfishness; for here the worldly fruit of the individual's past and present must be consecrated to the spiritual future of mankind. Only the preserving power of universal love is strong enough to sustain the heart of man on this perilous elevation.

While meditating alone upon the top of the mountain, he was really nearer to the beings in the valley than were those other beings who spoke to them face to face and lay

upon their hearts; for the Self he felt himself to be was the source of all other men and women. Their joys and sorrows were his joys and sorrows. He had outgrown the feeling of separateness from any living thing. Even those who hated him were included in the understanding love with which he embraced the world; for he had solved the mystery of enmity and the greater mystery of friendship. Because he could regard his own heart coldly as a thing apart, he was able to regard the hearts of others ardently as being one with himself. The fire which had purified his nature from the dross of selfish desire had rendered it so volatile that it could blend with the nature of any other being, independently of the limitations of time and space.

Four days he spent in ceaseless communion with the lives of men and women whom he knew: his mother, his stolid brethren, Rose Thomas, his New York friends, his new followers in Capronville, his boyhood's comrade, Marty White, the enigmatical Mary Magnus, and all those other persons, slightly known before but now known intimately, whom he had met in his brief life on earth. He found the secret cause of all their strangest actions: he found the hidden meanings in their seemingly careless words.

From an impartial distance, he studied his own heart; and the events of his life from the beginning were brought into the vivid light of his analysis. The reasons which he saw for many of his own words and deeds gave him a clue to the motives behind the words and deeds of others.

Much has been written of the mystic death, but few know what it means; few know that shadow-country where the soul walks with spectres of the dead and the unborn--dead dreams, dead men, dead selves, unborn beings, unborn destinies, unborn desires. It has been said that certain men have talked with the dead; but what is it to talk with the dead? He who has the courage to commune with his own dead self need fear no spectre of the graveyard. Most men will say that they commune with their dead selves when they think about the past; it is not so, for the selves they think of are not dead, but throb-

bingly, insistently alive. Not until personal desire is mastered can a man safely walk in the tombs with the ghosts of other men.

It was night on the mountain, a dark night; neither star nor moon was visible. Black darkness and utter silence, the two most formidable terrors to the mind of man, held dual sway over the solitary waste. Not a leaf stirred on the trees. Jesse sat with his chin in his palms, peering into the void. His days of uninterrupted meditation and fasting had sharpened his perceptions; he beheld the unseen and listened to the unspoken.

Was that wavering outline in the darkness the form of his father? Were those other grey shapes against the night his unknown companions in the mazes of the dead? The stillness was appalling. Then a something—a sound that was to the sense of hearing as the brushing of an insect's wing might be to the sense of touch, something almost too slight to be called a sound—came to his ears with meanings as of words. Strange things they seemed to utter, terrible things that made his heart grow cold with horror and with pity. Were the dead indeed so sad? It could not be. Then how explain these wailing ethereal wanderers? But wait! Might these not be only the evil passions of the beings gone before, the worldly lusts, the nameless abominations, which the free spirits had left behind in the lumber-room of the earth's atmosphere? Surely that melancholy something in his father's shape was not his father's soul; surely the secrets he had heard were not the titanies of those who have left the earth behind. It seemed to him that hours went by while those unrealising, changing shadows passed and repassed before him in the spaces between the visible and the invisible—those spectres of passive disintegration, victims of the inevitable reflex of active creation. It seemed to him that he was exhausting the knowledge of all misery—bereft of the boon of tears.

Then other visions passed before him—awful, unhuman presences, the shadows of semi-conscious beings who never have been human, spirits of the woods and the waters, spirits of the air, alien and some of them unfriendly to humanity. But having transcended his mere humanity, he was their master: their most malignant impulse could not

reach him, could not penetrate the atmosphere of purity that guarded this instrument of the world's uplifting. They came and went at his bidding, helpless puppets of his will, the passive leaves of the great book of Nature which he studied, types of formation and fertility, that brought him knowledge of how beings are evolved in unlimited space. These later shadows were, compared with the spectres of the earlier night, as integration is to disintegration, as gestation to decomposition. Where before he had faced illusions he now faced realities,—only partially evolved, but none the less realities.

All the night long, the longest night he ever knew, Jesse's mind was tried and tested by his spirit, with tests and trials that endow the victor with *the strength for further progress*. Had he failed? . . . But how could he fail? At dawn sleep came with its rewarding balm, and held him for as many hours as he had wandered with the shadows.

He was awakened by drops of rain falling on his face, and sought shelter in a small open cave he had discovered in the mountainside. For three days the rain fell steadily, and for three days he remained in the cave, braving the storm occasionally for refreshment of wild berries and spring-water. He became again aware of his corporeal existence, which he had forgotten. The human self he had left behind had now risen from the dead, transformed into a powerful individuality. As he gazed out of his cave at the falling rain, the realisation came to him that he had exchanged the smaller self for the larger one, had given up desires in exchange for power; that for every personal right which he had consecrated he now possessed a god-like privilege.

Then came a thought which made him leap to his feet and rush out into the storm: With the power he already controlled, he could now go down this mountain and demand from the world *any gift which the world could understand*, and the world would be obliged to yield it to him. But stay. . . . The boons he hoped for were those which the world could neither understand nor give. He walked slowly back to his cave and to his meditations.

That idea was not to return to him until it should come in a more insidious and more dangerous guise.

Feelings which had slumbered, which he had supposed to be left behind for ever, also returned to him now in higher forms: the love of family and friends, hope of success for his great mission because it was *his own* as well as because of its greatness. Here the child and the master, the human and the divine, were mixed together as wine and water, and no drop was wasted. After his recent sojourn in the etheric realms, he was forced by reaction to return to the material world; only his present consciousness of individual and corporeal life could have restored the balance and enabled him to continue in the body. But he had brought back with him from that aerial journey the faculty for living in either world at will.

Who that has dwelt long with any person of highly developed soul but has marked the seeming incongruities and contradictions, growing out of this familiarity with the two extremes of consciousness? In the average human being some one quality predominates; the perfect equilibrium of those natures which have passed a certain stage of mystic evolution makes them often appear unbalanced, by reason of the very perfection of their mental and spiritual balance. They illustrate in their own beings the very acme of antithesis, the parallelism of opposites.

While Jesse was aware of the powerful instrument for his high purposes which he had in the beautiful human self he had mastered, yet he had no personal pride in its beauty, nor any spiritual pride in the achievement of its mastery. He would have relinquished both without a moment's hesitation, could he have thereby furthered in the least degree the development of the souls of men. His body was merely a part of that nature which he could command to serve the Spirit.

He sat inside the cave, watching and listening to the rain. Water . . . what was its meaning? Was there water in the unimaginable spaces between the stars? and were "the waters above the heavens" like this terrestrial water? Or was there not another and more tenuous moisture, bearing the same relation to the interplanetary ether as water bears to air? And had not the other ele-

ments also their finer prototypes? Watching the currents of the wind-blown rain, he learned the secret of the flow of other currents—mysterious and almost incomprehensible—of that fluid which is the vehicle of souls.

After three days and nights of rain the sun rose in a cloudless sky; the green world seemed to dimple and smile, all fresh from its cool bath, and every bird was exultingly telling the joy of its heart. Nature herself was laughing with the consciousness of her own power. Who should prevail against her, with the smile on her morning face? "Am I not fair?" she seemed to say. "What need has man of anything beyond me?"

Jesse drew in his breath with keen delight. Surely Nature was beautiful, a pleasing bride for the Spirit. But alas for those who exalted the bride above the bridegroom! Earth smiled in his face, rustling her soft green garments. "Now put away your solemn meditations for a day," she seemed to whisper, "and enjoy with me the fragrance of my garden. Am I not lovelier than cold-eyed philosophy?"

He gathered a handful of wild flowers, breathing their perfume with eyes half-closed. The whole bright day he spent in contemplating the beauty of the earth—as the mirror upon whose gleaming surface the face of God was reflected. He watched the lights and shadows flickering over the trees and the grass; he gazed through the illimitable blue of the summer sky; he breathed the fragrance of the flowers; he listened to the song of the birds and the whispering of the river.

But the next day the world seemed not so fresh, seemed not so beautiful; though the sun still shone, the birds still sang. He had learned long before that no experience is ever exactly repeated: this day would bring him something different, perhaps another aspect of the many-sided mother of mankind, perhaps the limitations of her sphere—the narrow circumference surrounding all the human children she nourishes at her breast.

Surely there must be a circle which no man could pass, till he should become more than man—the circle of earthly destiny. Could *he* transcend the limits in which the in-

carnate soul is doomed to act? His very human nature, the link which bound him to his kind and made it possible for him to touch them, seemed now to mock at him. Was he too bold? Could man perform the labours he had set himself? Somewhere in his wide reading he had found the phrase, "the circle of necessity." Was this not what it meant, this serpent-circle of fatality, the settled bound of the soul's daring course. Might there not also be a guardian Power which watched upon the border of man's legitimate domain, hurling him back with fear and pain should he presume to arrogate to himself the powers and privileges of superior beings,—a mysterious guardian of limitation? Chained to the planetary footstool, how should man's will escape the iron fetters? Surely the spirit, having accepted the limitations of matter, must abide by the decision; whenever it seeks to rise above the earth, must remain suspended, like a fluttering bird, between the co-ordinating pinions of good and evil.

In gloomy meditation on these problems he passed another day. He who attempts to lift the veil of Life must dare the shadows cast by the veil's awful folds upon the unknown face.

The night that followed was dark with more than darkness. All sources of light seemed hidden by the earth, the underworld that had devoured the sun and moon seemed also to have made a giant's feast of all the spiritual lights that had shone in the soul's heaven. The faith which had wrought miracles was now sore beset by the doubt which ever seeks to work destruction; and as he lay sleepless under the heavy sky, the dark horns of the universal monster seemed to be arched over him, their menacing points buried in the earth on either side of his hard natural bed.

At sunrise he awoke from a brief sleep troubled by vague, evil dreams; through them a malign face leered at him, a never-to-be-forgotten face with slanting eyes and false, uncertain glance. So vivid was the vision of this entity through the formless shadows of his dream, that it seemed to stand before him even in the broad sunlight for a moment after he opened his eyes. In its hand it held a

lighted torch; dark batlike wings extended from its shoulders, and its vesture was wrought with serpents and strange symbols.

Jesse leaped to his feet and shook himself, he ran down the hill and bathed in the cold mountain river; but still the leer on that false, satanic face remained with him, still at the back of his consciousness remained the restless doubts suggested by its glance. What dark force of Nature had his brain visualised? Or was it, really, an independent entity, having its home in the secret realm beyond the intrusion of man's normal senses? Could it be the fearful guardian of the spiritual place of beauty and high power? Whatever it might be, the Presence remained with him—to warn, to mock, to torture with cold doubts.

What was the will of man that it should set itself to superhuman labours? the Presence seemed to whisper. To what result were tending all his fiery hopes of world regeneration? Ingratitude, derision, martyrdom,—all were the doubtful prizes of the struggle. What if his conquest should take another form? With his indisputable powers he might accomplish anything he chose, should he confine himself to ways the world could understand. He at whose word the very stones changed colour, at whose will the wild deer came and the menacing bear departed, could command the obedience of fortune, command bread for the mouth and beauty for the eye.

He realised that he was hungry. Wild berries and spring-water might sustain life for a long time, but the material appetites demand a more substantial fare.

"You who could change the colour of the stone," the haunting Presence whispered, "command these other stones at your feet to be made bread, that you may not suffer from hunger."

Surely a not illogical suggestion; and whatever Jesse's powers might be, his hunger at least was real.

"You have declared that you are God," the Presence again whispered, "have declared that God is the Power and that you are the expression of the Power. The time is come to prove your daring faith. Of what use or dignity are superhuman powers if they may not be put to human uses? Now command the stones to be made bread.

What, is your faith so weak? You fear they will not obey you?" And a mocking laugh sounded against his inner ear.

"My failure to make bread of stones," he said aloud, as if one listened to him, "would affect only myself; but my failure to depend upon the Spirit would affect the work of the Spirit that dwells in me."

Again he made his meal of wild berries and quenched his thirst at the cool spring.

To escape the malign Presence he climbed to the top of the mountain, and stood on the edge of a cliff which fell sheer to a rocky bed below. But the morning visitor was before him, still whispering temptations as from the depths of his own brain. On the rocks below were the whitening bones of some animal. A fall from this height would mean certain death; but if he were really chosen by the Spirit for the performance of great works, would not the Spirit bear him up? Why should his body not pass unharmed through the air, even as his more subtle form of thought? Were they not both equally the vehicles of consciousness?

"The Spirit cannot be destroyed," the Presence again whispered. "If you are indeed the Spirit, cast yourself down and prove your unity with God. To him who shall prevail against the force of gravitation and the sharpness of those rocks, all things will be possible—even the regeneration of mankind."

"The laws of Nature are the commands of God," Jesse said, again aloud as if one listened. "He who destroys the body is a traitor to the Spirit."

He sat down upon the cliff and gazed out across the rolling hills and valleys, to the far blue line of another chain of mountains in the west. O wide and myriad-peopled world! O world of beauty and of strange, far cities, among whose rulers he might take his place by virtue of inherent strength—if he but chose! And might not such choice be wise and righteous? Among the cold, self-seeking sovereigns of the earth, what influence for good might he not wield who should make himself a ruler for love's sake! The Presence again whispered in his inner ear:

"Is it then for nothing that you worship God? Can the Spirit act without a medium, the soul without a body? The ruler of a nation has power undreamed of by the plodding herd. Then make the State the body, the medium of the Spirit; and though to such an end one walks inevitably by devious ways, remember that in the physical mechanism that serves the soul are many gross and evil-smelling substances. Seize worldly power, then use it for whatever end seems best. What knows the soldier who fights for the king of the king's secret design? Seize worldly power! It may be given you to serve the Spirit by material means. Seize worldly power—command all men to be the servants of your will."

Then Jesse faced the evil Presence. He gazed into its eyes with stern, unshaken heart.

"Demon of Doubt," he cried, "you, too, have served the Spirit that I serve—served it by tempting and testing the steel of my soul's loyalty. Now get you back to your own realm, and nevermore come near me. I will fight the battle of the Spirit with spiritual weapons."

There came to him, even with the words, such peace and consciousness of strength as he had never known. Now might the powers of darkness storm and rage about the citadel of his soul; they could not reach the quiet place wherein he dwelt secure.

CHAPTER XXXII

BLACK storm-clouds were gathering over the mountain; from horizon to horizon they threatened one another, and the low voice of thunder reverberated among the hills. The air was tense with expectation of coming danger; the wind whispered shrilly through the tree-tops that shuddered at its message; the river seemed to rush faster, as if hurrying toward lower and safer levels. Now and then a bird cried out, in warning to its mate.

Jesse stood beneath a giant pine-tree, already scarred from head to foot in some past encounter with celestial wrath. He was far below the cave where he had housed himself in the long rain many days before.

The voice of the thunder grew louder, nearer. From a low grumbling it broke into angry roars, that were answered by other and angrier roars, and the wild bombardment was begun. A patter of rain, like drops from the wounded warriors of the sky, fell on the leaves and the grass; then, with a shrill whistle of wind, the drops became a deluge, and the trees arched their backs to meet the weight of it.

The broad pagoda of the pine was like a roof and sheltered Jesse from the rush of waters; but a wilder danger menaced him—a swift, incalculable danger. There came a deafening roar, a flash of flame, and only a few yards to the right of him a tree fell crashing to the ground—the very one he had considered for a shelter before he chose the pine.

“O Spirit that is myself,” he prayed, “bring Thou this body, our servant, safely through the baptism of fire!”

Suddenly a roar as of a thousand cannon . . . blinding light . . . a vivid sight *within* the blindness . . . and he knew no more. . . .

When Jesse opened his eyes and struggled back to consciousness, he found himself face downward on the soak-

ing grass; over him a cool wind blew with refreshing breath. The rain was over, the voice of the storm was still, and only the excited whisper of the swelling river rushed across the silence.

His body felt sore and shattered, but he staggered to his feet. How pure and fresh was the world after its baptism of fire and water! He turned to look at the pine-tree which had afforded him such dangerous hospitality: one of the boughs was torn from the trunk and was hanging by a long strip of bark, while a few feet distant a great hole in the ground showed where the bolt had spent its fury. The sun now came out from behind a bank of clouds, and Jesse climbed upon a large flat rock to dry himself and to consider his escape.

He told himself that had he listened yesterday to the voice of temptation, had he failed in the trial, had he compromised with his own faith and thought to build his spiritual temple with the stones of worldly ambition and expediency, the power which had stunned him would have killed outright, and his forfeited body would now be lying at the base of the broken tree. But he had found an answer to the question which had puzzled him in the cave: of what nature was the fire of celestial space.

He remembered reading somewhere: "Electricity flashes only when its current is interrupted." He saw the dual application of the principle in space and in himself; for without the *interruption of the spiritual current* by this material body which often weighed upon him, he could not light the visible world with his invisible message. Here was another dangerous paradox—an opening wedge for the Spirit of Evil, that had appeared, with specious reasoning, to his subjective eye and ear. While the Holy Spirit must manifest as the God of matter, it must never abdicate its sovereignty. The ramifications of this mystery he explored in meditation for several days.

One night he lay gazing at a flaming star in the west and considering the infinite duration of its existence. How could the soul of man be less eternal? Was it not related to the Spirit of yonder planet? and would they not both survive their material body? In thought he fol-

lowed the stupendous steps of the star from its nebular infancy in the dim past; in thought he followed the steps of his own soul from its original unity with God. The two ways seemed equally long. Not until the spirit of man has delivered itself from the temptations of the Spirit of Evil are the higher stellar mysteries unveiled to it; much may be learned before, but the final arcana are for the pure in heart only.

Jesse never spoke to anyone but John of what he learned during these later days on the mountain—and even to him he could not tell it all. He caught echoes of the speech that celestial beings use with one another; he learned the uses of the mystical Word that was “with God in the beginning,” and was the unknown cause of all the known developments of Nature—the Word that never can be formed in mortal speech; learned the secret affinities that unite substances, and why the seed of every animal and plant reproduces the image of its parent; learned how each particle of the universe contains within itself the impulse for reunion with its Source. After three days spent in superhuman contemplation of superhuman truths, Jesse turned with his new knowledge to study in its light the corresponding mysteries of the human.

He watched a butterfly with iridescent wings which fluttered round a flower—symbol of the ethereal soul, which comes and goes, and touches lightly the ephemeral flowers that are human bodies, blooming a little while in the sunshine before they return to the dust.

“O bright pilgrim of air!” he whispered. “The star of immortality shines over you, though unseen in the noonday of earthly trial. The winds of pleasure and pain that blow you here and there will pass and leave but vaguest memories; the griefs of to-day will be one with the joys of a thousand years ago.”

As he mused on the mystery of immortal life, it came to him again, like a fresh revelation, that there could never have been a time when he was not, and there could never be a time when he should cease to be.

“I am immortal and indestructible,” he cried aloud, even as he had cried that day, so long ago, “I myself am God.”

Of the millions of men who have taken that declaration of individual immortality upon their lips, perhaps one in every million has grasped the living consciousness of it—the glory. To be immortal is to be superior to change and above disaster; it is to work for the joy of the working and not merely for the prizes of life, as the one supreme and incomparable boon is already in one's hand. Immortal! To watch the ages pass like the marching soldiers of an army, to sit in the council-hall of destiny, to stand in a secure place when the nations go forth to war and death and terror stalk up and down the world, to study life as one studies a book of geometry, to guard unseen the cradle of the new-born child of earth, to *be* the poetry which shakes the heart of virgin love, to thrill at the metaphors of planetary correspondences. Immortal!

Again the crescent moon appeared to companion his meditations, again he watched its silvery reflection in the water. Much had he learned and lived since the spectral wanderer last walked with the Lion in the plains of the Zodiac.

Jesse had come to realise by this time that his contemplation had progressed by definite stages, each tending to a distinct end. He thought of the initiations of the ancients, and wondered if he were not finding for himself a similar path of illumination. Was not the soul's way one, in every age and clime? But he had found that way unaided.

The physical discomfort of his mountain sojourn could not tempt him to seek the lower levels of civilisation, until he should have found something which he believed to lie beyond even his present attainment. Step by step he followed the guidance of the Spirit through the labyrinths of thought and feeling, as all his life he had followed step by step the inner monitor which had led him toward the goal of his future ministry. No study had been too long for him, no task too humble or too difficult. But his present path seemed to lie outside the limits of terrestrial life.

He had made his own the knowledge of all human misery and human joy, had tasted the essence of fraternity; but now for a season he must leave behind the very thought

of all whom he had loved and who had loved him, and plunge alone into the wilderness of space. Beyond the blood-stained path of earth-existence, beset by servile and evil creatures that ever seek to drag downward the soul of man, in the region beyond the moon and the planets his spiritual form wandered in the twilight—in the vast womb of the universal Mother, where forms are generated by the Formless.

Out . . . out . . . he went in consciousness, past planet after planet. . . . Saturn behind him was a speck in the grey distance . . . on to the pale path of Uranus . . . out beyond the opalescent track of the ether-wallowing Neptune . . . still on and on into the unknown void. The solitude was appalling. The stillness of an earthly desert would have seemed deafening noise had a rumour of it been blown across this awful stillness of infinity.

He felt a pain like that of the uprooted plant, torn from the mother earth; he was lost in the loneliness outside of time; cold shivers shook his naked spirit, and the terror of the unknown challenged him. If he should never find his way back! Invisible, infinitesimal was the earth-home he had left behind. Should he ever see it again? After the first shock of the question, the answer seemed of small importance. What was the speck of dust called earth, that he should exalt it above all the other wonders of God's workshop? And why was he so lonely and afraid? However far he wandered in the trackless void, could he find a place where God was not?

Slowly, reluctantly, at last his consciousness came back to the earth. He realised himself again as a corporeal being with hands and feet, with human needs and human limitations. His very body now seemed strange and alien to his soul.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ONE fiery noon, a few days later, Jesse lay down in the shade of a tree and passed into a deep sleep.

How long he had been lying there he never knew, whether an hour or a day and an hour; but, in the strange consciousness between sleeping and waking, he found himself lying in the full blaze of the sun. And he became aware that the flaming eye of day was something more than the familiar source of the world's light and heat, more than the centre of the solar system; that it was even the Spiritual Sun which is God, the centre of the system of souls, in whose rays man awakes to the divine world.

He gazed with unflinching eyes at that supreme effulgence. And the golden sun was like a window through which he looked into another dimension of space, a universe within and yet unmixed with our visible universe, permeating it as feeling permeates the body. Even the positive and negative forces of his own being that he had learned to master were in the light of this new revelation athrill with other and stranger potencies. With the opening of yonder window, every power of his being was made free.

But he realised the price of the attainment: For every superhuman faculty acquired by the dauntless soul, some lower privilege must be relinquished. He who has gazed into the open eye of Infinity can nevermore defend himself as *against* any other being, never choose a given way merely because it is pleasant to walk therein, never again claim as *his own* even the privilege to weep. The Divine Idea once grasped by the mind of man—as a *self-defensive* being that man exists no longer.

The next great lesson that he learned was *why things are*—life and death, pleasure and pain, good and evil, reward and punishment; the primal law of cause and effect.

which has been called by many names in many philosophies—and as often misunderstood. He saw the reason why one man is clothed with power, another with weakness; why two beings may love and trust each other, two beings hate and fear; why attraction and repulsion, the inseparable twins, delude and bewilder the mind until light seems shadow and shadow seems light; why the soul oftentimes chooses for itself a destiny of trouble, and learns the lesson therein hidden—or does not learn it. He saw how the soul passes judgment upon itself; how the judgment of the Spirit is *our* judgment, because we are the Spirit. The suffering of the world became to him a mirror wherein he saw reflected the cause of that suffering. He solved the mystery behind eternal motion—the inherent urge of life, the impetus *within the soul itself*.

The awakening of the dead assumed a new and deeper meaning. He saw how the Spirit renews its vehicle, the shadow cast by the wings of Time becoming the garments of the Timeless; learned how the trumpet that summons to judgment is blown continually throughout the ages. And he fell on his face, in adoration of the Intelligence which weighs the effect and the cause in the delicate scales of cosmic justice.

Jesse now passed a day or two in rest and in the quiet enjoyment of the cool, green world. He knew that his period of solitude was drawing near its end; that after one more vision of the sovereign Eternity, he must return to deliver his message to the slaves of Time. He was in no hurry for the final initiation, and no longer either dreaded or rejoiced in the thought of his mission. It was to be—that was all. The joys of labour well performed might come in the future; but sufficient unto the present hour was the wonder of the vision.

At last, one perfect evening when the moon was full, he chose a spot near the top of the mountain and sat down to await the revelation. Whether it would come as a series of illuminating pictures visible to his inner eye, or as the formless Idea, he had no knowledge and no clue. He only waited.

Slowly his consciousness expanded. Though his body

was fixed on a remote spot on one of the smaller planets of one of the innumerable solar systems of the universe, his perception, liberated from the trammels of the body, swifter than light, more volatile than ether, radiated in all directions until he *occupied*, as a self-conscious and limitless entity, every atom of that universe.

Long ago he had cried, in the joy of a lesser revelation, "I myself am God;" but he now realised the infiniteness of that identity. He remembered, as an event in his own past, the condensation of the suns from cosmic fire-dust. He beheld, as a pageant without beginning or end, the dateless, rhythmic march of creation and destruction; felt the vast beating of the heart of God, the atoms of whose blood are whirling suns. He perceived the phenomena of time, of sequence, without relation to terrestrial dates; perceived the past and the future as coexistent in the thought of God, and the events of a million years to come were as clear as the happenings of his own earthly yesterday. His own! Were the two not equally his own?

In the hours that came his spirit walked in ways we may not follow, achieved experiences we may not record; for human language is evolved by race development, and the human race has never walked those ways not compassed that experience. Adrift on the sea of infinity, his spirit clung to his mind as to the frail bark which should bear him back to the shores of earthly life. Had the ecstatic spirit lost its hold upon that mind, the world had never known him more, and the guerdon-treasure of the perilous quest had never enriched mankind.

Reluctantly, after a long time, he left those larger circles of existence and shrank to the earth which bore him.—not yet to his own body, but to the earth, the great body which now *seemed* to be his; and to him who had walked the periphery of the universe, even the earth's wide orbit seemed a narrow way. He felt as firmly held by the rotundity of the planet as he had ever been held by his form of flesh. The destiny of the earth seemed to be his destiny, its pain his pain, and the entire past of humanity was as well known to him as the events of his own life from childhood to the present hour. He felt the sheer physical bulk

of the earth as being his own body; the great shoulders of the northern continents were his, his feet were in the Antarctic. But his consciousness was the consciousness of collective Man—the race ego was himself, its slow development was the evolution of himself. With inexpressible ecstasy he felt the groping aspirations of that great earth-being toward the Spirit that evolved it; with inexpressible pain he felt the suffering of that being when destitute of hope, chained to the matter that ever deceived it, ever failed to satisfy the yearning flame within. He was Adam-Eve, the dual pilgrim of Time; he was every soul that ever was or ever will be on this whirling sphere. He contemplated the ellipse of the earth's orbit as an ordinary man regards the circle of his daily walk.

Then, as slowly and reluctantly as he had left the larger circles of space for the lesser one of the earth's way, he contracted in consciousness to the limits of his individual horizon. He was once more the man Jesse, who was born in Vermont of humble parentage, and who aspired to found the republic of the spiritual life. Bewildered by the change, he opened his eyes and looked about him.

The sun was rising, as if to welcome the intrepid traveler of space on his return to the green earth. When he had closed his eyes, long hours before, the full moon in the eastern sky had bidden him God-speed on his incalculable journey. The familiar mountains now appeared strange as do the scenes of his childhood to a man who has wandered a lifetime in foreign lands; the hills seemed not so high, the river not so wide, and the lives of the restless dwellers in the wilderness briefer and less important.

His period of solitude was over. Now to the world again! As he had before laid aside his personal rights and privileges, he now laid aside his meditations. Henceforth ceaseless, unresting activity would be the order of his life.

If he could only give all that he had learned to others! But he realised that at best he could only point the way—which they must walk for themselves. The misery of humanity was an oppressive weight upon his heart. Oh, to give himself as a sacrifice for all these men and women! What was the lust of fame, the lust of power, when

weighed in the balance with this passion for self-giving? Greater, he thought, to serve the world unthanked, than to command the service of the world.

With head erect and steady eyes that pierced the future, Jesse walked rapidly down the mountain toward the levels of common humanity, carrying with him the pure atmosphere of the everlasting heights.

BOOK III
THE FULFILMENT

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CHAPTER XXXIV

IN a little house at the foot of the mountain lived a lumberman named Williams and his young wife. Standing together in their doorway one Sunday morning in July, they saw a majestic stranger coming toward them down the steep road. With rustic curiosity they stared at him, and when he paused and lifted the latch of their gate, the woman's heart beat fast.

"May I rest with you for a day and a night?" he asked. "I am hungry and in need of sleep."

"Rest, eat and be welcome," answered the man; and his wife disappeared for a moment into the house, returning with a bowl of cool, delicious milk.

"Dinner will be ready in a little while," she said.

He thanked her for the milk, and added: "For forty days I have subsisted in the wilderness up there, on wild berries and spiritual bread; so an hour of fasting, more or less, is of no consequence to me."

They gazed at him in wonderment. Was this another wandering Hermit, like him who had passed their house one day with a group of wild-eyed followers, crying harshly of repentance and the day of wrath? But the Hermit was mad, they believed, and there was no madness in the calm eyes which now looked so lovingly at them.

"Are you also seeking for one who shall transform the world?" the lumberman ventured, incredulously.

"Even the Hermit is not seeking any longer; his quest is ended."

They dared not voice the thought which flashed through their minds. Was it possible that the prophecy of John had been verified? The man before them was certainly unlike anybody they had ever seen before. The long fast and exaltation on the mountain, the ecstasy of the previous night, had given him a look of unearthliness, of supermor-

tal purity, that was reflected even in the dull eyes of these mountaineers.

Jesse smiled softly at their bewilderment, and said:

"Many that cursed the messenger who went before the dawn will rise joyfully to greet the sunrise."

The religious heart of the young wife was stirred by the words and presence of her guest; and the duty of preparing the midday dinner was welcome to her, as an opportunity for controlling her emotion.

He ate at their table, he rested and slept beneath their humble roof, he told them of his mission in simple words which they could understand; and when on the morrow he asked them if they would leave their home and follow him, the man cried, "Yes, to the end of the world!" and the woman wept for joy. That afternoon they started for Burlington, and the obliging old neighbour who drove them to the nearest railway-station talked of his beautiful passenger and repeated his strange sayings to the day of his death.

Arrived in Burlington, Jesse and his two companions went to the house of one of the disciples of John the Hermit, who was also a friend of Andrew Bond of Capronville. Hardly had Jesse crossed the threshold when he heard a cry of joy, and the hands of the friend who came nearest to understanding him—the young John—were warm within his own.

"I have been waiting for you here three days," the boy said. "I *felt* that you would come soon. I needed you so!"

Jesse's eyes were tender as he answered:

"The greater you are, the seldomer will you find the understanding friend whom you need; but the oftener will you find the misunderstanding friend who has need of you."

At the supper-table he began to teach them. There were ten persons present at the meal, several of them being men who had followed the Hermit. Instinctively they gave to Jesse the respectful attention they were wont to give to their own stern teacher, and something else—a wise and surprised enrapturement which John had never inspired. Jesse's teachings startled and charmed them,

they were so different from anything they had ever heard. He spoke with the sureness of authority, and his words gave a new meaning to their ideas of God and man.

"He who is fully negative to God," he said, "may become positive to the whole universe."

He did not speak as the preachers do, ringing all the changes on a given theme, pursuing it up and down until the attention of the listener is weary; but he taught them in brief, pregnant sentences, with pauses and conversation between, that his words might fix themselves in their memory.

"My will is the will of God—when I am strong enough to put my will into effect."

They looked at him in astonishment.

"Can the will of man prevail against God's will?" he asked. "Can you countermand the order of the Supreme? You see that the Law must be as I have said, though the way of its working is a mystery."

After a little while, he continued:

"You can never know God until you know yourself, and to know yourself you must first forget the existence of self."

Their minds, unaccustomed to subtleties of thought, could hardly grasp his meaning, and someone asked him to repeat what he had said about knowing God and oneself. He smilingly complied, and seeing still the look of wonder on their faces, he said:

"If you have the courage to examine the recesses of your own nature without fear and without shame, you have found the key which shall unlock for you the doors of eternal safety and honour. Fear and shame are two dragons barring the path of knowledge to all save those indomitable spirits which hunger for the everlasting truth.

"Before a man can have confidence in the soul, he must first become acquainted with the soul. Should you meet your own soul face to face, would you know it for the God it is?"

They smiled at him and at each other, shyly, half-ashamed of the new-born confidence warming their hearts and shining in their neighbours' eyes. Perhaps they were not vile, after all, as the Hermit had so often told them.

Search their own hearts without fear and without shame, the new teacher commanded them, for so they would find God. Should they also search the hearts of one another? He answered their unspoken thought:

"When you discover and become the God within yourself, all other men shall be as your children, to be loved with a love that passes their weak knowledge."

"Is it not wrong," asked the man in whose house they were,— "is there not danger in thinking too highly of sinful humanity?"

"No. Even the average man who would measure the greatness of his own soul, or the soul of his brother, needs a tape long enough to reach the stars."

So he began to teach them, stirring their faith in themselves and in each other, arousing their enthusiasm for him. And after they separated for the night, Jesse was the only one who slept; the others lay for hours meditating upon his strange words and entrancing presence, which seemed to stand at the foot of their beds with uplifted finger, pointing the way to a shining road whose end was lost in the mystery of God.

The next day came Peter and Andrew and Judson Carey, who had been summoned from Capronville to join their teacher on his return from the mountain. They cried out at first beholding the new beauty shining in the countenance of him who had always been beautiful beyond all other men.

"We have left our mill in the care of the womenfolks," said the matter-of-fact Peter to Jesse, with a mellow smile which won the hearts of the new members of the little band. "we have left our home in the care of God, and are come to follow you wherever you may lead us."

"Even to the dwelling-place of the Spirit?" Jesse asked.

"Even to the dwelling-place of the Spirit—if our feet are not too heavy to pass that ethereal threshold."

"Oh! Our Peter has become a poet," cried the scholarly John, his boyish face aflame with pleasure.

"*He* can make poets of plough-boys," said Andrew, with a deep look at his beloved friend, who answered him:

"When the praise men give you shall seem not praise of yourself, but of the pervading Spirit, when it seems im-

personal as their admiration of the dawn or the starry heavens, then know that you are on the path of personal immortality."

Jesse wished to see the Hermit again, but learned that he was preaching on the other side of Lake Champlain. The prophet whose habit was self-mortification, would not indulge himself even in the pleasure of close association with the one for whom he had prepared the way. It was no part of Jesse's plan to begin his ministry in Burlington, to supplant on his own ground the one who had proclaimed him; and his eyes, which could penetrate the mists of the future, saw darkly that the life of the austere wanderer was somehow nearing its end. So, taking with him his own friends, and two of the Hermit's converts who prayed to be allowed to follow the new teacher, he went down to Vergennes, a few miles to the south.

How different was his entry of the little city from that other time, eleven years before, when he had gone up there from his home in Nashburgh, a young carpenter looking for work! Vergennes—the home of Mary Magnus. Where was she now? Was she seeking, in some far foreign land, ease for her restless soul? Or should he find her there in the old place, awaiting in solitude the messenger of her fate? He had known for many years, with that inner certainty surer than all pledges, that in some unknown way this woman was to be closely connected with his own high destiny.

CHAPTER XXXV

MARY MAGNUS, twenty-eight years old, sole mistress of herself and of her dead father's fortune, had come home to Vergennes after a three-years' journey around the world. She was more beautiful than ever. From New York through Europe and Asia eastward to Yokohama, she had been followed, fêted and adored. Suddenly, in the latter city, about a month before, she had dismissed her followers and friends, and had caught the first Pacific steamer for San Francisco, keeping secluded in her stateroom nearly all the way. Arrived on shore, she had taken the fastest train across the continent; but even the steam-winged dragon of the plains was too slow for her restless passion to be in Vergennes. Why had that insignificant dot on the world's map suddenly loomed so large in her eyes that it shut out the view of all things near and far? She could not give a reasonable answer to the question. Was it a call of Destiny, she wondered,—one of those vague, unreasonable commands that move the souls of men and women at long intervals to fly in the face of judgment and discretion, fly wildly toward some unknown goal?

When she found herself at last, one day in July, in the quiet, cool old house, she passed her hand across her eyes in bewilderment. Why was she there? The city, the very State and nation of her birth, had grown distasteful to her long ago. The presence of her dead mother, ever melancholy and complaining, seemed to haunt the shadowy rooms of home. Her intimate girl friends were married and gone away, and the narrow society of the little town had always so wearied her that her listlessness had alienated the few old women who had been her mother's intimates. Only the green, blossomy garden behind the house seemed to welcome her with love. The buzzing of the bees among the hollyhocks made her eyes fill with tears. Over in the far corner her hammock used to swing between two trees, and she closed her eyes and bit her lips with the

onrush of an overwhelming memory. The servant who met her as she re-entered the house wondered why the face of her mistress burned so deep a red.

In the afternoon of the following day she walked down the main street of the town for the purpose of cashing a check at her father's old bank, now in other hands. Then she went on through the village. Passing the park, she saw a crowd of people gathered about someone who was talking to them in clear, ringing tones. A few words only caught her ear in the distance:

"God is the Power, and I am the expression of the Power."

Where had she heard that voice? Surely nowhere *that* voice, but one strangely like it, as the green little bud of the rose is in some way like the full-blown fragrant wonder of the blossom. Why did her heart stand still at the voice of this wandering preacher? She had heard many preachers in many lands: had sat at the feet of Hindu *jogis* in India, had listened to discourses on the Mahayana in Tokio, had gazed into the eyes of an enthusiastic Mahometan as he talked of the power of Allah, had heard the voice of the greatest religious potentate of the world. Yet she trembled at the voice of a wandering preacher in the little provincial town of her birth. Strange!

Moved by something deeper than curiosity, she joined the spellbound group around the speaker, with a proud grace which made the people give place to her until she stood but a few feet away from the man to whom they were listening. Then she raised her eyes. . . . It was Jesse.

At first she had no idea of what he was saying. She only saw him, and heard the strange, sweet voice rising and thrilling and deepening with the fervour of his feeling. He had been beautiful in the days of his youth, more beautiful still in his early manhood; but since those forty days on the mountain his face had assumed a look for which there is no name in the vocabulary of men.

Did he see and recognise her? If so, he gave no sign. In the exaltation of his discourse, the woman who had joined the throng about him was only one of the leaves in the great forest of human souls which he was sent to save

from the withering breath of spiritual drought. From the bewildering sweetness of his voice her mind began to disentangle the threads of thought—of speech.

"When the soul serves the animal in man, great is the degradation; but when the animal in man is servant of the soul, undreamed of is the power that waits on both.

"Whatever the soul lends to the body, it should demand again—with usury.

"There is one Spirit, but there are many bodies. . . . Consider this.

"Grieve not for the absence of those who are dead, nor for the deeds of those who are living. The Spirit is one, and can never die, and the deeds of man cannot prevail against It—which is yourself.

"Do you fear death and dissolution? That which the fire cannot burn, nor the air corrupt, nor the waters dissolve, nor the earth bury out of sight, *That you are.*

"Be not disturbed by any passing event. Shall not the Eternal prevail over the accidents of time? and are not you eternal?

"He that is the same in pain and pleasure, want and plenty, success and failure, honour and dishonour, is greater than he that is praised by a nation.

"As many stars as there are in the limitless sky, so many ages of bliss are there for the free spirit. Therefore, seek spiritual freedom.

"Until you are master of the outer senses, the inner senses will not serve you—the inner hearing and the inner sight. These are royal servitors, and they never answer to the call of slaves.

"When a man has sacrificed the pleasures of sensation, he lives in the embrace of the Eternal Friend."

What subtle power was there in the words of this man that those who listened should so hang upon his breath? What was there in his presence that when he ceased to speak made men and women gather round him fascinated, held by an invisible chain, unable to turn and go about the business of their lives?

Mary Magnus was not among those who pressed forward to have speech with him when he had ended his sermon. Instead, she turned and began to walk rapidly away; but a sudden dizziness overcame her, and she was

obliged to hail a passing cab—one of the few in the little city—and fell half-fainting into the seclusion of its musty interior. At home again, she locked the door of her bedroom and gave vent to her complex emotions in a flood of tears.

“Why am I weeping?” she asked herself, at every ebb of the rhythmic tide of grief. “What was there in his words or in himself that should so shake the foundations of my soul? His sermon was not meant for me, any more than for those others who listened to him, holding their breath. It was nearly over when I came; it would have been the same had I remained away—surely it would have been the same.”

Certain of his sayings were burnt upon her brain: “Whatever the soul lends to the body, it should demand again—with usury. . . . Until you are master of the outer senses, the inner senses will not serve you—the inner hearing and the inner sight. These are royal servitors, and they never answer to the call of slaves. . . . When a man has sacrificed the pleasures of sensation, he lives in the embrace of the Eternal Friend.”

Her tears flowed afresh. The memory of that wild letter she had written to him from California ten years before, came back to her with a sudden rush of shame. Had he ever received it? Oh, of course, of course! Such letters never go astray, those we would give our lives to recall. But why should she wish it unwritten? Why should she wish him to know her less than utterly,—he who was so great, so kind, so calm!

“Whatever the mind lends to the body, it should demand again—with usury.” Oh, she had lent much to her body! Suppose her soul should demand it all again—with the usurious interest of devotion to some transcendent faith? Could Jesse give her that faith?

During the last year of her wandering, an old friend in Burlington had written to her of the Hermit whose austerities and prophecies had been the talk of everybody in that region, written to her of the promised coming of some extraordinary being who should change the hearts of men. Suddenly it flashed upon her that Jesse was the one whose coming had been foretold. She remembered strange sayings of his in early life, remembered the night in the draw-

ing-room downstairs when in a rush of confidence, freed by her sympathy from the trammels of self-restraint, he had spoken of things she did not understand—of the lonely mountain and the iron face of the Law, of the empty mansion of the world's desire, of the slippery ladder leading to real and immortal joys, of the adoration of the people when he had achieved the height. And she recalled that other night in the moonlit garden, when he had said to her: "It is only the man who can live without love who shall show the world a better way of loving."

But the inevitable *other side* of every thought, the opposite pole of every force, now claimed its turn with her. Why should she pledge herself, her warm and beautiful womanhood, to an austere ideal which after all might be only a sublime illusion? The world was hers and the fulness thereof. She was free, and rich, and happy. When Asia beckoned, she could answer, "I am coming"; to the call of dream-garlanded Europe her glad response could never be questioned; the whisper of the Indian Ocean could bring her to its bosom whenever she desired its warm caress. She had paid the price of freedom, the full market-price, and she hugged it to her bosom. What madness to relinquish a veritable jewel for an immaterial ray of light, however beautiful!

Her thoughts were interrupted by a tapping on the door of the bedroom. It was Nannie, her old servant, to announce that dinner was served. As the house had been deserted by its mistress for three years, there was no servant but the faithful old woman who had been her mother's housekeeper, and a young gardener, Nannie's nephew.

When the coffee was brought on the table, Mary said:

"Nannie, do you know anything about a young preacher who holds meetings in the park?"

"Yes, Miss Mary."

"How long has he been here?"

"Only a few days; but everybody is talking about him. They declare that he is the fulfilment of the prophecies of John the Hermit. He says strange things, Miss Mary."

"Yes, I heard him this afternoon. Where does he live?"

Nannie mentioned a street of small houses on the edge of the town.

"With whom does he live there?" her mistress questioned further.

"The Brown family."

"Thank you. That is all, Nannie."

But the old woman lingered around the door, straightened a chair, and found something to do at the sideboard.

"Well, Nannie?"

"I hope you won't be offended, Miss Mary; but my nephew and I joined the people of the new religion only yesterday."

"Why should I be offended? Indeed, I am glad, and I hope the new faith may make you both happy."

"Thank you, Miss Mary." And she went back to the kitchen, wiping her old eyes on the corner of her apron.

Mary went upstairs to her father's library and walked aimlessly among the ghostly volumes. In that very chair Jesse had sat, eleven years before, on the night when she brought him to her father. Great Herman Magnus! The daughter's eyes were wet. *He* had recognised the power and poetry of Jesse Bethel, when the tree of that young life was hardly more than a sapling. He had never been afraid, her triumphant father, of the weak judgments of a misunderstanding world. He had made his way against race prejudice, had married an American of malleable character and educated her to the duties of a dignified position, had made for himself a great place in the small state of his adoption. But he had never understood his own daughter. Though she had given her confidence to no one save in that wild letter to Jesse years before, vague rumours were afloat regarding her strange friendships with more than one distinguished man; but it would have been a bold person who should have dared to repeat those rumours to Herman Magnus.

As she sat there in the library, a telegram was brought to her, reading:

"Shall I come to Vergennes, or will you come to New York?"

"V. L."

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Taking a blank from the messenger, she wrote her answer:

"Do not come. I will write. M. M."

Then she went to her bedroom. And the night-watchman, making his solitary round at three o'clock in the morning, saw a light still burning in her window.

CHAPTER XXXVI

JESSE and his companions were sitting quietly the next morning in the little house on the outskirts of the town. They were still comparatively few in number. The time when thousands were to follow him, when he could find no solitude nor leisure anywhere, was yet to come. That morning he was not preaching, nor even privately instructing his friends. They sat together in the shaded sitting-room in almost silent communion—nine or ten men and several women, their faces shining with the peace of a new faith which hardly one of them could have defined by any word other than the loved name of their leader. Their real belief was in *him*, and the things he taught were mere beautiful accessories to the real and intimate fact of his existence and his love for them.

The boyishly affectionate John sat at the left of Jesse, with one hand clasped in his; Peter was at Jesse's right, and the others sat around the room in a circle, some of them on chairs and hassocks, others cross-legged on the floor, as the furnishing of the house was not on a scale to accommodate even so small a number of guests. The eyes of all were fixed on the radiant head of their teacher, who sat opposite the door on the other side of the room.

Suddenly they saw him rise, his face alight with welcome. Turning in the direction of his glance, they saw standing in the doorway a tall and beautiful woman robed in white. A few residents recognised her as the richest woman in the city; the others knew not who she was.

"Mary!"

He met her in the centre of the room and took both her hands in his. She tried to speak—but could not. The self-possessed woman of the world, she who had many times stood unembarrassed in the presence of a king, was stricken mute, trembling before the majesty of simple faith. She bowed her head, and a tear fell on the tender hand which held hers.

Jesse turned to John.

"Kindly tell them that I wish to have private speech with our sister."

When the door was closed behind the last retiring figure, Jesse led Mary to the chair next his own, the little low rocking-chair where John had sat almost at his master's feet a few moments before.

"I am glad you have come," he said.

She bent quickly and kissed the hand which still held hers.

"I want to be your servant," she breathed, "your disciple."

"You are my sister, whom I have never forgotten all these years."

"Oh, let me be one of the members of this brotherhood of yours, the lowest, the humblest. . . . I who am so unworthy!"

"You wish to learn of me? That is well. The first lesson I teach my children is to love one another: with your great heart, that will be easy for you. And the second thing I teach them is the essential worthiness, the grandeur of their own souls. Your gentle humility will make this also an easy lesson for you, as the height and the depth of the soul are equal. But beware of the pride of humility. . . . Of all the forms of pride it is perhaps the most dangerous, because the most subtle."

"Beautiful friend," she said, and her voice was low with wonder, "where do you *learn* the wisdom your very presence sheds like a perfume? Is all this poetry written on the pages of some book?"

"I no longer read any book," he answered, "save that of my own soul and the souls of men and women."

"Can you read my soul, Jesse?"

"Yes, and more clearly than most, because the globe of mind through which the light of your spirit shines is crystal clear. The minds of most persons are clouded, soiled and partially opaque. How have you kept your mind so pure, Mary?"

"I do not know. I thought . . . I feared . . ." she stammered, crimson with memories. But the steady voice of the teacher went on, as if he were unconscious of her self-accusing thoughts.

"You wish to serve the Spirit? And do you realise what that service means?"

"Teach me."

"It is to forget the limits which separate yourself from other selves; to surrender all personal rights and privileges; to dwell in the quiet and eternal Home of the Spirit wherever you may be; to cry no longer for anything, because in the Spirit you have everything; to be fearless of danger, because nothing can harm the Spirit you know yourself to be, nor cast you out of the universe which is your eternal country; to realise that nothing is really yours until you have given it away; to be as unconscious of the criticism of the world as of the buzzing of flies a thousand miles distant; to seek that wisdom which is incomprehensible; to live by the light of that faith which needs no proof, because it is itself the final proof; to desire no power save only that of worshipping the Spirit with such intensity as shall command response; to adore invisible Beauty until the very passion of your adoration gives it form and colour; to see in every material appearance but the shadow of the immaterial Reality which will never appear; fearlessly as a little child to place your hand in the hand of heavenly Pity, and go with her through all the dungeons and evil places of the world and the human heart, singing there of the purity which is unsoilable; to realise that the only possessions which can never be taken from you are those which have no weight, no form, no value in the eyes of the selfish world. . . . This is to serve the Spirit, Mary. Are you ready?"

"I am ready."

"And do you know what the Spirit is?"

"I feel—I believe it is God."

"And what is God?"

"Tell me, Jesse."

"God is the Spirit and God is the Self, immortal, limitless, without beginning or end, knowing the universe as the singer knows his song, loving the universe as the mother loves her babe, as the lover the beloved. God is the Spiritual Sun, giving light and warmth to all; God is the Spiritual Moon reflected in all the separate drops that are human souls. The consciousness of God is the

consciousness of unity. Would you realise that consciousness? You who know the ecstasy of the union of *two* loving beings, imagine the inconceivable intensity of the unity of millions . . . billions. . . . *That* is the consciousness of God."

But in the overpowering greatness and nearness of the thought, Mary had lost consciousness.

Bending over her, with a potent word he called her spirit back to the bewildered mind it had escaped in the rush of cosmic emotion. With a touch of his finger on her brow he cleared away the mists that enveloped her. Then gently, lovingly, he further explained the meaning of the great decision she had made.

"In giving yourself to my cause, you cannot be certain of remaining always near me. It may be that I shall send you out alone among uncongenial and scoffing people, to testify of me and of my faith. And even though you should remain with me, it may be that you and I will never again have speech alone together. I do not belong to myself, but to the Spirit whose instrument I am. The friends whom you have known in the past will not follow you across the frontiers of the spiritual country. In this democracy of faith to which you pledge allegiance, those who will be nearest you are humble persons—ignorant women, men with calloused hands, artisans, tillers of the soil. You will need always to guard your speech, that their simplicity may not misunderstand your complexity; sometimes you will need to share the household labours of the women, that your flower-like hands may not be a barrier between their hearts and yours; even the servants in your own employ will call you sister, as they joined our brotherhood before you came. Are you still sure you can be one with us?"

"I am still sure."

"So be it, then. You are sealed for ever as my friend and helper in the spiritual harvest-field. Now I will make you known to your fellow-workers."

He opened the door and called them all back into the room—the little band of simple and faithful souls who were pledged to him and to each other. He named her to them as "Sister Mary Magnus," and she gave her hand to the

men in token of fraternity, and kissed the women on the cheek. A great wave of happiness rushed over her. They were less than a score of souls, yet they seemed to have the power of thousands, an overwhelming, cumulative power that in its onrush through the world would sweep caste, selfishness and falsehood before it like barriers of sand.

With a voice which thrilled the hearts of all these new-found friends, Mary spoke to them of a plan which had been growing in her mind since the night before.

"This little house," she said, "pleasant and homelike though it seems, is too small to hold so large a company. Now I have a great empty house with room enough for everyone. Will you not all come and live with me?"

This was more than even Jesse had expected of the daughter of Herman Magnus.

"Those of us who have no home in Vergennes," he said, "will go to live in our sister's house for the short time we can remain in this city, and those who have homes of their own will be welcome there at any time of the day or evening."

So it was settled. And within an hour the gossip of Vergennes was set a-buzzing by the sight of Mary Magnus walking through the main street of the town side by side with the extraordinary gold-haired preacher of new doctrines, while behind them came a band of strange-looking persons of both sexes who, judging from the rapt look on their faces, were all oblivious of the curious eyes which followed them.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE whole city came out that afternoon to listen to Jesse's sermon in the park. Many who would have looked askance at the new teacher with headquarters in the little home of the Browns on the outskirts of the town, considered him worthy of their interest when housed in the home of the dead banker. So hungry is the world for spiritual food—when offered on a silver dish! But though Mary Magnus knew the importance of accessories, she dared not hint to Jesse any change in the manner of his ministry; she would as soon have offered advice to a king.

After the sermon, it seemed to her that half the population of the city followed Jesse back to her house. So great was the crowd that he led them around the house into the garden.

"What can they expect of him more than he has already given them?" the bewildered Mary asked of John, who was standing by her side.

"You will see," he answered, with the ecstatic look which shone so often in his eyes.

Jesse sat in large garden-chair under a spreading elm-tree, and the people gathered round, gazing at him and asking him questions. He had spoken that afternoon of the limitless power of the Spirit, of the stupendous potency of faith.

"Even the maladies of the body are subject to the awakened soul," he said to them now. "Is there anyone among you who is sick?"

An old man hobbled forward, leaning on a staff.

"I have been bent with rheumatism for ten years," he said, stretching out his gnarled and yellow arms. "Cure me, and I will believe."

"You must first believe, and then you will be cured."

"I believe in *you*," the old man answered, with vehemence. "Is that enough?"

"That is enough."

Gently as a mother touches an ailing child, Jesse passed his hands over the drawn and painful body of the grand-sire, whose son and daughter stood beside him, watching. They saw a light break gradually over the withered countenance, the knotted arms relaxed, the staff dropped to the ground.

"It's gone, it's gone!" he cried, "the pain—I feel it no more."

"Go home," said Jesse, "and pray to the Spirit, to God, that you may never fall into unbelief."

Then came another, a middle-aged woman, pale and weak from some obscure malady. After he had laid his hands upon her, she cried joyously to the women around her that she was cured.

A child with a sad, pinched face, who was led by his mother to the side of the beautiful stranger and leaned for a time in loving converse against his knee, went away joyously to play with his little comrades, as he had never done before in all his seven painful years of life.

Then Jesse arose from his chair, and dismissing the crowd with a gentle benediction, passed from their sight into the house. Slowly the people dispersed, some talking together in little groups, others silent and awestricken after the things which they had seen and heard.

That night and for many days the strange words and strange cures of Jesse Bethel were the sole subject of discussion in the little city. When two or three men stood together on the corner of the street, the passer-by was sure to hear one name; when women went to visit one another, it was of him they spoke; even the children played at preaching and healing in their little games. Some declared the things which he had done to be incredible; others were aggressive in proclaiming that they had seen with their own eyes the old victim of rheumatism throw aside his staff and walk upright, and seen the pale child grow rosy under the touch of the marvellous man. And so the wonder grew. Already it was beginning to pass from mouth to mouth that Jesse was the one whose coming the Hermit had foretold. Everybody in that region had heard of the prophecies concerning a mysterious being who should transform the world, and a few of the dwellers in Ver-

gennes had seen and heard the austere John in Burlington or elsewhere.

In the house of Mary Magnus everything was changed. The wife of the lumberman in whose home Jesse had rested after his sojourn on the mountain, helped old Nannie in the preparation and service of the meals, while two of the other women kept the large house in order. The room once occupied by Herman Magnus was given up to Jesse's exclusive use, and Mary guarded his solitude in those rare hours when he withdrew himself from those who hung upon his words.

During the first evening there Jesse had written a long letter to his mother, giving her as clear an understanding as possible of what he was doing. The sojourn on the mountain he merely mentioned; but of the preaching and healing which had followed his period of solitude he wrote much. At the end, after referring to a letter of hers which Peter brought up to him from Capronville a few days before, and in which the mother had expressed her sadness that the peaceful days which they had spent together were now to be no more, Jesse said:

"Why mourn for what is past? Do you weep that last night's sunset was so beautiful? Turn to the dawn: it may be that you will not find it void of beauty."

So many were the guests in Mary's house that she even shared her own room with one of the young women, a pale and ecstatic girl who had been a teacher in a neighbouring district school; but who, having heard the first sermon of the new teacher, had abandoned home and profession to remain near the fountain of her inspiration. Anna Martin was her name, and Mary had been interested in her from the first day. She had seen how the eyes of the bashful Andrew of Capronville followed every movement of the girl; how sometimes, even when Jesse was speaking, the young man's thoughts seemed busy with some blissful dream which had no relation to the messenger of the Spirit. But something even more interesting to Mary than a love-story was soon to show her the pale girl's importance in their religious life.

On the second evening after Anna came, Mary found her sitting alone in the twilight of their chamber, writing

with a pencil on a scrap of paper and whispering something over to herself.

"Do I disturb you, Anna?"

The girl started, as if surprised in some guilty secret; she blushed and stammered—then threw her arms about Mary in utter abandon of confidence.

"Oh! do you think he would be pleased—the Master?"

"Be pleased with what, dear child?"

Anna held out the paper, crumpled from the nervous pressure of her hand. "Read it," she said, "and tell me if I may show it to him."

Mary went over to the window, for the waning light was dim. The writing was in the form of verse, and after the first few lines she cried, "Oh, Anna!" then read rapidly to the end.

"You like it?" the girl asked timidly, as Mary raised her eyes from the paper.

"Yes, and you know I have knowledge of such things. Some of the most famous poets in the world are friends of mine." She gazed out of the window, her eyes dreamy with reminiscences; then she asked:

"Where did you learn to write technically good verse? Did you ever know a poet?"

"Oh, no!" Anna was breathless at the very idea.

"Have you ever been away to school anywhere?"

"Only to the high school in Greenburg."

"That is hardly an academy of poetry," Mary answered, smiling, "though I have heard it spoken of as a good school, of its kind. But you surprise me, child! Have you written any other things like this?"

"A few."

"You know I'm something of a musician," Mary went on. "It's no special credit to me, Anna, for I've had some of the best teachers in Europe. I can sing a little, as well as play the piano, and I know *how* to write music, though I don't call myself a composer—not after meeting Grieg and Debussy."

Anna had never heard of Grieg or of Debussy; but the names had a foreign and wonderful sound. She was haltingly smiling with joy when Mary said:

"I'm going to make a song of this."

Having learned that Jesse and the others were in the garden, Mary went down to the drawing-room and closed the doors. Then, for an hour or two, sprays and ripples of music floated upon the evening air. About ten o'clock she went out to the garden and called them all into the house. The eyes of Jesse were large and soft, for he felt the intangible presence of some act of love which was about to manifest its beauty. Anna was pale, but in her eyes shone a light which seemed to the watchful Andrew like the beam of the evening star.

When the others were all seated, Mary stood facing them, with one hand on the top of the grand piano.

"There is only one thing our beautiful life has lacked," she said, "and that is—songs of our very own, songs to express our faith, our love, our joy in the Master and in each other. Sister Anna Martin and I"—here she made a loving little gesture in the girl's direction, and the heart of Andrew beat fast—"Sister Anna Martin and I have made a song together and I will now sing it to you." Then Mary sat down at the piano, and sang:

"When our mild-eyed Master came
From the mountains of the soul,
In his heart God's secret name,
Round his head Love's aureole,
We believed the Dawn had taken
Form of man for our surprise,
And our dreaming souls were shaken
With the signal of his eyes.

"Roses which no time shall fade
He has given us to keep,
And the world his words have made
Lovely as the hills of sleep.
Now, revealed to one another,
We are one since life began,
And the sacred name of brother
We may breathe to every man.

"We have found the faith that gives
Mountain air for every breath,
Fragrant bread for each that lives.
And behind the doors of death

Lurks no dread to make us fear it,
For our souls have found the clime
Where the lilies of the Spirit
Blossom in the winter-time."

With the tears streaming from his eyes, Jesse came forward and clasped both the singer and the poet to his melting heart.

"Oh, my children!" he said, softly, "Love is the master-musician, the master-poet; and the song which gushes from the heart of even a little child will find the child-heart of the listening world. You two shall make songs of faith together, and sing them to the multitudes that gather to hear my sermons; and after you have melted the hard hearts of those thousands with your song, I will turn them to pure gold by the alchemy of the Spirit."

After a little while he called Mary out into the dining-room, that he might have speech alone with her.

"Dear sister with the thrush's voice," he said, "I ask you to arrange that song so that the others may also sing it. men and women, and to teach it to them with loving patience."

"I will do as you say," she answered.

"In the choir of the Spiritual Kingdom," Jesse went on, "each one is a lone singer; but the song of each is blended with the song of all the others, forming the universal harmony. Your voice will carry its clearness over the other voices which follow yours, even as your faith, which is followed by the men and women of your city, soars high above them all."

That was his way of thanking her for the help she had given to his mission at its beginning. Then he led her back to the drawing-room, where the others waited for them.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

JESSE remained only a few days longer in Vergennes, for it was not his plan to confine his teaching to that region. He would return to Capronville; but on the way he would revisit the place where he was born, the unimportant farming section which would ever be for him the most beautiful spot on earth, the green valley consecrated by first memories, and watched over for ever by the blue old Thunder Mountain. How would they receive him—those stolid, unimaginative people who had known him as a child? What would be their interpretation of the motives of his life? He would not take with him to Nashburgh the whole of his ever-growing band of personal followers, for the size of his cousin's house was inadequate for such a large number of guests, and he could not rely on the hospitality of the neighbours. Only Peter and Andrew and John would he take to Jim Bethel's, and Mary should go to her cousin Susie's house with Anna Martin. The others he would send on before him to Capronville, to spread the news of his coming. Judson Carey should be entrusted with the preparation for his first meeting in that town, a mission the dignity of which would reconcile the man to his being omitted from the group going to Nashburgh.

Mary had worked wonders with their choir. She was surprised to find that John had a clear tenor voice which under proper training might even have given him a livelihood. Anna Martin made a passable contralto, though hers was not what Mary called a voice; and there was much happy laughter while they taught the blushing Andrew to carry the bass. Those were care-free and never-to-be-forgotten days, and in the sterner times which followed they often looked back at them with wistful tears.

The last few days in Vergennes passed by, and Jesse had not asked Mary to sing with her new choir at his meetings in the park. Their singing was for the future in other

places, and the delicacy which restrained Jesse from asking Mary to sing in the streets of her native city was one more link in the chain binding her to him. A nature less fine-fibred than his would have considered it a personal triumph to have overcome her natural reluctance, would have made of it a test of her devotion.

"How considerate you are of me!" she said to him on the day before they were to start for Nashburgh. "Do you want me to sing Anna's song with our choir in the park this afternoon?"

"No."

He sat looking at her in silence for a time, and then he said: "If I really doubted your willingness to serve my mission, even at the sacrifice of your personal feelings, I should have asked that very thing of you. There are two kinds of devoted disciples, Mary: those who need to be tried and tested, and those who need only to be trusted. You are among the latter."

"I am so glad you did not ask me to do it!" she cried impulsively.

"Yes, I know, dear sister. But I shall ask you to sing at my meetings in all the other places where you go with me."

"Oh, gladly will I!"

"You may begin at Nashburgh, in the little church where I first heard the preaching of the Word. But," and his voice grew low and sad, "I cannot promise that we shall be received there in a manner worthy of our high calling."

"I remember them so well," she said, "the heavy-footed women and the sharp-eyed men. How could they understand one like you?"

"And yet I love them so!" he whispered. "They were my first companions; we drank together of the same cool spring, played together the same childish games. There is a boy down there for whose sake I did the only action which ever troubled my conscience. Is not that a tie?"

Mary's eyes were large and soft, but she made no answer.

During his last sermon in Vergennes Jesse seemed more

than ever to be inspired. His listeners gazed at him entranced, and many who had not really accepted his teachings wondered if, after all, there might not be something beyond our common humanity in this flaming man around whose form, as around metal heated in the sun-rays, the very light seemed to dance and vibrate. He spoke of the unrealised powers of the human being, and toward the end of his sermon he cried to them:

"Your soul is a bird whose wings are tied that it cannot fly, whose tongue is stopped that it cannot sing.

"He who refuses to see that there is something beyond and behind this self of matter, of flesh and sinew, is like a man imprisoned in a cell bolted on the inside, a prisoner who could be free by merely lifting his hand to the latch, and who not only refuses to lift the hand, but denies that there is any such thing as freedom.

"Only he who desires the unattainable shall know the perfect satisfaction of achievement.

"The highest spiritual ecstasy you can feel in your present state is only a hint of the Reality which lies beyond. Should you fully realise it now, you would cease to identify yourself with the man of flesh.

"I may suggest, but cannot describe, the joy of the free soul. Can you describe a rose to a man born blind? or can a maiden realise the rapture of maternity?

"You would find the Spirit—would find God? Where there is neither light nor darkness, neither man nor woman, neither east nor west, neither above nor below, neither hope nor fear, *there He is.*

"But he who sees God in all beings, and all beings in God, has also found the Spirit.

"And he who shall fully realise that God is everywhere, shall dwell in God wherever he may be.

"Man's only true home is in his own heart, and he carries it inside him, even as a tortoise carries his home outside.

"He who seeks the supreme abode of the Spirit shall find it in the hearts of men and in his own heart.

"Does the way seem hard to you, and the goal far off? How much harder must the way seem to those who do not know there is a goal?

"Does the night seem long to you, and the sunrise slow

in coming? Blind men there are whose night is a generation long, and who do not even watch for the sunrise.

"Give some men wings, and they would have only an added burden on the back, instead of the means of flight.

"He who has faith in the Spirit will not be discouraged by the shifting appearances of matter.

"In you is the God who shall answer your own prayer.

"He who has really found himself has discovered a fountain from which all other men may drink.

"Do you seem to yourself to go backward? Sometimes the soul grows most when the mind is unconscious of its growing.

"But having once turned your face toward the Spirit and having started thither, though you afterward turn in some other direction, you will seem to yourself to be going away from home.

"First make clean the mind, for the mind is the vehicle of the soul, the soul is the vehicle of the spirit, and the spirit is the vehicle of *That* which you are and which God is.

"Will you not enter into your divine inheritance? O you who are one with *That* which is both within and without matter; *That* which shall never taste of death; *That* which is more powerful than electricity, more enduring than the stars, more loving than the sun which warms the earth; *That* which germinates in the corn, which sighs in the wind, which smiles in the sunlight; *That* which the mother feels in the heartbeat of her child, which the lover sees in the eyes of the beloved, which the dying soldier hears in the bugles of victory; *That* which man calls God!"

The exaltation of his vision on the mountain was with him that afternoon, and all who came within the radius of his presence were lifted out of themselves. The wildest enthusiasm was loosed among them; the self-restraint of their northern blood was melted in the spiritual fire emanating from him, and the more emotional ones abandoned themselves to the waves of feeling that surged and rocked around this being who seemed to be of another world than theirs. Many men and women he healed that afternoon of their diseases, for the faith he had stirred in them performed the good work almost of itself.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THEY left the train at the station north of Nashburgh, Jesse and the five whom he had selected as companions on this journey to his native valley. It was his wish that they should arrive unheralded at the house of his cousin, Jim Bethel. As that house lay on the border of Nashburgh, midway between the two railway-stations, by leaving the train at Dellville they avoided passing the houses of the neighbours. The station was two miles from their destination, and Jesse asked the two women if they could walk that distance along the sandy country road.

"I have climbed the Matterhorn," was Mary's convincing answer.

Anna was a farmer's daughter, and Vermont farmers' daughters never walk; but she declared her willingness to try.

"If you grow weary by the way," said Jesse, "you may lean on Andrew."

O potent words, spoken half playfully! O understanding heart of their master! The young man and the girl blushed deeply and took opposite sides of the road without daring to look at each other; but in the soul of each the bird of joy sang as never sang the hermit-thrush, for they interpreted his message to their hearts as meaning that they might dream of one another without disloyalty to the cause for which they would even now have sacrificed all hope of earthly happiness. And they were not misled in their belief. For where should bloom the white rose of virgin love, if not in the garden watched over by him who loved the whole world better than any lesser being could love the one supreme and chosen companion of his soul? But he had yet to teach them the master-lesson of love, the lesson of voluntary postponement, for the service of the Ideal.

John was like a child in his joy at visiting the place of Jesse's birth.

"Do we pass your old home on this road?" he asked, with breathless interest.

"No, I was born in a house on the West Road; my cousin lives at the very edge of Nashburgh, on the other side. But to-morrow morning I will take all of you to stand in the room where the light first shone upon my face; to touch the rose-bushes in whose moon-shadow I believed that I saw fairies; to sit under the old lightning-scarred pine-tree which was the comfort-whispering confidant of the secret griefs of my child-heart. You shall drink the water from the old well in whose black deeps the mystery of reflected things first roused my mind to wonder; you shall enter the old barn in whose resounding interior I first addressed imaginary multitudes on the newly-discovered problems of life and death."

"The old barn will be more wonderful to me than the Colosseum," John said, "and maybe it will be the same to generations yet unborn."

"Before that time," Jesse answered, "the hand of thrift will have used the old timbers for fire-wood; the very stones of its foundation will go to make a sheep-barn for the man who hates me, the man who now owns the place."

"How can you possibly know that?" asked Peter; then, correcting himself, he added, "Pardon me, Master, I believe that you know all things."

"Return to Nashburgh a few years hence, Peter, and behold the verification of this prophecy."

"Shall you be with me, when I return?"

"I shall always be with you, whether visibly or invisibly." His eyes had suddenly become wide and grave, and all the bright colour had gone out of his face.

"What is it, Master?" they asked, with anxious looks.

"It is nothing that need trouble you now," he replied. "The power to behold the future by a clearer light than that of ordinary reason is a boon which does not always bring happiness to man. But let us talk of the present. Is it not a joy for us, who love each other with a pure and perfect love, to walk together along this beautiful road; to behold in the distance the blue mountains which spoke to my soul as a child? And is it not fitting that I should re-enter the neighbourhood of my birth on foot, followed

by my faithful friends? It is thus that pilgrims visit holy places."

A little farther along the road, John, who was walking arm in arm with Jesse, slackened his pace that they might fall behind the others.

"You wish to have private speech with me. Is it not so, John?"

"Yes, Master, to ask a question. May I?"

"Anything you will."

"It is about Judson. Why is he not with us?"

"Because I gave him an important mission, to prepare the way for us to return to Capronville."

"Is that the only reason?"

"It is not the only reason. When you were a little one at school they gave you simple lessons in addition and subtraction, not complicated problems in geometry which would have puzzled and discouraged you. Our brother Judson is still a little one, so I give him simple lessons in addition and subtraction; the geometrical problems of my reception by my fellow townsmen might puzzle and discourage him."

"How wise you are! But Judson was grieved."

"His grief will turn to joy when I thank him for the labours he will faithfully perform. I have already observed his skill in addition; he brought many strangers to our meetings in Vergennes. But I charge you not to repeat to anyone what I have said to you. Now you may call to the others to wait for us; and when we rejoin them, remove your arm from mine, that I may walk side by side with Peter for a while. The tenderest mutual love has often need to borrow from its provident brother—wisdom."

"I understand," John whispered, with a quick pressure of Jesse's arm as he relinquished it. "The price of the king's favour may be the envy of the court."

"And he who wins the favour of the Spirit must share it freely with all the world. You may be nearer to me when I lean upon the arm of Peter than when you lean on mine."

Over the trees they saw smoke rising from a chimney, and by the smile which lighted Jesse's face the five knew that they were nearing his cousin's house. They paused a moment before an open gate, and down the path from the

long white dwelling came a collie dog, wagging a shy and friendly tail. There was no person in sight.

"Shall Anna and I go on to Susie's house now?" Mary asked, glancing at a brown cottage a few rods further along the road.

"Yes," replied Jesse, after a moment's thought, "and I will send Andrew over after you when Jim's wife has recovered from the surprise of our arrival."

There was in his voice a boyish eagerness which made the old forbidden pain surge back to Mary's heart. When the sublime master of her reverence displayed his simpler and more human qualities, the task she had set herself became a giant's labour; the path of her discipleship wound steeply up the rocky hill, of whose sharp acclivity one being only knew besides herself, and of which no being ever spoke.

Followed by Peter, John and Andrew, and preceded by the friendly, leaping dog, Jesse went up the path to his cousin's house and rapped on the casing of the open door. There was a sound of steps in the room at the end of the passage, an exchange of muffled words; then a tall man in the working-garments of a farmer appeared at the hospitably inviting door. A silent look, a start of recognition, and the two loyal kinsmen clasped hands across the years.

"Jesse! Is it really you?"

"Yes, it is really I, and I have brought three friends with me." He mentioned them by their full names, and the welcome they received was genuine. In another moment they were all in the cool grey sitting-room, and Jim's wife was adding her shy welcome to the noisier repetition of her husband's.

"We've heard of your preaching up north," Jim declared, in his hoarse, kindly voice. "Some of the trainmen told the station-master here, and everybody knows about it. They do say, too, that you've been curing sick folks by only touching them. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't recalled what you did to that wild horse of Taylor's years ago. Do you remember, Jesse?"

"I remember."

"And it's all true?"

"It is all true, Jim."

Then the steadfast, clear-eyed Peter, whose words even a stranger had never disbelieved, testified to his master's kinsman of the extraordinary things which he had seen and heard. He told of their first journey from Capronville to Burlington, of their baptism by the Hermit and of the prophet's words regarding Jesse, of the mysterious forty days upon the mountain, of Jesse's return to Burlington with the glory of heaven in his face, of the preaching in Vergennes, the triumph, the multitudes, the miraculous cures.

"And we have left our business and our homes to follow him," declared Peter, "because he has the word of spiritual truth which lifts our hearts."

The eyes of the listening man and woman grew wider during this recital of faith in mighty works. Could such things be? Could one whom they had known as a child so elevate himself? Granted that a man might somewhere in the world perform these wonders; but could they be done in Vermont, and by Jim Bethel's cousin? In India, now, or Egypt, or any of the other far-off places Jim had learned about in the old geography-book—but in Vermont! Something of these ideas he managed to express in his slow way.

Jesse said: "Does God, then, so despise your native State that He would scorn to manifest Himself within its borders?"

"I never thought of that," the puzzled fellow answered. "But it does seem very mysterious."

"So is the birth and nourishment of every blade of grass on your broad acres," replied Jesse; "so is the shining of the stars that light your barnyard on a winter night. Yet God performs these wonders. Could He not also send a messenger with the word of truth—even to Vermont?"

"You have a way of putting things which makes a man believe against his will."

"So long as you believe," smiled Jesse, "I care not though it be against your will."

"And you do believe!" cried the zealous Peter, eager for new converts. "You even now believe!"

"If I could only see with my own eyes some of these strange things, perhaps——"

Jesse raised his hand as a signal for silence and attention, and they looked at him in breathless expectation, feeling that something extraordinary was about to happen. He closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them, clear and blue, upon their questioning gaze.

"In the room directly above this room in which we sit," he said, "is an old mahogany table. It was not there when I was last in this house, eleven years ago." He paused, and looked at Jim's wife. "Is it not so?"

"Yes, my father's writing-table, which I brought with me from New Hampshire after his death," she answered, in a low voice that quivered with suppressed excitement. "It stood at the head of his bed, and no one was ever allowed to use it but himself."

"Yes, your father's writing-table. It has a shallow drawer, in which he kept his papers. All this you know. But you do not know that by pressing a nail on the left side of the false-bottom of that shallow drawer, a sliding panel will be released. You were surprised that your father left so little money for his only child. Go up now, and claim your inheritance."

Without a word the husband and wife rushed upstairs. Jesse had not even risen from his chair, but the three men from Capronville were walking excitedly about the room. Suddenly they heard a cry from the floor above. The men turned triumphantly to Jesse, saying, "They have found it! They have found it!" But he answered them, with a sad smile:

"You told them of the words of immortal life, and they would not believe. You told them of the testimony of the inspired Hermit, of the multitudes awakened by the Spirit, of the comforting of the sad, the healing of the sick; still they would not believe. I tell them of a store of hidden wealth, revealed to me by that simple clairvoyance which is the stock-in-trade of many common charlatans, and now—they will believe. O my friends! How few there are, even among those who shall profess their faith in the Spirit, who shall really breathe the air of the spiritual mountain."

A moment later Jim and Eva Bethel, having satisfied themselves as to the contents of the secret drawer, were

overwhelming Jesse with their thanks and protestations of unshakeable belief in everything that he should ever say or do. They were richer by three government bonds of one thousand dollars each, and some five hundred dollars in currency. The sadness that had lain upon the heart of Jesse passed from him, and he enjoyed their gladness with them. In the first flush of gratitude, they even offered him a portion of the money; but he said:

"The Spirit that I follow has given me riches beyond your understanding. I have no need of any earthly thing."

The fire within him shone so clearly at that moment through the pure envelope of his body, that even their dull souls were lighted by reflection. They gazed at him, forgetting their new-found wealth in the sudden glory of his countenance. Finally Jim found voice to say:

"I don't know what it is that makes you different from every other being on God's earth, and I don't know very clearly what you want me to do, or what you expect me to believe; but I am with you from this hour, in word and deed. So help me God!"

Jesse's voice was gentler than the whisper of the summer wind in the pine-trees, as he answered:

"He who shall really claim the help of God to strengthen his belief, shall feel his spirit lifted by invisible wings into the thrilling atmosphere of the new life."

CHAPTER XL

WITHIN an hour or two the news of Jesse's arrival in Nashburgh, and the finding of the hidden fortune through his mysterious powers, had flown from one end to the other of the little district. Jim's farmhand had started the fire of rumour, and it spread hither and thither on the winds of hurried visiting. Women who had not been to see their nearest neighbours for a month put on their hats and went forth. Mrs. Olin Madison heard the news from her husband, who had it from Thomas Taylor, who had it directly from the hired man on Jim's place. Ten minutes later the eldest of the Brown girls, still unmarried, rang the newly-installed electric bell on the Madison front door.

"Come right in, Florence," cried Mrs. Madison, when she caught sight of her. "Of course you've heard the news?"

"Yes; what do you think of it?" Florence Brown never had any well-defined views of her own, but formed her judgments of the value of her fellow beings by the latest quotations of popular opinion.

Mrs. Madison paused a little before answering, to give more weight to her pronouncement. "I think," she said at length, pausing again to adjust a hairpin in her coronet of iron-grey hair, "I think I shall not go far out of my way to seek religious instruction from a young fellow that I fed with sugar-plums when he was in baby dresses."

"I quite understand your feeling," answered Florence; "but they do say he has quite a following in Vergennes. You remember the rich Mary Magnus who used to visit Susie Smith? Well, she is one of the five converts he's brought with him to Nashburgh."

"That may be. But, still, I don't believe that many of the best people go in for that sort of thing. David wrote me from Burlington that Jesse was there with that crazy Hermit, and that their followers were mostly poor people,

many of them quite disreputable. You know that David, having so high a position in the bank there, has to be very careful what sort of people he associates with. I always liked Jesse well enough, and so did David; but you know that in a place like Burlington the bankers and the carpenters don't go in the same society. Of course," she added, with heightened colour, "my own husband is only a farmer; but everything is quite different in a place like this."

"Of course," Florence assented. "But they say he cures people of all kinds of diseases, just by touching them."

"Oh, hysterical women, no doubt, who imagine themselves cured by the presence of a wonderfully handsome young man!"

"Yes; but there were men also, and little children."

Mrs. Madison drew a long breadth and sat very straight in her chair, while her lips tightened into a thin red line. "Of course, it's all very interesting."

Florence was leaning forward, with a flush on her usually pale face. "Did you hear about the bonds and the money he discovered in a drawer upstairs, without moving from his chair in the sitting-room?"

Something half-way between a superior smile and a sneer curled the thin lips of Mrs. Madison. "Of course," she said, "I wouldn't accuse Jesse, or Jim either, whose parents I knew thirty years ago, of making up evidence; but the whole thing looks to me very queer. Thomas Taylor said that nobody really saw the money in the secret drawer except Jim and Eva."

"You really don't think . . ." Florence was beginning to feel that perhaps she had spoken too sympathetically of this new religious teacher, of whom Mrs. Madison apparently disapproved.

"I really have no opinion on the subject," that lady went on, in her deliberate, judicial manner. "David says that no one should ever express an opinion based on insufficient data."

"They say," ventured Florence, "that Jesse and his friends are going to hold a meeting in the church on Sunday morning, the day after to-morrow."

"Are you going?" Mrs. Madison's face was non-committal.

"Why, I don't know. . . . Shall you?"

"Possibly, though I seldom attend the meetings of religious agitators. Still, Jesse was always extremely courteous to me, and I don't know of any reason why I shouldn't go to his meeting."

"I think everybody will go, if only out of curiosity," Florence said, rising and reaching for her parasol.

Mrs. Madison followed her visitor to the door, and as Florence was going down the steps she called after her, with a doubting laugh:

"You might get Jesse to cure your sister Jane's nervous trouble."

While Jesse was being weighed in the petty scales of local gossip at one end of Nashburgh, at the other end he rested in the cool grey sitting-room of Jim's house, surrounded by the five faithful ones and his now grateful kinsfolk. Susie Smith and her brother Stephen were also there, for Eva had sent them an invitation by Andrew to come over to supper. Jim's younger brother, Joe Bethel, had returned from the grist-mill in Wheelerville, where he had gone that morning with a load of grain; and when he saw the illumined face of Jesse and heard the story of the strangely discovered fortune, he lost all power of speech, and sat gazing at his cousin as at some incredibly gigantic being from another planet who had suddenly descended with a shower of meteors upon the dwellers in drowsy Nashburgh.

Mary Magnus was charming to Jim's wife, who thought her the most delightful person she had ever seen—with the sole exception of Jesse. Mary insisted on helping Eva prepare the supper, a very welcome service, as there were plates for twelve at the long table that night. Eva had no way of knowing that the eggs which Mary boiled so deliciously were her first experiment in the culinary art. When the table was almost ready, Mary went out into the old-fashioned flower-garden, and coming back with both hands full of the blue, crimson and white blossoms, she covered the cloth around Jesse's plate with their fra-

grant sweetness, that he might seem to eat from the very cups of flowers.

"Behold," she cried, laughingly, as he came into the dining-room, "the first meal I ever cooked for you!" Then she added, in a murmur for his ears alone,— "the first meal I *ever* cooked."

Thanking her with a tender smile, he loosened eleven blossoms from the half-hundred which wreathed his plate, and passing slowly around the table, laid one flower beside each of the other plates.

"That you may blossom in the Spirit like these flowers," he said to them. It was done with a grave dignity and sweetness that made it seem a mystic ceremony. The flower Mary received from his hand was a white lily, with a heart of gold.

Glancing round the table, Mary wondered who was the twelfth member of their company, a ruddy-faced young man who seemed to be rather uncomfortable in a coat too small for him, worn over a blue cotton shirt without a collar. She whispered to Jim Bethel, who was beside her:

"Who is the young man on the left of your brother?"

"The hired man."

"Oh, yes, of course!"

And the clear eyes of Jesse, watching her, saw no shadow of surprise or prejudice on her peaceful face. In adopting their simple life, she had come to them with no reservations of class superiority, not even that affectation of over-affability which really draws a broader line of demarcation than the haughtiest reserve. It seemed to Jesse as if she were unconscious of any difference between the new life and the old. The perfect tact of the widest social experience, and the self-effacing simplicity of a loving heart, those two extremes which so often resemble each other in externals, were fused in her by the flame of devotion to Jesse. She was not even aware of either, and therein lay the secret of her charm for these sensitive and independent owners of the soil.

It was a delightful meal, that first meal of the wandering community of the Spirit in Nashburgh. Neither John nor Mary had ever seen Jesse appear so simply and humanly happy. Even in the intimacy of their communal meals in

Vergennes, he had always been the Master, removed a little from them by the very greatness which brought them closer to him. But here in the valley of his birth, in the house of those who were akin to him in blood, he seemed, somehow, at a lesser distance from the life of ordinary humanity; not less transcendently himself, but more appealingly like them.

"Is the horse-chestnut still standing on the hill in the middle of the north pasture?" he asked Jim, as Eva passed the bread.

"No, the wind blew it down last year."

"Dear old tree!" Jesse was smiling with reminiscences. "Often have I come over here across-lots to visit Jim and Joe in the early spring, when all the other trees were still in their grey-green nakedness, and turning a corner of the barn I have seen appear before me—like an earth-spirit rising out of the ground to breathe the upper air and warm itself in the sunshine—that white-veiled tree. . . . And the spring flood, Jim; does it still cover the flats over there in April?"

"Yes, Jesse, the flood still rises every spring."

"And so it will for ever; as long as the mountains stand above the marshes, they will send down the water from their melted snows and their spring rains to form a temporary lake around Nashburgh. And generation after generation of growing children will gaze at dawn across the mirror of the flood, and see reflected there the vast, blue, distant mountains, the inaccessible mountains, lying at their very feet; as if a god had left his home on the white horizon and come down to play with them in the valley.

"When I was a child," Jesse went on, "I made up a wonder-story about a Nashburgh boy who loved the mountains so much that he thought of it all day and dreamed of it all night; but no one would ever take him to the mountain. And one lovely April morning, when the flood lay over the marshes beyond his home, the boy's heart leaped with rapture; for there on the blue reflecting surface of the water, only a few rods distant, was his beloved mountain. The white, inaccessible top of it was toward him, reversed by the reflection; and as the wind

passed in little ripples over the surface of the flood, it seemed to the boy that the mountain on the water was waving and beckoning to him. And he thought that if he should take his father's boat, and row out to the spot where the top of the mountain was reflected in the water, when the reflection rose he would rise with it and find himself up there where he had always longed to be. Then he would lay his cheek against the white sky as against his mother's bosom, while the mountain would sing to him over and over for a long time the song he had sometimes heard down in the valley, when the autumn winds blew cold and his father would say, 'The mountain is singing to-night: we shall have a storm to-morrow.' And he would dwell up there an immensity of years, learning all the secret things the mountains whispered to each other in the dark (for the boy was never afraid)—and if, being so near to God up there, he should ever hear Him speak out of the whirlwind, as He spoke to Job, perhaps the boy would go down again to the valley for a little while and tell the people what God said, that they might love each other better, and sometimes look up at the sky without considering the weather.

"With his heart full of these things, the boy went down to the edge of the flood, and loosing the boat moored there, he started to row out to the beckoning mirrored mountain, that he might rise with it when it rose. But with every stroke of the oars which should have brought him nearer to the goal of his dreams, the mountain on the water receded farther and farther away. At last he reached the other shore. The mirrored mountain had gone from the surface of the water, and the real mountain seemed as far away as ever, as blue, as inaccessible.

"The boy sat down on the sodden ground beyond the water, and wept."

No one spoke for a little time; they all sat looking into space, carried beyond themselves by the imagination of the narrator. Then Jim said:

"I guess you were that boy, Jesse."

They had been so absorbed in the story that they had not noticed a tall, thin figure standing in the door of the dining-room. The young man now came forward shyly.

twisting an old cap between his nervous hands. Jesse smiled a radiant welcome.

"Why, Marty! Marty White!"

"I heard—they told me you were here," he stammered, standing beside Jesse, who had turned in his chair to clasp the young man by both his hands.

Jim and Eva added their welcome to Jesse's, and a place was made for Marty at the table, next to his friend. Mary Magnus remembered the poor boy to whom Jesse had given the big red apple, her first offering to him, down in the old schoolhouse twenty years before.

"You were the boy who was bitten by the snake," she laughed. "How well I remember that day!" She said nothing of the tears she had shed that afternoon because Jesse had gone home without bidding her good-bye.

"And you were the lovely little girl who visited the school, and wore such soft white dresses. For years afterward, whenever I heard anyone speak of angels, I always thought of you."

It was said with such naïve sincerity that Mary blushed with pleasure. He did not seem to know that he was paying her a compliment, which made the simple tribute all the more worth while to a woman who had been surfeited with disingenuous flattery.

Marty knew all about Jesse's preaching up north; he had questioned the train-men who brought the news to Nashburgh until they were tired of his insistence, for he made them tell their story over and over again, while he wrote down on scraps of wrapping-paper the sayings of the new teacher which were beginning to be current in men's mouths—sayings Marty only half understood, but which charmed him even as they charmed others. Sitting there at the table beside Jesse, he repeated all that he had heard.

"They tell me you said this, Jesse: 'If you have the courage to examine the recesses of your own nature without fear and without shame, you have found the key which shall unlock for you the doors of eternal safety and honour.'"

"Yes, Marty."

"And this, too: Even the average man who would

measure the greatness of his own soul, or the soul of his brother, needs a tape long enough to reach the stars."

"I said that also."

"And did you say: 'God is the Power, and I am the expression of the Power'?"

"Yes. Do you not feel it to be true?"

"It seems to me it's the truest thing I ever heard. And this also I feel to be true, which they tell me you said: 'There is one Spirit, but there are many bodies.' Is that why you love everyone so much, Jesse? Is that why you've always been so good to me?"

"As the Spirit is one," Jesse answered, "we are really all one being: you and I, these friends of ours, and those others who are not our friends; yes, all the human beings in the world, whether we know them or not, are really a part of ourselves. So why shouldn't we love each other?"

"It's wonderful," said Marty, "and I've been so happy ever since the hour I heard it. I used to be lonesome; but now I'll never be so any more. How can I feel alone, when there are so many of me?"

The impulsive Mary laid her soft hand on the rough brown hand of Marty. Her eyes and voice were gentle.

"You are one of *us*," she breathed.

"I'd like to be—Oh, how I'd like to be!" His eyes were full of tears, and his homely face seemed almost beautiful.

"Henceforth," said Jesse, "you will follow me wherever I go. You are the brother of these faithful ones."

CHAPTER XLI

THE following morning Jesse set out to visit the house of his birth. As the principal road through Nashburgh was formed like a horseshoe, with Jim Bethel's house at one end and Jesse's birthplace at the other, in years gone by a foot-path had been made across-lots, a path worn smooth and grassless by feet which no longer moved across the surface of the earth. From Jim's dooryard, down through a marshy meadow and up a little hill, through a grove of woods and over a rocky pasture, went the narrow, pebbly path, whose every rod was sacred with memories. Wishing to share the enjoyment of this pilgrimage with one who knew the stories of every rock and tree along the way, Jesse had asked Marty to join them early in the morning and make the seventh of the little band of pilgrims.

Strange paradox of this great nature, with its blending of the sweet human and the superhuman! Now in the dawn of the fulfilment of his mission, with the weight of a tremendous destiny upon his shoulders, he carried the burden so easily that he could pause by the wayside to gather the violets of childhood memory. He would preach better on the morrow, would stand more firmly on the isolate height of impersonal prophecy, for this wandering in the valley of personal attachment.

But with all his tender familiarity of association, his unity with these friends in the little ways of daily life, there was always about him that majesty of humility which elevates the great religious teacher above the reach of kings.

Jesse was unusually quiet that morning as they climbed the hill beyond the marshy meadow and entered the woods. The hill seemed not so steep as when he was a boy, the trees seemed not so high; but the mysterious green shadows of the woods had deepened with the deepening of his soul, and the stillness made him still. Marty knew this region

as well as Jesse did, though less intimately; but the delicacy which is often native with those who live near to the earth restrained him from intruding with even a pleasing mutual reminiscence upon the privacy of his friend's thoughts.

When they had gone a little way into the woods, Jesse stood still and raised his arms in ecstatic invocation of that Power which to him was ever consciously near, ever in union with himself. He seemed to have forgotten the presence of the others.

"O Spirit of the universe," he prayed, "father, friend, sustainer and pervader of the souls of all that live! Thou who art in me and around me, whose thought is vibrant in my brain, whose love looks out at me from the eyes of those I love, and enters me with the air I breathe! Thou whose voice speaks to me in the song of yonder bird, and is silent with the loving silence of my companions, I adore Thee, and I am Thy servant!

"Though the world should refuse to receive me—my God is wiser than I. Should the gifts that I bring be thrown back at my feet—my God is more loving than I. Should my labour fail of its harvest—my God is more patient than I."

Something in the spirit of this strange prayer clutched at their hearts and made them afraid. Why did he speak of the world's refusal of him? Was he not to transform the world? What gifts would ever be thrown back at *his* feet? Why, all mankind were waiting for his gifts! How could his labour fail of the harvest? And why should he remind himself of the patience of God? They questioned him and each other with their eyes, but no one dared to speak.

They left the woods and entered the rocky pasture, warm with the summer sun, and cut diagonally across by the immemorial foot-path. Jesse was the only one who walked in the narrow brown line; the others trailed irregularly behind him over the green and yellow grass, clipped short by the grazing cows. He who had never walked in any mental or emotional path made by his predecessors, found an intense pleasure in following this physical path; it seemed to prove his claim upon the region of his birth.

to establish a tie between himself and the past and present of its inhabitants. Whoever he might be, whatever he might become, his life, his thoughts, were indissolubly twined with the path which crossed Taylor's pasture. Strange that it should be Taylor's; stranger still that the old house they were going to was now Taylor's also. In former days the pasture had been Smith's pasture, and the house had been his father's house. But the mere ownership of portions of the earth's surface had never been a matter of much importance to Jesse; the pasture really belonged to him who loved it most, and so did the old grey house, and all the other beautiful things in the world.

Suddenly an unwelcome thought crossed his mind. He turned to Marty and asked:

"Is anyone living there now?"

"Yes, a family from Wheelerville. The man works on the railroad-track."

So he was not to have the freedom of the empty place, after all! Some sordid story of the present was written over the ideal shadow-poem of the past—a palimpsest he must decipher as best he could.

"The house has been empty most of the time for the last few years," Marty went on. "Taylor has let the place run down so that nobody wants to live in it, if they can find any other house. The orchard is half eaten up by worms, and your mother's old flower-garden has been spoiled by Taylor's sheep; for he uses the dooryard as a pasture when he isn't able to let the house."

Jesse made no answer. He was thinking of the fairy play-ground under the rose-bushes—now desecrated by small cattle; thinking of the mystic grove where he had dreamed in the moonlit evenings—now "half eaten up by worms."

They came to the bars on the west side of the pasture, and Andrew let them down for the women to pass through. There they had their first glimpse of the old blue-grey house and the orchard. Jesse gazed across the intervening twenty rods of space, gazed across the intervening years. He had thought of his childhood's home as a rather large house; but this seemed to be a small house, low-roofed, and narrow as the life of Nashburgh. Then, too, its pro-

portions were inharmonious; and he now realised that the beauty he had seen about it all these years was but the glamour of his early dreams.

From where they stood at Taylor's bars the land sloped gradually down to the West Road, then rose less gradually to the level of his old home. A few yards to the left of the bars stood "the ghost house," shaded and made gloomy by its now overgrown hedge of cedar-trees. This shelter of vagrant and occasional families had been given its name by the ten-year-old Jesse, because of the strange way in which the light used to fall whitely on the glass of its usually empty windows. In this house he and his mother had once nursed a whole family of unfortunates through the horrors of black diphtheria, nursed them into the peace of hurried charity graves. No one else, except the doctor and the nervous undertaker, would come near the place. But Jesse and his mother were untouched by the disease, for diphtheria, like calumny, respects those who have no fear of it.

At the foot of the hill, beside the road, was the old well. There was no pump, and Jesse raised the wooden cover and looked down—down—to where his head was reflected in the black water, twenty feet below the surface.

"Oh, I would like to drink from the well!" cried Mary; and Andrew went up to the house to borrow a pail, and the rope with a hook at one end which was their primitive means of drawing water.

When the brimming pail was placed at his feet, Jesse filled a cup and gave it to Mary, saying:

"That you may quench your thirst for ever with the water from my well."

Then he gave the others to drink.

"Though Mary was the first to ask for it," he said, "the water is for all, and the well is deep." He always delighted in playing upon words, though often the duller wits around him did not grasp his meaning.

The wide gate was open, and they went up the road to the house, where a group of ragged children stood around the door, staring open-mouthed at the strangers.

A care-worn woman came out at the call of the children,

and asked rather gruffly what they wanted. She was trying to do her Saturday baking, and the mouths in her charge were many.

Jesse's smile was like sudden sunshine breaking through the clouds of her hopeless gloom. With that sweet courtesy which would have opened for him the doors of a palace had he cared to enter a palace, he asked this frowsy drudge if he might show his friends the house in which he was born.

For a moment the woman looked at him, without a word. No one had ever spoken to her in that way before. An unaccustomed dignity now straightened her slatternly figure, and a flush rose to her cheek.

"The house ain't over-clean," she murmured.

"So many little mouths to feed do not leave the mother much leisure," he answered, as they passed into the untidy kitchen.

Jesse led his companions to the broken west window, and pointed to the long line of purple and yellow marshes beyond the railroad, fifty rods away.

"This," he said, "is the lonely world my mother gazed at every day during the long months before I was born. Oppressed by the material nothingness, she was forced to find a spiritual something to respond to the yearning of her soul."

"Do you mean yourself?" asked Peter, to whom the clearness of an idea was more than the poetry of its expression.

"I mean the love that brought me into being—the love of the Spirit for the human soul."

He turned away from the window and went into an adjoining room, followed by his friends, and by the house-mother with her brood of children.

"This is where I slept for eighteen years," he said.

He did not linger there, but passed through a bare little entry, through another room littered with untidy beds and bedding, and thence into a smaller room at the north end of the house—a room absolutely empty. The needs of a numerous family had not intruded here; instinctively the casual guardians of the memorable place had kept sacred this bare altar in the midst of desecration. The six

who came with Jesse knew the meaning of his silence. This was the Room of Birth! These narrow walls had listened to the first sound of that voice whose words would reverberate through the chambers of human consciousness. Through that one little window facing east, the light of day had discovered him.

Mary and John moved forward to the window, that the rays of the morning sun might fall upon them. Each read the other's thought, but neither could speak. These two who loved their teacher most had many beautiful secrets in common. They were roused from their reverie by the touch of Jesse's hand.

"Will you ask them all to go out, and leave me a little while alone?"

He closed the door softly behind them. The air was heavy in the Room of Birth, even as the atmosphere of the world into which he was born was not pure enough for him. He raised the window, and fastened it with the very nail on the end of a cotton string which had been there when he was a child. Turning his back to the light, he contemplated the small square space, hallowed with vast meanings. To him it was a symbol of the narrow room of material existence, of the world-life into which he had been born, from which he had escaped on the mountain of enlightenment, and to which he had voluntarily returned for the great purposes of his mission. This little room seemed far from the mountain of enlightenment; but he had found his way unaided from the one to the other. Could the human race he loved find that long way, even with his aid?

The immortal Spirit, that was himself, had in this room taken on the vesture of mortality. It seemed to Jesse that here in Nashburgh he was plunged more deeply into matter than in any other place; that the wings of the Spirit drooped ever so little. He now saw the reason why: The Spirit, elsewhere free, was here reminded of its incarnation.

He closed the window, refastening it with the old nail; then he rejoined his friends in the dooryard. But the rose-bushes he had promised to show them were now no more, the grape-vines were no more, the blue and the white

lilies were no more. The orchard where the worms foregathered he had no wish to visit.

When Jesse turned to say good-bye to the tired-faced woman who baked her bread in his mother's kitchen, he noticed an unhealthy-looking child lying on a pillow in a rough wooden box, placed in the shade of a maple-tree. It seemed to be about two years old; its face was flushed with fever, and its thin arms tossed restlessly. Seeing the sympathy in the eyes of the stranger, the mother bent over the rude crib and tenderly smoothed the forehead of the child.

"I don't know what's the matter with him," she said. "I'd send for the doctor, if I had anybody to send, but the nearest one is seven miles away. He was taken sick yesterday morning, wouldn't eat, and all last night he moaned and tossed about so that I didn't get any sleep, and he hasn't slept all day, either. Do you think, sir, he's very sick?"

Jesse bent over the child. He took the hot little restless arms and laid them gently at the sides of the hot little restless body; he straightened the tangled clothing, closed the child's eyes, and drew the mosquito-netting over the top of the box. The mother watched. Her face had grown pale.

"Why, the boy's asleep!" she whispered, gazing round at the little group with astonished eyes.

"He will sleep until five o'clock," said Jesse, "then he will wake of his own accord. You may give him a bowl of mush and milk, let him play about a little, and put him to bed again at eight o'clock. To-morrow he will be as well as ever—better than ever, for I see that he has not been a very healthy child."

The eyes of the mother grew wider and wider.

"When the shade of the tree moves around," Jesse continued, "you may move the crib toward the other side. Do not fear that you will disturb the child; he will not wake until five o'clock. But leave him in the open air."

The eyes of the mother now filled with tears, and Jesse took both her hands in his gentle clasp. Then she found her voice to thank him, looking up into his face as at some wonderful and sacred thing.

"Love is the great physician," he said to her. "Be at peace, my sister." Then he turned toward the old grey barn, followed by his friends.

Mary Magnus lingered a moment with the mother of the child. She had taken something from a little purse at her belt, and pressed it into the woman's hand.

"Whomever *he* calls sister is *my* sister. Will you not take a little gift from me?"

When the woman saw the figures on the yellow-backed paper, she gasped. But the New England independence restrained her. She looked wistfully from the money to the beautiful woman who had given it.

"We're not so very poor," she said, "my husband makes good wages."

"But it's for the children," Mary smiled at her. "Those little feet wear out shoes so fast, and the little mouths enjoy beefsteak and broth and other good things. I haven't forgotten when I was a child."

"Who is *he*?" the woman asked. "Is he your brother?"

"He is the brother of all the world."

"He has cured my child, I *feel* that he has cured my child."

"He cured me also," Mary answered, "and of far more grievous things than summer fevers."

"Shall I never see him again?" The woman's eyes were wistful.

Mary replied to her question by asking another: "Have you a horse?"

"Yes." She pointed to the spavined old mare tied by a rope to a tree in the scrubby orchard north of the house.

"Then come to-morrow morning to the little Nashburgh church. He will preach there."

"Then he's a preacher? Why, I thought he was a doctor!"

"He is the doctor of both the soul and the body. I shall expect to see you at the church to-morrow morning—with the little one whom he cured."

Then Mary walked quickly over the grass to join her friends in the old barn, where years before Jesse had first tried the power of his voice among the reverberating raft-

ers. The rafters were still there, inviting reverberations; but Jesse did not raise his voice above a murmur. There was little hay in the barn now, and the spavined old mare was wise to browse in the orchard during the summer days, reserving this meagre store of provisions for the melancholy days to come.

Andrew had discovered an immense wasps' nest high up under the ridge-pole, and pointed it out to Anna. His shy and reverent love, always burning to call attention to itself, was so very shy and reverent that it left him only the courage to approach her on impersonal subjects, to call her attention to such things as sunsets and wasps' nests. Had she but hinted a desire for this marvel of the constructive art of the dangerous insect, he would have offered to scale the thirty-foot perpendicular west wall of the barn to get it for her; had she expressed a desire for the sunset, he would have made ready for the quest—provided always that it should not take him away from Jesse. In this case the divided allegiance was better than the single eye; for he could not have revered Anna so much had he not revered Jesse more. That she was also *his* disciple threw the aureole of infinity around her finite womanhood.

"It's beautiful to see how all winged things aspire, in building their homes high up," said Anna, referring to the position of the wasps' nest.

Andrew knew of birds that built their nests on the ground, but it would have seemed profane to refer to them at that moment.

"Even human beings," he said, "build high—when they love."

"That is because their souls are winged, too," she answered, with a pretty blush.

They did not linger in the barn, but set out across the pasture for Jesse's pine-tree, the witness of his childhood's tears, the confidant of his youth. Lonely and solemn the tree stood, its dark form outlined against the sky and the marshes. Of all the trees on the earth's surface, this would ever be for him *The Tree*; but how could he make his companions understand? Long ago he had come to realise that while his life was a type of the life of mankind on its long journey, yet in him all the human feelings and

perceptions were many times magnified; that his life was the life of man, raised to a higher power. And a great loneliness now overwhelmed him—the loneliness of him whose thoughts are beyond the comprehension of those he loves. Even the old pine-tree could not sympathise with him any longer, for his present joy and grief were beyond the ken of mindless Nature.

And to-morrow he must stand up in his native town, before a crowd of camp-followers of the army of materialism, and try to make them feel the beauty of the immanent Spirit. Had he descended from the clouds, had he come from some remote region of the earth with the glamour of the unknown around him, then the very flame of their curiosity might have lighted the viscid oil in their souls' lamps. But, as it was, he would ever be to them but the son of a fellow camp-follower in the material army. Should he tell them of the mountain of illumination, whose height was really farther from them than were the peaks of the Himalayas, they would place that height on the mountains east of Burlington, and mock at the presumption of one of Nashburgh's sons in thinking to instruct the fathers of Nashburgh.

To-day there was no communion between his soul and the soul of the pine-tree; the wind that whispered through its ancient branches seemed preoccupied with some business of importance only to Nashburgh. There was something vaguely resentful in the indifference of the tree. It seemed to hint that he who had made new confidants among the trees of the mountain of illumination, had better go back to the mountain.

CHAPTER XLII

THERE was no regular minister at that time in Nashburgh. The town could not afford to keep a minister, and one who could afford to keep himself in the town was not forthcoming. Wandering preachers occasionally spoke in the little wooden church, young men who wanted practice and old men who wanted pay; but none of them was "called." A preacher was sure of nothing there except an audience; there could, of course, be no admission fee, and free entertainment of any sort was a welcome break in the monotony of the long weeks. As subjects of conversation were few and news was at a premium, any man who announced to anybody in the town that he would speak in the church on a certain Sunday, could depend upon mouth to mouth announcements to advertise his meeting. That part of Jesse's complicated problem in his native town was easy of solution.

Some time before the appointed hour, along the three roads leading to the meeting-house came wagons of all ages and conditions, some shining with respectability and recent ablutions, others grey and crusted with the clay-mud of many months' accretion. The passengers were varied as the vehicles. There were toothless grandsires, who had been old men when Jesse was a little boy; young men who had known him in the casual fraternity of the station-platform, and of the post-office and general-store, that lyceum of rural opinions; young married women with their babies, who had secretly dreamed of his beauty in years gone by, when marriage was a fascinating possibility of the future, and these noisy children were still in the bosom of infinity; corpulent mothers of families, who had held Mary Bethel's boy upon their knees in days before he learned of his relation to the Spirit; stern or jocose farmers, weather-beaten, seasoned with the juice of bad tobacco, and cynical with the ethics of the horse-trade; boys and girls, most of them unborn when Jesse left Nashburgh,

who went to the meeting-house in the same spirit as they went to school, because it was expected of them; and here and there the fresh young wistful face of a youth or a maid in the Maytime of emotional possibilities, who might have been fired with the enthusiasm of Jesse's faith had they not been predisposed against him by the compromising fact that he was born in Nashburgh. There were also a few strangers, the floating population of the township, men and women who were unconscious of what a suspicious circumstance it was to have been born in this pretty valley; but they were mostly of the lower and least respected classes.

By a quarter of eleven the church was nearly full, and five minutes before the hour there was not a vacant seat, except the long "mourners' bench" in front, and the one black horse-hair chair on the platform, to the right of the pulpit. Nashburgh had turned out in force to hear what Jesse had to say, and to see how Jesse looked. Though their motive in coming was nothing more reverent than curiosity, at least they had come. The bare white walls of the little meeting-house had never before enclosed so large a gathering.

Mrs. Olin Madison sat with her husband, about midway between the pulpit and the door. To have gone farther forward would have evinced an interest in the speaker and his sermon to which she was not ready to commit herself; to have sat farther back would have been compromising to her dignity, would have placed her among those whom she called "the riff-raff." The presence of Mrs. Madison in the meeting-house was in itself an unusual event. She did not tell herself that she hoped the son of Mary Bethel would appreciate her condescension, but such a feeling dwelt vaguely at the back of her consciousness. It was three minutes of eleven by Mrs. Madison's gold watch, and still Jesse had not come.

Thomas Taylor and his wife sat well forward. He had married his hard-faced housekeeper some years before, after repeated hints from the neighbours that such a course was expected from him if she was to continue a member of their God-fearing community. Taylor's younger son was also with them. The three Brown girls had followed Mrs.

Madison's lead, and sat about half-way back. The station-master, the store-keeper, the constable, and two hundred of Nashburgh's other inhabitants were also listening and watching.

It was one minute before eleven when every person in the church became suddenly aware of a presence. The thick carpet down the aisle gave back no sound from his footsteps; but they *felt* that he was there behind them, beside them. There was a lightness in the atmosphere, a response in their hearts as to the air of high mountains, and he passed by them to the platform and sat down. He did not kneel, nor shade his eyes with his hand in silent prayer, nor do any of the other things to which they were accustomed. He simply sat down. High and pure he seemed, even to their dull perception. He did not wear the solemn and ill-fitting black clothes usually seen behind that pulpit; his soft, well-made garments were of dark blue, and above them shone his beautiful face, with its nimbus of gold hair. He looked at them, and a tremour passed over every man and woman there.

Then down the aisle came his companions: the three men from Capronville, Mary Magnus and Anna Martin, Stephen and Susie Smith, Marty White, and the three Bethels, Jim, Joe and Eva. They sat on the long front seat, called the "mourners' bench," and the four singers were in the centre.

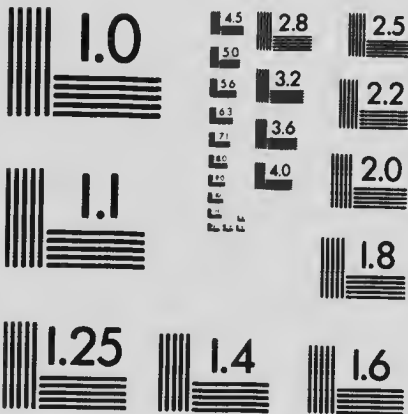
For perhaps thirty seconds there was utter silence. Then Jesse rose, and the four rose with him; they stepped forward a little, faced the congregation, and without a word of announcement began to sing—the song of love and discipleship which Mary and Anna had made for the glory of their teacher.

"When our mild-eyed Master came
From the mountains of the soul,
In his heart God's secret name,
Round his head Love's aureole,
We believed the Dawn had taken
Form of man for our surprise,
And our dreaming souls were shaken
With the signal of his eyes.



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"Roses which no time shall fade
He has given us to keep,
And the world his words have made
Lovely as the hills of sleep.
Now, revealed to one another,
We are one since life began,
And the sacred name of brother
We may breathe to every man.

"We have found the faith that gives
Mountain air for every breath,
Fragrant bread for each that lives.
And behind the doors of death
Lurks no dread to make us fear it,
For our souls have found the clime
Where the lilies of the Spirit
Blossom in the winter-time."

The song was a confession of faith, a challenge to disbelief, a statement of the claims made by him and by others in his name. It fell upon the ears of listening Nashburgh like a song in an unfamiliar tongue; yet its purport was somehow plain, however its finer meanings might elude them. The voice of Mary Magnus rose pure and clear above the untrained voices of her choir, leading them, luring them on in the fearless quest of the Spirit along the paths of sound. No one could listen unmoved to that passionate voice, and had she sung the glory of some far-off god, some long-dead prophet, their minds would have assented; but they realised that this new song was in honour of the son of Mary Bethel, realised that it presumptuously exalted him to a place on the mountain-peak of humanity, within hailing distance of God. And the heart of Nashburgh rebelled against the assumptions of her son. The religious members of the congregation were shocked as by some bold profanity; the irreligious listeners hardly realised the enormity of the claim.

The choir sat down, and Jesse opened the Scriptures which lay upon the pine pulpit. It was not his habit to read from the Bible at his meetings, but he chose to do so in this place. He turned to the Book of Isaiah, and read a verse here and there:

“I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

“And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

“And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.

“The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.”

He closed the book and stood for a moment looking down at them in silence, that all the meanings and suggestions of the words which he had read might be grasped by their slow minds. When he saw in their eyes that they understood him, he began to speak.

“I am the mouthpiece of the Spirit, the voice of the everlasting stillness. My words ring loudest in the soul when the ears no longer hear them; for what the Spirit utters can never be gainsaid.

“You have read how Moses wrote that the world and the heavens were formed in six days; but the Spirit will re-form them now in twice as many months.

“You have been taught how to protect yourselves from one another; but nothing can protect you against the aggression of the Spirit.

“You have learned the lessons of selfishness and thrift; but in the school of the Spirit that knowledge will be of no use; the penniless man who loves his neighbour shall stand higher than the wealthy man who loves only himself.

“The world values you by the costliness of your garments, and by what you have accumulated; the Spirit values you for your nakedness, and by what you have relinquished.

“You pride yourselves upon your morals. Morals are as desirable as frequent bathing; but as mere bathing will not change the face, so mere morals will not change the heart. Both are external. That which shall transform

the face and make the heart beautiful is love, and it comes from within.

"What are love's duties? The privilege of high souls to give themselves for others.

"When you speak for the sake of others and not for your own sake, then only will the whole world listen.

"Many fail who are personally ambitious; but a few personally succeed who are ambitious only for the progress of mankind.

"He who does a good action for the sake of reward may receive what seems to be a reward; but there is a higher motive.

"Why do you build such towering structures on the perishable foundation of your body? A little while and it will be no more; it will sink into the earth, and all your building with it; for the *you* which shall endure is not this body.

"That which is immortal and indestructible, which water cannot drown, nor fire burn, nor the passing seasons leave behind—*That you are.*"

Someone had placed upon the pulpit a vase of flowers. He separated one—a white lily—and held it up for them to see.

"Is it not beautiful?" he said. "Yet its beauty is more than the dust from which it sprang. There is a Something concealed in every object that is more beautiful than the object. Look for that. When you have found it, you will have found the Spirit.

"The sun is a luminous body giving light of itself; so is that Something at the centre of man and of all things.

"Alas, that men should carry in their souls a ray of the Great Light, and yet should walk in darkness!"

He spoke to them of the wonders of the immanent Spirit, and the grandeur of the human soul, using the same beautiful words he had spoken in the house of the Hermit's disciples on that first night in Burlington, when he was fresh from the exaltation of the mountain. He told these weather-beaten, cynical farmers, to whom a dollar was more certain than a God, that they themselves were gods—gods who denied or bartered their divinity. He told them also that they were good; that somewhere among the lit-

ter and confusion of their life's lumber-room was the priceless pearl of spiritual goodness, often trodden under foot, always disregarded, but indisputably there; and that even their meanest and most disoblighing neighbour possessed such another pearl. He said:

"Does the heart of man seem evil to you? Look again.

"He who declares that the heart of man is evil, is like one who ties a bandage over his eyes before he lights the lamp.

"Or do all other men seem evil to you, and do you alone seem just? Then pity the poor world which has laboured for a million years to produce only one creditable work!

"Do you shrink from the contemplation of an evil man? It is the sinner in you which recognises and fears the sinner.

"Do weak and evil men seem small compared with you? How do you fancy that you appear when compared with great men?

"I have said that there is a god in you; but there is also a devil, and one of his many names is self-righteousness.

"If you refrain from lifting your fallen brother for fear of soiling your own stainless garment, beware of the slippery rock which will throw you in the mud but a step or two farther on.

"Anything which really separates you from humanity is an evil, even though it be your own virtue.

"When a man seems to you to be utterly depraved, it may be that you are not pure enough to understand him.

"When you enumerate all the follies and vices of which you have never been guilty, try to remember a time when you preferred the happiness or welfare of your enemy to that of yourself.

"Do you rejoice that you are superior to your neighbour? Humble yourself before him, and prove it.

"The repentant sinner may pass the threshold of the spiritual chamber and take his seat among the elect within, while the self-righteous saint remains outside with the uninvited."

Again he stood in silence for a moment, looking down

at them. The thin lips of Mrs. Madison were set in a straight line; on the dark face of Thomas Taylor was a threatening frown; but here and there about the congregation Jesse saw a face alight with wondering admiration, and the church was still as virgin space.

Then he told them this allegory:

"There was a wise physician who discovered the healing properties in a familiar flower which grew in every meadow.

"And he told his neighbours and his friends, offering them freely of the medicine distilled by his own labours.

"But they laughed at him and scorned his medicine, saying: 'All our lives we have known this common flower, and our children have played with it. How could it heal our fevers, or allay the weariness in our bones? We want neither your medicine nor you.'

"Then the wise physician went to another country, whose people were unacquainted with the source of his healing draught, and he cured these strangers of all their diseases and raised them from the level of the grave, so that his very name became sacred, and he was called the great physician, the healer of the world.

"And a fever came to scourge his native valley, and those who had refused the wise physician and his remedy went down before it as a field of grass before the mower. But the potent flower still bloomed—above their graves."

Another silence, longer and more tense than before.

. . . Then Jesse raised his arms in signal of the coming benediction, and the whole congregation rose in involuntary obedience to his will.

"May the Spirit which never sleeps awake you to a realisation of its invisible presence."

CHAPTER XLIII

THE congregation seemed to be in no hurry to leave the church. Many came forward at once and gathered around Jesse, who had left the platform and was standing below the pulpit. People were talking together all over the room; the usual Sunday hush was not preserved on this unusual day—did not seem to be demanded by the occasion.

In groups or singly, everyone in the church came forward finally to have a word with Jesse. Mrs. Madison held back for a time, not wishing to compromise her dignity by unseemly haste. She stood talking to the Brown girls and others, who listened to her with wandering eyes and wandering attention; she spoke of other things instead of the sermon, every-day things, as if the commonplaces of village gossip really occupied her mind to the exclusion of the burning subject which occupied the mind of everybody else. But the restless manner of her companions told her they were not listening, and in order to preserve the appearance of being a centre of social exchange she was obliged to refer to the matter in hand.

"What do you think of the sermon?" she asked, with a nonchalant air which did not commit her to any opinion, but invited her unwary listeners to commit themselves.

"It was certainly not what we're accustomed to," answered the eldest Miss Brown, with spasmodic efforts to control the twitching of her face, known in Nashburgh as her "nervous trouble." "I mean," she added, "it was much better than anything we're accustomed to."

Mrs. Madison lifted her eyebrows. Secretly she admired the young woman's courage in being the first to voice a fact which they all vaguely realised; but she was by no means ready to surrender to the spell of the young man whom she had "fed with sugar-plums when he was in baby dresses."

"His claims are high," she answered, with a laugh which might have been mockery and might have been from

mere nervousness. "As far as I can make out, he considers himself a sort of Messiah, sent by God for the reformation of the world."

"What blasphemy!" ejaculated Thomas Taylor, who had joined them. "The son of Mary Bethel! A Messiah, indeed!"

The boss of the railroad section was a respectable man of religious professions, and he now joined the group around Mrs. Madison, saying incredulously:

"Have you heard that he cures disease by the laying on of hands?"

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the afflicted Brown girl.

"When and where?" demanded Mrs. Madison.

He told them of the incident of Saturday morning, when this man had cured the Bennett child of fever, in the doorway of his old home. "Or so the parents say," he added. "That's almost as remarkable as finding a hidden fortune in a cupboard."

"It was a secret drawer," corrected the youngest Brown girl.

"Suppose you go up and ask him what he thinks he is, anyway," suggested Taylor.

"I'll do it!" declared Olin Madison. "Come on, Maria."

In a body they moved forward, all but Taylor, who discreetly watched from the centre of the church. The Bennett woman and her brood of children were in the foreground. The mother, in a clean calico dress and with her hair neatly done up in a pug under her rusty bonnet, was telling everyone who would listen to her of the strange healing of her child. Mary Magnus had seen the woman in the back of the church, and had sent Andrew to bring her forward where her testimony could be heard.

"He merely touched the child and looked at him, and the fever left him and he slept, after a day and a night of crying and moaning," she was saying as the group came up. "I don't know what *you* call it, but I call it the power o' God."

"The power of the Spirit that makes him like to God," thrilled the voice of John, his clear eyes challenging anyone to disbelieve the miracle he had witnessed.

Mrs. Madison shook hands with Mary Magnus before she spoke to Jesse. Broken straws of gossip about the banker's daughter had blown about in the pure air of Nashburgh; but the solid certainty of Mary's wealth weighed heavily in the popular mind against the uncertain rumour of her lovers, and Mrs. Madison turned to her as to the one indisputable, well-dressed fact in this questionable riot of fancy.

"And did you really see him cure this child?" she asked.

"I saw him cure this child, as I have seen him cure many others," Mary answered. "He cures everyone who is afflicted and who has the faith without which all cures are impossible."

"Has he ever cured you of anything?" Mrs. Madison laughed her unpleasant little laugh.

"Oh, he cured me of seven devils!" Mary replied, with more enthusiasm than discretion.

"How very interesting! I hope they were polite, well-bred devils; but I'm sure you wouldn't associate with any other kind."

Mary bowed with courteous reserve, and turned to speak with John. That was the beginning of the story of the seven devils, a story which survived all the real facts of her life save only her devotion and her faith.

Mrs. Madison turned with her husband to the place where Jesse stood surrounded by an eagerly questioning crowd. She was displeased with the obvious necessity of going to Jesse if she wished to speak with him at all, displeased also at having to wait a little time behind a group of unimportant persons who lived in the shanties behind the railway-station. She had heard that he made no distinction between respectable people and the riff-raff, and now he was actually talking, and with every show of consideration, to a mulatto woman who took in washing—while Mrs. Madison was kept waiting. Becoming impatient, she put out her hand to him across the mulatto woman.

"I am glad to see you again," he said, taking her hand in a warm clasp which sent an electric current through her whole body. "But will you kindly wait one mo-

ment?" When he had finished what he was saying to the other, he turned again to Mrs. Madison with his irresistible smile, and shook hands with her husband.

"I found your talk very interesting," she began; "but——"

"We want to ask you," Olin Madison interrupted, "just what you mean by some of the things you said."

"Which things?"

"Well, er——" the old man stammered and the colour deepened in his cheeks under the sunburn—"what do you mean by saying that you are the voice of the Spirit, or the mouthpiece of the Spirit, or whatever it was that you did say?"

Jesse looked down into the eyes of his father's friend:

"You are familiar with the voice of the robin, and with the voice of the storm; but the voice of the Spirit is not like either of these, nor is it like the voice of man. Are you sure that you would recognise it if you should hear it?"

Several of the leading men of Nashburgh had now joined the circle around Jesse. Their eyes were sharp and their mouths had an unpleasant look. He had said that they were gods who bartered their divinity; he had accused them of selfishness, and made light of their morality. A regularly ordained minister might be allowed to tell them, in time-honoured scriptural language, devitalised by repetition, that they were sinners; but here was a man, without the authority of the established church, who dared to tell them, in language of his own, that they were something dangerously near to self-righteous hypocrites. They were not pleased, these leading men of Nashburgh.

Thomas Taylor had left his place in the centre of the church and had come down to the fringe of the circle around Jesse.

"I have said that I am the mouthpiece of the Spirit," the thrilling voice went on, "and you ask me what I mean. When you hear the voice of the thunder you do not ask its meaning; but if your hay is dry upon the ground, you hurry it into barns."

When, still unsatisfied, they asked for further explanations, he said: "The Spirit will purify the atmosphere

of the world with lightning and with rain. Will you not come with me into the sheltering house of faith?"

"But why with *you*?" they persisted. "You are only one of us, a man born in our town, whose parents we all knew."

His answer staggered them:

"The shittah-tree, from whose wood was builded the Ark of the Covenant, had no great honour in its native hills."

"What do you want us to believe that you are, anyway?" It was Thomas Taylor's first question to Jesse, and the tone was a challenge. This is the answer he received:

"The pine-tree dominates the hill, however the grass-blades may deny it."

"You mean that you are the pine-tree, and that we——"

"The pine-tree is the symbol of the Spirit."

Taylor could make no reasonable objection to this, and he was again silent, awaiting his opportunity.

"We are told that you can cure diseases by the laying on of hands," said Mrs. Madison. "Come here, Jane Brown!" The young woman with the twitching face came forward. "Here is a case which has baffled all the doctors. Cure her!" The woman's voice was high-pitched, half-mocking, half-excited. "Cure her," she repeated, "then tell us that you are really something extraordinary."

Jesse drew a long and deep breath, while a smile of ecstasy lighted his face. He took the trembling, unloved hands of the young woman in both his own. "Look at me," he said, and she raised her timid eyes to his. For a few seconds he held her thus, hand to hand, eye to eye, while her quivering fingers relaxed, and her eyes grew clear and steady. She realised that he was speaking to her, yet the voice seemed to come from the depths of her own heart.

"You trust me, do you not? You believe that the Spirit can cure you?"

"I do believe."

"Faith is more potent than all medicine; it is the covenant of the human soul with God. If you unite your faith with the power of Heaven, that faith becomes an irresist-

ible engine, and neither space nor matter can prevail against it. The body is the servant of the spiritual will, and the ally of the spiritual will is faith. Faith is the promise which is always fulfilled; it is the source of power, the treasure house that is fuller for every blessing you take from its abundance. It strengthens the soul as food strengthens the body; it refreshes the soul like a well of water on a weary road. It is the shelter from attack, the chamber of sweet rest. There is no mountain which faith cannot climb, no sea it cannot cross, no star it cannot reach. It guides the farmer's hand in the sowing of the grain; it leads the mariner across the trackless ocean; it steadies the heart of the earth for its awful plunge through the dark of unknown space. Believe, and whatever you believe *shall be.*"

He placed his electric hands upon Jane's forehead, still holding her gaze with his eyes; then slowly, with lingering beneficent pressure, his healing touch passed over every part of her afflicted face.

"You may turn and speak with them," he said; "you are cured for ever—*your face will never twitch again.*" The concentration of his gaze, the power of his command, were indescribable.

Jane turned as he directed her, half-dazed by the mysterious force emanating from him. She looked around upon what seemed a sea of staring eyes; she opened her lips slowly, as if speech were some new power to be exercised with caution. Then, looking straight before her, she repeated the twenty-third Psalm which she had learned at the age of seven years, beginning: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," and ending, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

The face which had twitched and struggled for ten years *was calm as Jesse's own.*

Then pandemonium broke loose: the sanctity of the Sabbath, the restraints of the sanctuary were forgotten, and a hundred tongues were speaking all at once: "He's cured her." . . . "I don't believe it." . . . "She's been unsightly for ten years." . . . "It's some trick." . . . "It's the power of God." . . . "The power of the Devil." . . . "He's only Mary Bethel's

son." . . . "The son of God, I tell you." . . .
 "She's tried every doctor in Burlington." . . . "It's
 witchcraft." . . . "Blessed be witchcraft, then." . . .
 "I say, it's a trick." . . . "Go down on your knees
 to him." . . . "Drive him out of town." . . .
 "He could kill a man and leave no mark." . . . "The
 mouthpiece of the Spirit." . . . "I tell you again, it's
 a trick." . . . "Blessed be such tricks." . . .
 "He's dangerous." . . . "He's sacred." . . .
 "He can't stay here." . . . "I couldn't sleep nights
 if he did." . . . "Glory be to God!" . . .
 "Keep silent, will you?" . . . "Where did he get
 such power?" . . . "It's hypnotism." . . .
 "Who cares what it is?" . . . "He's bewitched
 her." . . . "He's cured her." . . . "Why,
 where is he?" . . .

Jesse was gone. The little party loosed their horses
 and started homeward, leaving the crowd behind.

CHAPTER XLIV

SUSIE SMITH was helping Eva Bethel to get the dinner, when Marty rushed out into the kitchen.

"They're coming!" he cried.

Eva was putting the potatoes to bake, and she rose from her knees and banged the oven door. "Who's coming?" she asked.

"A whole crowd of them."

"Where's Jesse?"

"Upstairs in his room. Come to the front door, Eva."

Jim Bethel was on the verandah, and the three men from Capronville were behind him. Coming up from the gate were about forty men; they had left their horses at Taylor's, a short distance down the road. At the head of the moving crowd was Taylor himself. They stopped at the edge of the verandah.

"What can I do for you?" asked Jim Bethel, folding his arms and looking down at his fellow townsmen as if they had been strangers who intruded on the quiet of his Sabbath.

"We want to see *him*." Half a dozen voices spoke at once.

"And what do you want of him?"

"We want to ask some questions."

Jim shrugged his shoulders. "I'll tell him you're here," he said. "The house is hardly large enough to hold all of you."

"We'll stay where we are," someone said, and others echoed the words, "Yes, we'll stay where we are."

Mary Magnus and Anna had been watching from the window of the sitting-room, and they now came out on the verandah. Anna was pale; but Mary was calm and even smiling. She had seen religious riots in the Orient, thousands of madmen struggling with each other; and this handful of farmers in their Sunday clothes, who declared they had come to ask questions, did not arouse in her mind

any serious apprehensions. An important part of Jesse's mission was to answer questions. Why not here as well as anywhere?

"The other mouthpiece," she heard someone murmur. She supposed it was a reference to her singing.

Jesse now appeared in the doorway, calm and beautiful as always. He looked down at the men and smiled; then came to the edge of the verandah, and said with grave dignity:

"I am glad to see you. Ask me anything you will."

He sat down in a large armchair, and waited for their questions. Was he weary, Mary wondered; or did he seat himself for some subtle reason which she could not follow?

"When do you intend to leave this place?" asked a man whose face was vaguely familiar to Jesse, but whose name he had forgotten.

"I intend to leave Nashburgh on the train passing through about ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Why did you come here?" was the next question.

"To bring you the message of the Spirit."

"Who sent you?"

"The Spirit."

"Whose spirit?" demanded Thomas Taylor.

"The Spirit is not a possession," Jesse answered; "it is something which possesses."

"And do you consider yourself possessed by a spirit?" Taylor still questioned.

Jesse looked down at him, half-sternly, half-pityingly.

"Thomas Taylor," he said, "you are interpreting the language of God in the terms of a petty sect. The Spirit I have tried to reveal to you is not one of the irresponsible, table-rapping spirits which may or may not haunt your seance rooms; but the one and supreme Spirit of the universe, whose other name is God."

"Then why don't you say God, and be done with it?" cried Taylor, and other voices also cried, "Yes, why not say so?"

"There are some words," said Jesse, "some phrases, that have lost all their potency by meaningless repetitions, soulless, parrot-like repetitions. The name of God is often on

your lips, but what do you know about God? His spirit is not in your hearts."

"How do you know that?" they demanded.

Jesse smiled. "When a tree puts forth no leaves in the spring, we know that the sap has not risen in it. Why, if the faith of the Spirit, the faith of God, were really in your hearts, you, too, could heal the sick, or do any other thing in accordance with the will of Heaven."

"You have declared that you are the mouthpiece of the Spirit," said the schoolmaster from the station district, the village logician, "and you say that the Spirit is God. Then your word must be the word of God. Is that what you would claim?"

"All the powers of the Spirit are held in trust by the sons of the Spirit, even the power of divine speech."

"Then, if you are the chosen one of the Spirit," Taylor screamed, with an evil laugh, "take the muzzle off this devil of a dog, and make him lick your face." He snatched from the hand of his hired man the chain of a great ugly black dog, and dragged the growling animal toward the steps.

Jesse raised his eyes to Jim's and smiled. The minds of both flew back over the years to the young horse which had been known as "Taylor's devil." Jim's eyes answered Jesse's, but he did not smile. He knew the animal and was afraid.

"If you unmuzzle that dog and make him lick your face," roared Taylor, "may I fall down in a fit the next minute!"

"Rash man! Madman!" exclaimed Jesse. "Do you realise what you are saying?"

"I know that dog, and I'm safe enough."

Jesse's voice was calm, but in his eyes was the sadness of resignation.

"You have challenged the power of the Spirit," he said, "you have invoked the pitiless, iron-visaged Law, and even I cannot protect you from the reaction of that invocation. You have summoned the same power to smite that I summon to heal. Do you still demand that I unmuzzle the dog?"

"Unmuzzle him, yes, and let him kiss your face."

"Why are you fastening his chain to the pillar of the verandah?" Jesse asked, in a low, sweet voice.

"Do you think I'd let him loose with all these women around?"

"The only women here are the women of my household, and they are protected by me."

"Don't unchain that dog!" cried a dozen men from the yard below.

"You had better return to your friends," Jesse said to Taylor, very gently. "I am powerless to protect *you*."

When Taylor had retreated to a safe distance, Jesse rested his chin on his hand, looking at the dog with tender, pitying eyes. "Poor helpless victim of cruelty!" he murmured, "dumb martyr to the dominance of man!" He now leaned forward in his chair and drew the dog toward him by the chain. It seemed afraid, it trembled, whining and cowering. "Poor dog, has no one ever loved you?" Mary, who was watching with the wings of her soul aquiver, saw Jesse's tears fall on the rough black head. The animal raised its eyes to the sympathetic face above it, and the strange fear it had never felt before gave way to even a stranger feeling—confidence. Jesse stroked its head, he ran his fingers along the furry throat, and the dog wagged its tail ever so little—shyly, hesitatingly, as an aged man might falteringly repeat some half-forgotten lesson of his childhood. Still murmuring kind words, Jesse unstrapped the muzzle which held the chafed mouth and threw the torturing thing away. The animal gave a little whine of relief and shook himself. Then Jesse smilingly unhooked the chain which held the poor beast's collar, leaving the other end of it still fastened to the pillar. The dog was free.

"Come up, old brother," cried Jesse cheerily, patting his own knees in signal to the animal, that there was the place for his front paws. Up jumped the dog, his tail now joyously thumping the verandah post. Jesse bent forward; and excitedly, ecstatically the dog licked his face, from the gold hair above the forehead to the gold beard below the beautiful mouth. Then Jesse gathered up the great beast in his arms and settled him in his lap, looking over the shaggy head at the gaping crowd below.

"Are you satisfied, my friends?" he asked.

A sigh of relief went up from the group behind him.

"Have you any further questions to propound?" Jesse was still smiling at the men in the yard.

But he was never answered, for at that moment Thomas Taylor, with a tortured, inarticulate cry, fell on the ground in strong convulsions. Then all was excitement. No one knew what to do. The men below walked hither and thither, talking wildly; but they did not go near the sufferer.

"Can you do nothing for him, Master?" Peter cried.

"I am powerless to help the man now," was Jesse's answer. "The force of his hatred for me would kill him, if he felt the touch of my hand. Go you down, Peter, and lay your hands upon him. He does not hate you."

Peter went to the writhing man on the ground; he held his arms and talked to him, while the crowd looked on with amazement in their eyes.

When Taylor finally became quiet, his companions took one of the shutters from a window of the house, and using it as a stretcher, four of them carried him slowly home down the green road by which he had come with sturdy strides only half an hour before. But the black dog remained behind.

Was it the weight of his own baffled rage that had stricken the man down? Was it the power of his invocation of the Great Law—his challenge flung in the face of God? Or was it one of those coincidences which the enemies of Jesse, the disbelievers in his mission, were always seeing in the strange happenings that followed his track across the world?

"I would have shielded him had I been able to do so," Jesse said to his friends, as they sat around the table at their belated dinner; "but no man may turn aside the lightning of the Law. He who chains himself to his own hearthstone and sets fire to the house, will perish in the flames. Taylor will recover; he did not call upon God to kill him—only to strike him down. Oh, my friends," Jesse continued, "beware of hatred! It is a poison corrupting the body as well as the soul; it is a venom in the blood, a madness in the brain. Even the resentment you

feel for one who has injured you will hurt you more than the injury itself. Taylor knew I would remove the muzzle from that dog, and he believed the dog would lacerate my face. Had one throb of resentment toward him tingled in my blood, his evil wish had been fulfilled."

"Master, what *did* you do to the dog?" It was John who spoke.

Jesse answered: "I cast out of him the spirit of his former master, by substituting my own. It is easier to control an animal than a man, because man has a spark from the flame of the divine will. He chooses his own course; while the course of the animal is chosen for him, by Nature or by man."

The next day Jim Bethel left his new-mown hay upon the ground, his waving grain untouched by the sickle, his wife to the care of his brother, and enrolled himself among the followers of Jesse. Eva and Joe, the brother, were destined also to join them in the fulness of time; but their day was not yet come. As for Marty White, no river would have been too wide for him to swim, no mountain peak too steep for him to climb, if by so doing he might have walked with his friend.

They were a hopeful company that went to the Nashburgh station the following morning to take the train for Capronville. Eva gave her husband to Jesse's cause without a tear—not that she loved him little, but that she loved him much. Less than three days had Jesse been with them; but in that brief time their hearts had been changed. They had always taken for granted that they loved each other, but now they asked themselves if they loved other people; if perhaps their very absorption in home and the domestic love had not narrowed their feelings a little, had not built a wall between them and the fresh life-giving breezes of fraternity that blow across the wider world. Eva felt, when she consented to Jim's going, as the queen of some little, isolated kingdom might feel on sending her first ambassador to a great world parliament. She wore her crown of wifedom with a more conscious dignity.

There was a crowd at the station. The feelings aroused

by Jesse in the hearts of his fellow citizens were a mixture of curiosity, admiration and resentment. They were glad that he was going away, they would breathe more freely when they had seen the last of him; but they wanted to see the last of him. Hence the crowd at the station.

Three wagons were coming down the Creek Road. Jesse and the men from Capronville were with Jim and Eva in the carryall; Mary and Anna came with Stephen and Susie Smith in their two-seated wagon, and Joe Bethel and Marty came behind in the one-horse buggy. The crowd on the platform waited breathlessly. The rumour had gone round that Jim Bethel was going to leave his wife and follow Jesse, so the latest charge against the new religion and its founder was "the breaking up of homes." Had Eva's husband left her for any other cause, the gossip of Nashburgh would have hinted darkly at flaws in her character; but as it was, they were ready to give her the wreath of martyrdom, so they might strip bare the stalk of Jesse's honour for leaves with which to weave it.

Thomas Taylor had recovered from his seizure of the day before sufficiently to go to the station. Pale and haggard, and with an unnatural glitter in his eyes, he watched the three wagons coming down the road. The postmaster, who had himself brought over the bag of mail that morning, did not like the looks of Taylor, and watched him closely. The postmaster's wife had recently been sent to an insane asylum, and he would always feel vague apprehensions at the sight of preternaturally brilliant eyes set in a haggard face.

The horses which had brought the travellers were tied to the fence near the bridge, and the little group of twelve persons came down to the station together. From their appearance they might have been a care-free picnic party, setting out for a day's pleasure; not the nucleus of a great religious movement that should carry everything before it. They were early at the station, though not so early as the waiting crowd. The first sound wafted to the listening ears on the platform was the ripple of Eva's laughter, inspired by some remark of the grimly humorous Peter. The wreath of wifely martyrdom would lie lightly

on her brown hair. Mary Magnus walked ahead with John, and Jesse came last with Andrew.

"Harmless looking crowd," smiled Olin Madison, who was inclined to take the whole affair as a joke. But Taylor glared at him without a word. Well might Olin smile, that dark look seemed to say, *he* had not fallen in a fit the day before.

"Eight tickets for Capronville," said Peter Bond at the office window. Then the crowd knew for certain that Jim was leaving town.

"Going to help your cousin transform the world?" asked a voice in his ear.

"I'm going to do my best," was the answer.

"Have you got those bonds in your satchel?" asked another voice. This question was ignored.

"Mail-train twenty minutes late," called the station-master, as he passed along the platform.

"Let us go and walk on the hill over there," said Jesse to the men of his party. He preferred his last memory of Nashburgh to be of the green fields and the trees, not of these curious and unfriendly faces.

"I'll stay behind with Eva," Jim said, as the other men started down the platform. Mary and Anna also remained in the waiting-room.

West of the station was a hill, one side of it a gentle grassy slope, the other side a sheer and rocky declivity. Scarcely had Jesse and his companions reached the top, and turned to look at the long blue range of mountains, when they became aware that they were not to have this last half-hour for the quiet enjoyment of nature. Two-thirds of the station crowd were following. But were the men following them, or were they following Thomas Taylor?

Going before the others, with his head down, kicking the stones out of his path with impotent fury, the implacable hater of Jesse Bethel came up the hill. He stopped some ten feet from the man he sought, and the other Nashburgh men, including the postmaster, stopped with him. Jesse was standing on the very peak above the rocky precipice.

Suddenly, with a bellow like that of an angry bull, Taylor made a rush for the object of his wrath.

"Stop him!" . . . "Close in on him!" . . . "He'll throw Jesse off the cliff!" . . . "He's lost his mind!" . . . cried the jumble of voices; and Jesse saw Taylor surrounded by the other men. He was screaming, striking with his fists, kicking with his feet, hurling his great form to and fro in the rage of his madness.

"Get a rope," cried the voice of the postmaster, "we'll have to tie him down. I tell you, he's gone insane!" And one of the men rushed off to the store for the means of harsh restraint.

"Oh, come away!" said Jesse. "Come away!"

They returned to the station building, and the men who had not followed Taylor met them at the end of the platform; for everyone had seen and heard the tumult on the hill. Eva and Anna were crying wildly in the waiting-room, but Mary was tearless and utterly still; she hardly seemed to breathe; all the life of her body was burning in her eyes.

John came and touched her cold hand. "He is safe, sister," he breathed to her. "Oh, will the train never come and carry us away from this place!"

Mary's white lips moved, but no sound came.

"Why, he'd have thrown you off the cliff!" was Olin Madison's rather obvious remark to Jesse.

"What have they done with him?" It was the first time Jesse had spoken since they left the hill.

"Tied him down in the baggage-room."

"Will you ask them, for me, to treat him gently?"

Olin never forgot the look in Jesse's eyes as he made this last and strange request of the citizens of Nashburgh. And as the belated train drew into the station at last, the request was repeated:

"Please tell them to treat him gently—for my sake."

CHAPTER XLV

IT was on the train going to Capronville that Jesse learned that the wandering Hermit had been cast into prison in the North, for some defiant violation of the laws of order. The news saddened him, even more than the tragic incident of their last hour in Nashburgh. Not only had he failed to convince the people in his native town of the greatness of his mission; but the austere and authoritative friend who had proclaimed him, and by so doing had made easier the early steps on his hard road, was for the time discredited in popular opinion. The agitator in prison may be considered a hero in some places; he is not so considered in Vermont.

For some minutes after hearing the disastrous news Jesse allowed the shadows to lie upon his heart and upon his face. He was not only grieved at his friend's imprisonment, but grieved at this new proof of the disagreement between the Law of God and the laws of man. And he knew that when the time came to send forth his own disciples, they might any day be tested in this same furnace of the world's power. Would they meet the trial as John was surely meeting it—they who were still babes in the great school of faith? Of danger to himself he had no dread. As he had told his mother long ago, "The price of the song is the singer." She had trembled at the words, though she hardly understood their meaning. He who understood profoundly, trembled not at all; but the shadows lay upon his heart and upon his face.

"Do not grieve, Master."

It was the sweet, appealing voice of John, and his eyes were raised to his teacher's face, as they sat side by side in the crowded car. That gentle presence was a pale candle-flame struggling with the gloom of his mood. How little the boy knew, in his mystic adoration of the Idea, the awful reality of Jesse's mission! He said, "Master, do

not grieve"; but there was so much more to grieve for than he knew. The imprisonment of the Hermit was more than a mere fact; it was a symbol of the Spirit's imprisonment in the jail of human society.

Jesse had dwelt so intimately with the idea of the Spirit, that he loved it even as his friends loved him. And it came to him now that the light of the Spirit, though always burning in him, was obscured for the moment by this cloud of sadness, as the light of a lamp is darkened by a clouded globe. Then with an effort of will he cleared his consciousness of every darkening thought, and the great light shone once more upon his path. He *would* succeed in Capronville.

"John," he said, "and Andrew and Peter," turning to include the two who sat in the seat behind him, "this is not the hour to weaken our souls with grief for that which cannot be changed. A great labour lies just ahead of us. That I have healed men's souls and bodies in the North will not avail me here. To conquer in one battle does not make a mighty warrior. Are you ready now to charge with me as you have never charged before? Is your faith booted and spurred with will?"

Their eyes glistened, their breath was long and deep as they answered yes, and Jesse saw that they were indeed ready.

The crowd at the Nashburgh station was a mere handful compared with the crowd that awaited their arrival at the station in Capronville. Judson's failure, should he ever fail, would not be from a lack of zeal in advertising his master; for the light of Jesse's glory was reflected upon his friends, and Judson loved glory as they only love it who have known the opposite. Every waking hour of the three days since his return he had spent in preparing for this demonstration of public interest in Jesse. Judson had few personal friends, but Peter and Andrew and John had many; and it was through the popularity of these that he did his most effective work. He could not ask men as a favour to him to go in a body to meet the returning travellers; but he could arouse their curiosity, and pipe their incredulity, and excite their enthusiasm, by the stories he told of the great preacher's success in the North,

of the beautiful and rich woman who had embraced the new religion, and especially of the devotion of Peter and Andrew and John. In all these announcements he named the hour and the train by which the triumphant party would arrive.

As religious movements can only live and grow by the enthusiasm of many people, this way of Judson's was not a bad way. He had been told by Jesse to prepare for his coming, and this was his interpretation of the trust imposed. He loved Jesse as he had never before loved anybody, and he wanted him to shine, not only in the North where Judson Carey was unknown, but here in Capronville where he was very well known, indeed. His reinstatement in the favour of Peter Bond had meant more to him than anyone knew, save Jesse. Self-love is innate; but self-respect is more or less dependent upon the respect of others. Even his coat now set more squarely on his shoulders; his very back had straightened with his belief in his own straightness. Something more than divine pity had drawn Jesse to his man; there was in him the force, the passion, that is the great dynamo for success in good or evil. Neither John nor Peter, with all their advantages of popularity, would have done so much in those few days as he had done. But, on the other hand, the depreciation of Jesse in Nashburgh, which only strengthened the devotion of those other men, would have made Judson doubting and discouraged. As it was, he knew nothing which would have dampened his ardour.

When the train bearing Jesse and his seven friends drew into the station at Capronville, they were surprised at the mass of people; and the faces they saw were not like those they had left behind at Nashburgh, unfriendly or uncertain; these faces were alight with interest and smiling with sympathy. Jesse's heart grew warm and his courage high at the first sight of them. He could preach the immanence of the Spirit to those men and women, for their eyes were aflame with it.

As he came out of the train they gathered round him, smiling and holding out their hands. These were his first words to them:

"They who go out to meet the Spirit, bring the Spirit

also with them. You have a message for me, even as I for you."

"When will you speak to us?" they cried. "When may we listen to your words?"

He turned to counsel with Judson, who had arranged for the use of the largest church in the town that very evening.

"To-night," he said, naming the hour and the place, "we will meet with one another, and invite the Spirit to be present."

He would have preached to them then and there, but it was nearly one o'clock, the time when the labourer returns to his work after the respite of the noon-hour; and he knew they would all be at the appointed place, bringing others with them.

"Weave and measure and hammer thoughts of me into your work this afternoon," were his parting words to a little group of men who seemed reluctant to leave.

While Jesse was thanking Judson for the visible proof of his activity in the service of their cause, he noticed a tall, brown-haired young man of about thirty years of age standing beside John, and waiting as if to speak to him.

"My brother James," was John's response to Jesse's look of invitation; and the young man eagerly came forward and placed his hands in Jesse's.

"I have thought of nothing but you since John first went with you to Burlington," was his impulsive greeting.

Jesse answered: "May you think of nothing but me and the Spirit that I serve from this time on, for ever." And James Dana was numbered among his followers from that hour.

Among the faces around him Jesse saw one which drew him by its look of tender melancholy. It was that of a young man with jet-black hair and eyes, and whose sensitive mouth was shaded by a long drooping moustache of the same hue. His skin was of a pale ivory-colour, and the dark coat he wore hung loosely around his tall and slender body. Without knowing who he was, guided only by that infallible intuition which often made him seem

omniscient, Jesse touched the arm of the strange young man, saying:

"You are one of those who are chosen to follow me."

"I, who am so imperfect?" The sombre eyes were lit with a strange fire.

"They who are too certain of their perfectness," replied Jesse, "will never follow a prophet; they seek rather to be followed by those less self-righteous than themselves."

"My name is Philip Manning," the dark young man said simply, "and I was born in the same place as Peter and Andrew Bond."

"And you shall go to the same place they go to—the home that is builded on the rock of faith, by the hands of the Un-seen."

"And I may help you in your work?"

"Yes, from this moment. Go now up yonder street, and do whatever work the Spirit bids you."

Surprised and half-bewildered by the suddenness of his call to this new faith which he but vaguely understood, Philip turned away and went up the street, looking to the right and left—for what, he did not know. He had gone but a few rods when he saw a friend of his walking slowly along in the same direction. Like a flash it came to him: this was the unknown errand on which he had been sent.

Calling his friend to stop, he told him all that he knew and felt about Jesse Bethel, adding:

"He is down at the station now; come and see for yourself."

Jesse greeted this man, Nathan Evans, by his full name, though he had never seen him before, and told the substance of his conversation with Philip, picturing the place where they had met.

"If you can see what people do at such a distance, and hear what they say," cried the astonished man, "then indeed you must be all that John the Hermit claimed!"

Jesse answered: "Do you believe in me because I mention a certain place which you must have passed in order to come here? Do you believe in me because I know what Philip would be certain to speak to you, and because I greet you by the name John spoke when he saw you coming? All that is nothing. Not every man who is really

gifted with psychic sight and hearing is a safe guide to follow. But should you know a man who prefers his neighbour's interest to his own, though he be deaf and blind, you will find him a safe guide to follow."

"You are what I have always wished to see," said Nathan Evans, his eyes wide with admiration.

"And through me," replied Jesse, "you shall also behold the Invisible, and feel the very touch of the intangible Spirit."

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CHAPTER XLVI

JESSE'S fame in Capronville was given immediate impetus by the first cure he performed there, for the story of it was repeated all over town before nightfall.

Leaving the station, they went to the house of Peter Bond—Jesse and his personal followers, old and new. There he found the mother of Mrs. Bond lying sick upon her bed; and by a touch of his magnetic hand, he raised her immediately to active health and cheerfulness, and she went about her duties of the household, helping to prepare dinner for the young Master and the friends who came with him from the North.

The mother of Peter's wife, old Mrs. Lewis, was well known for her rugged virtues and her charities; and a wise Providence could not have chosen a better instrument in all the town for the demonstration of Jesse's power. To rich and poor alike, her very name suggested loving service in affliction. Within half an hour the story of her recovery was well started on its round; and the picture of Jesse in the popular mind, hitherto a vague outline, suddenly assumed colour and brilliancy.

Immediately after the midday dinner Mary Magnus, with Andrew and Anna and John, went away on some mysterious errand. At the table Judson had casually mentioned that there was a good organ in the church he had secured for Jesse's sermon that night, and Mary had exchanged smiles and meaning glances with the other members of their choir. Jesse, who divined everything before it happened, knew there would be another song.

He had no seclusion that day, for a steady stream of villagers climbed the hill to Peter's house, to see and talk with the new teacher. There were no sick among them, but almost everyone had questions to ask; and as all who came were reluctant to go away, the house and dooryard

were alive with the moving throng from dinner-time to sunset.

That night the church was crowded. There was not even standing-room for the late comers, and Jesse was obliged to place his friends behind him on the platform, in order to make space for a few more persons below. Even the steps leading to the choir-loft were packed with men and women.

Mary had called on the organist of the church late in the afternoon, with the music of the new song and the old one; and by the charm of her beauty had persuaded the half-reluctant young man (who had never seen Jesse) to play for them that evening.

When every seat and every foot of standing-room in the church were filled with the expectant throng, the tones of the organ rolled out above their heads. Then Jesse arose to listen to the song of the Spirit he adored; for though they sang of *him*, he told himself it was the Spirit in him that inspired the singing, and he listened for this new expression of their love with soul and body tremulous with emotion. The great voice of Mary touched and caressed the voice of the organ, and the lesser voices mingled with hers.

“Before the young bird breaks the shell,
It has no voice for song,
No dream of all the winds will tell
When summer days are long.
Before we heard our Master's word,
And broke our soul's dark shell,
We knew no more than that young bird
Of all that life can tell.

“Under the ground the roots lie warm,
And wait the quickening hour
When Spring shall call them, and transform
Their sap to leaf and flower.
Your souls have slept through many springs,
But God has kept them warm;
And now the love our Master brings
Shall wake you and transform.

"O dwellers in the busy world,
Your toils and tears are vain;
From birth to death your souls are whirled
Around the wheel of pain.
But now our Master, armed with might,
Shall change you and the world,
And round the Spirit's wheel of light
Your souls will yet be whirled."

There was a charm, like that of childhood, in the naïve lines of this untaught singer, Anna Martin, with their quaint conceits and nature images—the spontaneous expression of a simple heart, which found its parallels for spiritual emotions in the every-day experiences of the farm and the woodland. Almost everyone in the great audience realised that this was a song composed for the occasion, and the sublime daring of so exalting a man of their own time aroused in them a surprised admiration. Before their minds had time to react, to doubt, to question, Jesse began to teach them. He said:

"To be fearless, and free from anxiety, is the a, b, c, of faith.

"Doubt and anxiety are spendthrifts that waste the substance of the soul.

"That man who through all the changes of life, in fortune and misfortune, pain and pleasure, strife and peace, preserves an even faith, shall be untouched by change, misfortune, pain and strife.

"Until you can hear the melody of life in the raucous cries of the market-place and in the roar of the field of battle, know that your ears are not attuned to the eternal harmony.

"When you are unconcerned as to the outcome of the battle, and yet fight valiantly, know that the battle is going your way; for either way is your way, when you are one with the will of Life.

"What you take for cries of pain and pleasure from the lips of your fellow men, are really the tones of the immortal mass which Life plays upon the organ of Eternity. But if, in your absorption in the music, you neglect

to still one cry of pain which may be stilled, then will a discord mar the harmony.

"Fear nothing. If the hand of the disciple trembles when he knocks at the door of wisdom, the door will not be opened. Only he who can take, shall have.

"You can never look God in the face so long as you fear the eye of the Devil, his opposite.

"He who fears anything, even his own failure, has not learned the powers that lie in the awakened soul.

"It is only when the mind is darkened by anxiety that one sees adverse omens.

"A lion in the daytime is far less terrible than a common wildcat in the night.

"Accept every disappointment as the promise of some other attainment—for the balance must be preserved.

"He who has faith in the Spirit will not be disturbed by the shifting appearances of matter. A man who does not live his religion does not believe his religion.

"Know that the mountain whose cloud-crowned height is the goal of your aspiration, is based on the rock which so cruelly tears your feet.

"He who is afraid of anything can never face the dragon of evil and set his heel upon it.

"He shall succeed who does not fear to fail. He shall attain who would sacrifice the attainment. He shall live who is not afraid to die.

"Fearlessness, guided by caution, will finally unveil all the guarded secrets of Nature and of God.

"Life is a nettle that, touched too carefully, will sting and irritate the flesh; but fearlessly and firmly grasped, is harmless as a rose-leaf.

"You who believe in the power and wisdom of the Spirit, fear not to put your faith to the trial. A golden truth is of no real value to a man until he has tested it with the acid of his own experience.

"If your faith in the Spirit were as great as your faith in matter, you would accumulate spiritual treasures and touch the souls of men.

"Do not fear the surface-judgments of your fellow beings. He who is too careful never to seem ridiculous, will never trust himself to be sublime.

"The world is not moved by rules of conduct; it is moved by faith.

"You sow and plant in the spring, and wait long months for the harvest; how much greater should your faith be in those spiritual seeds which can neither rot in the ground nor be eaten by crows.

"And do not be discouraged when you seem to have made a mistake. Nature is more experienced than you, yet she produces many a crooked tree and blights many a harvest.

"Perseverance is the cord which holds together the pearls of endeavour. Without it they are scattered along the highway of life, and are lost to the owner."

He told these people of Capronville, as he always told his audiences, of the Spirit dwelling in their souls, the Power of which their lives were the expression. He compared the Spirit to a candle-flame, their souls to the light, their minds to the wick, their bodies to the wax which is consumed.

"Be not surprised when I say that your souls are the light of the Spirit's flame. Your souls are one with the flame, one with the Spirit, *wherever the Spirit is expressed*. As fire is latent in all matter, so is the Spirit; and as fire can express itself only through something which burns, so the Spirit can express itself as soul-light upon the earth only through the mind of beings. Oh, little do you realise the power and wonder of yourselves! You are really one with the Spirit—with God—and God is one.

"The pleasures and pains, the struggles and attainments of the many are only the passing experiences of the One; and in order better to understand the existence of that One, we call it God. But it is really ourself.

"God and the soul are one. What the soul perceives through the senses is the many.

"If the One is eternal, and you are the One, then must you be eternal.

"The Spirit is everywhere, either latent or expressed. Wherever you find what seems to be a void, look deeper: you have found a room in the house of God.

"Look for the still place in the centre of the world's confusion: God is there.

"They who think only with the material surface of

their minds may say that all this talk about the Spirit is unreal. But what is reality? *Reality is the power which holds appearances together, and that power is God—the Spirit.*"

The audience was utterly motionless, gazing up at him. It was not only that his words excited their imaginations; but the man himself convinced them by his very presence. To use his own simile of the candle, his mind was a wick of many strands, which fed so well the flame of the Spirit that his light was as the light of a myriad lesser souls, illuminating everything within the radius of its effulgence.

They had no idea of how long he stood there talking to them; it might have been half an hour, it might have been two hours. He impressed upon them the importance of giving to spiritual things the first place in their lives, of relinquishing many worldly things which crowded out the soul. He said:

"A pint cup will hold only a pint. If you fill your day with the petty business of time, there is no room left for the business of Eternity.

"When you say, 'I want' a thing, stop and consider which is the 'I' that wants it—the eternal or the non-eternal. Then act accordingly as you desire the greater or the lesser life."

At the end of the sermon the choir sang again—their first song, ending:

"For our souls have found the clime
Where the lilies of the Spirit
Blossom in the winter-time."

He dismissed them with the benediction he had first used in Nashburgh: "May the Spirit which never sleeps awake you to a realisation of its invisible presence."

The last word was hardly spoken when an old man in one of the front pews began to scream wildly, throwing his arms in the air and jumping up and down. He was the father of one of the leading men in Capronville, and for many years had been considered a quiet and harmless fanatic, being permitted even to go alone about the village.

Save for his occasional muttered conversations with some imaginary companion, he was little different from other old fellows seen daily about the streets.

When he began to scream in the church his friends tried to restrain him; but he only cried the louder, pointing to Jesse and asking in a terrified voice if he had come to kill him; declaring also that he knew who Jesse was, a holy man, sent by God.

The son of the afflicted one felt Jesse's touch upon his arm.

"Let me approach your father."

"He has never been like this before," the man declared, looking with troubled, apologetic eyes into the faces of his neighbours.

"Nor will he ever be like this again," said Jesse. "Do not fear."

He laid his hands upon the violent man, who immediately became quiet; he spoke some words to him in a low voice, unheard by the others, and the tortured expression of the rolling eyes gave place to a calm, clear look. Bewildered by the sudden return of a consciousness long lost, the old man gazed at Jesse.

"I seem to have been in a dream," he said, "and you awoke me. I remember—I half remember—something you said while you stood up there behind the pulpit. Won't you tell me the words again?"

Jesse repeated the benediction he had given: "May the Spirit which never sleeps awake you to a realisation of its invisible presence."

"That's it," said the old man. "I think the Spirit must have awakened in me."

His family and friends were astonished. They had not seen him look like this, nor speak like this, for more than ten years. Indeed, he had never looked nor spoken quite as he did now: for something had gone out from Jesse's soul and had been accepted by his soul.

"What is this man?" the people asked each other. "What power dwells in him, that the sick and the insane are healed by his touch?"

A little later Jesse was standing in the vestibule of the church, still surrounded by eager questioners who would

not let him go, when a middle-aged man approached on whose face was a look of purposeful intentness which singled him out immediately for Jesse's attention.

"What is it?" he asked, bending his head to look at the man, who was of short stature.

"It's my old gardener, who is sick," was the reply. "He has worked for me faithfully seven years, and now he lies helpless on his bed, and the doctors can do nothing for him."

"I will go home with you and cure the man," said Jesse, with that simple certainty of his which seemed able to bring anything to pass.

But the gardener's master said: "I live on the other side of the town, and I do not want to trouble you to go so far. But if you will *say the word*, I know he will be cured. I employ two hundred and fifty men in my factory, and when I say that a thing shall be done, it is done. You who have authority over disease, as I have over my men, command the sickness to leave my old gardener, and it will leave him."

Jesse gazed with wonder at the man, who was the largest mill-owner in the town; and he said to those who were with him: "I have not found before, not even among those nearest to me, a faith like this!" Then he turned again to the man, who still stood waiting for him to command the disease to leave his absent servant:

"Go home. *It shall be done as you believe.*"

As Jesse left the church at that moment and the people could not question him any longer, many of them followed the factory-owner to his home, eager to see for themselves if such an incredible thing could really be. At the end of their walk (it was more than a mile, and the hour was late), they found the old gardener upon his feet, stewing a dish of meat for himself on the kitchen stove, for the women servants had gone to bed.

"How does it happen that you are up and about?" his employer asked.

"Oh! I began to feel better about half an hour ago, and I got hungry. But why are all these men here?"

They told him what had happened in the church.

"Praise God!" cried the old man, who also had faith

of his own. "Praise God for revealing Himself to a faithless generation!"

Then the people went to their homes; but they had little sleep that night for thinking of what they had seen and heard, and every man determined to go to Peter Bond's house in the early morning, for it was well known that Jesse lived there. Who was he, they questioned, *what* was he, that he could bring sick men to health, a mile away from him, by merely saying it should be so?

CHAPTER XLVII

ANDREW and Anna lingered a little behind the others on the way home. It was a warm and lovely summer night; there was no moon, but the air was like a crystal globe through which the innumerable stars shed their soft radiance. The breeze was sweet with the perfume of flowers, and there was a low hum from one of the lumber-mills where the men were working at night.

"It's less than two weeks since you and I first met each other, Anna," Andrew said, in a tone as if he were telling her some incredible thing.

"Is it really only two weeks? It seems as if we had known him for ever."

"It seems as if I had known *you* for ever."

"Perhaps you have."

"Anna!"

"Yes, Andrew . . ."

"Do you realise you're living now in my home?"

"I had thought of it, yes."

"I used to find the old house rather a lonesome place, for all the faces and voices in it; but I think now I'll never feel lonely again, Anna, unless . . ."

She was silent—the soft singing of the lumber-mill was all the sound he heard.

"I'll never be lonely again," he went on, "unless something should separate me from you."

"As long as we both follow Jesse, we're sure to be together, aren't we?"

"Do you remember what he said that day on the road from the station to his cousin's house in Nashburgh, that if you were tired you could lean on me?"

"I remember."

"He wouldn't have said that, would he, unless he'd been willing we should think a great deal of each other?"

"I don't know. . . . How many stars there are

to-night, Andrew! You'd think a lot of new eyes had come out in the sky to watch the wonderful things that are going on in Capronville."

"What lovely things you say, Anna! Do you know, when I'm singing those songs you made, I feel as if my soul was walking alongside of yours in some strange high place—a real place, but not like anything I've ever seen in the world. Of course I can't sing like Mary, or even like John; but when I hear my voice mingled with yours—why, I don't hear their finer voices at all, but only yours and mine!"

Again she was silent, and the singing of the mill came up to them from the river.

"Won't you take my arm, Anna? The sidewalk is rather rough along here."

"Thank you, Andrew."

"You know the Master said you might lean on me when you were tired."

"He is so kind to all of us! Sometimes I feel that we ought never to think of anything, for the rest of our lives, but of helping him to do his great work."

Andrew said nothing for a little time, then he drew a deep breath. "People work better when they're happy, Anna."

"Sometimes they work very well when they're miserable," she answered. "I remember the first time I went away from home, to teach a hard school in a desolate neighborhood, I was utterly wretched; but I worked as I never worked before nor since. I had to, to keep from thinking."

"I don't like the idea of your working, Anna."

"Why, I love to work! And especially I love this work we're doing now—though it seems more like play."

"You spoke a little while ago," he said, "as if we'd all be together so long as we work for Jesse; but it isn't so. He's going to send us men away pretty soon, each in a different direction, to preach about him and the Spirit, to carry the message everywhere. I don't know how I'm ever going to preach. I can't talk well; seldom had the courage even to speak in meetings, right here at home. I told Jesse so, and what do you think he said?"

"I'd never undertake to guess what *he* said."

"He told me I'd have only to open my lips, forget myself, and think of him."

Anna pondered a moment. "Why, Andrew, isn't that the secret of all eloquence? If we forget ourselves, we can't be bashful; and if we're really full of an idea, possessed by it, we've only to open our lips and the words will come. That's how I wrote those songs for him. If I'd

e thought of myself, or feared I was going to be ridiculous, I'd never have dared to do it. I just thought of Jesse as the Master, and thought of the Spirit, and the songs came."

"What a beautiful faith you have, Anna! I believe if I could have you along with me, when I go out to preach for Jesse, I could do that very thing. Your faith would help me to forget myself, and your mind would lift mine up. Will you come with me—if he is willing?"

Her heart began to beat so loud that Andrew could hear it in the stillness of the night. He laid his hand, large and warm, over her cold little hand which rested on his arm. She looked up at him with wide, startled eyes, and then looked down again.

"Will you, Anna?"

"I . . . I don't know," she faltered, in a voice so low and fluttering it hardly reached his ear.

"May I ask Jesse if he is willing that we should be married, and then go out together to tell the world about him?"

She caught her breath, and Andrew went on:

"I love you so much, Anna. Since that first day when you came to the house in Vergennes, in that little soft grey dress, your eyes so large and shining with the wonder of the new faith that had come to you,—why, since that day I've had to bite my lips every hour to keep from telling you how dear you are to me, how wonderfully, sacredly dear. And you care for me a little, too, don't you?"

"Yes, Andrew, you know I do."

"And I may ask Jesse?"

"Yes."

"She raised her eyes again, confidingly; and he bent

and touched his lips to hers in a kiss so light it would not have crushed a rose-leaf, the very spirit of a kiss, a seal between their souls. A moment later they came to the door of the house. Jesse had already gone to his room for the night, and Andrew was obliged to wait until another time for an opportunity to ask his great question.

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CHAPTER XLVIII

EARLY in the morning, before anyone else in the house was astir, Jesse arose and went out alone into the grey dawn freshness. He felt the need to commune with the Spirit in some solitary place, far from the troubling atmosphere of the daily life of even those who were dearest to him. He could not have borne the burden of the flesh, his ethereal self could not have held together the atoms of his body, had it not been for these occasional feasts of spiritual solitude. He climbed the hill that lay to the west of the village, the hill on whose lonely height he had stood that evening at the end of May, when the young John came up to him.

He sat down on the ground facing the east and folded his hands, drawing into his nerves the electricity of the earth, into his blood the vitality of the air. Strong as he was and sustained by the constant influx of spiritual power, something went out of him with all this preaching and healing, something he needed to renew occasionally in the quiet, face to face with God. Since his day of wrestling with the Demon of Doubt upon the mountain, no questions ever troubled him as to the wisdom of his course or the justification of his personal endeavours.

"Power of the universe," he prayed, "God who is throned in my soul, whose footstool is this body I consecrate to Thee, possess and sustain this life of mine which is dedicated to the service of Thy world. Give me to bathe in the waters of that lake of peace which lies in the garden of Thy dwelling-place—the stillness at the centre of life's confusion. Without Thee I should be as a wind-blown leaf that is broken from the parent tree; without Thee I should be no more I, for Thou art the *I* in me.

"Give me to feel Thy presence within, Thine enfolding love without. Expand my brain, enlarge my heart, dwell in me *consciously*, till all men shall be aware of Thine existence by the light that shines from the windows of this

Thine house. Measureless One, who yet can occupy the smallest heart and there find room to grow! Master of earth's masters, whose wisest problems only love and charity can solve, the way to whose highest peace is through the renunciation of peace, enlighten and sustain me.

"Thou to whom each human heart is as a water-drop to the soul of the ocean, pervade and purify the hearts of those who hate, as well as those who love me. For what am I, but a channel to conduct the unwilling as well as the willing stream to the spiritual sea? Call Thou to those who rejected me, that though they despise the channel, they yet may yearn for the ocean. Make known Thy love to that heart which is most full of bitterness, that brain which is wrought with madness. Descend upon him, and rise within him, till all sense of separateness shall be crushed out between the rising and descending love.

"When I open my lips to testify of Thee, command my breath, and testify of Thyself. When I lay my hands upon a fellow being to heal him, speak Thou the word which shall arouse the will to health; give Thou the touch which shall scatter the forces of disease.

"Oh, guide these dear disciples of my faith! Fill them to overflowing with the certainty of Thy favour; reassure them every hour of the reality of the Spirit; hold them by the clinging tendrils of Thy love."

Jesse now became conscious of the presence of others behind him. Turning, he saw Peter, John, Philip and Nathan, who had been searching for him.

"Do you also come up here to pray?" he asked them. "It is well to begin the day by communing with Eternity."

"We come to find you, Master," Peter answered. "All the men of Capronville are down at the house, inquiring for you."

"It is well that they should come; but now it is also well that I should go, for I have to preach in other towns besides this one. It was for that I came out of the silent place of the spirit; for that I learned the language of mankind."

"Where do we go?" asked Peter, "and when?"

"We go to-day to Myra, where my mother and my brothers live."

In silence they descended the hill, and when still a long way off they saw the crowd gathered before Peter's house. There were young men and old men, women and little children, though the hour was early; and when the people saw Jesse, many ran forward to greet him.

"They who go out in the early morning to meet the Spirit, shall not return alone," were his first words to them.

"Show us more of your wonderful power," they cried.

"Shall I not tell you, instead, where to seek the power for yourselves?" And when he came to the place where the mass of the people stood, he told them this story:

"There was once a traveller who, as all supposed, had visited many lands and learned the secret of strange peoples. And one day the traveller appeared in the public square of a certain city, and exhibited to all men a jewel of surpassing size and lustre.

"Then each of the men of that city wished to secure for himself that jewel, for it was of great value. Some planned how they might buy it, others how they might steal it; but a few there were, a very few, who thought to ask the traveller where he had found it.

"When the excitement over the man and his jewel was at its height, he climbed upon a wall in the public square and stood there in the sight of all.

"'Oh, Traveller!' the people cried, 'show us again your jewel, for the sight of it is pleasing to us. We would see it glitter in the rays of the sun.' And they pressed about the man, reaching toward the jewel with their yearning hands, so many and so close that he could hardly preserve his balance upon the wall.

"Then, looking down with pity at the people, so many and so desirous, the man said:

"'You call me Traveller; but all the travelling I have done has been in the realm of thought, for I was born in a humble quarter of this very city, and have never been far from home. This jewel which so delights you, I found hidden deep in the common ground on which our city is built. Go you out a little way and dig, each man for himself; there is a hidden diamond for every one of you,

if you dig deep enough, and never stop until you have found the treasure. I can but point the way.' "

The people gazed at Jesse, then gazed at one another; for their perceptions were untrained in the language of symbols, and they understood his allegory but vaguely.

"Won't you tell us the meaning of the story?" one of the men found courage to ask.

"Is it not clear to you? The Traveller in the realm of thought is he who shows to men the jewel of spiritual knowledge; the city is human society; the common ground on which the city is built is the ground of the soul, wherein, if one digs deep enough, one finds for himself the hidden diamond of surpassing lustre. But one must go a little way outside the personal life, and each must dig for himself, and never rest till he has found the jewel."

"And how shall we know when we have found it?" someone asked.

"There are many ways of knowing," Jesse answered; "but the surest way is by the love that is the jewel's radiance."

CHAPTER XLIX

JESSE was to arrive unannounced at Myra with all his personal followers, as he had arrived at Nashburgh with a chosen few of them. There was no question as to limitations of hospitality; three houses at least would be open at all times to him and his, the homes of his two brothers and that of Rose Thomas.

It seemed almost incredible that only three short months of earthly time had passed since he bade farewell to his mother, going out alone to test his strength among strangers. Three months! When he left Myra he was only an obscure young house-builder, whose name was known to scarcely a score of persons outside that little village and the smaller place of his birth. Now he returned to Myra as the accepted teacher of a large group of personal disciples, the prophet and inspirer of hundreds of others, a man whom the newspapers were already celebrating, whose fame was something more than fame, whose words were beginning to change the consciousness of his time.

During the last half-hour of the railway journey Jesse sat quietly by himself, a little way from his friends, thinking of all he had passed through since he had seen his mother: The first journey to Capronville, the finding of Peter and the others, the quest of the Hermit whose testimony had done so much to raise him in the confidence of men, the sojourn on the mountain of illumination, the subsequent preaching and healing, the multitudes, the enthusiasm. Had one man ever before changed so much, effected so much, in three months? But though he fully realised the scope of his achievement, in his heart there was no pride; even to himself he said, "The Spirit has done these things," not "I have done them."

Andrew sat with Anna, a little way behind Jesse. Though his heart was surging with the desire to ask the Master's permission to marry, he could not bring himself to speak of it now; for the intensity of Jesse's meditation

built an invisible wall about him which none could pass. On a crowded railway train he could be as much alone, if he desired, as on a mountain top.

Leaving the station at Myra, they walked up the village street to the house where Mary Bethel lived with her son Henry and his young wife.

Jesse's mother was sitting on the shaded verandah, sewing in a little dress for her infant grandchild. Since dawn her thoughts had been busy with her absent son, and his last letter was hidden in her bosom. Maternal pride and anxiety struggled together in her heart. That Jesse should succeed in any work he chose to do, she accepted as a matter of course; but this mad enthusiasm, these crowds of followers, the superhuman cures of which he wrote, the stories in the newspapers, filled her with vague fear. Little things, long half-forgotten, came back to her memory: the great maturely-intelligent eyes of Jesse when he was an infant; the moonlit night when he discovered the fairies around the rose-bushes, at the age of seven; the mysterious journey to the mountain when he was a growing youth; the strange things he had said all his life, illuminating things, that sometimes made one think until thinking was pain, and sometimes lifted one on wings of fire to a place of joy unspeakable.

There was a sound of steps on the gravel walk, and she looked up and saw him.

"O my son, my dearest!"

She was in his arms, crying with gladness. She saw the men and women behind him, but for the moment could not think of them; the form of her returning son shut out the universe.

"Was the surprise too great, little Mother? I wanted to see that look of wonder on your face when you should see me."

"Have you come back to stay, Jesse?"

"Only a few days."

"And you will go away from home again?"

"Hereafter I shall never know the peace of a home with you, Mother. Hereafter my only home will be in the hearts of those who seek the Spirit."

"And these who are with you . . ."

His friends had lingered near the gate, with delicate feeling, leaving him to meet his mother alone. He now called them to him. Jim Bethel greeted his aunt affectionately, and Jesse made the others known to her. John's face was flushed with emotion as he held the hand of the little woman.

"You are wonderful and sacred to us," he said, his eyes filling. "You, the mother of our Master!"

"You call him that?" Her voice was low and tremulous.

"Surely you realise how great he is—you, his mother!"

"I have always known that he was not as others."

"If all others were like him, then God would really be clothed in the garment of humanity."

She knew not what to answer, it was all so bewildering to her; so she asked them to come into the house. Jesse's brother Henry was away at work; but his wife sat by the window, with her baby on her knee. She was a heavy and unemotional young woman, and Mary Magnus afterward confided to Anna that the sister-in-law seemed as much out of place in this gathering of the God-intoxicated followers of Jesse as a cabbage in the midst of a rose-garden. She was too stolid to be easily embarrassed, but it was evident that her slow mind was busy with a problem—the possibility of her being called upon to provide shelter and food for these friends of her husband's strange brother. Why, there were more than a dozen of them, and provisions were high that year!

"Mother," said Jesse, "are you expecting Rose Thomas this afternoon?"

"I don't think so. I saw her Sunday at church, and she didn't say anything about—Why, here she is now, hurrying up the path!"

Jesse's old teacher came and put both her hands in his. Her eyes were shining with joy.

"You have come for me?"

"Yes, Rose."

"And I may be one with these?" She looked around the group of men and women who were his closest friends.

"You shall, indeed, be one with them. Were you not the first of them, the first who promised to follow me?"

Then Rose told the story of that Sunday, more than ten years before, when Jesse had taken her to the woods to gather trailing arbutus; how his heart had been overcome with pity when he learned of her long-defeated desire for a place in the schools of Myra; how he had sprung to his feet and stood with his back to her, facing the sunset; how the golden light had leaped and quivered and burned around his body, as he hurled his will and his loving command across the distance to the minds of those who stood between her and the object of her hope. With eyes full of tears and voice husky with emotion, Rose told her story, and Mary the mother confirmed it.

"It was then I knew," declared Rose, "that he who could pity and love and *will* like that, must some day teach the world the meaning of pity, and love, and will."

"Some day," said Jesse, "some day in the near future, I will preach for you a sermon, greater than any I have given you, and its theme shall be pity and love."

"Will you not preach it here," Rose cried, "here for the people of Myra?"

"No, not here, but in Capronville, where the eyes of men and women are already alight with the awakening Spirit. It shall be a sermon which men will remember, the core of all my teaching. Love and pity! It is only through those two emotions that the human becomes divine. Will is the great commanding power, but will inspired by love is strong as the urge of the universe."

As if drawn by some call of which they were unconscious, Jesse's two brothers came to Henry's house before their working day was over. They came from opposite sides of the village, and met at the gate.

"Why, that's Jesse sitting in the window!" Fred exclaimed, as the two men strode up the walk.

"Maybe he's spent all his money and is going to be sensible and go to work again," replied Henry. "I always knew that his preaching business wouldn't pay."

When they saw the number of Jesse's companions, and learned of his intention to remain a few days in Myra and preach there, the two brothers were rather interested in the novelty of the idea, notwithstanding their disapproval of what they termed "Jesse's ambition." When Jim

Bethel, their cousin, declared himself a convert to Jesse's religion, and loudly proclaimed to the astonished Fred and Henry that their brother was a greater prophet than any in the whole Bible, they hardly knew what to say.

"Do you mean that you've *made* a religion?" asked Henry, staring at Jesse. "I didn't know that men made religions in our day."

"How *could* you be a prophet?" Fred insisted. "Why, you're only our brother, and we've known you all our lives!"

Jesse looked from Fred to Henry, half-sad, half-amused; but he made no answer.

Jim Bethel answered for him:

"Those are practically the same things I myself said to Jesse back in Nashburgh; but when I realised that he could see through bricks and boards as I can look through glass; when I saw him cure diseases by a mere touch, diseases which had been declared incurable by all the doctors; when I heard him say things that lifted me out of myself, why, then I came to realise the truth.

"What truth?" persisted Henry.

John answered him: "The truth, that God is the indwelling Spirit, and that Jesse Bethel has declared Him as none other ever did."

Mary the mother threw herself on Jesse's breast and wept.

There was to be no preaching that first night in Myra. It was decided that Jesse, John and Peter should remain at Henry's house, the other men were to lodge at Fred's, and the women with Rose Thomas; but they would all take their meals together in Henry's house. Rose would arrange for a meeting the following night in the largest church in the village.

About nine o'clock Jesse went to the room he was to occupy alone, knowing that his mother would follow. He had been more silent than usual at the evening meal, for the unbelieving eyes of his brothers and the stolid countenance of Ann Bethel, his brother's wife, were not an inspiration to the ecstatic speech habitual with him when at table. But the attitude of his companions, the way they

called him "Master" and adored him with their eyes, had not been without effect upon his family.

"I want to speak with you, Jesse," his mother said, as she timidly opened the door of his room.

"It was for that I came up here," he answered, "that we might be alone together."

Jesse blew out the lamp, and mother and son sat down by the open window. Before their eyes was the star-sprinkled summer sky, in their hearts the calm of true communion. For a little while there was no word spoken; their souls were becoming readjusted to each other after the lapse of time and tremendous experience. Then Jesse touched the silence lovingly with his low voice.

"Do you remember how we used to sit hand in hand like this on the door-step of the old house in Nashburgh, when I was a little child, and watch the stars come out in the eastern sky above old Thunder Mountain?"

"I remember, Jesse."

"One evening, in the summer after I was nine, as we sat there, you told me the story of Elijah in the days of King Ahab; how, when the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal had failed to call down fire from heaven upon their altar, Elijah made an altar of *twelve stones* and laid his sacrifice upon it, and poured twelve barrels of water over the sacrifice; then called upon the Lord, and the fire of heaven fell and consumed the sacrifice, and the altar, and licked up the water in the trench; and how, when the people saw it, they fell on their faces, crying: 'The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God.'"

There was silence for a little time, while the two looked out together at the eternal stars—the very stars that shone upon Elijah.

Then Jesse said: "Little Mother, you have seen the fire from heaven that burns in the faith of my disciples; you know of the cures I have performed, of the multitudes that follow me. *The proof of the power is the exercise of the power*, in my day no less than in the day of Elijah."

"I know, Jesse, that I have given birth to a great man, a man of a thousand years."

"If a man is a great prophet, his period is more than a thousand years."

"But, Jesse,—I am almost afraid to ask it,—what will be the end of all this?"

"A real faith has no end, Mother."

"But what of him who inspires the faith? For years I have shuddered whenever I have thought of the future in connection with you. Some sublime but terrible destiny is brooding over my best beloved, my first-born. Do you remember the day we left New York together, after my visit there? I begged you then that you would never again go near that terrible city. And I beg you now, Jesse, never to go there. Won't you promise me?"

"Have you not heard the saying, that a prophet cannot die out of Jerusalem?"

She cried out with horror; but he soothed her with his gentle voice and hand.

"Do you not remember what I said to you on the train that day, as we were borne away from New York: 'The price of the song is the singer'? When a man has done his work, it is time for him to go; and whether he lives a hundred years, or thirty, is of no consequence. My mission is to declare the truth of the Spirit, the falseness of what the world calls life. And he who shall speak the truth in a way to make men listen, will need a bodyguard of soldiers to protect him from the anger of men."

She shuddered, and drew nearer to him.

"A little while longer," he continued, "a few months, maybe a year, I shall remain among the simple men and women of this region; then I must carry my message to the great outer world which seems so terrible to you. Here I am happy; but should I remain here, the blossom of my life would never round into the fruit. Meanwhile, be content with me, and follow me wherever I go."

"I will follow you as long as we both live, and may I be the first to die, Jesse!"

"I feel it is not so to be, little Mother."

CHAPTER I

IN a little lavender-scented room in Rose Thomas's house, Mary Magnus and Anna Martin lay side by side waiting for sleep. In this communal life of theirs the privacy of separate rooms was impossible; and these two women, seemingly so unlike in everything save their devotion to one idea, had grown more and more to lean upon each other. Anna found in Mary the power, the courage, the great-heartedness which her own narrow life had lacked; and Mary found in Anna a negative, subduing influence which held her own wild nature in leash and helped her to adjust herself to the demands of a new and difficult position.

Poor Mary! Could the emotions, the thoughts, the spiritual experiences, the pain and rapture of that strange being have found expression in words, she might have made a book which would have lived as long as Jesse's faith, a human document, written like all human documents in the blood of the heart. Fragments of such a book were in existence for a little while, a journal which she carried in the locked travelling-bag that went with her everywhere; but it was afterwards destroyed, burned by her own hands, lest by some accident it should be discovered, and the revelations of her tempestuous heart be misinterpreted in a way to raise false questions round the name which shone upon its pages.

As Mary and Anna lay side by side that night waiting for sleep, Anna sighed heavily.

"What is it, little sister?" Mary's hand smoothed the hair from the girl's damp forehead. "Don't you want to tell me, little sister?"

"You know about—Andrew?"

"We all know, dear. You wear your secret on your faces, you and Andrew. But why do you sigh so heavily to-night? Often, lying beside you, I have heard you sigh with happiness, and my heart has quivered with sympa-

thetic joy in your joy; but to-night there is another spirit in your sighing. Has something happened between you, some lovers' quarrel?"

"Oh, no, Mary! How *could* we quarrel? You didn't mean that, did you?"

"Of course not; though I've heard of such things, dear little gentle Anna."

"You're laughing, Mary. But, somehow, there's such a sad tone in your laughter; it seems almost as if there were tears in it."

"I was laughing to cheer you, little one, though you haven't told me yet why you were sighing."

"I am sad because Andrew is so sad. The Master won't give his consent for us to marry. Andrew found a way to be alone with him a little while this evening, and asked him if we couldn't marry, so I could go with Andrew when the Master sends the men out separately to teach the faith. And the Master told him that unless he could gladly leave me and go out alone to tell the truths of the Spirit to unbelievers, he didn't deserve to have me."

"So that is why you sighed, little sister?"

"Yes. And he says that he will be so unhappy all alone away from me, that he can't preach."

"That isn't so, Anna. Andrew will work all the better for the pain in his heart. Jesse understands these things. Why, if Andrew's heart were broken; if he had no longer the faintest hope of any earthly joy; if he had sacrificed everything that makes life dear; if life had stripped him so bare and frozen him so with pain that he had to cry aloud to the Spirit for fire to warm him and a veil to cover his nakedness from the mockery of the world. why, if he could suffer like that, he would preach—Anna, he would preach—yes, *preach as well as I sing!*"

"Mary, you frighten me!"

For Mary had suddenly sat up, her body tense, her voice ringing bell-like, triumphant, in the very ecstasy of despair, as she made this fiery declaration of her own greatness. Little Anna was dazed. She had sung with Mary and written songs with her; had seen how she made every being near her happy by her utter forgetfulness of self; had slept by her side at night; but not until this

moment had she realised the latent, repressed power of her.

"Anna," Mary's voice had softened now to a tone befitting the lateness of the hour, "if you really love Andrew you should rejoice that the metal of his soul is going to be tested in the fire. To you and to him the decision of the Master seems hard, even cruel, maybe; but I am sure that in denying you and Andrew he suffers more *for* you than you can possibly suffer for yourselves. Believe me, Anna, even we who know Jesse best have but a weak perception of the greatness of his love for us. He makes us suffer sometimes, but then he suffers, too; for he loves us in God's own way. We need never be ashamed of letting him see our weaknesses and faults, because his pity and his love are equal; and though we should fall down every day on the path of our duty to him and to the Spirit, he would always be there to pick us up and to wipe the mud from us, without any superior fear of soiling his own pure garment. Being with him, our spirits are *forced* beyond their normal growth, like plants in a hothouse. Maybe the plants suffer when they grow so fast; but isn't it worth while for them?"

"You give me courage, Mary. I'm going to try to be great and strong like you."

"I great? I strong? Why, I'm the weakest and most utterly unworthy of all those whom his great heart takes pity on!"

"*He* doesn't say so."

"Why, has he ever spoken of me?"

"Yes, this afternoon, when you were out in the kitchen helping his brother's wife to get the supper. Rose Thomas and I and the other women were selfish and wanted to stay near him, because he was saying lovely things; but you went out, without a thought of yourself, and made cakes for him and the rest of us to eat. (Your old housekeeper told me in Vergennes that you had never raised a finger to work in your own house since you were born.) After the Master had told us a beautiful story, John said (he's always thinking of you): 'What a pity that Mary should miss that!' The Master looked up, with that gentle smile which would make any of us willing to die for him, and said:

' Mary never misses anything I say, whether she hears it or not; for she has come nearer than any of you to that self-forgetting love which is the source of all wisdom and all purity. She is the greatest among you, and you let her do your cooking. . . . No, do not call her in now, nor take her place in serving; for when I eat of the food she has prepared, I am nourished with the very essence of devotion.'

This was too much for the taut heart-strings of the woman disciple. Her whole being suddenly relaxed, and she wept as pale little Anna had never seen anyone weep before. Whispering, "Oh, Mary, Mary!" Anna wept too, her soul being carried on in the rush of the greater woman's emotion. Mary, unconscious of her physical strength in the abandon of her tears, crushed the slender form of the girl until she cried out with pain.

"Oh, Anna! Forgive me, child! What a brute I am to hurt you!" And Mary got out of the bed and walked about the room, tossing her head from side to side like a wounded animal.

"Mary, sister, please come back. You didn't hurt me, really you didn't."

"Don't mind me, little one. I'm not often such a mad thing. I've never behaved like this before, have I?" And Mary broke into sobs again.

Anna came and wound her loving arms about the shaken body of her friend. "Tell me, Mary, what it is that hurts you so. I've never loved any woman so much as you, never anybody, except Andrew; for the feeling we all have for the Master is a different kind of love, like that we give to God. Won't you tell me?"

"I can't."

"I've often wondered, Mary, why you never seem to think of the personal happiness, of love for yourself, as other women do. And I've wondered sometimes if perhaps you hadn't loved some man very much in the past, and he was dead."

"You have thought that?"

"Yes."

Mary was silent, but she stroked Anna's hair as one strokes the hair of a little child. She did not sob any

more. "Let us go back and lie down," she said, after awhile. "I don't want to make you ill with my wild behaviour."

They lay down again quietly, side by side, and Anna went to sleep; but Mary remained wide awake, thinking and thinking, until the grey summer dawn came ghost-like through the window.

CHAPTER LI

EVEN the brothers of Jesse were convinced by the enthusiasm of that first public meeting in Myra—not that he was a prophet; but, as they expressed it, that he was going to make a success of preaching. Wild rumours of remarkable cures performed in other places by the strangely beautiful young man who used to build houses in Myra had been floating about the village for some days; and the last twelve hours before the meeting were not spent by Rose Thomas in sitting for instruction at the feet of her new master. She spent those hours in going from house to house, from store to store, from office to office, carrying the news that he would preach that night, repeating the stories of his miraculous healing, and exciting the imagination of her fellow townsmen. There were also forty devoted children ready to run errands for her and to carry letters to those whom she had not time to visit in person.

“The test of devotion is service,” Jesse had told her one time in the past when he had been privileged to do a kindness for her, and she had never forgotten the words. They were the seeds which came to fruit in this meeting. There would be plenty of time in the future for her to enjoy his presence.

The church was crowded. After the sermon, which gave the substance of his spiritual teaching, the power of faith, the indwelling presence of God, the love of human beings for each other, the gentle beauty of forgiveness, he told them this allegory:

“There was once a wise king who determined to seek out the most perfect man in the realm and make him counsellor; so he sent emissaries to the north and the south, the east and the west, with instructions to inquire diligently for any man who might be regarded by all his neighbours as being pre-eminent in virtue.

"The first emissary returned, and said to his royal master: 'It is hard to find a man of whom all his neighbours approve; but in the town of A. there is a rich merchant who is noted for alms-giving.' 'And he remains rich?' the king answered. 'He is not the one I seek.'

"The second emissary returned, and said: 'Most noble King, I cannot find any man who is unqualifiedly approved by everyone; for he who admits a virtue in his neighbour with one breath, regrets or censures a weakness in him with the next breath. But in the little town of B. there is a man who lives on insufficient food and sleeps in a fireless attic, that his only son may enjoy the luxuries of college-life in the city.' 'That man is fostering the demon of selfishness in the heart of his son,' the king made answer; 'he is not the one I seek.'

"The third emissary returned to the king, and said: 'Eminent Sire, there is not a virtuous man in your kingdom, judging by the testimony of neighbours. But in the town of C. there is a minister of the established church who preaches sermons so eloquent that poor people deprive themselves of the necessaries of life, in order to support him in a state befitting his great eloquence and learning.' 'The state befitting a true prophet of God is poverty and humility,' said the king; 'he is not the one I seek.'

"The fourth emissary returned, and said: 'Your Majesty, I have travelled over all the western part of your kingdom, and I cannot find any man whose neighbours do not censure him for something. If a man is rich, they call him a defrauder of the poor; if he is poor, they call him lazy and inefficient; if a man is courageous and defends his rights, they call him a browbeater; if he is gentle and forgiving of injuries, they call him a fool.'

"'Have you, perchance, found any fools upon your journey?' the king inquired.

"'I have found that sort of fool,' the emissary answered. 'In the town of D. there is a learned doctor much censured by his neighbours for what they call his laxity in moral judgment. His wife deserted him for another man, and he gave her a house to live in when she was afterward in need. His brother defrauded him of half the inheritance, and he refused to prosecute him. His daughter

lost her virtue and wandered far away, and he sought her without ceasing until he found her and brought her home, where he sheltered her until she died. His dearest friend betrayed his trust, then went, self-murdered, to a dishonoured grave; and this learned doctor was the only mourner who followed the coffin. Never before, O King! have I found unanimity of judgment regarding any man; but all the neighbours of this man declare that he is a fool.'

"The king took a great jewel from his finger and placed it in the hand of the fourth emissary, saying: 'Go find the man and give to him this jewel, then tell him that he has been made counsellor to the king. He is the one I seek.'"

Before Jesse's listeners had recovered from their surprise at this strange teaching, he told them another allegory:

"There was a man who had five sons, and they had each received from Heaven a peculiar gift. The first had received the gift of valour; the second had a great mind which joyed to wrestle with deep questions; the third possessed a talent for amassing money; the fourth had a genius for invention; and the fifth was gifted only with a loving heart.

"And the man had great pride in the first four sons, and sent them out into the world to prove their gifts; but the fifth remained at home, because he would not leave his father all alone.

"The first son became a soldier; but so great his valour that it touched the border of foolhardiness, and he was shot in his first battle, neither returning to the father nor proving his gift.

"The second son studied in the schools till he knew all that they could teach him, and his mind wrestled with life's problems. But the harder he thought, the deeper became the mystery surrounding all things, and the more impossible seemed a final answer to any question. The great brain was sterile by reason of its over-activity, and the second son could never prove his gift nor justify the pride of the father.

"The third son, with the money-making gift, came

nearer to the goal than his brothers; but so intense was his passion for gain that it overshot the mark, and he was ruined and disgraced through seeking to possess himself of more than one man's share of a treasure which belonged to many. So his gift proved a curse to himself and to the father.

"The fourth son, with the genius for invention, became so fearless in the pursuit of knowledge through experiment that he was killed by an explosion of his own chemicals, and left the world no wiser for his gift.

"The fifth son, he who was gifted with a loving heart, and in whom the father had no pride, pursued the even way of life in his native village. His love of every created thing endeared him to all children, and the love of the children endeared him to their parents, till there was hardly a man or woman in the town who would not have declared that he was their closest friend. When he would leave his father alone for awhile, there were a hundred houses open to him; whenever he walked abroad, he was hailed with a chorus of welcoming voices. As the years went by, he who was so well-beloved was given the highest position in the town; and the fame of his loving-kindness spread beyond the borders of his native village, and he was given the highest position in the county, then the highest position in the State.

"And the surprise and wonder of the father grew with every step of his fifth son along the larger path; for he in whom the father had no pride had become the pride of a million strangers."

These were the stories Jesse told the people of Myra at the conclusion of his first sermon. Then, as they gathered round him to be cured, he commanded a bent man to stand upright, a stammering tongue to speak with ease, a woman with nervous blindness to see steadily. He was followed home by half the people of the village; and the next day and the next they constantly surrounded him, so that he had no rest nor any time for quiet converse with his friends.

On again he preached to them, this time in a public hall, and many declared themselves believers in his doctrine

of love and faith and spiritual power. But when they asked him for some token of their membership in the new church, he said:

"The seal of the sons of the Spirit is written in fiery characters upon the heart.

"You are the God of your own seeking, and you are the church wherein His worship must be celebrated.

"But do not think that by loving himself a man shall find his hidden God. If God did not love the universe instead of Himself, both God and the universe would cease to be.

"If you see the universe in one side of a balance and your God in the other, behold, they shall weigh the same.

"This personality of yours, this self of flesh and passion which seems so precious to you, is not your real Self; it is only one of the many, many tools used by the real Self on its great masterpiece—the human soul.

"If you ever really understand yourself, you will know all there is to know about God.

"You are the only interpreter who can translate the hieroglyphics of your own experience.

"If you cannot find God in the solitude of your chamber, it is useless to look for Him elsewhere. If He does not speak to you in the silence of the midnight, you will never hear the Voice from between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies.

"Your mortal lives shall fall to the ground like leaves in the autumn; but your life is the life of the Tree that renews its leaves in the springtime. Think of yourself as the Tree and not the leaves.

"Realise that every human being is a centre of divine experience; that from the eyes of the humblest man God looks out and questions the world.

"Do not regard with scorn the meanest human creature. His house of flesh is good enough for God to dwell in.

"Could you read every secret written in the heart of the simplest man, even yourself, you would be wiser than Solomon and all the Magi.

"You and your brother are not one; but the One is in both of you, and each of you is It."

When Jesse returned to Capronville, his mother, his two

brothers and Rose Thomas went with him. Not that Fred and Henry Bethel accepted the religion of their great brother or believed in his mission; but the force of the tide of popular enthusiasm carried them along with the crowd of Jesse's followers. Though they would never commit themselves to a declaration of belief in his mastership, they found a certain satisfaction in being called "the brothers of the Master." To each other they expressed a willingness to sacrifice personal interest by leaving their work for a time, that they might be near Jesse in case he should need them; they would stand ready to advise with him and guide him by their judgment and common sense, should his excessive zeal lead him into any trouble. When they listened to his exalted utterances, when they witnessed his cures and felt the wild enthusiasm of the crowds surrounding him, their faces wore a look of deep concern. They felt that a great responsibility had been thrust upon them, and they were ready and willing to do their duty. They did not say these things to their mother; for there was something in her worship-lighted eyes which kept them silent—out of consideration for her, they would have said, had they been called upon to explain their reticence.

Mary Bethel herself was living in a dream. She seemed to have forgotten the danger that by his own admission threatened her beloved son. She saw him adored almost as a divine being, she heard his kindling words, she gazed at his illumined face and lived in the glory surrounding him. He had been able to lift her on the wings of his own imagination, to fire her with the ecstasy of his faith. And if sometimes she awoke in the night with a gasp of indefinable dread, if her pillow was wet with tears in the lonely dawn, at the first look of Jesse's quiet, compelling eyes the shadows vanished.

CHAPTER LII

NEAR the village of Capronville was a beautiful lake. Jesse went out there with his friends soon after their return from Myra, and many people followed them. Often during the summer and fall he was to go to that pine and hemlock bordered lake, to bathe his soul in the silence. The Spirit, that seems hardly able to make known its presence in the noise and confusion of civilised communities, in the quiet ether-washed spaces can hold communion with the consciousness of man.

On the evening of their first day at the lake, a strange thing happened. Jesse had dismissed the crowd of people who had followed him thither, and had also sent his friends back to the village, keeping with him only Peter and Andrew, James and John. The five were sitting on the margin of the water as the night shadows came down. During the afternoon he had told some of his illuminating allegories, and had cured a child of a violent epileptic seizure by one touch of his hand. He seemed rather weary as they sat by the water. There was a slight chill in the air, and the foliage of the trees behind them waved softly in the rising wind.

"Peter," Jesse said, "there is a large boat moored on the other side of that point of land to the right. The owner is coming down there at this moment; and if you go and ask him, he will lend it to you for a few hours. I wish to go out on the water."

From where they sat neither boat nor man was visible.

"I will go, Master," Peter answered, rising to his feet. "But when we passed that way a little while ago there was no boat there."

"The boat is painted white," Jesse went on, his eyes looking far off into the dark sky. "It is a large flat-bottomed boat, and on the stern is the name 'Valiant' in black letters."

Peter was too much astonished by the announcement to make reply. His eyes were wide, his step quick and de-

terminated, as he turned from them and went out across the wooded point of land. The sound of his footsteps died gradually away into the silence. No one spoke. Jesse still sat gazing out across the dark water.

"There's someone coming round the point in a boat," John said presently, in a voice which seemed to start and tremble at the shock of its own sound.

"It's Peter!" James rose suddenly to his feet.

"You seem surprised," said Jesse.

"It doesn't happen every day," James answered, "that a man looks up into the sky and tells me what is taking place out of his sight and mine. I am surprised, Master."

"No, it does not happen every day; but it might happen any hour. Must the messenger of the Spirit always justify his claim by the testimony of the wonder-worker? It may be so. Men who accept the marvel of the sunrise without comment, exclaim at the sight of a double-yolked egg. That I can see what is passing out of sight is far less marvellous than the fact that I can see at all. But if you care for the testimony of the wonder-worker, listen, James: In the inside pocket of your coat, over your heart, is a folded paper, a letter addressed to a friend of yours in a far place. You have written to him before about me, and in this letter you are trying to give him some idea of my teaching. You have told him of the presence of the indwelling Spirit, the power of faith, the beauty of gentleness, and toward the end are advising him as to the discipline for the weak and erring human self. You say:

"As to control, begin with the tongue; for he who can control the tongue is master of the whole body. By means of the tongue you can effect more good than with a thousand loaves of bread, and you can do more harm with the tongue than with a whip of scorpions. It is no worse to do evil to a man than it is to speak evil of him. A king by his word may seal the doom of a nation; by his word an humble man may make himself an outcast. A wise man guards his lips as a nation guards its treasure vaults; a fool scatters words as a drunkard scatters coin, and wakes to find himself impoverished. Falsehood and truth may be lived, as well as spoken; but no one who lives

a lie can long refrain from telling lies. Speak no harsh word to any man; for he whose words are always gentle will some day find that he has none but gentle feelings in his heart. These things our Master has taught me.' Thus the letter ends."

In bewildered silence James took from his pocket a folded paper and handed it to Jesse. There was not light enough to read by at that hour.

"And those words are written in the letter, James?" The voice of John shook as he questioned his brother.

"Word for word, as I wrote the last page of the letter, he has repeated it; and no eye but mine has seen the writing."

Jesse laid his arm lovingly around the shoulder of John's elder brother, saying:

"A few days only have you been with me; but already you are giving to others the blessings you have received. You have learned instinctively the great lesson I am always striving to teach: That no man can really possess anything until he has given it away; that a truth shared is a truth verified."

"Never again will I be surprised at anything the Master does," James promised, "though he turn back the tides of the ocean."

Jesse gave him a strange look across the gathering shadows. "We shall see," he said.

They heard a grating sound upon the pebbles of the shore. It was Peter with the boat. Jesse stepped in, and the others followed, Andrew taking his place with Peter at the oars.

"Row out into the middle of the lake," said Jesse, "and rest there between the water and the sky until I tell you to return. I am tired, and would sleep on the bosom of the waves." He laid himself down in the prow of the boat, and was fast asleep before they were ten rods from shore.

"This must be the middle of the lake," said Andrew, after a time, "though it's now so dark that no man could tell."

"There's a storm coming," Peter muttered. "I wonder how long he will sleep."

"A strange thing happened while you were away," John said to him.

"Was it any stranger than the errand he sent me on? The boat was there, just as he said, and the name 'Valiant' is painted in black letters across the stern."

"It was equally strange," John answered, and told him the story. They were not rowing any longer, and there was no sound save the dual whisper of the wind and the waves. John's voice rose clear and full as he repeated from memory the more striking sentences from the letter so miraculously revealed to them.

"That is even more extraordinary than his seeing the boat," Peter assented. "I wonder how long he will sleep."

There was a brief silence, broken by a little start and a stifled cry from John.

"What's the matter?"

"Only a wave that wet my hand."

"The wind is rising," James observed.

"He said we were to stay here until he told us to return." Peter's voice was higher-pitched than usual.

At that moment there was a rumble of thunder in the distance.

"I wonder how long he will sleep." It was John who said it this time.

The call of the thunder was answered across the black sky; the wind shrieked suddenly, and Peter's hat was blown from his head and whirled away into the night.

"Do sit still!" John pleaded. "You're rocking the boat."

"I didn't move," declared Peter, "though the wind blew my hat away."

"It's the waves that are rocking the boat," said James. He seemed more at ease than the others, and his voice was steadier.

Andrew, the silent one, now spoke: "Do you really think he will sleep much longer?"

"God knows." Peter answered.

"Yes, *God* knows. We hadn't thought of that." It was James again.

A rush of wind slapped their faces with foam; a wave

went over the edge of the boat, partly filling it with water and wetting them to the skin.

"Hadn't we better go ashore?" John cried.

"The shore? Where is the shore? The wind has tossed us about till we don't know north from south."

"How peacefully he sleeps!" said James, "like a little child in its mother's arms."

"Suppose we should all drown!" Peter's voice was full of fear. "Would we ever be forgiven for letting *him* drown?"

"He told us to rest here between the water and the sky," James reminded him.

Peter leaned forward. "Let us wake him."

"What for?" James asked. "Do you think he will row you ashore?"

"He can tell us where the shore is. He found the boat, and read the name 'Valiant.'"

Another wave went over the edge. The thunder rattled and roared in the hills.

"If it would only lighten so we could see the shore!"

"Are you afraid, John?" his brother asked.

"Yes, terribly afraid."

"The name of the boat is 'Valiant,' little brother."

"He loves me. He will forgive me for waking him."

And John leaned over and softly touched the face of the sleeping man.

"Master, Jesse, wake! Please wake! The wind is terrible; we shall drown. It is I, John, and we are all afraid!"

Then occurred the strangest thing they had ever seen or ever would see, a thing the recital of which was to be listened to with wonder or denied with scoffing by generation after generation; a thing occurred that would ever seem incredible to those who had not seen it, and that made the men who saw it almost doubt the testimony of their senses.

Jesse stood up in the boat, and the first flash of lightning which rent the darkness at that moment lit his face with unearthly radiance. So calm he seemed, and strong, as if an angel had appeared to comfort and save him. In another second the flash of light was gone, and his voice came to them in the darkness.

"Why are you afraid, my children? Where is the faith that makes the soul of the true disciple valiant as a lion among dangers? Does the Spirit sleep when the messenger of the Spirit takes his rest?"

There was silence, for no one dared to answer him—a silence in which even the wind seemed to listen for what was coming next. Then over the troubled waters Jesse's voice rose in a long, vibrant, bugle-clear command, such a call as the Creator of the universe might have sounded over the waters of chaos when the hour was come to harmonise them,—one ringing, potent tone, which reverberated in endless waves of sound through the startled air and was lost among the surrounding hills.

Slowly the wind died away, the boat ceased rocking, and over the waters of the lake there gradually settled a great calm. Then without a word, as if what he had done were a simple action of every day, Jesse returned to his former place in the prow, and soon was sleeping peacefully as before.

The men breathed deep; they coughed and cleared their throats from sheer nervousness. The night was still so dark they could not see one another's faces. It seemed impossible that he could really be asleep again so soon. John whispered softly:

"Master."

There was no answer.

"Don't wake him again," James said, "though there are several inches of water in the bottom of the boat."

In moving his foot, Andrew hit something which gave forth a flat, metallic sound; it was an old tin pail, and with it he began to bail the water they had shipped in the storm. This commonplace labour relieved the tension of their feelings, and gave them time to pull themselves together. John's teeth were chattering, but not with cold; and Peter was rubbing his hands together, as one might who went gloveless in midwinter. Finally he spoke:

"Now what sort of man is this, who can order a hurricane to lie down, as a man might order a dog!"

"Did you see his face at the moment of the lightning flash?"

"I shall see it till I die."

Not another word was uttered during the hour that

Jesse slept. When he awoke, the sky was lighter, the thunder-storm had passed round them, and a few stars were out between the clouds. They rowed back to the place where they had taken the boat, then walked from the lake to Capronville, arriving at Peter's house a little before midnight. There were few words spoken on the way home; but before they separated for the night, Jesse said to them:

"Which is the greater marvel, think you, that a man should quiet the waters of a small lake, or that he should rouse the mighty waves of aspiration on the sea of human consciousness?"

The next morning Jesse was invited to meet the clergy of the town in consultation, at the house of the most influential of them. He sent back word that they should come to him, and after some delay they came, six men in smooth black broadcloth. He received them surrounded by his friends. Many poor people of the village were also there, and Peter's youngest child sat upon Jesse's knee during the whole interview. The mother would have reproved the child and carried it away, but Jesse restrained her.

"Children are nearest to the Spirit," he said; "they remember much that the wisest of men and women have forgotten. He whose heart is open to the Spirit as a little child's, shall dwell in the Spirit wherever he may be."

"By the Spirit I suppose you mean the Almighty," said the oldest of the ministers, a tall, spare, beardless man, with a narrow mouth.

"The Spirit *is* almighty," replied Jesse.

"They tell me that you call yourself the mouthpiece of the Spirit," said the youngest of them, a florid, amiable man, who seemed to regard the whole matter as rather amusing than otherwise. He was an up-to-date minister, with a liberal following, and was noted for his skill in oratory and out-door sports.

"It is a great responsibility," Jesse answered, "a grave responsibility, to speak for God to the hearts of men."

"Yes, yes, to be sure."

"I am told that you cure hypochondriacs by suggestion," said another of the men, one who had formerly failed as a physician but had succeeded in the church. "You must have a very powerful will."

"The spiritual will is all-powerful," was Jesse's answer.

"Pardon me," said the fourth minister, "but by whom were you ordained?"

"By the Holy Spirit, and I am the servant of Its will."

"And how is that will made known to you?"

"It is the Power of which I am the expression."

"The possibilities of self-deception——" began another; but Jesse interrupted him:

"He who has really sacrificed his life to the life of the Spirit, has no longer a personal self which can be deceived."

The sixth man was a mild and gentle being, with eyes as clear as those of the child in Jesse's arms. His was a poor church, and his broadcloth was shiny at the seams.

"I see no harm in you," he said simply, shaking his whitening head.

"Nor I in you," replied Jesse. "He who carries the water of the Spirit to the poor and humble shall drink himself from the immortal fountain."

The child in Jesse's arms had not moved before, but it now put out a little rosy hand and touched the hand of the shabby preacher, whose eyes slowly filled with tears.

After a few more questions the ministers all rose together and went away; and the last sound they heard as they passed through the outer door was Jesse's voice in loving converse with the little child.

CHAPTER LIII

IT was in a large field, lying outside the village of Capronville, that Jesse gave his promised sermon on love and pity, transcendent themes, which none may fully understand who has not burned the dross of separateness from out his heart. The crowds that gathered round him were larger every day; they came from all the near-by towns, and even from greater distances, their souls answering the call of his soul. It was a cool and pleasant Sunday morning, and he spoke in the open field because there was no church in the town large enough to hold a tenth-part of the multitude that pressed to hear him.

"He who would read the Book of Immortal Life," he began, "must learn its alphabet, and the first letter is Love.

"I have said that man may become one with God; but until you love all other men *as* yourself, you shall not become that God who dwells in the centre of all things.

"I not only say, love your enemies; I say, understand your enemies. He who shall truly understand another shall love him as himself.

"Think of all unawakened men and women as being little children, whom you can love and teach.

"It is by pitying and understanding the weaknesses of others, that we transcend them.

"Does a criticism of yourself arouse your resentment? Resentment is a confession of weakness. An impregnable tower needs no defence.

"Our enemies are often of more service to us than our friends; for they point out the faults which we may remedy.

"Do not complain because others misunderstand you, but look back over your life. Would you *dare* that they should fully understand you? Yes? *Think again.*

"If, when a man speaks evil of you, you look deep into your own heart, you may find that you have been tempted to do that very evil; so forgive the speaker.

"But *never say of others what you would not wish them to say of you.* He who can follow this injunction is on the road to mastery of self.

"If your love of God does not include all his creatures, God will never be aware of your love.

"Until you think of the welfare of all beings as an ambitious man thinks of his own welfare, know that you have not made certain your own welfare.

"When you can think of your own misfortune and the misfortune of your enemy as being of equal importance, then shall you be beyond the reach of misfortune.

"It is not by thought, or even by sacrifice, that a man shall find his way to the spiritual place; it is by love that he shall find his way.

"Let us pray for that understanding sympathy which shall make even the unfortunate acts of our fellow beings seem to be *our* acts, to be given the same pardon we extend to our own failures in living the perfect life.

"Would you know how to be sure whether an action is right or wrong? There is a test: Is it inspired by unselfish love?

"The greatest exaltation carries with it one supreme privilege—that of serving others.

"And do not be looking always for reward. Do good because it should be done, leaving results to the Law. It is just, and infinitely wiser than you are. But those who do good merely for the sake of reward complain that the Law is ungrateful.

"Not until the individual is adjusted to others is he really adjusted to himself.

"Why are you so afraid of self-surrender? You can never really possess your own soul until you give it away.

"Only when a man regards all beings as himself, has he a right sometimes to *disregard* them.

"When the struggle of life confuses you, when the noise of life distracts you, seek out a quiet spot and find your quiet soul; then return to the noise and try to harmonise it.

"The discord you hear is but the vibration of a few tones in the great harmony you do not hear.

"Go teach the truth to others. Is it for yourself alone that you sow the seed of discipleship? The bird of truth will pine and die if imprisoned in the cage of self. Only by releasing it can you possess it, or enjoy its ravishing music.

"Do not be discouraged when you realise the vileness of the world. If the world were on a higher plane, the ideal of the disciple would be higher still and more difficult of attainment.

"Should I tell you now the highest interest possible to the human soul, it would seem to you to be devoid of human interest.

"When you intensely desire something for yourself, and the whole world seems blank to you because you cannot have it, try to realise that you are only one of the millions of yearning human beings the earth bears upon her bosom; that you are only one grain of sand on the shore-line of eternity.

"Observe how mortals hover round the flame of ephemeral passion as moths around a night-lamp; then turn and watch the quiet, immortal stars.

"It is not written that you should despise pleasure; only insist that in the cup you drink there shall be at least one drop of the elixir of pure love.

"Do you grieve because the love of a friend has grown cold? The only love that can sustain you is the love that never grows cold, and you must find it in your own heart.

"When you no longer demand anything for yourself, and yet give everything, the hearts of your fellow beings will overflow with love for you.

"It is only in the soil of a bleeding heart that the seed of immortal love can find nourishment to grow.

"He who has an utterly hopeless love has the highest gift of Heaven—the possibility of an utterly unselfish love.

"He only can really trust who has been betrayed and who expects betrayal.

"Not until you understand why others act as they do, will you be wise and loving enough to show them a better way.

"Gentleness of speech is greater than eloquence, and love is greater than worldly knowledge.

"He who shall treat all beings with loving-kindness, will some day be thrilled with the consciousness of his unity with all beings.

"Neglect no duty; but remember always that *duty is only the imitation of love.*

"He who shall wilfully injure another has placed a mountain in the path of his own soul; he who shall carelessly injure another has dugged a pitfall for his own feet.

"And in seeking to help your brother, do not force him to lead your life. It was evidently the intention of God that he should lead his own.

"Because toys no longer give you pleasure, do not forget that a child's day may be darkened by the breaking of its doll.

"Only a wise man may venture to wound another for his good, or to choose the way another's feet shall travel; and a wise man will be slow in doing either.

"A man's contempt for the weaknesses of his neighbour is the measure of his own lack of spiritual strength.

"Often when you think you doubt another's character, what you really doubt is his admiration for you.

"Question your own motives always; but only he whose love for all beings is like that of a mother for her children should dare to study too closely into the personal motives of others.

"Love is the only defensive weapon the soul needs.

"If you wish to disarm the man who would injure you, throw away your shield and remove the breastplate from your heart.

"A man may defend himself so vigorously that the whole world will unite in attacking him.

"Silence is the most effective refutation of slander; kindness is stronger than cruelty; love is the antidote of hate, and peace is the inevitable end of war.

"But do not fancy that you shall attain the great peace by merely removing yourself from the distractions of human life; you will find no quiet in the solitude of the primeval woods unless you carry it with you. Some there are who shall open the door of peace by thought, others

by sacrifice; but he who shall pass the threshold and dwell inside for ever shall open the door by love.

"Do not grieve for the loss or absence of anything. Does the earth mourn that you help yourself to her fruits and rifle her hidden mines? She is inexhaustible, and so is That which you are.

"Even though your brother has betrayed you, do not lose faith in him. How often have you denied or forgotten God! A serpent may suffer from hunger as keenly as a dove, and even a treacherous man is a human being who may need help far more than the righteous man.

"They need your pity most who suffer from their own fault, for they have not the consciousness of virtue to sustain them.

"Refuse no man who asks from you the hand of brotherhood. The erring soul whom you should turn away would stand between you and the light you seek.

"Even your own virtue will not save you unless it lights the way for others; and God will never open a place for you in the heaven of his consciousness, until you would gladly relinquish heaven for the sake of those who suffer on the earth."

So Jesse ended his sermon on love and pity. Those who listened were astonished at his teaching, and one asked another: "How can a man so far forget himself as to love others like that? It is not human nature!"

"When a man loves others like that," answered Mary Magnus, who overheard the question, "when a man loves the whole world like that, he is something more than human."

CHAPTER LIV

It was after this sermon that Peter came to Jesse in great perplexity. "Master," he said, his honest face red with embarrassment, "how is it that you, who make so much of goodness, can say that bad people are as good as good people?"

"I have never said that, Peter."

"Yet you said that those who suffered from their own fault deserved—or needed, rather—our pity more than others."

"Quite a different statement," replied Jesse.

"It seems to me about the same."

"To say that darkness is in need of light, is that to say that black is white, or that night is day? You who are nearest to me should not set the world an example of misunderstanding." Jesse's manner was gentle, but Peter realised that he had failed in discernment. It was not the first time that one of Jesse's own had perverted his teaching, nor would it be the last.

"Was there anything else in my talk to-day which puzzled you, Peter?"

"Yes, Master. You said, or it seemed to me you said, that not one of us would dare to let other people really understand him. Now I've been an honest man all my life."

Jesse laid his arm around the shoulders of his friend and looked down into his eyes.

"Do you remember," he said gently, "the little serving-maid who left your house soon after I came here?"

Peter answered in a low, firm voice: "I was never once in a room alone with her."

"That is true; but can you say that you never wished to be, during the weeks she lived here?"

"I am humbled, Master, and reprov'd. I will never again question the truth of your teaching. Is there nothing hidden from your eyes?"

"There is nothing which needs to be hidden from my eyes," was Jesse's answer. "Do men raise an umbrella when the moon shines? The gaze of the understanding love is gentler than the gaze of the new moon."

Many of Jesse's doings were as grievously misunderstood as were his words. Among the new followers who joined him soon after his return to Capronville was the keeper of the village livery-stable, a man who had lived a wild and self-indulgent life; but who, from the hour when he first listened to Jesse, renounced his reckless ways, and tried to lead as many as possible of his former boon companions to follow the pure life of the new teacher. Jesse dined one day at this man's house, to the amazement of the rich people of the village, who were fascinated by the personality and teachings of the young master, and would have joined his flock had he given up the common habit of preaching in the streets and open fields and associating with outcasts.

The women would have liked to ask him to their parties, he was so handsome and so courteous in manner; but, somehow, they were never quite sure how he would receive the invitation to leave the dusty open road for the flowery but walled-in garden. It would have been quite impossible to extend the invitation to his friends and disciples, and he might have objected to leaving them behind. So reasoned the rich women of the town; but they went in groups to hear him preach, they talked about him much of the time and thought about him all the time.

It was at this period that he made one of his most remarkable cures, snatching back the soul of a little girl of twelve years from the very clutches of death. Though he charged the father and mother of the child to tell no one, the story spread with a growing multiplicity of details from house to house and from village to village, till the name of Jesse Bethel was on the lips of every man and woman and child in that part of the State. His preaching alone would have surrounded him with crowds of eager listeners; but the cures he performed thrilled the imagination of the people to a fever of enthusiasm. There were circulated about him even wild and improb-

able stories, and a legend of his miraculous birth was germinating already in those early days in Capronville.

At first he went about from village to village preaching, with all his disciples and intimates together; but as the summer advanced, and the popular interest in him grew more and more intense, he told the men in whom he had most confidence that the time was come for them to go out ahead of him, themselves preaching the doctrine of the indwelling Spirit, curing the sick by the power of faith as he had done before them, and telling all who would listen of the great things they had seen and heard. The grief of the men at the thought of leaving him was as deep as their desire to serve him. They had returned to Capronville for a few days after a happy journey together round the neighbouring towns, and they were at Peter's house when Jesse told the men that they must go out, two by two, in different directions. John, always emotional as a woman, wept when the announcement came; though all of them had been prepared for it.

"How can I leave you, Master!" he cried, struggling with the sorrow that choked his voice.

"He only is my true friend and my disciple who is willing to leave me, and to carry my message to those who need it. Is it for this little group alone that I harrow the spiritual field? Out of the richness of your harvest must come the seed of future harvests which other men shall reap. He is nearest to me who is willing to go farthest from me, that my mission may be fulfilled. The foreign ambassador is nearer to the king than is the page who carries the royal mantle."

"It is sad," said Andrew, "that those who love each other should be separated."

"Such separation is of the body, not of the soul," Jesse answered. "Our separate lives exist that we may come through them to realise there is no separateness."

"You are the source of all our strength," said Philip. "Without you we are nothing."

"He who desires to give, and still to give, will find at his disposal all the riches of the Infinite."

"I am a plain man," said Peter, "and I have no skill in words."

"Are you afraid to testify of the faith that is in you? Do you fear to stammer? to appear foolish in the eyes of others? Then is your vanity stronger than your faith. Because your voice is harsh and your language unpolished, will you refuse to point the way to the fountain where you have been refreshed? Does the buttercup refuse to blossom because it is not a rose? The word you fear to utter may be the rope which would keep some struggling soul from drowning in the sea of doubt."

Andrew was even more troubled than Peter at the thought of standing up and preaching before men. His natural shyness rose like a high wall between him and the duty he was about to face. His heart beat fast and his hands trembled at the very thought of the ordeal before him.

"I am sure," he said, looking at Jesse with his great dog-like eyes, "I am sure that I shall speak worse than any of the others."

"What of that," Jesse answered, smiling, "if you do the best you can? The desire to surpass your brother in the race of eloquence is the treacherous briar whose touch would make you lame."

"And how shall I know what to do, not having you to tell me?"

"Before the pupil can really begin to learn, he has to become his own schoolmaster, nor must he shrink from the discipline he gives himself."

"And what if people will not listen to me?"

"If men refuse to listen, still go on speaking. To him who speaks the truth, even the rocks and the trees must finally listen."

"We know, Master, that there is much evil in the hearts of men," James said. "Before we go, will you not tell us what we have most to avoid in our dealings with other men?"

"Look deep into your own heart, and whatever evil you find there—that evil avoid in others."

They thought he was mocking them, and their faces grew sadder than before; but he went on:

"Why do you shrink from the knowledge that you are like your fellow men? Are you not human, even as they are? It is through overcoming evil in yourselves that you learn to pity it in others. A vice is sometimes of more value to the soul than a virtue, through the power and pity which may be gained by conquering it."

"Master, will you not give us some charm to protect us in danger?" It was the imaginative John who spoke.

"Yes," Jesse answered, "when any danger threatens you, repeat this all-potent formula: 'God is the Power, and I am the expression of the Power.'"

"And when people criticise our doctrine and refuse to listen to us?"

"Be not discouraged by criticism of your teaching. He who shall try to refute every objection of his critics is like a man who should leap hither and thither on the highway, trying to dodge the shadows that fall across his path."

Though it was then about ten o'clock at night, he took them with him to the top of the adjacent hill where he was wont to commune with the Invisible in solitude, and standing before them, with uplifted face, he called down upon their coming labours the inspiration of that Power whose instrument he felt himself to be.

"O Thou whose habitation is in every heart," he prayed, "Thou who slumberest in the souls of men, awake in these my children! Descend upon them, arise within them, ravish them with Thy glory. Touch their lips with the fire of Thy word, their hands with the healing of Thy love, their faith with the answer of Thy presence. Make them to burn like candles upon the altar of mankind. Be Thou the urge in their souls, the zeal in their devotion; drive them like leaves before the wind on Thy business of inspiring the souls of men."

Listening in the darkness, their souls caught fire from his, and their lips moved, following his prayer. He had endued them with his own spirit.

Telling them to be ready to start in the morning, he sent them back to the house. But he remained upon the hill, praying hour after hour, throwing himself like a fearless swimmer upon the waves of the spiritual ocean, wrestling with them, conquering them, making his way

to the goal by the power of his indomitable will. At dawn he went back to where his disciples waited, knowing that all the night he had been commanding their alert and responsive spirits, while their bodies lay locked in slumber. As they greeted him, he saw that every face was alight with the fire of his long vigil.

Then, two by two, he sent them out in all directions; and in choosing those who were to go together, he gave each man as a travelling companion that one whom he least loved and understood, that through the intimacies of their journey and the unity of their purpose they might draw nearer to each other.

These were his last words to them:

"Remember that my spirit dwells in each of you, so that each of you is myself. Whatever I have done through this body which you see before you, that can I also do through yours. When you lay your hands upon a man to heal him, my faith shall work the miracle of cure. When you open your lips to declare my doctrine, I am the word which proceeds out of your mouth.

"Fear nothing, and surrender yourselves to the Spirit. For before you can conquer the world, the Spirit must have conquered you.

"When you shall have learned obedience to the King that is throned in the centre of your own being, then shall the kings of the world come to you for instruction.

"Preach the doctrine of the Spirit; not that yourselves may be rewarded, but that all men may know the doctrine of the Spirit.

"Deliver your message in words which your listeners can understand. He who shall use the German language in speaking to Italians will seem to them a foreigner and an alien.

"Do not give to any pupil a lesson beyond his power to grasp. He who wishes to play with children must choose games which they can understand.

"Follow the guidance of the Spirit in all things; and when in doubt as to any direction, listen for my assenting voice—and it may be that you shall hear it.

"When men question you with sincerity, declare unto

them the truths of the Spirit; when men question you with insincerity, declare unto them also the truths of the Spirit.

"If any shall scorn you as homeless wanderers, invite them to enter with you the spiritual home.

"To those who greet you harshly, reply with gentleness; to those who shall greet you gently, deliver the message of my love.

"Remember that when the pupil is ready, the teacher is ready; so fear not to answer any who shall ask of you for knowledge of the Spirit and of me.

"From all public storms and hatreds, seek shelter in secret devotion."

CHAPTER LV

FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARY MAGNUS

HE has sent the men away to preach and to make converts, but me he has not sent away. Yet of all his followers it would seem that I am the one best fitted for that labour. Why am I spared the pain of leaving him? But no, it is not that. He would not spare me pain. It is because he thinks it best for the work that I should not go out with the others. Does he fear that the intensity of my words in testimony of his teaching might be interpreted as personal devotion to the teacher? Yet they are all devoted. How wise you are, Jesse, for all your purity! To be pure is to be unmixed, an old teacher of mine once told me. Is the soul pure when it is unmixed with the desires of the earth? The soul of my Master seems to touch the earth only to raise and chasten it—never to mix with it. Yet he told our friends in Myra that I was greater than any of them. They may have misunderstood him. Which is better, I wonder, greatness or purity? He is both great and pure.

Sometimes it seems that I am walking in a dream. Does this strange life that I am living appear unreal by reason of its very reality? It may be so. It is incredible that I should dwell so near to him and not break my heart—either with happiness or pain. And I am his disciple! I love and serve the cause he loves—the revelation of the spiritual consciousness to a matter-blinded world. I do this, I who am often more blinded by matter than any of those who deny the Spirit. Oh! where does the body leave off and the soul begin? And is not the heart between the two—crucified between the two?

"Mary," he said to me one day, "the sun that makes the fecund earth to blossom and bear fruit is the same sun that smites to death the traveller in the desert." Then he passed out into the garden, leaving me alone to wonder at his words.

Surely the soil of my heart has blossomed and borne fruit, for am I not serving the messenger of the Spirit? I daily buy food for my fellow disciples, and often I cook it for them. I am the comforter and friend of all who doubt their worthiness to be among us. Who should understand them as well as I? "Sister Mary Magnus is so good herself," he told a poor creature yesterday, "that she helps everyone else to be good." How utterly he trusts me—my beautiful Master!

Yet I am not always good. One day in passing his seat, when there was no one in the room but ourselves, I bent and touched his hair with my hair, lightly as a rose may touch another rose in the breeze. And when, passing on, I turned and looked back at him, smiling—his eyes were full of tears!

Overpowered by the grandeur of his gentleness, I knelt and pressed my forehead to his feet. By some miraculous transformation in me, he was no more the man, but the Master, in an instant. Peter came into the room at that moment and asked what was the matter with me, and Jesse said: "Our sister knows that humility is the path that leads to the stars."

Peter told the others, and all that evening John and Anna Martin sat on the floor at Jesse's feet—in imitation of my humility!

How strange it is that I never grow restless or discontented among these people, so different from myself. Here in the home of Peter and his family I am at home. The children seem to love me almost as well as they do their mother. "Beautiful Mary," they call me; and when I tell them stories about the strange little people of Japan and India and China, their eyes remind me of Jesse's eyes, twenty years ago, when he told us other children stories from the Book of Wonder, back in the old schoolhouse at Nashburgh. Twenty years ago! And since then I have measured the world, and he has measured the universe.

Does he ever think of that evening in the garden at Vergennes, I wonder . . . or of the letter I sent him from Los Angeles . . . or of the time I saw him in the theatre in New York and ran away because I was afraid? He has never spoken of any of these things,

and his thoughts no one can guess. Loving and gentle and expansive as he always is, I feel that none of us can yet follow him to that lonely, stupendous height where his spirit holds communion with the unveiled Splendour. Sometimes when we are all sitting together around him, and he has been teaching us how to lighten our heavy lives with the spiritual leaven, suddenly his face is all aflame with a white glory; his eyes are raised in rapt contemplation of some ecstatic vision which we cannot see, and his whole being seems to quiver and melt with beauty. At such times we gaze at him in wonder, and dare not speak.

O beatific one, if I could only be uplifted for one moment on the fiery wings that carry you away, how gladly would I leave the earth behind for ever and all the hopes of earth! The vision that beckons to my Master is the one Reality, of which all earthly beauty is but a shadow. I know it, I realise it; and yet I only catch rare flashes of the effulgence that lights his every hour.

"Love me, and follow in my footsteps," he tells our fellow disciples, Peter and the others. And they answer him: "We do love you, Master, and will follow you to the end of the world."

But when he and John and I are alone together, as we are sometimes, he never tells *us* to love him; but he says: "Adore the Spirit. *It* is the Father, the Mother, the Lover, the Friend. Reach to *It* with your souls. *It* is ravished with the idea of giving *Itself* to one who can receive it. *It* is the one inextinguishable Flame, and *It* yearns for all humanity to light their candles from *It*. *Its* power is never exhausted; *It* burns eternally, and *Its* substance is never consumed; *It* is the kindler of the sun, the glamour of the moon, and the stars are the tapers of *Its* chamber. There is no satisfaction like the love of *It*. no glory like *Its* favour. Seek *It* unceasingly, and you shall find. Some day the windows of the soul will open of themselves, and the great Light will shine in on you."

And John and I sit spellbound, for the Light he bids us seek for *Its* own sake is reflected upon our souls from the countenance of our teacher, until it seems to us that

he is himself the Light, the Father, the Mother, the Lover, the Friend, and that the stars are the tapers of *his* chamber.

But sometimes late at night before I go to sleep, lying very still, I feel a Presence, vast as the starry sky yet nearer and more intimate than all the tender intimacies of earth. And I know that I have touched for a moment the fringe of the Spirit's veil of glory. Is this a hint, a promise of the Vision that came to Jesse on the mountain of illumination? And shall it come to me? I feel that he lives every moment in the presence of this mystery that merely brushes me in passing. Is that why you are so beautiful, my Master? Is that why the sound of your voice rouses a legion of slumbering memories that tap and whisper at the doors of consciousness? Why the touch of your hand is like the lifting of a veil before the eyes of the soul?

One day at twilight when I was alone in the garden behind Peter's house, leaning on the stone wall and looking down at the river, Jesse came out and stood beside me. I raised my eyes to his for a moment, then we remained there together in silence, looking at the grey water. There is a mystic unity between two human souls when they gaze at the same beautiful thing, even though their minds are filled with unrelated thoughts. I scarcely thought of anything during those exquisite moments; the action of the mind was stilled by the happiness of the soul. And then I heard his voice, that seemed to bring me back from a long distance.

"Mary, when I am no longer with you, when I am dead, will the memory of these perfect days be enough to fill your heart?"

The world swam round me, and I closed my eyes to keep from falling. "When you are dead, Jesse?"

"It is written that I am to die."

"And shall I survive that, too?"

"By many, many years, Mary. Will the memory of these months be enough to fill your life?"

The idea that he might die had never before come to me. That the happiness of being with him might end—that was always my fear; but that this living, radiant entity that was Jesse could be cut off—as well expect the

sun to cease shining. I was so overwhelmed by his question that I forgot to answer it.

"I shall be with you all in Spirit, even when my body shall be no more." He felt the shiver that ran through me at the suggestion of the grave for the beautiful being that lived and breathed before me.

"The body which perishes is not the real I," he went on; "it is only a garment worn by the imperishable Spirit. You will realise this when my body is only a memory. For I shall be with you at all times, though you do not see me; I shall be a living invisible presence, for ever looking over the shoulders of those who have loved me. Will the consciousness of me be enough to fill your life?"

Thrice he had asked the question, each time in a different form of words; but the substance of it was this: If he were to die, and his breathing presence were removed from me, would the consciousness of his immaterial presence be enough to fill my burning woman's heart through all the years of my life? Did I love him well enough to be only the disciple of a dead yet living master, from youth even to old age? This was what he meant, and I answered:

"Is there anything or anybody in the world that would be large enough to hold my heart—after you?"

"I do not think so, Mary," he said. "That is why I have chosen you as the confidant of this knowledge that has come to me; none of the others may know it yet. Try to become accustomed to the idea of me as an indwelling presence. Hitherto I have told you to meditate upon the Spirit; now think of me as a medium of communication between the world and It."

"I do not know the two apart," I answered.

"When I am no longer with you in this body," he continued, "my work will still go on, through you and the others. Give your life to it, Mary, as I have given mine. Though I do not want you to work for reward, yet the reward is great. Give yourself so completely to the cause of the spiritual awakening of the world, that from my home in the centre of the Spirit I may be aware of you as an extension of myself, a part of myself still

upon the earth. Then shall the bliss of the Spirit flow through you as it flows through me."

He turned ~~away~~ and went up the path to the house. When he was ~~gone~~ the night seemed cold, and the garden lonely as the regions of dark space between the stars. I could not follow him into the cheerful room where the others, who had been waiting for him, raised their happy voices to welcome his return. I stole quietly past the open door and up the stairs to my own room, where I threw myself upon the bed and ~~lay~~ without moving, until the grey twilight passed into the black night. Mine was a grief too vast for the comfort of tears, and during those hours I laid upon the altar of sacrifice the last and only thing I had not offered up before—the privilege to weep.

CHAPTER LVI

It was about the time Jesse sent his disciples out to preach that his two brothers, who had watched with growing anxiety the ever-increasing crowds that followed him, and his incomprehensible exaltation, came to harbour the suspicion that he was not in his right mind. They confided their fears to each other and compared their observations of his strange ways.

"Did you see how his eyes glittered last night, Henry, when he was talking about a coming revolution?"

"Yes, Fred; and did you notice how he turned away that time and gazed up at the ceiling, as if he saw things?"

The elder brother nodded his head: "I'm afraid we ought to consult a doctor."

"We could do it without his knowing."

"Mother mustn't know, either. He's made her as crazy as himself. She actually believes that he's been sent by God to transform the world."

"Yes, there's no doubt about our duty; we must call in a doctor."

The medical man chosen by the two brothers was a middle-aged country practitioner, who knew very little about insanity, and therefore assumed with awesome gravity the responsibility of judgment laid upon him. He was to go to Jesse in the guise of a possible convert, having thus an opportunity to question him about his strange beliefs. The brothers arranged for a private interview, telling Jesse, who smiled sadly at them, that the doctor was a man of immense influence whose conversion would bring glory to the cause.

Jesse received him in a little room on the ground floor used by Peter Bond as an office. He sat in Peter's easy-chair behind the flat-topped desk, and motioned his visitor to the straight chair used by those who came to consult with Peter as to the business of the mill. The simple dignity and beauty of this preacher whose brothers thought

him mad, both charmed and perplexed the man of medicine. But, faithful to his professional errand, he asked to be enlightened as to the beauties of the new belief.

Jesse explained to him the meaning of the Spirit, the indwelling Reality which is both God and the soul of man; he spoke of the love of fellow beings that is the joy of him who realises the unity of all with the one Spirit; of the faith that makes man's will the will of God; of the blissful time to come when the whole world would be united under the banner of love, and men should desire the joys of the Spirit above the pleasures of the flesh.

"A beautiful belief," said the doctor, whose alert mind had caught every idea in Jesse's words, "a very beautiful belief that I should be glad to see realised. But will you tell me," he added, irrelevantly, on the look-out for hallucinations, "if you ever hold converse with spirits and angels?"

"The quest of the Spirit," said Jesse, "is not a quest of the supernatural. I have never seen an angel, nor do I know of anyone who has; but I am filled with rapture every day by discovering some angelic quality in the soul of a common man."

"And do voices ever speak to you out of the air?"

"The voice of the heart says that all men are brothers, and sons of God."

"Yes, yes, just so," murmured the doctor. Evidently, he told himself, there were no hallucinations. Then he took another course, saying:

"This work of yours must be very exhausting—the constant preaching and healing, the urgent crowds that follow you everywhere. Do you sleep well at night?"

"Yes, thank you."

Jesse now leaned back in his chair and looked steadily and sympathetically at his questioner, until the doctor grew uneasy. He began to feel as if he were being examined as to *his* sanity. But he went on bravely.

"With this incessant labour, do you not often have pains and weariness in your head?"

"No. I have never had a headache in my life, that I remember. But there is a pain which I have much, an almost constant pain."

"Yes?" The doctor brightened perceptibly.

"The pain," said Jesse, "is in my heart, which aches with pity for the awful suffering of humanity."

"I feel that, too," responded the doctor, who was a kind-hearted man, full of emotion. "In my profession I see so much suffering."

"Shall I tell you a story, Doctor?" Jesse's smile was like the smile of a mother for her child at the twilight hour. He did not wait for an answer, but went on:

"There were two children who lived in a humble house on the edge of a large green meadow. There was no garden beside the house, and the only flowers they had ever seen were simple daisies and buttercups and dandelions.

"One day the children found, growing upon an elevation, a strange white flower. The plant had been there a long time, though it had not blossomed before. Now the children had been warned from babyhood never to touch an unfamiliar flower, for fear it might be poisonous; and when they saw the great white blossom they distrusted it. It was so much larger than the daisies and buttercups and dandelions growing in the meadow. And when they drew timidly a little nearer, and the sweet, strong scent of the flower was borne to them on the air, they were still more afraid. 'It must be poisonous,' they said to one another, 'it is so large and smells so sweet.'

"Then the children saw a stranger passing along the road, and they called him to examine the strange flower and tell them whether they might safely touch and smell it.

"'Why,' said the stranger, in surprise, 'this blossom which you fear to touch is the lily, the purest and sweetest flower that blows. I cannot say how it came to grow here in this uncultivated meadow, where there are only simple daisies and buttercups and dandelions; the seed must have been borne on the wind from some far-off garden. But enjoy the lily while you may, dear children, for its life is brief. Do not destroy it, and from its seed may possibly grow other lilies to make sweet the world.'

Jesse leaned toward the doctor. "Do you like the story? My brothers are the children, and I am the large

white lily. Though the plant has been growing near them a long time, it has not blossomed until now."

"And the stranger?" The doctor's eyes were large and bright.

"I think, my friend, that you are the stranger," was Jesse's quiet answer. "And whenever you pass this way, stop and inhale the perfume of the lily. It may be that you will find healing in its breath."

He arose, and the doctor passed out from the little room and on to the verandah, where the two brothers were waiting for him.

"Well?" whispered Henry.

"What do you think?" whispered Fred.

The doctor placed a kind hand on the shoulder of each of the young men.

"I think," he said,—“and this is a free opinion, for which I want no fee,—I think that your remarkable brother is the sanest man in all this crazy world. If you and I were as sane as he is, we might measure up about as high as his knees; but as it is, my friends, we don't even come to his shoe-tops.”

"You've taken a load off our minds," declared Fred.

"And your brother has taken a load off my mind," the doctor answered. "All my life I've wanted to see a great man, and now I've seen him. There are twenty sick folks on my hands just now, but the other doctors will be glad to look after them. I'm going to drop everything and follow this light—wherever it leads me."

The next day Jesse left Capronville, going on to preach in the villages round about, and the physician went with him as a new disciple. He also took his mother and the other women, and those among the men who had not already been sent out alone; but he advised his two brothers to return to their families in Myra.

"It is better," he told them in parting, "to tend well one small square foot of ground, than to sow thistles in the largest field."

CHAPTER LVII

ON Jesse's return to Capronville, about a fortnight later, the first friends to greet him at the station were Lawrence Lane and his two sisters. Jesse had not found time to write to Lawrence since the early spring; but ever since that summer visit of the Lanes in Myra, five years before, Mary Bethel had been in correspondence with the girls, and during the last few months she had sent them full accounts of Jesse's ministry. They knew all about his preaching; they knew of the cures he had performed, of the multitudes that followed and believed in him, of the twelve men now travelling about as his disciples and speaking in his name; and they treasured above all their other possessions the fragmentary extracts from his sermons which the mother had been able to write down for them.

But, notwithstanding all they had read and all they had imagined, they were unprepared for a meeting with Jesse. He was the same man they had known—but not the same. The morning star had become the blazing sun. They were glad that the crowd at the station, pressing round him, demanded his attention for a time; glad that, after the first greetings were over, they could look at him and listen to him in conversation with others, while they gradually adjusted themselves to the change which had made of their simple friend an exalted prophet whose followers could not be counted, and whose very presence was like a breeze of invigorating mountain air in the heat of a dusty valley.

"And only five years ago we used to talk with him, and even differ from him, as if we were his equals!" exclaimed Martha in a whisper to her bewildered brother.

The eyes of Mary Lane were like blue fire with the intensity of her feeling; but her face was pale and her lips were still. The vague emotion of the girl, which had found vent in lonely tears five years before, and had

later pined and died for lack of nourishment, now arose from the grave, transformed and spiritualised—purer it could not be, but more ethereal. What might have been human love, in reawakening became divine devotion.

They saw him cure a cripple, who threw away his crutch and walked like any other man at Jesse's word that he should do so; they saw unemotional New Englanders so carried away by emotion for this man that they kissed his hands and even his garments, forgetting their habitual reserve; they *felt* the atmosphere of other-worldness, the vibration of spirituality which surrounded him, and within whose radius the marvellous seemed normal and enthusiasm seemed inevitable. They, too, were carried away by the Spirit that burned in Jesse, even as hundreds of others had been before them and as thousands would be after them. Even before they left the station and started with Jesse for Peter's house, each of the three had made a secret vow to live by the light of Jesse's faith. Though they could hardly have defined it, yet were they filled with it.

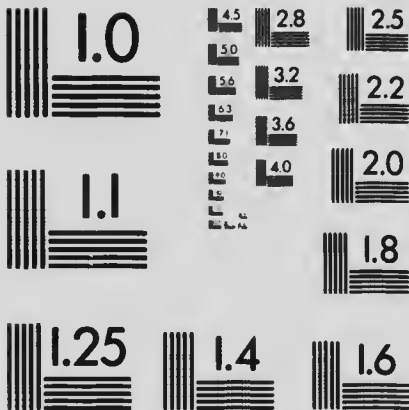
They arrived at the house about dinner-time, and Jesse asked the two girls to sit on either side of him at the table, Lawrence being seated next to his sister Mary on the left-hand side, and Mary Bethel next to Martha on the right. Peter and the other men were still away, and as it was impossible for them to feed the crowds of people that followed Jesse, there were no others present at the dinner that day except the women who were always with him, the recently converted doctor, the little group of sweet-faced children, with Peter's wife and mother-in-law, and the handsome middle-aged woman who was the mother of James and John Dana. Mary Magnus was absent, for the first time since she had joined the followers of Jesse in the early summer. A matter of business had called her to Vergennes that morning, nor did she return until after Lawrence and his sisters had ended their three days' visit. Thus it happened that they did not meet her until the following year.

In his gladness at seeing these friends of other days, Jesse seemed to his mother to have become more youthful; while they, in turn, were exalted by his presence, so that



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a balance was struck between them, and all were now happy and at ease.

"New York is the place for a great teacher," Lawrence said, accepting with a smile the bread which Jesse offered him. "Do you not intend soon to come down to us?"

"I do," replied Jesse, with a quick glance at his mother, which she understood as an appeal for silence regarding her own dread of New York. "When I have balanced my accounts with those whose needs I serve around these farms and villages, then I will open a new ledger for the more extensive business of the Spirit which I hope to carry on with the great city."

"And will you not employ me as bookkeeper in the business of the Spirit?" Lawrence asked, falling in with Jesse's mood and with his metaphor. "I have had a long experience in keeping the accounts of the Spirit's most formidable rival—Matter."

The pseudo-master never ventures to play with his disciples, nor the very young teacher with his pupils; but he whose mastership and authority are sure, delights in such relaxation. It serves as an elastic spring-board from which to leap to the serious heights of Truth.

"I cannot pay you wages," Jesse said; "but I can promise you an interest in the business—a gradually increasing interest."

John's mother, from whom her son had not inherited his imagination, was puzzled and half-shocked by this toying with sacred things; but Jesse, seeing the trouble in her eyes, gave her such a warm and reassuring smile that she was comforted and smiled at him in return.

"It is through play," he said to her, "that all young things develop strength and fit themselves for the labours of maturity. These friends of mine are such young things in the spiritual life, that I encourage them to frolic with faith, that they may gather strength. The Spirit is not resentful of familiarities. Does a mother reprove her child for taking liberties with her? Many respect God without loving Him; but they who love God are in no danger of dishonouring Him."

So Jesse lessened, by subtle words and tender smiles, the immeasurable distance which separated his conscious-

ness from the consciousness of these dear ones who had loved him before his days of Mastership. Then, by gradual degrees, he led them with him up the steep height of spiritual aspiration.

Jesse was to preach that evening at the twilight hour, and during dinner Mary Bethel told the visitors about the songs which had been composed for his meetings, and expressed regret that Mary Magnus was not with them now, so that the Lanes might hear her sing the songs.

From the letters of Jesse's mother, Mary Lane had conceived a vivid interest in "the other Mary," as she called her, an interest made up of diverse elements. She was not conscious of being jealous of the brilliant and beautiful woman who bore her name, but she was keenly disappointed that she was not to see for herself why everyone described her as so fascinating and so good. She was less impressed with the knowledge that the pale girl at the end of the table had written the words of the songs which Jesse seemed to value so highly than she was with the knowledge that the absent one, "the other Mary," had written the music. Mary Lane knew good music when she heard it, and after dinner she got the songs from Anna Martin and played them over on the piano. Their beauty made her sad; but as she listened to the harmonies that flowed from beneath her fingers, she was conscious of a strange new feeling—a throbbing in her heart of sisterly love for the one who had woven those harmonies. How blest was she in being privileged to serve with her art "the Master," as they called him! The Master! And little Mary had wept in the long ago because he had never seemed to love her any better than he loved Lawrence and Martha! She was now appalled at the greatness of her presumption. Sitting alone before the piano she let her fingers lie motionless in her lap, while she repeated softly to herself, "The Master, the Master." Her imagination took fire. She, too, would be his disciple; and though she could not make great music for his cause, she could absorb, and give again to others, the spirit of his teachings.

She now rose from the piano and went into the next room where Jesse sat surrounded by his friends, and asked him timidly if he would explain to her more fully the

faith she had accepted on the strength of her faith in him. Lawrence and Martha listened also to Jesse's clear exposition of the cardinal points of his belief; and when, after an hour or more, he ceased speaking, all three declared themselves his converts, Martha with strong, decisive words, Lawrence more quietly, Mary almost inarticulately because of her falling tears.

Three days they remained, the limit of the time Lawrence could be spared from his duties in the city; for he was not one of those whom Jesse advised to leave everything and be with him constantly. He felt that these three *were* with him, wherever they might be; and he knew that in some way yet to be revealed these friends would better serve the Spirit by preserving, for the time, their relations with the complex life of the great materialistic city. But though they questioned him, he did not tell them when he would transfer his labours to the larger field.

"Write to me constantly," he said to them in parting, "and meditate and talk together constantly on all that I have taught you. Though I cannot say when I shall come, be ready for my coming at all times."

CHAPTER LVIII

DAILY his fame increased, and daily the crowds that flocked to see and hear him grew larger. Already his name was well known from one end of the little State to the other, and paragraphs about a strangely beautiful young religious teacher who had arisen in Vermont, who cured diseases by the touch of his hands and preached an idealistic faith, began to appear in newspapers all over the country. Letters from strangers, too numerous to answer, poured in upon him from all sides. He continued to preach and heal the sick in all the larger towns and villages within forty miles of Capronville, but he did not go again to the North.

The North came to him, in the persons of two followers of the famous Hermit, who was still imprisoned on the unproven charge of inciting a riot which ended in violence and bloodshed.

It was the supper-hour at Peter's house, and Jesse sat at one end of the long table, facing the door, when the two grave men appeared. The happy home, the smiling faces of the men and women, the plentiful fare, were surprising to the unbidden guests who stood at the door of the dining-room. They had come down to see a prophet like their own stern master, and they found a smiling man who was the centre of what seemed to them a scene of revelry and feasting. Though Jesse's first disciples were still absent, preaching in other towns, their places were filled by his new followers and friends; and there were many women among them, young as well as old. How different was this scene from the one on which these pilgrims had turned their backs but a few hours before! At noon they were in a bare room in a northern jail, where an emaciated, fiery-eyed prophet exhorted his fellow prisoners to repentance; at sunset they beheld the new teacher, whose fame already eclipsed their master's, seated at the head of a flower-strewn table, eating and drinking with

his happy friends, like one for whose word no suffering world was waiting. They watched him a few moments from the shadow of the doorway; then, knocking on the panel to make known their presence, they advanced into the room.

"You are welcome," Jesse said to them, with his tender smile. "Have you come to join the company of those who love the Spirit better than the body?"

"We are come from the Hermit who languishes in prison," was their answer. "He sent us to ask if you are really the one whom he has sought."

The eyes of Jesse filled with tears. "How cruelly your master must have suffered in his prison, if he has come to doubt the truth of his own spiritual recognition of me!"

Peter's wife, at a sign from Jesse, laid plates and cups for the strangers; and her old mother, whom Jesse had raised from a sick-bed on his return from the North, brought food and drink for them.

"He did not bid us tell you that he doubted; only to ask if indeed you are the one," the elder of the men declared.

Jesse turned to an eager youth, one of his new friends, who was standing behind his chair. "If there are any waiting outside who wish to be cured, you may bring them in here."

The youth returned, followed by a score of men and women who crowded about the doorway. From this background three persons separated themselves and came toward Jesse: a young mother holding in her arms a little child wailing with some feverish disease, an old man bent with years and weakness, and a wild-eyed girl whose family thought her insane because she had not spoken a word to anyone for more than a month.

Jesse arose from the table. He stood for a moment with closed eyes, in silent invocation of the Spirit within, while the two visitors watched him with breathless expectation. Then he lifted the feverish, wailing child in his arms and cooled and stilled it, as he had done with that other child in the dooryard of his old home in Nashburgh. With a sigh of comfort it fell asleep, and he gave it back to the

mother, who kissed his hands and murmured tearful thanks. He straightened up the bent old man, giving him of his own vigour, until a look almost like that of youth came into the dull eyes, and the shoulders squared themselves for another trial in the battle of life. He took the hands of the wild-eyed girl who had not spoken a word for several weeks, and looking deep into her troubled soul, he soothed that, too, as he had soothed the wailing child. And then he questioned her, charming away her dumbness by the sweetness of his appeal.

"Will you not tell me your name?"

"Susie London." Her voice was clear and natural, after a month of silence, and the eyes which had been so wild a little while before were now grown soft and wide, like those of a child.

"Susie, I have a friend here, Rose Thomas," and Jesse took the hand of Rose, who stood near, placing it in the hand of the girl. "I knew her when I was a little child, Susie; and sometimes, when she wished to make me very happy, she would read to me beautiful things from the Psalms of David: 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.' Would you not like her to read those things to you?"

"I should like it very much, if she would be so kind." There was something pathetic in the tones of the girl's voice and in her manner, half shy, half joyous. She seemed like a child who has been ill, taken out for the first time into the air and sunshine of a blossomy garden.

"She will read to you for a little while," Jesse continued, "and her voice is very sweet and comforting. Then, when you are tired, she will put you to bed, and sit beside you until you fall asleep. In the morning you will find her there when you awake, and after breakfast she will take you home to your mother, and you will tell your mother all about it."

The girl followed Rose Thomas from the room, smiling back over her shoulder at Jesse. When she was gone, he sent one of the young men into the village to tell her mother, from whom she had evidently run away, that she

would remain in Peter Bond's house that night. Then he turned again to the two messengers of John the Hermit, who had been gravely looking on at all these things.

"When you return to your master," he said, "tell him what you have just now seen. But if you are still doubtful, you may see greater things. The very children in the streets of Capronville and the neighbouring villages can tell you what has been done in the name of the Spirit. And he who shall truly understand these things shall be happy for ever."

The two messengers then started on their return journey to the Hermit.

The rumour of their presence in Capronville had spread through the village, and Jesse went down to the public square that evening to speak to the people about John. Great crowds now followed him wherever he went; and whenever he walked abroad, men and women seemed to rise out of the earth and join him. When he was at Peter's house, whole families from the neighbouring towns camped out on the hill beyond. The entire population of that region was stirred out of its routine of life by the fire and enthusiasm of this one man. He was, one may truly say, a visitor from another stratum of consciousness, and the swift vibration of his presence electrified the slower lives around him.

"He whom men call the Hermit is now indeed a solitary," he told the people that night, with the play upon words which was always a favourite way of his in forcing home an idea. "He is in prison, but he is still John. Did you expect to see him trembling before the judgment of some petty magistrate? Did you expect to see him reclining on the sofas of the rich, or fawning in the council-chamber of the Governor? John will never do any of these things. But if you have thought to see an inspired man looking fearlessly in the face of a hostile and uncomprehending world, then you have seen that man in John the Hermit.

"He who dwells in the Spirit cannot be confined by prison bars and doors.

"Nor is it necessary that a man's body be devoured by the worms of the earth in order that he may dwell in the

Spirit. The way of the grave is not the way of the Spirit. He who has not pursued the indwelling Spirit during life will not be pursued by the Spirit after death; and he who has not attained the Spirit during life will not attain the Spirit after death. Only he who beats upon the doors of the spiritual home and will not be denied shall enter and dwell therein. But from the day when John the Hermit found the object of his quest until this hour, the spiritual doors have been shaken by the onset of those who have demanded to pass through them.

"Those who read by the letter of fact instead of by the soul of truth may ask, 'How can a spiritual place have doors?' But only by the use of material symbols can I teach you spiritual truths. The language of the inner spheres is understood only by those who dwell therein.

"John the Hermit is the greatest of all those who have not forced the spiritual doors by Love—which is the only password. But do not think that in one short life in human form a man may acquire the power that is in John. Many times must the revolving periods of day and night pass round the globe before an acorn can become an oak-tree. But through the darkest night the sapling preserves its identity, to reappear in the light of dawn a little larger with the growth of the preceding day and night.

"John himself has declared that he is the messenger who goes before the dawn. And this is not the first time he has appeared before the dawn of a new era. He has been known in other ages; and so have you and I, and all men.

"Nothing is ever exactly repeated, not even a blade of grass. But that which has been before shall *be* again."

CHAPTER LIX

HOWEVER great the power of Jesse over the pure, the simple-hearted and the young, in the villages where he preached and healed the sick there were some who not only did not believe in him nor his mission, but sought to discredit both. Among these were most of the clergy of those towns.

"Have we not the Bible for a guide?" they asked. "Must we sit at the feet of this young man for instruction in religion? Why, he has not even been ordained to preach!"

If anyone reminded them that none of the great prophets had been so ordained, they shook their heads and declared that the days of inspiration were over. Some, mistaking the light of his countenance, affirmed that he was crazy; others, seeing that he healed the sick without a doctor's certificate, wanted to have him punished for the illegal practise of medicine; but, as he accepted no fee, and no person died as the result of his ministrations, they could not effect this purpose; others, again, seeing the great numbers of women, young and old, that surrounded and adored him, made veiled insinuations regarding what they called the morality of his influence. It was even counted against him in that region, as in Nashburgh, that men left their homes to follow him.

In some places the ministers came together in a board to question him, trying to entrap him into some admission which could be used against him; but they always went away baffled, like those six ministers who had come to Peter's house in Capronville. A few of the clergy, a very few, were moved by his sincerity and the beauty of his teaching, and even offered him the hospitality of their houses of worship (after discreet consultation with the contributing church-members); but as no church could hold a tithing of the multitudes that flocked to hear him, he could not accept their offers, though he acknowledged them with gentleness and courtesy. So great was his con-

sideration for these men, that his Sunday sermons were now always given in the afternoon, instead of in the morning. Otherwise the churches in whatever town he was visiting would have been empty; for while many might deny and even revile him, none who had once come under the charm of his presence could keep away from him. The minds of men might say no to his appeal, but the souls of men he bound as by a spell. So the clergy were more troubled over this one man who turned his face to the Spirit than over the many sinners who turned their backs upon repentance.

Jesse was again in Capronville when those whom he had sent out to preach his doctrine returned and gave account of their labours. Though they came from different directions, they all arrived on the same day. He had sent no letters to summon them together; they came as if impelled by that guidance he had told them to listen for in the silence of their own hearts.

"We have preached your word and you, and we have healed the sick, even as you bade us," Peter said; and the stories of the others echoed his.

"Now you shall all be with me again for a little while, face to face," he promised them. "And when you have refilled your baskets from the storehouse of the Spirit, you shall go out again among those who are starving for spiritual bread.

He was preaching in a large village some miles east of Capronville when the news reached him that John the Hermit had died in his northern prison. Grieved that the world was now bereft of the speaking presence of that strong and valiant soul, Jesse immediately left the town and went eastward, seeking the comfort of the quiet mountains, and taking with him only the twelve men who had been chosen and sealed as his principal coworkers. But the crowds that had gathered to hear him would not be denied; when they learned the direction he had taken they followed a long distance, and overtook him in a lonely place in the shadow of the mountain. After many hours, during which he taught them of the unseen spiritual world and its reaching and interpenetrating the visible world, he sent

them back again to the places whence they came, filled with the consciousness of the indwelling Presence.

When Jesse and the twelve sat together in the early moonlight, after the crowd had been dismissed, John said:

"Master, you have fed to-day a hungry multitude with spiritual bread."

"And yet we have plenty for ourselves," replied Jesse. "As I have told you before, we can never really possess anything until we have given it away. To-day we have fed a great multitude with the bread of the Spirit, and yet," glancing round the circle of *twelve* men, "there remain to us *twelve baskets full*."

"We are, indeed, baskets filled to the rim and piled up with the bread of heaven," James said, and the others answered, "Yes."

Then they talked together of the Hermit who was dead; and Andrew, who had spent some time with him before he followed this gentler master, told them stories of the austere life of him who no longer had a body to chasten by fasting and vigils.

It was that same night when Peter, in answer to Jesse's question as to *what* they believed him to be, made the potent declaration that he was the very Spirit made flesh, the incarnation of God. The other men, who had often asked themselves the question without daring the supreme answer made by Peter, were stirred to the depths by this confirmation of their own thought. But why had he chosen them, simple and ignorant men, for his intimate companions, when the wisest of the earth might have been sitting at his feet, in their places? He answered their unspoken question:

"Does not the mother reveal to the simple and unlearned children at her knee wonders of love she could not speak to the wisest of grown men and women? By the very simplicity of your minds are you able to receive the profoundest wisdom—which is always simple. But the time is not come when you can wisely reveal to others all you know and feel about me."

Then he spoke to them again concerning the death of the Hermit, and reminded them that all who wear the garment of the flesh must lay it off.

"Even I," he said, "shall become invisible some day. But when you no longer see me, I shall be present with you as a breath, an influence leading you on in the ministry of revealing the Spirit to the men of earth. When I am dead, the work—the preaching of the faith—must still continue."

"When you are dead!" It was a hoarse cry from the lips of all.

"Yes, for the time is not far off when I must make the final sacrifice of the flesh to the Spirit. The autumn will soon be here. Through the winter I shall be with you; but when the spring comes up from the South I must go down to meet it, down to the great city where I must lay the final stone in the temple of my faith—the great city where my bodily death will be the price of spiritual victory. And I shall die by violence at the hands of those who shall reject the Spirit."

Peter sprang to his feet. "Master, it must not be!" he cried. "It shall not be!" And he took hold of Jesse, as if to draw him back by force from the threatening future.

Jesse's look was a reproof, before he spoke:

"Is it better, then, that you should enjoy the pleasure of my presence, and my mission be unfulfilled? Would you hold me back from the purpose for which I came into the world?"

"But if you die," persisted Peter, "how can your purpose be fulfilled? Can a man work after he is dead?"

The wind was rising in the mountains before them, and its low murmur sounded like a warning from the vast powers of Nature that watched and listened. John shivered, and drew his coat closer about him.

"To die is a part of my work," the Master went on, his voice rising with the voice of the wind. "Can I not speak with your tongues when my own shall be silent? Only he who can live without my bodily presence shall feel my spirit constantly within him. When the self no longer cries for anything, then the soul comes into its divine inheritance."

John's hand went out and sought the hand of Jesse. The boy's face was wet with tears.

"There is always a price set," the thrilling voice went on. "The price of the ecstasy of motherhood is the pain of giving birth. The price of immortality is death."

"Master, is not your life too valuable to be sacrificed?" It was Andrew who spoke; and though he asked a question, his tone had all the firmness of an affirmation.

Jesse answered: "When a man shall know his life to be more valuable than the life of any other, then will he be willing to sacrifice that life upon the altar of the world."

They were heavy-hearted. That very night they had declared him to be the supreme Spirit in man's form, and even then he was preparing to die the death of an ordinary man! The twelve composed their limbs to rest; but for a long time sleep would not come near them.

Judson, especially, was restless and miserable. Was this pleasant life to last a few months only? When Jesse had sent the men out to preach he had sent Judson and Andrew together, and the ministry of these two had been less brilliant than some of the others. And now unwelcome doubts came whispering to this disciple. The Master had spoken of death by violence, spoken of the rejection of his teaching. Were they then to be dishonoured in the eyes of the world? Judson had had enough of dishonour. For hours he turned from side to side, listening to the wind among the mountains; and in the morning he was haggard and absent-minded.

They were in Rutland the following day, when a letter was brought to Jesse from a man who wrote on behalf of the Governor of the State, saying there were many prominent persons in the North, including that high official himself, who were desirous to see and hear the young preacher of whom such remarkable stories were told.

Peter read the letter aloud to the little band, as they sat at dinner in the house of one of their new converts; and the heart of the troubled Judson again beat high in his bosom.

"Now, surely, Master, that is an honour," he cried, "when the Governor himself sends for you! If you can win his support, and the support of the other prominent persons spoken of in the letter, why, all the things you dread may be avoided."

Jesse looked at him some moments before answering. "You mistake," he said, "I dread nothing. And how high must be your respect for the indwelling and immortal One, when you think It can be honoured by the Governor and other prominent persons!"

"But surely——" Judson began; then wavered, for he knew not what to say.

"My mission is not to appease the idle curiosity of prominent persons," Jesse went on, "but to speak the word of spiritual life to all who will hear it. These prominent persons are too well satisfied with their own prominence to exchange it for the humility of spiritual service. It is not they through whom the world will be transformed. Shall the denier of self be fed from the plate of the self-satisfied? Will a ruler sign the warrant for his own execution?"

Then Jesse turned to Peter, giving him instructions to write to the man who wrote for the Governor, saying that the messenger of the coming spiritual era would continue to deliver his word to seekers after truth in the region where he then was; and that all who came to him, rich and poor, were given to drink of the same cup, in faith and brotherly love.

A few days later Jesse took the three who were now nearest to him, Peter, James and John, and again sought the solitude of a night upon the mountain. It was the time of the full moon, and the surface of the little mountain stream, the smooth bark of the birch-trees, and every leaf swaying in the wind, seemed touched with silver. He led them on and up, to the very top of the mountain; and before they fell asleep, wearied with much walking, the last thing their eyes rested on was the form of their Master, standing in prayer a little way from them, his palms extended, his face uplifted to the moon, and all his being flooded and illumined with the unearthly radiance.

As they closed their eyes on the entrancing picture, their souls passed out into that mystic mid-region between the waking world and the ocean of sleep—the region of visions wherein seers behold those wonders which, recorded in wise books, are mankind's most precious promises of another and

purser existence, outside the present limitations of flesh and time and space. And as the unveiled sun, the sun itself, must be far brighter than as we see it through the mists of the earth-atmosphere, so the unveiled *Reality* of their Master, as they saw him thus in spiritual vision, was far more luminous and beautiful than the physical appearance they had seen a moment before upon the moonlit mountain. The souls of the three men beheld the same vision at the same moment of time—their Master transfigured and shining with such light as never may be seen by open earthly eyes. And in the vision he was not alone, for angelic forms were with him, and he seemed to hold converse with them.

In that strange mid-region sound comes as well as sight, though it comes more rarely. The inner ears of the three men were opened for the mystic hearing, and a voice declared to them transcendent things about their Master, things they were afterward forbidden to repeat. And their souls were overwhelmed with wonder and weak with human fear.

Awaking from the vision and opening their eyes, they perceived that Jesse had touched them. Tall, calm and beautiful, he stood alone in the moonlight; the ethereal beings they had seen in converse with him were no longer there. They knew they had not been dreaming, knew they had been instructed by a Power beyond their comprehension; though the full meaning of its message was only to be realised in after years.

CHAPTER LX

So the summer and autumn passed, each month crowded with incidents too numerous to record. Among those who absorbed the teachings of Jesse Bethel were many others, besides the twelve, whom he sent out to preach as soon as they were ready for the trust. Even beyond Burlington in the North these new disciples went, and below Bennington in the South; so that by the time the early snow made outdoor preaching difficult, there was hardly a town of any size throughout the little State which had not listened to the thrilling voice of one of Jesse's messengers; hardly a man or woman who had not heard the prophecy of a coming revolution, by which the powers of gold and greed and selfishness should be laid low, and the gentle influences of love and faith should be triumphant—a revolution that would exalt the universal possessions of the Spirit above the personal vanities of the flesh.

There were many to whom these teachings were mere empty words; but there were many others to whom they came like the songs of their own beloved country to exiles in a foreign land. For, as Jesse said, the children and lovers of the Spirit are always exiles in a world where Greed and Matter are sovereign and god. But not yet had the time come for the prophet of the new era to attack these monsters in their central stronghold—the great city where Greed and Matter are Church and State, where the values of spiritual things are quoted in the market, and Beauty and Poetry are always in pawn.

The winter is very cold in that part of New England, and the snow is deep; but, on the other hand, it is the time of greatest leisure with the farming population. Jesse continued to send his disciples here and there through the coldest months, though they were obliged to speak in public halls, sometimes hired for the purpose, in those towns

where the use of the churches was refused them. Jesse's cousin, Jim Bethel, whose wife and brother had joined them at Capronville after the autumn harvesting, was one of the men whom Jesse sent out to preach during the winter; but he did not send him to their native place.

The propaganda of the new faith was not hampered by the lack of funds, for Mary Magnus was rich, and Peter and Andrew and several of the new disciples were far from being poor. But no large amount of money was needed for this work, as the travelling disciples were in nearly all cases welcomed with enthusiasm in the houses of those who were eager to learn about Jesse Bethel.

Indeed, so great was the public curiosity regarding him, that a few penniless and dishonest men with ready tongues, who had merely heard him preach somewhere and had picked up a few of his phrases, found shelter and food on many a cold night by pretending to be his disciples, and relating to their fascinated hosts, thus gained by fraud, true stories of the lovely personality, the sermons and marvellous cures of Jesse Bethel. So many an insincere and self-appointed minister, in every age, has filled his stomach and warmed his hands by repeating the immortal words of a great teacher.

At one time, in the early autumn, many of Jesse's new followers had left him, shocked by his fearless speech and bewildered by the strange symbolical language in which he often clothed the naked beauty of his thought. But for every one who went away, two new ones came; and even of those deserters who had believed they could live without him, more than a few returned in shame to throw themselves upon his pity and forgiveness. And he did not turn them away.

"As the mother receives back a runaway child," he said to them, "so I receive you back. As the doors of the heart of God which never close, so are the doors of my heart."

And they who thus returned in shame, and were received with pity and love, were faithful to him thereafter even unto death.

Peter and Judson were at first much troubled at this let-

ting down of the bars of mercy to the runaway sheep that came to bleat outside.

"Shall the faithless be even as the faithful?" Peter asked. "Must I receive in my house these men who turned against my Master?"

"You need not receive them in your house," was Jesse's gentle answer. "I can break with them the bread of forgiveness under the open sky; and as it rains to-day, there will be no need to explain the moisture in our eyes, which may be the moisture of heaven. He who bars his door against the angels of pity and forgiveness, will always find his Master upon the outside."

"I am myself unworthy to be your disciple!" Peter cried. "I see that I have denied the *spirit* of your teaching—even as they."

"Were you perfect," replied Jesse, "then would you have no need to learn of me."

Though many of Jesse's disciples were constantly traveling about, and sending their more earnest inquirers down to Capronville to sit at the feet of the Master, he was himself very quiet during the latter part of the winter. It seemed as if he were consciously working in harmony with that true rhythm by which all things move; as if he were purposely withdrawing himself, like the waters of the ocean at ebb-tide, that when the hour of the flood-tide came he might dash himself with renewed vigour and irresistible power high up against the rocky strand of the world's life.

For six months he had not known a day of rest, and few had been his hours of solitude; but he now secluded himself as much as possible, though he could not turn away the sufferers in spirit and in body who came, many of them from distant places, to hear his voice and to receive his healing touch. Long hours he spent in meditation and prayer in the room which was held sacred to him.

"The builder rests but a brief time," he told his friends, "for he has yet to finish the building, and nail the flag upon the very tower."

His mother, who heard the words, knew of what he was thinking, and asked leave to follow him to his room.

"When are you going down there?" she asked, as soon as the door was shut. She could not bring herself to name the city of her dread.

"When the spring comes, then I am going."

"And who will go with you?"

"You will all go with me, little Mother."

"Even I, and Mary, and Anna, and Rose, and John's mother, too?"

"Yes, for the faith of woman is a torch in the dark night."

"Jesse, you frighten me!

"Does your torch, then, flicker in the wind of fear?"

In his eyes was a look of tenderness past understanding, but his tone was steady and almost cold.

"What terrible battle are you going into, my son?"

"The battle of the Spirit and of truth, against materialism and falsehood. But if there is quiet in your soul, the roar of the greatest battle will not have power to disturb you."

"But you are my little child, the baby I nursed at my breast. . . ." Her voice shook and broke, and her eyes were wet with tears.

Jesse took the quivering form of the mother in his arms and led her to a chair.

"Sit here beside me, Mother. You love me, do you not? And you would gladly die to prove your love?"

"To save you? Oh, gladly would I die to prove my love and to save you!"

"Then shall I not gladly die to prove my love to the world, and to save it, if possible, from spiritual death?"

"Can your death save the world?"

"My death can show the world the way to save itself. How? By the revelation of that love which sacrifices self. Man can be saved only by sacrifice; because the soul of man is sunk so deep in matter, that only by making of his own life a rope whereby the souls of other men may climb, can one help those blind and matter-laden souls to reach upward to the light. My life will be that rope. Death is the unanswerable argument, dear Mother; its logic surpasses that of the schools."

"And *how* shall you die? In what inconceivable way?"

"What matter? Death is one, though the doors of death are many."

After a little silence he went on speaking, as if to himself, in a strange, rapt voice:

"To the souls of millions now unborn I shall become the very symbol of sacrificial love, the hope and promise of a passion beyond self; I shall be the dream of those who give themselves for others, the comforter of all who suffer for their love. Though I give my body unto death, my spirit will endure in all men's minds for ever. I shall be called the Lord of gentleness and pity, and in my name will men forgive their enemies and do good in secret to those who hate them. When a man would injure his neighbour, my invisible hand shall hold him back; when a woman opens her lips to voice an uncharitable thought, my word shall persuade her to silence. They who would desecrate the temple of their body, remembering me shall dedicate that temple to the service of the Spirit. The lips of little children will be taught to repeat my words, even before their minds are ready for the meaning; and the hearts of aged mothers who go down the slippery path to death will lean on me in preference to their first-born. The hungry will ask me for bread. The lonely will come to me for love. They who are misunderstood will remember that I also was not understood by the world for which I died. They who labour from morning until evening that they may have mere bread, will know that the palms of my hands were calloused by years of contact with the hammer and the plane, and that my hours for reading and meditation were only in the intervals of a laborious life. I am the path whereby men's feet shall reach the higher levels of true brotherhood. It is the voice of Death that shall proclaim me the immortal, immanent guardian of mankind. And they who believe on the Spirit that is I, shall also become immortal."

His mother gazed at him, at first in sadness; then, as the full grandeur and scope of his idea burst on her vision, her eyes widened, her breath was suspended, her heart almost ceased to beat. She forgot, in the rush of enlightenment, that he was her son; she knew only that before her was a colossal and god-like man, whose star would blaze

for ever in the firmament of human consciousness. In the light of this new revelation the little spark of personal, maternal fear was blotted out, and her pain seemed only a great red flower which she was privileged to lay upon the altar of his worship.

"O inconceivable one," she breathed, "inconceivable one whom I by the grace of God conceived! May all things be as you say—yes, even to the death that shall purchase your immortality in the consciousness of men for ever!"

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BOOK IV
THE SACRIFICE

CHAPTER LXI

ON the morning when Jesse left Capronville for the last time, no words of comfort could still the crying of Peter's children. They clung to his hands, they held his garments, pleading with him not to go away from them.

"Oh, we shall never see you any more!" they sobbed, "we know that we shall never see you any more!"

The intuitive of the pure heart! Never before when he had left them to go on one of his many journeys had the children tried to hold him back, never before had they doubted that he would return. Notwithstanding his determination to Peter and the other men that his life had now been a brief course to run, they did not really understand, but the little ones, to whom no word of warning had been spoken, knew even as Jesse knew that this was a last parting.

"I shall be with you always, my precious ones," he promised them, even as he had promised the men and women to be ever with them in the spirit; but the unhappy children only wept more hopelessly, still pleading:

"Do not go away! Oh, do not go away!"

He sat down in a large chair on the verandah and gathered them in his arms, from the eldest boy of eleven years to the little girl of three who had nestled on his breast that day in the preceding summer when the delegation of masters had come to question him.

"Now you will not cry any more," he said, "I will tell you a beautiful story, one you are always to remember."

With the tears still hanging on their eyelashes they stopped their sobbing to listen.

"There was once a man who had five beautiful children whom he loved even as I love you, my little ones, and who loved him even as you love me. But one day the man was obliged to leave his children and to go on a journey into a far country, and the children wept and would not be comforted; their eyelashes were heavy with tears, like those I

now wipe from the face of little Anna. And the man, who was grieved at their grief, said to them in parting:

"If I do not return before the little moon, which you saw lying low in the western sky last night like a curled silver feather, shall grow to be a round golden ball, then I will send to you in my place a being far more wonderful than I, one bright like the sunshine, whose step will be so light it will not bend the frailest grasses as he comes along. He will also love you more than I, because he will know you better; no thought of yours can be hidden from him. When you wake alone in the night and are afraid, he will be there to comfort you; the secret griefs that you dare not tell even to your mother, he will understand and pity. When you hear a bird sing in the early dawn, you will think he is calling to you; when the rain beats against the window-pane and the wind sighs round the house, you will think of the tears he must have shed for you; and whenever you smell the fragrance of a rose, it will remind you of some wonderful secret thing which he is waiting to tell you when you shall be good and wise enough to understand."

"And as the father told the children about the wonderful stranger who was coming, his heart was so full of love for them that his tears fell on their faces, even as my tears fall now. Do you not think, dear little ones, that when the children knew how much the father wished them to love the stranger, they would watch for him?"

"I think," said the smallest boy, who was five, "I think they would watch most for their father."

"And I think," said the eldest boy, "that the stranger was their father; that he was going to be an angel, and come back to them that way, for only an angel could have a step so light it would not bend the grasses as he walked along."

Jesse now rose from the chair and kissed the children softly in farewell.

"The less you cry," he said "the clearer your eyes will be to see the wonderful stranger, in case he should come to you also, as he came to the children in the story."

Then, while they were still wondering at his words, he turned and passed quickly down the road, followed by the men.

Several days before, Jesse had received a troubled letter from Martha Lane, telling of the serious illness of her brother Lawrence, and urging him to hasten, if possible, in his promised journey to New York. "Lawrence constantly asks when you are coming," Martha wrote. "If you were here, I am sure he would get better."

But Jesse did not hasten. He left Capronville on the day he had originally set, and then, instead of going by the most direct route to New York, he chose a roundabout way which would take him through the town in which his old enemy, Thomas Taylor, was held in an asylum for the insane. The twelve men were with him, but the women had been told to remain in Capronville a few days longer, then to go directly to New York, under the guardianship of Mary Magnus, and await a message from Jesse in a place agreed upon between them.

Early that afternoon they arrived in the town where Taylor was, and went to the asylum which stood a little way outside the village. Approaching the portal of that house of woe through an avenue of calm and noble elm-trees, they paused for a few minutes midway between the wide gate and the entrance of the house. So restful was the scene, it might have been the foreground of a palace of art or of music; and save for a shrill, harsh cry which now and then rang out from somewhere in the long west wing extending from the main building to the road, one might have envied the dwellers in that well-proportioned pile for the quiet of their surroundings. An abode of peace it seemed at the first view; but looking closer, one saw strange faces behind the grated windows, some emaciated and cadaverous, others distorted by incomprehensible wrath and lighted by fiery eyeballs, others again of putty-like appearance, so void were they of any gleam of that spirit of intelligence which we call human. Here and there a hand was thrust forth from between the gratings of the windows, a hand which waved aimlessly at nothing, or gesticulated wildly at some imaginary enemy or friend.

"What a terrible place!" gasped John. "But, Master, what really is insanity?"

"The escape of the mind from the guidance of the soul. Sometimes it comes about through a revolt of the mind against that guidance; for the soul of a man should control even his own wandering thoughts. Only that man whose soul is master of the mind as well as of the body can be said to be entirely sane. The mind of our ordinary consciousness is the path between the Spirit and matter, and that path should be kept clear and clean. It is of no avail to drive the herd of passions from the pastures of the body, if we give them leave to make a stable of the mind. Then, again, much insanity is caused by the mind arrogating to itself the use of psychic powers of which it has not taken the trouble to gain knowledge; such a mind loses the power to co-ordinate with the normal physical consciousness."

They passed on to the office of the institution. Jesse went in, ahead of his companions, and announced his name to the young physician in charge. The effect was electrical. The young man sprang to his feet.

"Your name is well-known here," he said. "Not only has your fame reached us; but one of my patients, Thomas Taylor, of Nashburgh, speaks constantly of you."

"It is he whom I wish to see," Jesse replied.

The doctor hesitated.

"Taylor is rather low at present. He was extremely violent for a long time. He has an iron constitution, or he would have worn himself out long ago. Of late he has been in a semi-stupor. I wonder how the sight of you would affect him."

"You may have heard," said Jesse, simply, "that the sight of me has proved beneficial to a great number of persons."

The eyes of the young doctor were aflame with interest, both personal and scientific.

"Of course you shall see Taylor," he said. "I will go up with you myself." They went out into the wide hall, where the other men were waiting. "Do you wish any of your friends to accompany us?"

Jesse motioned to Peter, James and John.

"Can I not go?" asked Marty White.

"Do you know Taylor?" the doctor questioned.

"I have always known him."

"Then you had better remain here."

Taylor was lying in his bed, propped high with pillows, in a little room which opened off a long corridor. The man who had been so large and strong was now pathetically shrunken, the formerly bronze-like face was the colour of old ivory, and the knotted hands which lay on the coverlet were limp and nerveless.

"Taylor," said the cheery voice of the doctor, who stood behind Jesse in the doorway, "I have brought a friend to see you."

"I have no friends." He did not even open his eyes.

Jesse passed into the room and stood beside the narrow bed. Without speaking a word, he touched one of the shrunken, nerveless hands of the invalid. Quickly Taylor opened his eyes, as if a shock of electricity had passed through his body. With suspended breath he gazed at the vision before him. A ray of sunshine from the unshaded window fell on the golden head of the visitor and gave to his face a look of unearthly radiance.

"Are you the angel of death?" The voice was hoarse, but there was a tone of surprise and gladness in it.

"I am the messenger of life and of love." Jesse clasped the hand of his old enemy in both his own, and bent tenderly above him. "I have come to make you well and happy. Do you not know me?"

"You look like Jesse Bethel. How strange! Why, I used to hate you!"

"That was because you did not really know me. To know anyone really is to love him."

"I had a strange dream about you last night, Jesse."

The doctor stood listening in the doorway, his eyes wide with astonishment. This was the first time Taylor had spoken rationally in all the months he had been under his care. But the sick man took no notice of the spectators.

"Yes," he went on, "I dreamed that my old ugly dog came tearing at my throat, and that you took him away. And the dog licked your face, as he did that day in Nashburgh. Why did the dog lick your face, Jesse?"

"Because I pitied him and loved him."

"Do you pity and love everything?"

"Yes."

"Even me?"

"You more than most."

"But why?"

"Because I feel that you need it most."

The eyes of Thomas Taylor filled with tears. It was the first time anyone had ever seen those eyes suffused with the moisture of emotion.

"Why did you come to see me to-day, Jesse?"

"Because I felt that you had need of me."

"Do you know that I am going to die?"

Jesse turned to the watching doctor and motioned to him to close the door.

"Let me sit down beside you," he said to Taylor, when they were alone; and Taylor moved his wasted form a little further back upon the bed.

"Do you know that I am going to die, Jesse?" he repeated.

"Yes. And I also am going to die in a little while. We who stand so near to the wharf of death should wish each other a calm passage."

"Do the dead rest well, I wonder?" Taylor's weary eyes were fixed on Jesse's face. "I am so tired, I shall be glad to rest. It seems to me that I have hardly slept for months until last night, and then I dreamed of you. Do you think the dead rest well?"

"I think you will rest well. Do you want to go to sleep now for a little while?"

"Oh, if I only could!"

"You shall, dear brother. Close your eyes, and when you wake you shall see my face in another dream."

He laid his fingers on the fluttering eyelids, and they were quiet. With a sigh of contentment the man who had been mad so long passed into the peaceful sleep of perfect sanity. Jesse sat looking at him for a few moments, then arose and joined the doctor and the three other men in the corridor.

"Well?" The doctor gazed anxiously at Jesse.

"Your patient is asleep."

"Why, this is extraordinary! The man has slept only under the influence of drugs since he has been here. What have you done to him, if I may ask?"

"Given him peace."

"You are certainly a most unusual man! Do you think my patient will recover?"

"No, he will die to-night."

"And even you cannot prevent it?"

"I would not if I could."

"Yet rumour says that you have brought men back from the very clutch of death."

"Not one who had so great a need of death."

"*Could* you—in the interest of science?" The face of the young physician was alight with enthusiasm.

"But I have no interest in science," Jesse answered, with a gentle smile, "except where science can serve the spirit of man."

Then he sent for his other companions who were waiting below, and together they went over the great building, through the halls of the men and the halls of the women. To all those tortured souls the presence of Jesse brought a sense of peace, and to many of them a word from him or a touch of his hand marked the turning-point for their recovery.

That night Thomas Taylor died, as peacefully as he had fallen asleep in the afternoon. His last words were, "Tell Jesse that I shall be watching for him when I awake."

The nurse who sat beside the bed did not understand. He thought the mind of the dying man was wandering.

CHAPTER LXII

AFTER leaving the asylum Jesse and his companions went to Albany, where they remained nearly two days. That was the largest place in which he had preached, so far; and one of his reasons for stopping there was that the men who were with him, shy and awkward from a lifetime passed among the little farms and villages of Vermont, might gradually become accustomed to the ways of city life, before he plunged them into the great metropolis, where their faith and courage would be tried so sorely, where they would be as children set to accomplish tasks beyond their power. John and Judson were the only ones among the twelve who had ever spent more than a few days in New York city, and most of them had never been outside their native State.

Arriving in Albany that evening, Jesse sent announcements to the newspapers that he would speak in a public square at twelve o'clock the following day. The necessary arrangements were made by Judson Carey, whose wandering, unhappy life had included more than one sojourn in this very city. In one of the newspaper offices he met an old acquaintance.

"Why, what are you doing here?" the man asked, in surprise.

Judson stated his business in Albany and in the office of the newspaper.

"Do you mean that you are travelling about with a religious prophet? Well, that's a good joke! Do you get well paid?"

"I am his disciple. There are twelve of us."

"Humph!" The man, who was rather sceptical in matters of religion, and whose own hard life had made him doubtful of the purity of human motives, first stared at Judson, then laughed outright. "Do you mean that you are doing it for pleasure?"

"I believe in him," Judson answered, simply. "So

would you, if you had seen him do the things I've seen him do."

"For example?" The man looked interested.

"Well, I've seen him cure almost every disease by one touch of his hand, and even raise the dying. Four of my friends once saw him still a hurricane, simply by calling to it: I wasn't there myself. He can read the thought in your mind and the writing in your pocket."

"Sounds like a fortune-teller," said the man. "That's what they claim to do."

"Can a fortune-teller raise the dead?"

"Some of the quack doctors pretend to."

"Suppose you come and hear him preach to-morrow, and then tell me if you ever knew anyone who could speak as this man speaks."

"Do you pass the hat at your open air meetings?" he asked.

"Never."

"But who pays for all this? Who's your cashier?"

"I carry the money, usually."

"But where does it come from?"

"Our wants are simple."

"If I remember rightly, yours weren't so simple in the days when we knew each other."

Judson winced, and his face flushed. "Those days are over," he said.

"Then you are much changed," the man observed.

"The whole world will be changed," declared the disciple. "Our Master is the prophet of a spiritual revolution."

"Revolutions are either very dangerous or very profitable—for those who bring them about. I've gone into politics myself, in a small way, since last we met; and if your master, as you call him, doesn't pass the hat, then he's looking for something bigger. It's always the way. Better feather your nest before the thing fails: for it's sure to fail, if the man is even half-way honest. Honest reformers always fail." And the man who had gone into politics in a small way bade the disciple good-night.

Judson walked back to the obscure hotel where they had obtained lodgings, much disturbed in mind by his chance

encounter with an old acquaintance. The most faithful of Jesse's friends was not so sensitive regarding the fame and dignity of the Master as this man was. Great love and faith are so sure of the loveliness of their object that the praise or blame of others affects them little. Judson's feelings were not of that simple order. Nor had he ever pondered the saying of the sage Lao-tsze: "Those who come up to the vulgar standard have existed for a long time as small men."

The square was packed at the hour of Jesse's sermon the following day. He had two ends in view in causing those notices to be inserted in the newspapers, besides the obvious one of gathering a crowd to listen to his words. In the first place, he wished to test for himself how far his fame had spread beyond the region of his early preaching; and in the second place, he wished the news of his coming journey to New York to reach that city before him. Several times during the preceding fall and winter he had been visited by representatives of the metropolitan press, and more than one account of him, and of his cures and teachings, had been published in the large newspapers. The great prophet always adjusts himself in some degree to his environment; otherwise he would perish as a small prophet, and his life and labour make no material change in that environment, for the benefit of those who come after him. In the dawn of the twentieth century, no man could move the world a fraction of an inch without the aid of the newspapers. And Alexander, had he lived in our day, would have gone to the conquest of Asia with machine guns instead of spears and pikes.

The morning after his sermon in the square, every important paper in Albany had a long account of Jesse Bethel. One printed a full stenographic report of his words, and several gave much space to the extraordinary cures he had performed, under the very eyes of the reporters. Scores of persons had come during the afternoon and evening to the small hotel where they were staying, and the next morning they came by hundreds, after reading the newspapers.

But though he was besought to remain in Albany even one day longer, he could not remain. Invisible threads

were drawing him to the little house beyond the Palisades, where his friend Lawrence Lane was in danger of a fate more dreadful than the inevitable end that comes to all mankind. Jesse sent a telegram to Martha, stating the hour when he would come; and late in the afternoon he and his companions took a train for New York City. It was plain to the twelve men that their master was much troubled; never before had they seen him so restless and preoccupied. Many persons gathered around him on the train; but though he answered all their questions, those who loved him knew that his thoughts were elsewhere.

CHAPTER LXIII

THEY left the train at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street and went across-town to the Fort Lee Ferry. On the New Jersey side they were met by Martha Lane. Her face was pale, her eyes red as from long weeping.

"Oh, Master!" she cried, clinging to Jesse's hand. "My brother is dead."

The twelve men knew how dearly Jesse had loved this man, and their eyes were wet with sympathy.

"If you had been here," said the weeping Martha, "I know he would not have died."

"No man is so fully alive," he said, "as the dead that live again."

They did not understand him, for they thought he was speaking of those who live in the Spirit.

They took the car which climbed the steep hill, and Martha clung to Jesse's hand all of the short way home, as if she still cherished in her heart some vague and nameless hope; as if in the coming of this friend there lay some possibility of comfort, beyond the bounds of reason.

To Jesse's companions that short, steep ride from the ferry-house to the home of the Lanes was more wearisome than the journey down from Albany. The feeling that depressed them was something more than the natural sadness of those about to enter a house of mourning, something more than the feeling of nearness to a strange and unfriendly city which may so affect the imagination of sensitive souls. The death of Jesse's friend seemed like an evil omen. When they had first seen Martha approaching they had shrunk back, repelled by a sudden dread of some unnameable menace that lay just behind her. Could there be anything in Jesse's warning, more than once repeated, that the shadow of death lay over this journey?

Arrived at the house, a wooden structure of medium size some distance back from the Palisades, Martha left them in the large sitting-room and went to call her sister. There

were present several persons, men and women, whom Martha had made known to the strangers.

"The brother has been dead some days," said a white-bearded old man to Jesse, when Martha had left the room; "but neither of the girls would hear a word of his burial until you should come."

"All will be well," Jesse answered simply. Then after a moment he added, as if to himself:

"To leave undone that which should be done, is no less evil than to do that which should not be done."

They thought he was questioning the wisdom of leaving the dead unburied, but such was not his meaning. In his mind was the conviction that Lawrence had not bidden an eternal nor a willing farewell to the sunlight, and he was living over in memory that scene of seven years before, in the little home near Washington Square, when his friend's hold upon the world had seemed so near to slipping. He was also thinking of that other scene, two days before, when he had refused to detain the world-tired spirit of Thomas Taylor even an hour from the rest it craved. Surely his course was plain; but would the task be easy as before? He buried his face in his hands, seeking in spirit the spirit of his friend.

A sudden, half-stifled cry at the door of the room caused him to look up. It was Mary, the younger sister.

"Oh, Master!" she cried, sinking on her knees besides his chair and clinging to his hands. "If you had been here, I know he would not have died."

The very words which Martha had spoken! Surely the faith of both would help him, if such help were needed. Was this an opportunity made by the Spirit itself, to prove the power of the Spirit? He knew that Lawrence was well-known in the neighbourhood; that he held a local office of some prominence; that even the funeral rites had been performed above him, though his sisters had forbidden the burial. Here on the outskirts of the great sceptical city could he perform a work which should challenge the attention of every man?

"Would you not like to come and see him?" asked Mary timidly, raising her bowed head and looking into Jesse's face.

"In a little while," he answered, "not yet."

The work which he hoped to do must be well attested, by witnesses of whose impartial judgment there could be no question. He turned suddenly to Martha.

"Where is the physician who attended your brother?"

She pointed to a neighbouring house, whose roof was visible through the trees.

"Please send for him," said Jesse.

After a few minutes a bespectacled, black-bearded young man of some thirty years of age came into the room and was presented to Jesse.

"I am glad I happened to be at home," he said, with more briskness than is customary in a house of death. His was the professional manner with which a doctor cheers a living patient, rather than the more subdued demeanour befitting the acknowledgement of professional defeat in the presence of a dead one.

"I suppose you wish to know some details regarding your friend's illness," the doctor went on. Though his manner was an opaque glass behind which his soul was hidden, it was plain that he was surprised, and even somewhat awed, by the tremendous personal power of the man before him.

"No," was Jesse's quiet answer. "I wished your presence for another reason. Will you come with me to where he lies?"

"Certainly. And now that you are here, there is no reason for further delaying the burial. I have made almost every test known to science to prove to these young ladies the fact which needed no such proof. Perhaps you can convince them."

"Let us go to him," said Jesse, and motioned the others to follow.

Martha led the way into the darkened parlour across the hall. Besides Jesse, there were twenty-one persons standing in the room. In the centre of the floor was the open coffin, half-covered with flowers whose heavy fragrance made the atmosphere oppressive.

"Please open the blinds and the windows," Jesse said in a low tone to John, and the full rush of oxygen and sunlight seemed to fill the room with life.

Against the white pillow in the coffin the face of Lawrence seemed moulded out of wax, and he was fixed in that unbending dignity by which the dead mutely command the reverence of the living. The fresh breeze blowing through the open window lightly stirred the dark hair above his temples, and those who saw it shivered at the motion of those passive locks. The two sisters wept unrestrained, and the sympathetic neighbours wiped their eyes.

Jesse was shaken with emotion. He had long loved this friend; but deeper than any personal grief that could ever come to him was his overwhelming consciousness of the universal, inexorable fact of human sorrow. At that very moment, in ten thousand homes the wide world over, he knew that mourners hung above their dead and dying, helpless before the law which declares that all who live must die, that every love must be baptised in grief, that every tie must be some day severed. None could escape the all-embracing horror. No home could be so closely guarded but that the silently-gliding and unwelcome visitor drew daily nearer, waiting the inevitable hour to enter and claim his own. He saw Death standing at the elbow of the tender mother, as she bent ecstatically above the cradle of her child; he saw Death watching beside the altar-rail and following home the new-made bride; he saw Death walking familiarly beside the aged, whose children clung to them with questioning eyes and lips that dared not speak the fear within; he saw the same shadowy presence threatening every unfinished labour of the brain, or hand, or heart of man. The tears of all the world were burning in his eyes, the sorrow of all mankind was a weight unbearable upon his breast.

But nearer—nearer and darker—was the real and inexorable grief that waited now behind the curtain of the days for those who so loved *him*. And though his heart was breaking with pity for all they would have to suffer, he must not falter on the stony road which waiting Death now pointed out for his own feet to travel. This was the price he could not pay for them, the pain he could not bear for them, however vast his love.

This was why Jesse wept as he stood beside the coffin of his friend.

"How much he must have loved him!" said the sympathising neighbours to one another.

Then a change came over Jesse. His tears no longer flowed, the shadow of grief passed from him, and the light of a great purpose shone in his face. He touched the bowed heads of the weeping sisters, and they were quiet, looking up at him with wide and questioning eyes. Gently he spoke to them.

"All that we receive from the Spirit we must yield to the Spirit again—even the gift of life."

Then he turned to the men who followed him.

"When you listen to the truth, listen with the inner ears as well as with the outer. Truth is one, but the ways of hearing truth are many."

They wondered what strange thing was about to happen, which he wished them to interpret by the light of inner knowledge. He turned again to the two young women.

"Would you be willing to endure this grief, would you be willing to give your brother to Death, if you felt that by this sacrifice of your own personal love the presence of the Spirit might be quickened ever so little in the souls of men?"

It was a question which would shake the heart of any mourner, at which the devotee of any faith might tremble,—the question which every pledged soul must put to itself over and over again, as one by one the dearest hopes of self are relinquished, and the lonely pilgrim painfully climbs toward mastership.

Would they be willing? After a pause of breathless thought, Mary answered:

"We would give our brother to the Spirit and to you, Master." And Martha bowed her head in sign of acquiescence.

"That is well," Jesse answered. "Not until you have sacrificed a thing can you really possess it, for then only can you learn the lesson it holds for you.

"But it may be," he went on, his voice rising on the wings of feeling, "it may be that your brother's life will serve the purpose of the Spirit better than his death could serve it."

The eyes of the listening doctor opened wide. He had

heard strange stories from the members of the Lane family relative to the doings of this young enthusiast from the North, incredible stories which lessened his respect for the intelligence of those who could repeat them as facts. Of what folly was he now to be a witness? He heard Jesse say to the two sisters of Lawrence:

"Do you not believe that the Spirit is all-powerful? Do you not believe that I am the instrument and demonstrator of that power?"

"We believe."

"Of my own will I could not do this thing; but if the Spirit that is in me shall declare itself, even this work may be accomplished." He then turned to one of the men who stood near, and asked him to unscrew the lid of the coffin which covered the lower part of Lawrence's body.

"What madness is this?" cried the doctor.

Jesse looked at him with calm eyes whose power might have commanded a much stronger opponent to be silent. He said:

"Even though my madness should prove as inefficient as your science, no harm can now be done by me to him who lies here."

The lid of the coffin was removed. The watchers held their breath. Jesse leaned over the motionless figure and touched the cold brow at a point a little above and between the eyes.

"Lawrence!" he cried, in a tone that was a command.

The cold sweat stood on the forehead of every person in the room. Even the doctor felt the unreasoning dread of the supernatural running like icy fingers up and down his spine.

"Lawrence!"

Was it the flickering of the sunlight over that ivory-like face? or did the eyelids really quiver, the set lips relax? In the room there was no sound, not even a breath was drawn, and every palm was cut by the nails clenched into them.

"Lawrence!" For the third time the bell-like voice rang out.

"He lives! Oh, he lives!" cried Martha.

Two dark and preternaturally brilliant eyes were shining

up at them from the white face in the coffin. The lips were shaping themselves for speech.

"Jesse! Is it you?"

"It is I—Jesse. You have had a long sleep, dear Lawrence. Let me help you out of your bed."

No one dared to move, while Jesse gathered the slight figure of Lawrence in his arms and lifted him to his feet. Across the hall to the family sitting-room he led the dazed and unresisting man, and placed him in a chair.

"Bring him warm food and drink," he said to Martha in an undertone, as he motioned the others back. Then he closed the door of the room, and he and Lawrence were alone.

CHAPTER LXIV

"A MOST extraordinary case of catalepsy! A most extraordinary case!" declared the doctor half an hour later, when, after a private talk with Lawrence, Jesse opened the door of the sitting-room to the neighbours and to his own friends.

"I shall read a paper on the case before the Medical Society," the doctor went on, "and afterward publish it."

"What matter by what name you designate his sleep?" was Jesse's answer. "What matter by what learned terms you designate the power by which I awakened him? It is enough that he whom you would have buried has been raised to life by me. You can at least vouch for the facts."

"Which I shall do, giving you all honour."

"I desire no honours for myself. I am only the servant and mouthpiece of the Spirit."

But the language of religious enthusiasm was unintelligible to the man of science. It was a pity, according to his reasoning, that a man who indisputably possessed the rarest natural gifts should disqualify himself before the bar of science by talking about the Spirit. Now if Jesse had spoken of God-given powers, the well-worn phrase, divested of all meaning by centuries of repetition, would have fallen inoffensively upon the doctor's ears; but this talk about the Spirit was a challenge to his intellect.

"What do you mean by the Spirit?" he asked.

"You may think of it as the eternal Flame, of which our lives are sparks; you may think of it as the Father, whose innumerable children are mankind; you may think of it as the immaterial Reality, of which the material universe and men are shadows. However viewed, it is one and the same, though its reflections are endless."

"Do you explain it thus to your devotees?"

"They feel it and love it. Love does not demand explanations. Too much explaining but confuses love."

Jesse now left the room for a few minutes of tranquil

thought. He had already requested the doctor and the other neighbours not to worry Lawrence with futile questions. The strangely resurrected man sat quietly in the midst of them, with a hand clasped between the palms of each of his sisters, who sat on hassocks at his feet and gazed at him with eyes which seemed insatiable with the vision of his living face.

One by one the neighbours slipped away, to carry about the town the incredible news that Lawrence Lane, whose body had been given to the coffin and his soul to God, now lived and breathed and spoke, now ate and drank, and had even been heard to laugh!

Raised from the dead by Jesse Bethel, the young preacher who called himself the mouthpiece of the Spirit—so the story flew from lip to lip. Who was Jesse Bethel? Why, the man who had caused such a stir through New England, curing all manner of diseases by the touch of his hands, and preaching a new religion. What religion? Why, the religion of spirit over matter. What did that mean? Something about the invisible being more real than the visible. What did he look like, this young prophet? Oh! he was a man all gold and rose-colour and white, as gentle as a woman and more powerful than a hundred men. And he had raised Lawrence Lane from his coffin? Yes, just called his name three times, in an indescribable voice, and the dead man had opened his eyes and spoken. What else was this remarkable man going to do, now that he was here? Oh! destroy materialism, preach a spiritual democracy, revolutionise the world. How was he going to do it? Nobody knew; but the men who travelled with him, twelve sturdy countrymen, thought that he was God himself—or, rather, the incarnation of the Spirit he talked about—anyway, something more than merely human. Yet he seemed to be even more human than ordinary people, and a thousand times more loving. What did he preach about? The Spirit, love, the power of faith, the unreality of wealth, the unreality of everything outside the soul and mind of man.

The rumour of Jesse gathered force and detail as it went on. It crossed the river to New York City; it found the thousand ears of the great newspapers, that hurriedly

dispatched reporters to trace the thread of fact in the maze of fable. Jesse Bethel? That was the name of the man whose strange doings and sayings in Albany the day before filled columns of the morning press in that city.

During the evening the house of the Lanes beyond the Palisades was besieged by an army of young men with note-books, who asked a thousand questions of everyone—of Jesse himself, the two girls, Lawrence who had been so mysteriously restored to life, the twelve excited and half-bewildered disciples, the black-bearded doctor, and the neighbours who had been present when the wonder happened. Half a dozen illustrators made sketches of Jesse and sketches of Lawrence; photographs of the two girls mysteriously disappeared from the mantel; even the old uncle of the three young people, who had returned from his daily business to find his house full of strangers and his supposedly dead nephew watching for him from the window, was surreptitiously fixed in black and white for the gaze of the reading world next morning. In the midst of the confusion a sound like an explosion startled everyone; it was only an enterprising young reporter taking a flash-light picture of the parlour where the empty coffin still stood in the centre of the room.

"An extraordinary case of catalepsy," the doctor repeated for the hundredth time.

"He has raised others from the dead before," Peter insisted, over and over again.

The story of how Jesse stilled the storm on the lake near Capronville was dramatically told by James Dana, while a group of men made notes of what he said.

"We have seen him standing on the top of a mountain at night, shining like the sun from head to feet," John confided to a sympathetic young man of about his own age, who proved to be the satirist of the most scurrilous paper in New York.

The stories of miraculous healing given by the twelve men were too numerous to record: they were lumped together by these note-book historians of the hour, as an effective background for the immediate and more vital story of the resurrection of Lawrence Lane.

A sworn statement by the doctor, of the supposed death

of his patient, including a summary of the scientific tests which he had made in an effort to persuade the sisters to permit the burial, was seized upon with avidity. It was a positive disproof of any possible collusion between the prophet and his friends which might be claimed in future, and was declared to be such by the doctor, who was a graduate of the largest medical college in the country.

Lawrence himself, though he stood in the centre of interest next to Jesse, had less to say than anyone else. From a peaceful sleep he had awakened to find himself an object of universal wonder. What could he say by way of explanation? Obviously, nothing.

"Are you not filled with horror at the thought of how near you came to being buried alive?" asked one sensational reporter of Lawrence, with his pencil poised in air.

"I am glad to be with Jesse again," was the simple reply. "He could not have let it happen."

"But it surely would have happened, if your friend had not arrived to prevent it," persisted the reporter, who was not over-endowed with delicacy of consideration for the feelings of others.

"My sister and I would not have permitted the burial until Jesse came," said the fair-haired Mary.

"But supposing there had been no Jesse; supposing you had never met him?"

"As well suppose there were no sun in the sky," answered Lawrence, with a loving glance at his friend.

This reporter wrote a story representing Lawrence Lane as a young man of less than mediocre intellect, bewitched by the personality of the man who had brought him back to life.

So the interviewing went on for several hours, until Lawrence was half asleep and even Jesse was weary. Then rose the old uncle, the master of the house, and respectfully but firmly told the uninvited guests that the hour was late, and that he and the other members of his household requested the privilege of rest.

CHAPTER LXV

THE next morning a neighbouring newsdealer, who knew Lawrence and had been much excited on learning of his restoration to life, sent to the house a copy of every New York paper which contained an account of the extraordinary happening of the day before. Folded in the usual way, they made a pile nearly a foot high, and Martha brought them into the dining-room at breakfast-time and placed them on a chair beside Jesse. The uncle had already left the house for his place of business in the city; but all the Vermont men were present, with Lawrence and his two sisters.

"Though I spoke with the tongue of God himself, but worked no wonders; though I revealed to all mankind the one great underlying secret of the universe, but gave them no sensational phenomena, they would not accord to me a tenth-part of this attention." Jesse said, as he laid his hand upon the pile of papers.

Here are a few of the headings and sub-headings which met his eye:

A VERMONT WHO RAISES THE DEAD.

THE RESURRECTION OF LAWRENCE LANE.

A PROPHET ON THE PALISADES.

A MODERN MIRACLE.

CALLED FROM HIS COFFIN.

JESSE BETHEL JEERS AT DEATH.

Glancing from one paper to another, Jesse read aloud a few paragraphs, chosen at random from many columns:

"Jesse Bethel, a prophet and wonder-worker from Vermont, yesterday raised a man from the dead in a little house near the Fort

Lee Ferry. The physician who attended the patient and pronounced him dead some days ago, declares it to be a case of catalepsy; but the wild-eyed disciples of the prophet insist that a veritable miracle has been performed. The sworn statement of the physician, which follows, would seem to do away with any possible question of fraud. Besides the family of the supposed dead man and the twelve followers of Jesse Bethel, there were present at this resurrection some half-dozen persons, including the physician himself."

Here followed a minute account of the occurrence, given with a multiplicity of lurid details. The three-column article concluded with these words:

"If the stories of the man's disciples are to be credited, this new prophet blends the wisdom of a Plato with the idealism of a Buddha, and the magic of an Apollonius of Tyana. His paradoxical sayings challenge the intellect, his personality charms everyone who comes in contact with him, and the wonders he is said to perform would stagger the credulity of the Middle Ages. He prophesies a coming revolution, in which the spirit shall triumph over matter, society shall become a universal brotherhood, faith shall conquer material force, and love shall take the place of selfishness and competition. He questions all accepted theories of value. He declares that the Church has sold itself to mammon, and that he is himself the path by which men shall climb to the higher life."

In the same paper was a half-column editorial which contained these words:

"To the sober judgment of sensible persons Jesse Bethel seems to be a sublime madman, sincere as the rule of three, but a man who might possibly become dangerous to law and order, if his influence should grow among the people."

Another paper, commenting editorially on the raising of Lawrence Lane, had this to say of Jesse and his mission:

"To proclaim himself the spokesman of the Divine; to break the tablets of accepted law and substitute his own ideas of right and wrong; to weaken the superstition of mine and thine, in favour of the more elastic and convenient law of need; to prove the worthlessness

of material prosperity and comfort, and the value of improvidence and visionary inactivity, seem to be the purpose of this youngest and most fascinating of the enemies of Baal."

Still another editorial interpreter of the incident at Fort Lee and the man who effected it, ended his column with these remarks:

"Miracles do not happen in this day and generation. The need for them is past. Science on the one hand, and accepted religion on the other, give light enough for mankind. We cannot question the truth of the statement of a reputable physician who says that the man who came to life yesterday was to all appearances dead, and had been so for some days; but catalepsy, while an unusual disease, is not unique; nor should the fact that a man awoke from a cataleptic sleep in the presence of twenty-two persons, one of whom happened to be a religious agitator, prove sufficient basis for a fit of popular hysteria. This journal is not given to prophecy, but we shall be happily surprised if the perfectly natural awakening of Lawrence Lane is not made the groundwork of an elaborate structure of fable. Of the character and honesty of this so-called 'mouthpiece of the Spirit,' to quote our esteemed contemporary of Albany, we have no knowledge on which to base an opinion. But if his sermon in that city two days ago was accurately reported, he is evidently a revolutionist, all the more dangerous because of his refinement and the idealistic nature of his teachings."

Most of the papers printed large pictures of Jesse and smaller ones of Lawrence; reproductions of the missing photographs of the two girls appeared in the same sheet which cast reflections upon the intelligence of their brother, and sketches of pretty girls which bore no resemblance to them were plentiful. Peter Bond and James and John Dana were the only ones among Jesse's twelve companions who were mentioned by name on this first day of their metropolitan celebrity.

"Surely to be written about like this is to be great and famous," declared Judson, as he eagerly scanned one page after another.

Jesse smiled sadly at him, and said.

"If you should ever meet the greatest man in the world, you would probably find him rather unconcerned with the

idea of his own greatness. He might even be unconscious of it—if he were really great.”

Though he was still besieged by representatives of the press, this was the only peaceful day of Jesse's sojourn in the region of the great city. On the morrow he must leave this quiet home and attack the monster of materialism in its stronghold across the river; after this day there would be for him no more tranquil enjoyment of the company of loving friends; after this day he would belong exclusively to his great but terrible destiny.

In honour of Jesse, a large company had been invited to supper at the home of the Lanes that night. While Martha busied herself with preparations for the feast, Mary sat on a hassock at Jesse's feet, listening to his words and asking him questions. She had a humble opinion of her own worth, and her choosing that low seat instead of a chair on a level with his own was symbolical of her mental attitude. John Dana had been telling her about the wide travels and accomplishments of Mary Magnus, whom she was soon to know, and she now said to Jesse:

“I am afraid that she will find me very ignorant and uninteresting. I have been nowhere, while she knows all the far-away wonderful countries of the world.”

“It is well to know the surface of the earth,” he answered; “but it is better to know the deeps of the soul. And the only plumb-line for those deeps is love.”

“Does the other Mary know the deeps of the soul?”

“Yes.”

“What is the test of that love which is the plumb-line of the soul?” Mary asked, wistfully.

“When you can accept the fact that your friends are selfish, vain, weak, and sometimes disloyal in thought and word, and *love them notwithstanding*, you have learned the meaning of love.”

The girl drew a long sigh.

“Does the other Mary know that kind of love?” she asked.

“Yes.”

Jesse saw the tear which quivered on her long lashes, but he made no reference to it. Oh, if he could only teach these

many beautiful souls to love and understand each other, what a power they would be for the carrying on of his work when he should be no longer with them! If he could make love for one another a part of their religion, indissolubly associated with the memory of him! He said to Mary Lane:

"He who cannot find God in the soul of his fellow being, will not find Him in his own soul, nor in the infinite spaces of the universe.

"You have heard much of the Holy Spirit," he continued. "The Holy Spirit, in its highest aspect, is the sympathetic relation of the innumerable atoms of the one God—ourselves and all others."

She gazed up into his face with yearning eyes.

"Oh, that I might do some great work!" she breathed.

"Compared with the men who can go out and preach of the Spirit and of you, and compared with the other Mary who has done so much, I seem to myself such a small and insignificant being."

"Do not despise your own being, however humble. Does the clover refuse to blossom, because it cannot produce a lily? In the struggle to achieve what was foreign to its nature, would it not pass blossomless under the scythe of the mower? From the humble clover the bees drink sweetest honey."

Once or twice during their long talk Martha had passed through the room, and several times her voice was heard outside in anxious consultation with butcher, baker or serving-maid. She now came and stood in the doorway, and a troubled look was on her face.

"Master," she said, "is it right that Mary should sit with you, while I do all this work alone? Will you not tell her to help me?"

"For many years, dear Martha," Jesse answered, "you have been eating and drinking and making feasts for your friends; but I was not with you. The labours of the household are only for the day; but the labours of the Spirit to make beautiful its invisible dwelling-place in the heart are for all time. Mary has been preparing a feast for herself and for you, a feast of love whose richness will never be exhausted."

But when Martha had left them, Jesse said to Mary: "If you go now and help your sister with her work, it may be that you will find the jewel of love of which we have been speaking—hidden somewhere in the kitchen."

The dining-room in the house of the Lanes was a large one. For the supper that night long tables were placed down the north and south sides of the room, and another across the west end, forming a three-sided open square. As Jesse paused for a second on the threshold, a chance extension of the white cloth at the foot of the left-hand table, together with some dark object which covered the other end, gave to the whole arrangement the form of the Hebrew mystical letter Tau. The vision fired his imagination, and as he passed on to his seat in the centre of the farther table facing the room, on his face was the uplifted look of one who has caught a sudden glimpse of the great Mystery.

Near Jesse sat the twelve men who had come down with him from Capronville, and opposite sat Lawrence, so recently reclaimed from death. The atmosphere of the room was tense with the repressed excitement of its occupants: for each of the two score guests and neighbours of the Lanes had come to see the man of whom all New York was talking, as well as to celebrate their friend's return to the world of living beings through his agency. What strange doctrine would he expound to them? So eagerly they listened for anything which he might say, that there was little conversation at the lower end of the tables. His first words made them open their eyes in astonishment, so different was the idea expressed from anything they had ever before thought. It revealed to their half-trained minds a new conception of the relations between themselves and the Divine. Someone had asked Jesse a question about God, which brought out this reply:

"You seem to think that God is the centre of a circle, and that you are somewhere on the circumference. On the contrary, each man is the centre of the great circle of which God is the circumference."

"How may I gain a clearer idea of the Great Spirit which is God?" the same man further questioned.

"Meditate upon the Spirit to gain knowledge of the Spirit. Man does not learn astronomy by digging in the soil."

"We shall all know when we are dead," a little woman ventured; but Jesse shook his head, saying:

"Life is the great teacher. He who cannot learn of Life will be a dull pupil in the school of Death."

Most of the men and women present believed themselves to be religious, and a white-bearded man began to speak of the rewards of a good life. Jesse's eyes enveloped him with a look of inexpressible sweetness as he answered:

"He who desires reward for good actions may obtain what seems to be a reward, but there is a higher motive."

The old man, who had been successful in a material way, and attributed his bank-balance in old age to a life-long diligence in church-going, declared that according to his belief the man who was always ready to testify for the Lord would be blessed with worldly prosperity. But Jesse said:

"He who proclaims the truth that the world may reward him, had better go till the soil and be sure of his wages."

Then, after a moment, he added:

"He who shall perform all the duties of life without attachment to results, or even the hope of reward, will find his actions trebled in effectiveness."

"You say that the Spirit is one, and that the Spirit is in each of us," a puzzled youth now said. "How can that which is one, be also many?"

Jesse's reply was fully understood by no one at the table save John Dana; though Mary Lane, who was sitting at the far end of one of the side-tables, felt in her soul a vaguely ecstatic response. He said:

"There is the One, and there are the many; but every truly self-conscious individual among the many is consciously the One."

Another guest, a restless-eyed, expensively-dressed woman of some prominence in local society, told Jesse that she was very glad the newspapers had manifested so much interest in him, and that she believed the excitement over

the restoration of Lawrence to life would be of incalculable benefit to the success of his teaching.

He smiled indulgently at her banality, and said:

"Yes. The world is so fond of the bread of excitement, it will not refuse to eat it even when it is light with the leaven of the true philosophy."

Judson, who sat next to this woman and on the opposite side of the table from Jesse, expressed his great satisfaction that so much recognition and honour had been accorded to the Master; but Jesse's response he could not understand:

"The true sage shuns the praises of men, that would foster in him the delusion of separateness from those whom the world praises not. To the really enlightened spirit, both the praise and the blame of the world are soundless as the voices of babes on the other side of the earth to those that dwell on this side."

One of the guests, a young man interested in work among the poor, asked Jesse what he believed to be God's reason for allowing so much misery on earth. Jesse answered:

"As the moon is reflected in a million pools and seems a million moons, so is the one Reason (which is God's) reflected as a myriad reasons in the pools of the human mind."

Another man asked Jesse when he expected to enter the city and begin his teaching there.

"To-morrow morning," was the answer. "The time is now fully ripe." Then, looking from one to another of his followers, he added:

"He who knows when to speak and when to be silent, is more learned than he who shall utter untimely words in a score of languages."

Lawrence spoke little during the meal, and only when directly addressed by someone. He was still bewildered by the strangeness of the experience through which he had passed, and could not realise it. Though to his family and friends he had been as one dead, and they had looked upon his seemingly lifeless form and heard the words of the consignation to the grave pronounced above him, he had had no part in the solemnity or in the grief. As

into a quiet sleep he had passed from the consciousness of his surroundings; as from a quiet sleep he had awakened some days later to find himself a centre of universal interest. And now his sisters were giving a large supper-party to celebrate an event which seemed to him unreal. Even the coffin from which he was lifted by Jesse had been carried away without his having seen it. Yet the well-meaning people kept on asking questions, which he could only answer with "I do not know," or "I do not remember."

His love for Jesse had now become adoration. He was afraid to think of what might have been his fate if this friend had not come to save him, and he could only gaze and gaze at the face of his friend with such rapt concentration that the physician who watched him feared that he would again lapse into a state of unconsciousness.

The supper was near its end, and Jesse had told the listening guests more of his spiritual doctrine than they were able to comprehend, when a movement near the door drew his attention, and the fixedness of his look made every other eye follow his.

There in the doorway stood a beautiful dark-haired young woman robed in pale grey, a stranger to all present save the men from Vermont. Half timidly she advanced into the room, having greeted Martha in the hall beyond. In her hands she held a fragile and exquisite vial of oriental crystal, the gift of an Asiatic ruler on one of her world-circling journeys. She passed down the right side of the room next the wall, behind the seated guests, and around to the place where Jesse sat at the end.

"Why, it is Mary, our sister!" cried John, rising with joy to greet her.

Jesse's face was alight with welcome for the faithful helper, and her coming there alone meant that his mother was safely housed on the other side of the river. Seeing the precious vial in her hand, he said:

"Has my daughter brought an offering to the altar of her faith?"

Every eye was fixed on Mary as she stood holding the fragile crystal vessel above the head of the seated Jesse. Then suddenly over the senses of all swept a rare, delicious

perfume, rich with the faith and mystery and beauty of the East, bringing to every soul—save only one—joy and the blessedness of love. Mary, in the enthusiasm of her devotion, had broken the vial and poured the precious ointment upon the head of the Master. Hereafter for many days, wherever he should go, his bodily presence would carry to the perception of even the most obtuse a sense of permeating sweetness.

For some moments there was utter silence in the room, while every person breathed deep draughts of the pleasurable fragrance. Then the harsh voice of Judson Carey broke the stillness.

“Oh, what a waste is this! The vial and the perfume are both valuable. They might have been sold for much money, which would have bought bread for the hungry.”

Jesse turned his calm blue eyes upon the face of the displeased man, whose eyes shifted uneasily before their penetrating gaze. He said:

“May those who follow me devote their lives to feeding the hungry with both material and spiritual bread—when I am no longer with them.”

Then, seeing on one or two other faces a look which seemed to question the propriety of Mary's action, and seeing the veil of unshed tears through which her loving eyes shone on him, he said:

“Do not trouble her with your questions or your doubts. Hers is that perfect devotion which places no consideration before the object of its faith. It is the sweetness of her soul's fidelity which she has poured upon me. The fidelity and the sweetness shall witness for me after I am dead, the perfume envelop my body in the tomb.”

John, who loved Mary as a sister, gave to her his own chair at the left of Jesse, and seated himself on the broad ledge of the window just behind them. All the reserve and self-control of her worldly training dropped from her like a veil at this reunion with the Master. The tears were running down her face as she sat beside him. She seemed unconscious of the presence of strangers, oblivious to her surroundings—to everything save the one blinding fact that they were now at the doors of the great city which he had told her was to be the scene of his death.

When, where, how death would come to him, she did not know; but that it would come, she was the only one among his followers who realised. And she was half-distraught, for during the three nights since he had left Capronville she had hardly slept an hour. Now she bowed her head upon the table and wept without control. Such tears are Nature's kind restorative for the overwrought heart and brain that can endure no more.

When Jesse felt that the unendurable tension of her grief was loosened, he beckoned to Martha, who stood troubled and uncertain in the nearest corner.

"Let her rest in your room for half an hour," he said; "then Andrew and Lawrence shall take her back to my mother in the city. The night air and the change of scene will work good to your brother, and my mother would not sleep if Mary should not return."

When the two had left the room, Jesse said to the assembled company:

"Among all the faithful ones who serve my cause, there is none more faithful than this woman. And wherever the truths of the Spirit and of my life shall be told in the future, the things which she has done shall cause her to be remembered."

CHAPTER LXVI

FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARY MAGNUS

Sunday, at Dawn.

TO-DAY he will enter the city, the great, rich, cruel, and indifferent city, where once I felt at home and among friends, and where now I feel an alien.

How can his spiritual message reach these minds so deeply sunk in selfishness? What medium of communication can there be between his purposes and theirs? I who know this life so well can see the hopelessness of his sublime attempt as no one else can see it. Why did I not dissuade him from the sacrifice? But would I have dared? Would I have had the right? And what word of any creature so unworthy as I am could have deflected him by a hair's breadth from the course which he had chosen?

Oh, his overwhelming kindness to me! It leaves my soul defenceless before the charges of its own self-accusation. John told me the exalting things he said of me last night after I had left the room. I know that he speaks no word which he does not believe; but how can he believe such things of me—he who can read the soul, and who knows the history of my failures?

What can I do to help him here? Should I go to my old friends and tell them of his greatness, they would not understand. My faith in him would seem to them but the latest of a long series of vagaries; even my testimony as to the wonders I have witnessed would be interpreted by them as evidence of the self-delusion of an enthusiastic nature fascinated by the charm of a powerful personality. And what right have I even to aspire to help him, save by the humblest service, such as Anna and Rose and Eva may also give?

And he has said that he will die here, that his death is necessary as the seal upon his work. Even in this trial also have I failed, for I would save him if I could, would

give my life here and hereafter to avert but for one week the pain of death for him. I am abashed before my own presumption; yet would I dare to look God in the face and bare my soul to the lightning of His anger, offering my share in the ages of eternity in exchange for a few days more in the sunshine for Jesse. How God must laugh at such a prayer! Yes, in this also have I failed, for I would retard his work to save him. And I may not even follow my own wish to die when he does, for he has given me a solemn charge to help in carrying on the work when he is no more with us. In this one thing I shall not fail. There is a limit to the longest life, and from even those who look most longingly for death, the stars cannot for ever withhold it.

Of all the millions of men and women who daily pass through the streets of this great city, why should I have met last night the one being whom I least desired to see—the man whose lips were the last to touch mine, in the old life when love to me meant bodily possession? If he had seen and questioned me last night, what could I have told him of my present life which he would have understood? And no better proof could there be of the essential unreality of what we called our love! Though learned in the lore of the schools, he would accept nothing as real which he could not see or touch; and I have often heard him say that the spirit was merely an attribute of matter. He loved me, I believe, to the limit of his possibility; but when I remember a definition he once gave of love, my cheek grows hot. Yet one bitter night I saw him take off his overcoat and wrap it round a shivering beggar in the street; and when I asked him why he did it, he said that the sight of the freezing wretch hurt him far worse than the cold. And he was often gentle to me as a mother. Why do I shiver and draw back at the memory of his gentleness? It is a part of that life I would forget—that I can never forget.

Has the Master forgotten? It cannot be, and yet it often seems so. But one day I overheard a woman—a newcomer to our band who soon deserted it—speak disparagingly of me to Jesse as a woman who had loved men without marriage. And from my place in the next room

I heard his gentle voice: "Which is the worse, think you, love without marriage, or marriage without love?" So has he always defended me. And he knows that since the day when I first heard him speaking to the people in the little park in Vergennes, I have been as one set apart for the service of a temple, a priestess whom no investiture of snow-white robes could make more inviolably sacred to the Spirit—the chaste but ecstatic Spirit whose slave I am for *his* sake.

Daily and nightly since our talk in the garden of Peter's house, when we gazed out together over the grey-blue, twilight-veiled river, and he told me that he was to die in the body but still remain a living, vital presence, unseen but more intimately near and real to us than now, I have thought of little else and dreamed of little else. Will he reveal himself to me as an ethereal form which I can see with the inner eyes he is teaching me to use? Can I make his presence visible to others through the intensity of my own sight and the intensity of my own faith? I know that I have touched only the fringe of the floating garment of spiritual love; but I feel that there is a power in my soul which yet shall wrap the folds of that tenuous veil about me, a power and fearlessness which shall enable me to stand upon the lonely, ice-cold height where the Invisible reveals itself, in the almost inaccessible pavilion on the top of the frozen mountain with the heart of fire. The child of sin and earth who reaches that place must have suffered as I have suffered, must have relinquished the last quivering and tear-stained hope of selfish happiness.

Is despair the magic key which opens the door of power? It may be so. If the Intelligence which rules our world has set that price upon that rare possession, then surely I have paid it.

Yet the woman in me shrinks and trembles—the woman I can never altogether outgrow so long as I am I. Sometimes my soul seems to be standing alone on the top of a high mountain, with the winds of the worlds blowing round it, and far below, through the mists, the soul can see the wistful, quivering-mouthed woman who is Mary Magnus reaching to it pleadingly with her weak, pathetic hands. And the vision of the soul is blinded with tears of pity for the woman, who seems to be its child.

CHAPTER LXVII

IT was ten o'clock on Sunday morning when Jesse and the twelve men, followed by Lawrence and his sisters and a large company of men and women from the neighbourhood, started for the city. The day was warm for a day in early spring, and the sun looked down exultingly upon a world already stirring with the urge of reawakening life. There was no wind; the budding trees stood absolutely motionless. In telling the story of this day in after years, the youngest of the Twelve declared that Nature, having hurried her work to make ready for the Master's coming, waited during these morning hours in utter stillness, as if listening for the sound of his footsteps. The imagination of this most poetic follower of Jesse saw symbols and strange meanings in many of the simple incidents of the Master's life. But the day was really very warm and still.

There was a look on Jesse's face as he passed out into the sunshine which even those who knew him best had never seen before. His face was not less sweet, but more determined in expression; his eyes were wider and more brilliant; the half-languorous loveliness which had been his greatest charm during the months of his ministry among the little villages and fields of his native State was reinforced now by a sterner power for sterner uses. The loveliness was there and the sweetness, but behind them was the new force summoned for the new and greater need.

They went along the winding road toward the ferry; but when they came to the edge of the Palisades above the river, where the full view of the city burst upon them—the miles on miles of towers and homes and many-windowed buildings forming a ragged, endless line against the blue-white morning sky—Jesse stopped. He stood and gazed at the city across the intervening water. Over there were millions of men and women, striving, suffer-

ing, yearning, enjoying, tossed hither and thither on the waves of passion, each isolate soul a centre of the universal consciousness, a focus for the sun-rays of the Divine. Oh, to reach them all and lift them to the level of their own indwelling angel! Oh, to be the way whereby those faltering feet might walk to the sure heights of peace! How small a sacrifice would his life be upon that altar!

The tears of a love too vast for the comprehension of any lesser mortal overflowed his eyes. The men who watched him saw the colour of his cheek turn gradually from rose to white; they felt the influence of an emotion they were not large enough to understand. Even the lightest among the strangers who had come with him that morning, more out of curiosity than for any deeper interest, were moved from their usual commonplace indifference to all serious things by the power of his presence as he stood there yearning toward the city of his coming martyrdom—though this they did not know.

On the ferry-boat which carried them across the river John turned his eyes from the long line of buildings to his Master's face.

"Oh, the great, cruel city!" he murmured. But Jesse answered him:

"The city is neither cruel nor kind; it is merely self-centred, engrossed in pursuing the desires of self. What seems to be its cruelty is but unconsciousness of the larger Self, of which the smaller is a distorted shadow."

"And what will you tell the people of the city on this first day among them?"

"Can the telegraph-wire say what message will be flashed over it an hour hence? No more can I say now what message the Spirit will deliver through my mouth."

"And has it always been like that? You never know beforehand?"

"It has always been like that, and I never know beforehand. Were I too eager to express some thought of the man that is I, the message of the Spirit might go undelivered."

In the ferry-house on the New York side they were met by Jim Bethel, the Capronville physician, and several of the women members of their band: Jesse's mother, Mary

Magnus, Anna Martin, Rose Thomas, Eva Bethel, and the mother of James and John Dana.

The meeting between Jesse and his mother was quiet. A stranger would have thought they had parted the day before, nor guessed that the mother's heart was breaking with the grief which even her exalted spirit could not master. In giving her son to his great mission she had relinquished all the privileges of motherhood save only that of tears. As they went toward the train which was to take them down to the centre of the city, she walked quietly beside Mary Magnus, who was the only one among all the followers of Jesse whose sympathy was deep enough to see and comprehend her feelings. Though in after days the mother of the Master was to be regarded by them all with a reverence akin to worship, in this her time of greatest trial she was upheld and strengthened by the devotion of one woman.

Andrew had seen Anna Martin for a few minutes the night before, when he and Lawrence went with Mary Magnus to the women's lodgings in the city. Month after month these two had waited and loved in silence, trusting to the hour when he in whose hand they had laid their destiny should give them to each other, purified by denial in the service of the Spirit. To-day they walked side by side without speaking, only by a deep look now and then revealing their hearts to each other.

They left the train at Forty-second Street and walked westward to Fifth Avenue, now thronged with well-dressed men and women, some of them on their way to church, others on pleasure bent, enjoying the spring sunshine. Every eye was turned to follow Jesse as he passed.

"Who is he?" . . . "Can that be the new prophet whose picture is in all the papers?" . . . "What a wonderful face!" . . . "Yes, that's the one who raised the dead man over at Fort Lee." . . . "What a head for a painter!" . . . "Let us follow him." . . . "They say he calls himself the mouthpiece of the Spirit." . . . "He says that God is the power, and that he is the expression of the power." . . . "Strange!" . . . "How majestically he walks!" . . . "Where is he going?" . . . "The paper

said he had been a carpenter." . . . "He looks more like a king." . . . "One of the old gods come to life again, maybe." . . . "The prophet of a new religion." . . . "What religion?" . . . "Something about the indwelling Spirit." . . . "He prophesies a coming revolution." . . . "Political?" . . . "No, spiritual." . . . "I'll never forget that face so long as I live." . . . "What sadness and what power!" . . . These are a few of the innumerable comments that followed Jesse's passage up the avenue.

The crowd behind him had become large when he turned into a side-street and went up the steps of a closed house with shuttered windows.

"He is going to speak to us." . . . "Listen!" . . . "He is going to speak to us." The people waited, pressing closer and closer toward the steps, round the foot of which stood the twelve men, that they might guard their Master from the nearer approach of the crowd.

Jesse stood for a moment looking down at the uplifted faces, his own face calm and sweet and full of power. Then he began to speak.

"Have you come to listen to the word of a prophet, that you may light your lamps at his flame? Or have you followed him to pass an idle moment? Whatever the motive, you have followed him, though but a little way, and on a sunshiny morning. They who follow the Light for a long distance, through the darkness of the night and over a hard road, in the end, if they do not falter, become themselves the effulgence of that Light.

"Would you know Truth itself, the whole of Truth? It is a blazing sun, and you may not behold it from a distance of a million miles without blinding your weak eyes; but by the light and heat of it you live, and may see little truths.

"Do you desire power? Look upon a pine-tree and learn the secret of its majesty.

"Do you desire peace? Seek for the rhythm that controls the restless ocean.

"Do you desire beauty? Study the scarred face of humanity.

"Does your heart swell with pride when you view your

attainments and count them over? Then know that you have not attained.

"Does your heart swell with pride when you view your worldly possessions and count them over? The only possessions which shall not be taken from you are those which can neither be viewed nor counted.

"If you are puffed up with the consciousness of knowledge, know that you are still in the school of ignorance. The man who is truly wise is aware that he knows little. How many grains of sand are there around and under the ocean? Where dwells memory after the dissolution of the brain? What meanings underlie the seemingly simple actions of mankind?

"Look within at your soul, at the one whom you know to be yourself; then look out at the many who surround you, in whom is also the soul. Do you seem to be different from these others? What seem to be differences are only the varying folds of the veil of matter that covers you and them.

' My soul may dwell in you, even as my thought takes up its abode within your brain. I reincarnate every time I speak the Word of Life to another in such a way that he comprehends my meaning.

"Separation is only an illusion. The Spirit is One, and each of us is It. What seems to be many is in reality the One, and what seems to be one is in reality many.

"Men speak of love, and know not what they mean. Love is the heart-perception of this unity. You cannot hate, or sin, or doubt, or be disloyal to another, without hurting me; nor can I love, or labour for the Spirit, or believe, or comfort another, without helping you. Even so closely are the many related through the One which each man is.

"He who does not perceive this light of true relation gropes his way blindly through the maze of life; and though he may pick up gold and honours by the way, he never finds the centre where peace dwells. He who walks by this light of true relation perceives always the direction to the centre, and may lead others thither.

"A man never becomes powerfully self-conscious until he is able to forget his own existence.

“ He who shall harvest life’s grain for himself alone and knead his flour with the water of selfishness, shall have but bitter bread to eat.

“ He who finds the balance between himself and others is no longer mastered by others. There is no freedom save under this law.

“ There was once a king who ruled over a great nation, and his storehouses were filled with wealth that he had taken from the people by severe taxation; but so abundant were their harvests that the people questioned not the king’s demands for many years. At last there came a year of drought, a year when the land itself became exhausted from too much bearing, and the people wanted bread. Then they said to the king: ‘ Give us of the abundance in your storehouses, the surplusage of our many years of labour, that we and our children may not die.’ But the king would not, and answered the people: ‘ These stores have you yourselves paid to me without complaint. Why should I now surrender them to you? In years of plenty you have acquired habits of luxury, and now must learn to be content with less. Go work a little harder than before, and bring me still my share of what your labour yields. Am I not the king?’ Then the people murmured among themselves, ‘ Would he be king save by our long consent? A king is only an *idea*, and our children cry for bread.’ So they declared the king was no more king, and fed their children from the nation’s accumulated wealth. For the king had failed to preserve the balance between himself and others.”

Among the many who listened to Jesse’s words that morning was a prominent clergyman, whom a powerful curiosity had made to pause and stand in the crowded street on the way to his own place of aristocratic worship; several reporters, who had followed the new prophet in search of “ copy ”; and a young multimillionaire of wide reputation, whose absorption in the speaker was noted by the newspapers the following day.

Jesse had been conscious of the brilliant dark eyes of the young man gazing at him, and when he came down from the steps of the house, the eyes were near his own.

"I am coming to see you at the cottage of the Lanes at nine o'clock this evening," said the young man hurriedly, and in a low tone. "Will you be there?"

"I shall probably be there," Jesse answered.

The tall form disappeared immediately through the crowd. There was something in the presence of this earnest listener, an atmosphere of conscious power, that marked him out from others. A moment later two reporters were asking Jesse:

"Did not young Needham speak with you?"

"A young man spoke with me."

"But do you not know who he is?"

"All men who would learn of the Spirit are of equal importance to me."

But when they asked what words had passed between him and the multimillionaire, Jesse made no reply.

"Do the police permit street meetings in New York on Sunday?" asked one young man of another in the crowd.

"This preacher seems to have held one. But he spoke briefly, and none of the police happened along. He is going on now. Shall we follow him? What a handsome woman that is, she who is walking with the older one! A convert of the Spirit's, I suppose."

"Oh, you were always a cynic! Yes, let us follow him. It's a rare sight, that of a genuine idealist, dashing his dream-filled head against the stone walls of the world. The man really means what he says."

"So do I, when I say that black-haired woman is very handsome. I will follow her, and you may follow the prophet."

And the two fashionably-dressed young dandies fell in behind Jesse.

CHAPTER LXVIII

"OH, see the beautiful man! I want to go with the beautiful man!" cried every child whom Jesse passed that morning on the walks in Central Park. When he sat down on a bench under a large budding tree at the edge of the common, the little ones gathered round him; daintily-dressed children escaped from their nurses and flew to him; plainly-dressed children slipped their hands from their mothers' clasp and tried to reach him. It was a sight to fill the heart with love and the eyes with tears.

A portly park officer, himself the father of many little ones, looked on and smiled indulgently. The common was free ground. He had no orders to forbid the children to gather round a man they seemed to love instinctively. The officer read the newspapers, and he guessed at once who the stranger was. Parting the mass of heads with his great hands, he made his way to the bench and sat down beside Jesse, removing half a dozen children to make room. The men and women who had followed the Master from below stood on the outskirts of the crowd and watched.

"They seem to like you," said the officer; then he added, with a flush of paternal pride, "I have six of my own."

"Then remember and repeat to them this story, which I now tell the children because they have asked for one:

"There was once a king's son, beautiful and young, and heir to all the riches and the throne of his father. But he was sad and wistful, and only half enjoyed the pleasures of the palace, because of a dream he had had of a land more wonderful than any the sun ever shone on. In the land ruled over by his father, the king, there was unhappiness and strife and hunger and hatred; the faces of the men and women were care-worn, and when they laughed, the gaiety did not seem to come from their hearts. But in the land he had seen in dream, the land of loveliness, as he had named it, the people were as beautiful as the

landscape, and it was perfect happiness merely to look at them.

"And when the boy was old enough to follow his own will, he set out with a few chosen comrades on a journey round the world, saying in his heart: 'I will find the land of loveliness somewhere on the great curve of the earth, the place where dwell the people with the smiling eyes; and having found it I will nevermore return to the land of my birth, where there is misery and strife and hatred, and even laughter is mirthless.'

"But though he wandered the round world over, he could not find the land of loveliness, nor could anyone tell him where to look for it. And everywhere he went he saw uneasy eyes and care-worn faces. At last he returned to the land of his birth, a little older, a little wiser, but still unsatisfied.

"One day he was sitting all alone in the garden of the palace and thinking wistfully of what he could not find, when he saw standing before him a tall, majestic figure. It was that of an ancient wise man whom he had seen three times before, in childhood.

"'Why is the young prince so sad?' asked the wise man. 'Did he find the world smaller than he expected, or the oceans not so wide? It is the way of youth.'

"Then the prince told him about his dream of the land of loveliness and his long search for it, adding, 'And I shall never be happy until I have found my way there.'

"The wise man smiled. 'The land you dream of is my home,' he said.

"'Oh, take me there!' cried the young prince, leaping to his feet.

"But the wise man shook his head. 'No man may take another to the land of loveliness, but he may point the way.'

"'Where is it found?' the prince asked eagerly. 'No mountain is too high for me to climb to find it, no sea too rough for me to swim.'

"'The land you dream of is not found by scaling mountains or by swimming seas,' the wise man answered, in a gentle tone. 'The land of loveliness is hidden in the human heart, and he who finds it in his own, will find it

also in the hearts of others. There dwell the people with the smiling eyes, and it is perfect happiness to look at them.'

"The young prince wept with joy, and a great wave of love rose in his heart; for he had found the way to the land of loveliness, and he knew that he should dwell there all his life."

Wide-eyed, entranced, the children listened to the story told by the beautiful stranger. They did not really understand it; but they felt the loveliness of that land which the young prince found at last, and they realised that he had somehow found it in his heart. A score of little hands went seeking the place where little hearts were beating—beating very fast now for the excitement of the stranger's story and the pleasure of his presence.

And when he arose to leave them, they clung about him so that the big good-natured officer was obliged to aid the mothers and the nurses in disengaging their clinging little hands.

It is one thing to cure by a word the sick and suffering in remote rural districts of whose very names and places on the map the great outer world has hardly heard; it is quite another thing to make similar cures of well-known persons before one of the largest churches of the Western Hemisphere, and under the eyes of a group of reporters from enterprising newspapers. The scene which Jesse chose for the first public manifestation of his power in the great city was the steps of the church presided over by the very clergyman who had paused on his way that morning to listen to the stranger's words.

This minister during his own sermon, which by the seeming irony of chance was on the need of faith in modern times, had broken the thread of his carefully prepared discourse in order to warn his hearers against the disintegrating influence of new and revolutionary religious agitators, who without authority proclaimed themselves the instruments of God.

Passing out through the main doorway of the church a few minutes after the services were over, the minister was surprised to find the larger part of his congregation

still lingering on the steps and on the sidewalk below; but when he saw the reason for this unusual spectacle, he was astonished.

"What is the man doing here?" he demanded of one of the church ushers, when he saw Jesse.

"Look," answered the young man, excitedly. "Do you not see Mrs. Freeman—without her crutch?"

The clergyman passed his hand across his eyes. Was he awake? Old Mrs. Freeman, lame for seven years, was walking up the steps *without her crutch!* The tiny black-robed figure of the famous politician's widow was moving directly toward him. Her face was flushed with excitement, and in her blue eyes was the half-humorous, half-malicious twinkle he had seen so often. She was shaking hands with him now.

"I think I have heard you say that the days of miracle are over, Doctor Claflin. Behold—a miracle!" Her voice was well-controlled, but there was a ring in it which thrilled even him.

He opened his lips, but no sound came from them. Again he passed his hand across his eyes.

"No, you are not dreaming, Doctor." The little old lady laughed, and put out both her hands to free herself from the crowd of friends who pressed around her, eager, questioning, incredulous. "You are fully awake, and I am fully cured. *He did it.*"

"But I don't understand. . . ."

"No more do I. But this much is plain to anybody, that I who have been carried, or have hobbled on a crutch, for seven years, now walk as well as other people—rather better, maybe, considering my age."

"It is certainly remarkable."

"Your words are not exaggerated, Doctor Claflin," and her old eyes twinkled again. "Will you come and speak with the man who did this thing?"

"Another time, maybe—not now. But——" he hesitated, compromising with his curiosity—"if he would like to come and speak with me, I will wait."

The old lady turned her head to hide a smile, ostensibly to look at Jesse, who stood near the foot of the steps, surrounded by a mass of people.

"He seems rather occupied just now," she said, turning back to her pastor when she had controlled the muscles of her mouth. "I think I will go down again, and invite him to come home with me to luncheon."

But Jesse did not go home to luncheon with Mrs. Freeman.

"I thank you," he said, with his gentle and half-melancholy smile; "but I am going with my friends to the poor quarters of the city, where also dwell the children of the Spirit."

"But where and when can I see you again? I want to learn about—the Spirit."

"I cannot say where I shall be, even at this hour tomorrow. But you will find a way to see me."

"I shall certainly find a way," she answered. "What you have done for me is beyond thanks. But what if the lameness should return?"

"You will never be free from any danger so long as you fear it. Fear is a dog that will lick the hand of its master."

She drew a deep breath, and her eyes flashed with determination. He knew now that her lameness would never return.

"Oh, the freedom of it," she exclaimed, "after the slavery of the crutch!"

He said to her and to the others around him:

"No one is so free as the slave who has achieved freedom. No one is so weary as the man who does nothing. No one is so strong as he who has conquered weakness."

The Reverend Doctor Clafin walked slowly up Fifth Avenue. The dove of peace, a favourite metaphor of his, was not spreading its white wings above his soul. He sincerely believed himself to be a good man, a faithful if not an humble servant of the Lord; and he would have been truly glad at the deliverance of his old friend Mrs. Freeman from her long affliction—had he not been obliged to acknowledge the means of that deliverance. That an "itinerant preacher," as he called him, a carpenter and the son of a carpenter, should have stationed himself at the entrance of *his* church, and by the power of personality and

notoriety (we would not call it fame) held the larger part of his own cold and elegant congregation standing on the steps, like a crowd of common people at a street meeting; and, by some mysterious and possibly dangerous means, performed what certainly looked like a miracle of healing on one of the most important members of his flock (most important from the standpoint of the newspapers because of her dead husband's former popularity) was disconcerting to the dove of peace which was wont to hover over the soul of the Reverend Doctor Clafin. What attitude would the public and his own congregation expect him to take in the matter? What would the papers say in the morning? Would they send reporters to interview him? He shuddered at the thought.

CHAPTER LXIX

It was Sunday afternoon in Rag Alley. Not by any appreciable degree of quiet would one have known it was the first day; rather the reverse, for most of the dwellers here worked somewhere else on week-days, when they could find work to do, as the more preferable alternative to starving. Many did both, by turns, depending on their luck or skill in securing and keeping remunerative jobs. Many others made no pretence of working, finding the way of the beggar or the thief the way of least resistance.

On week-day afternoons, when the weather was warm enough for open windows or to lure the people out of doors, Rag Alley resounded with the cries of innumerable children, crying, playing or fighting, and the strident voices of women, gossiping, scolding or fighting; but on pleasant Sunday afternoons these sounds were mixed with the deeper voices of men, swearing, arguing or fighting. And though the neighbouring saloons were closed on Sunday, more or less, the sobriety of a legally enforced abstinence did not lie heavily upon the dwellers in Rag Alley.

On that warm afternoon in early spring the multitudes that inhabited this one of the many dumping-grounds of the great city's refuse—this garbage-barrel of civic house-keeping, if one prefers that figure—were mostly sitting, standing or sprawling on tumble-down door-steps and littered pavements. Even to Rag Alley spring comes once a year, and though the people do not compose lyrics in its praise, or look for early violets between the paving-stones, yet they enjoy it after their fashion, and go out to meet it—not in festal array, but in their shirt-sleeves, mostly coloured. Sometimes even a snatch of pure song will rise above the din of the Alley's profane life, and hover like a butterfly above a cesspool, telling the listening sky that down there somewhere a soul is trying for a moment to spread its wings. But most of the songs heard in Rag Alley would never be mistaken, by even the most placid sky, for the timid soarings of a soul.

The sun was midway between the zenith and the irregular western horizon of roofs and chimney-pots, when the peculiar form of Sabbath calm that distinguished the Alley was interrupted by the appearance of a large party of respectable-looking strangers, many men and a few women. At the head of the company walked a man such as the dwellers in the Alley had never before seen. It was Jesse. His head was bared to the golden sunshine, and the look of pity on his face did not shame or humble those unfortunate souls who faced it. His was the pity that exalts the object through recognition of brotherhood. And though the dwellers in the world's alleys are vaguely conscious of a bitter grudge against the universe, they are not conscious of how pitiable they are.

The comments of Rag Alley on the appearance of Jesse varied somewhat from the comments of Fifth Avenue:

"Hi, see de bloke at de head o' de prussion!"
 "Gee! what a phiz!" "What's he doin' here?"
 "Say, Mike, dat's de feller what's got his pictur
 in de papers." "Sure." "Hully
 smoke! See dat hair. Yer c'd pawn it fer eighteen carat
 gold." "Shut up, Susie, or I'll pawn you."
 "Der man what raises de dead." "Git
 out!" "Fact. Don' ye read ther papers?"
 "Look at 'im." "Say, he's outa
 sight!" "Gwan! he's only another parson!"
 "'Tain't no sech thing. He ain't no parson."
 "Den what is he?" "Search me."
 "T'row 'em out. We don't want no slummin'
 parties." "Shut up! He ain't slummin'."
 "Look at 'im smile!" "Say, I never
 seen nobody what looked like 'im." "Eyes like
 a young mudder wid 'er first brat." "Ain't he
 goin' ter preach?" "Preach? What fer?"
 "We don' want no preachin'."
 "Shet up. We do." "Free show."
 "G'wan, Mister." "Speak up."
 "We don' want no preachin." "Shet up, you!
 He shall preach." "Say, we're listenin'."

Jesse raised his hand for silence, and was answered by what passed for silence in Rag Alley. Then he began to

He spoke slowly, that the meaning of each word might have time to penetrate the tough rind of their consciousness and find the core within.

"From the eyes of every man and woman, God looks at me. For God dwells in every man and woman. And what is God? He is the Spirit. He is one, and he is many. As you are His, so also is He yours. Your bodies are His body, His soul is your soul, His goodness is your goodness. You cannot hurt another without hurting Him. You cannot love another without loving Him. He is the child you tend and feed; He is the friend who helps you in your time of trouble."

"Gee, Mary! So little Mikie's God, is he? That's great!" . . . "I think he's guyin' us." . . .
 "Shet up! He means jest what he says." . . .
 "Gee! So you all is God!" . . . "And me, too?" . . .
 . . . "On de level, now, he means it." . . .
 "G'wan, Mister."

"When you give a loaf of bread to one who needs it, you give bread to Him. When you quarrel with your neighbour, it is He with whom you quarrel."

"Now hear dat! So I give God a black eye yistiddy!" . . .
 . . . "Be still, thar!" . . .

"When you make His name a common oath, it is yourself that you dishonour. When you befog your mind with drink, you darken the way in which He must walk. Have you thought evil of another? It is He whom you have doubted. Have you trusted another? Then have you trusted God."

"Say, will God pay me back that dollar I lent Flanigan?" . . . "Not on yer life!" . . . "Shet up, an' listen! He's goin' on fine."

"The God who is both yourself and your neighbour, is richer than you know. His debts are always paid, somewhere, sometime. Eternity is not longer than His memory; and while He lives, can you, who are Himself, cease to be?"

"Say, we don't want no reward in heaven bizness." . . .
 . . . "We want somethin' here and now." . . .

"Rag Alley ain't no heaven." . . . "What about now?"

"The past was no less real than now, when you lived in it; the future will be no less real than now. In you is the God who shall answer your own prayer. When you learn how to pray for something better than your Alley, you will find the answer waiting. Prayer may be a helpless wailing; prayer may be the conscious exercise of power. The a-b-c of power is self-control, and to the prayer of him who knows the letters of that alphabet, God cannot answer no."

"What's He givun us?" . . . "Prayer and alphabets!" . . . "Shet up, Mike, or I'll break yer face." . . . "Listen to ther preacher."

"Would you control your own life? Begin with your own thoughts. Look for your own weakness. He who knows a man's weakness is his master. Be master of yourself."

"Say, how about the sweat-shop?" . . . "Whiskey's my weakness, begob!" . . . "Hunger's mine." "That's the man what can raise the dead." . . . "He knows what he's talkin' about."

There is a sleeping man in every one of you. Awaken him. Call your own sleeping souls to life. The power is yours. The healthy man is he who never thinks of sickness. The strong man is he who knows that he is strong."

"That's so! I can lick every man in dis Alley." . . . "But yer can't keep from drinkin'." . . . "I can, begob!"

"The world will not give you anything because it loves you; but the God in you can give you anything which you are wise enough to use."

"Say, Mister, will He gimme a job to-morrow? I hain't worked fer a month. How'll I git a job?"

"When you can listen to the God in your own breast, you will no longer need a teacher."

"When I go to git a job, I'm always afraid I won't git it."

"The general who fears to enter a battle will never conquer the enemy. And even the mob in the street will chase a man whom it sees running away."

The crowd gathered closer and closer about him. From every nook and cranny of the Alley they had come out, to see and hear the man who was so different from themselves, yet who aroused no feeling of distrust. His tender, pitying eyes passed round the sea of faces. Half-human faces, they were, many of them—some lean and ferocious-looking as starved animals, others bloated and expressionless as jelly-fish with drink and with disease, others again whose narrow eyes were burning with the malice of devils, or leering like sub-human, elemental things for which the language of mankind has found no name.

"Help us! Oh, help us!" the strange eyes seemed to say. "We are the lost, the strayed, the hopeless starvelings of the House of Life, for whom the Father's door is never open, the Mother's table never spread. We are the question which no sage can answer, the Devil's clenched fist shaken in the face of God."

When they asked him what he was going to do for them, he answered:

"I came to raise your spirits from the dead; but I will comfort any who are sick, and give them of my strength."

Many of their ailing, feverish children he left in a refreshing slumber, from which they would awaken with new life. And the aroma of his own spirit he left with them, a subtle but pervading influence that remained with all for many days, and remained with some for ever. Most of his words they had only vaguely understood; but he had told them of the God within themselves, and though they made a joke of it to one another, they pondered the matter in secret.

That night the owner of Rag Alley came alone to Jesse. He came on foot, having left his luxurious motor car at the ferry-station below, and Jesse received him privately in the room where Lawrence had lain in the coffin a few days before.

"I want to do something for your cause," were the first words of the rich young man.

"My cause is the cause of humanity," Jesse answered. "The wise ones of the past have called it the Great Orphan."

"But I know not where to begin."

"Then begin at the centre and work outward; begin under your own roofs."

"Why, I have a thousand roofs! I know not what to do."

"Examine those roofs and the life that hives beneath them; then examine your own heart, and find yourself the way. Great is your opportunity."

"But I am less happy than many who have nothing."

"Can one man deserve all blessings? He who has power and knows the way to use it can make that power itself his happiness. I never ask myself if I am happy."

"You?" The young man gazed at him in wide-eyed reverence. "Why," he said, "I believe no other man in the world has power like yours. That is why I am here. What victories you must have won—what spiritual prizes!"

"The prize of every victory is the right to enter another battle," Jesse answered.

Needham sat locking and unlocking his long fingers, as if under the stress of strong emotion.

"There was one thing you said in your sermon this morning that has rung in my ears all day: 'Does your heart swell with pride as you view your worldly possessions and count them over? The only possessions which shall not be taken from you are those which can neither be viewed nor counted.' Will you tell me of those possessions? I want to obtain them."

Jesse reached out his hand and touched the clasped hands of the young man beside him.

"My brother," he said, "the way for every soul is different, yet are they all the same. For you, the way to acquire spiritual possessions is to relinquish material possessions."

"Do you mean that I should relinquish everything I have, or only a part?"

"That is for you alone to determine. But for every material and personal right surrendered by the disciple, he acquires a spiritual privilege."

The light of enthusiasm in the young man's eyes grew clouded by anxiety.

"But I do not stand alone," he said; "I have so many ties that link me with the world."

The smile Jesse gave him was full of understanding and of sympathy, as he answered:

"The world may be likened to a great shop of varied merchandise, from which a man may choose whatever things he is willing and able to pay for. And gold is not the only medium of exchange."

"Then may I not give service in other ways, as well as with my wealth?"

"Have you any other power that is comparable with your wealth?"

"I have great influence."

"Is it the influence of your wealth, or of yourself?"

The young man sighed.

"I fear it is not of myself," he said.

"Then you have found the answer to your question."

"If I could only get away for a little while from the distractions of the world," he went on, "perhaps I would be strong enough to practise my own philosophy."

"The world is the place to practise philosophy," was Jesse's answer; "though solitude is sometimes necessary for the assimilation of experience."

"But how can a man learn faith? I have studied many religions, but I have not found the basic Law which underlies our life."

"Some men can learn the Law only by the study of laws, and some can learn Faith only by the study of faiths; others, again, learn the Law by studying Faith, and Faith by studying the Law."

"And what is that Law?"

"It has many names," replied Jesse; "it has been given many forms by those who have glimpsed it through the ages; but there is no better symbol for it than the balances."

A puzzled look came into the eyes of the listener.

"I fear I do not fully understand," he said. "If the law of balance is what I have sought, how shall I apply it to my life?"

"There are many ways; but first restore the balance between yourself and the world. When you have given the Spirit as much as the world has given you, then will you be ready to study the other applications of the great Law. That is your first lesson."

"And if I fail?"

"Then you will forfeit the reward. But having invoked the Spirit, you will find that what you refuse to yield willingly, the Spirit itself will take."

"And may I come to you sometimes for guidance and advice?"

The young man did not understand the look of sadness which clouded Jesse's eyes, nor did he understand his parting words—until some days later:

"When I am not here to advise you, listen to the voices of the winds and the waters, and to the wise words of little hungry children. It may be that they will teach you more than I."

Sad and unsatisfied, he who had come to the young Master alone and at night descended the hill on the way back to his own world, the world which—though he could not bring himself to relinquish it—had lost all beauty for him.

CHAPTER LXX

ON Monday morning the newspapers made the most of their opportunity. Sensational news had been scarce of late; the nations of the world were in a state of peace that was most irritating to the press; murder, robbery and suicide were at their minimum, and not even a scandal of respectable proportions had stirred the country for days. So the moulders, or reflectors, of public opinion hailed the appearance of Jesse Bethel and turned his unworldly mission to their own worldly profit. The resurrection of Lawrence Lane having been exploited to the full, they leaped at the miraculous cure of Mrs. Freeman's lameness, on the steps of the church of the famous Doctor Claffin. In the old days when Mrs. Freeman's departed husband had been running for office on the more conservative ticket, and the less conservative party had been sifting the chaff of his past career for kernels of disrepute—even in the days of the political prominence of Freeman, the name was not more conspicuously placed in the newspapers than on that Monday morning. Interviews with the witty old lady appeared in every journal, and those who knew her recognised the quoted words as being in her own characteristic style. Even her enthusiasm for the new prophet was expressed in terms of quaint, half-serious hyperbole. One saying of hers, "His glance was so exalting, that my lame foot spurned the earth and carried me with it up the steps of God's house," was prominently placed in every paper.

Another interview, with the Reverend Doctor Claffin, who had been an unwilling witness for the truth of the occurrence, was printed next to that of Mrs. Freeman, and by the very darkness of its laboured impartiality made hers appear more highly-coloured and extravagant. It was as carefully worded as his famous printed sermon on the text of Proverbs, XXVIII, 19: "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough." When asked by a persistent reporter to give an opinion as to the means by

which the wonder was accomplished, he answered with a quotation, again from Proverbs: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter." Doctor Clafin was noted among his fellow clergymen for having the Scriptures at his tongue's end. "Then do you intend to search out this matter?" the interviewer asked. And the interviewed was quoted as replying, with an agitated manner which perhaps accounted for the somewhat cloudy metaphor: "A clergyman is the king of his flock, and must search out whatever threatens it."

There were no editorials on this second incident; the minds behind the presses were quietly awaiting developments before committing themselves further.

That afternoon the large Sunday-school room of Doctor Clafin's church was brilliantly illuminated with artificial light and filled with fashionably attired men and women and many children. It was the occasion of the annual spring fair, depended on to replenish the coffers of the Sunday-school and to help in carrying on the work of one or two of the much-advertised charities of the church. Everywhere were booths and tables decorated with gay colours and laden with wares for sale or raffle, each booth and table in the care of one or more beautiful young women whose duties were to extract every possible dollar from every possible purse.

Twenty-five cent bunches of violets sold for a dollar; photographs of popular actresses sold for the price of orchestra chairs at their performances; boxes of confectionery went for figures that would soon have made the fortune of any secular dealer; at the Oriental booth the charges would have brought a blush to the cheek of a bargaining Turk of Stamboul; and at the "refreshment tables" hungry or thirsty visitors might regale themselves on varicoloured ice-creams and cakes and innocent drinks, for sums of money that would keep the dark-skinned beneficiaries of the church's favourite mission in rice and curry through a protracted period of famine.

But the raffles offered real bargains—provided the investor won the prize, and there was an equal chance for

all. For a few dollars one might win a good red motor car, if luck were with him, and "luck" is the watchword of those who sell chances in raffles. For a single dollar one might possibly become the owner of a Persian prayer-rug to make comfortable the orisons of generations; and also for that trifling sum a speculative woman had one chance in fifty of wearing on her head a fanciful creation of lace and feathers which hid within its crown a famous Paris name, more magical in its effect on modern femininity than the potent abracadabra on the philosophers of olden time. For those who had no need of motor cars, prayer-rugs or bonnets, there were other and equally seductive opportunities for invoking the favour of the tutelary deity of church fair patrons—the fascinating god called Chance.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, when the opening glories of the fair were at their height, and the walls of the Sunday-school room were ringing with laughter and chatter, that a sudden lessening of the noise, a silence round the door, made those at a distance crane their necks to see what person of distinction was entering—to see who *could* be so distinguished as to silence, even for a moment, the babble and the laughter of the fair. In another breath, a quick murmur ran round the room.

"Oh, look!" . . . "It's the new prophet, the man who made Mrs. Freeman walk." . . . "He who raised the dead man at Fort Lee." . . . "And what a band of followers!" . . . "What is he doing here?" . . . "There's Mrs. Freeman, over by the door." . . . "She's speaking to him." . . . "What a gentle smile he has!" . . . "But he could be stern, though." . . . "Let's make him buy our violets." . . . "Oh, no, no, you mustn't!" . . . "Why not, pray?" . . . "Because he's different—I can't tell why." . . . "Oh, he's coming this way!"

Jesse paused before the flower-booth, where several young ladies were standing, among them the one who had advised the others not to sell him violets—and none were offered him. The girl waited, shyly, for him to speak, looking up at his face with half-frightened eyes.

He touched one of the red roses on the table.

"Are these beautiful flowers, which seem to exhale the very sweetness of the Spirit, to be offered upon the altar?" he asked.

"They are for sale," she answered.

"The perfume of the Spirit should not be made merchandise—and in the Spirit's house."

His tone was gentle, almost caressing in its sympathy; but the rebuke within the words sought out and found the sensitive spot in her young heart; her eyes filled with tears.

"They asked me to sell them," she answered softly.

"And if I ask you not to sell them?"

She hesitated, trembling with the unexpected responsibility of choice between the favour of her pastor and the wish of this strange man whose eyes seemed to unveil the hidden places of her soul. Silently he waited, full of tenderness and pity for her fluttering will; but there was no wavering in the purpose which shone in his eyes. Looking up at him with a child-like and pathetic smile, she said:

"I will not sell them, if you say that flowers should not be sold in the church."

"May the Spirit open your soul to the beauty of Itself, my sister." And he passed on.

"Surely you are not going to leave the booth!" one of her companions expostulated with her. "You will not break your promise to us?"

"I will not break my promise to him."

The third young lady in the booth came forward to her friend's defence. "Of course she need not serve here, if she would rather not. We can manage very well without her. . . . I don't blame you, child," she added; "I understand, and I like you for it."

With a whispered "Thank you," the girl quietly left the stall and joined a group of friends, on the other side of the room. From there she could watch Jesse as he made the circuit of the fair, followed by the men and women who were helping him in his work. Oh, that she were free to join them! But though she was a petted child, and could leave a flower-booth, she had no real liberty. "May the Spirit open your soul to the beauty of Itself, my sister." The words gave her that strange feeling of ecstasy which she had sometimes known when listening to the music of

great masters, only this new feeling was more intense, and there was another element in it which mere music had never given her—a consciousness of “the everlasting arms” beneath her. Was it thus the Spirit opened the soul to the beauty of Itself? she wondered.

Jesse stood at the table behind which the Persian rug was exhibited on the wall and chances on it were offered for the raffle. The young woman who had charge of this department was not of the same sensitive type as the girl at the flower-booth; she had a bright and rather hard face, and when Jesse paused and seemed to examine the rug, she offered to sell him a chance on it, mentioning the devout purpose for which it was originally intended.

“A prayer-rug,” he repeated. “But those whose prayers reach highest bruise their knees upon the rocks of supplication.”

“It will not be thus with the one who wins this rug,” she answered, with a twinkle of amusement in her bright black eyes. She knew who he was, and it was out of sheer bravado that she had asked him to take a chance in the raffle. Looking beyond him at that moment, she encountered the steady gaze of Peter Bond, who read her as an artless man may sometimes read an artificial woman. When she turned her eyes back to Jesse’s face their expression was less self-confident, but her chin went up ever so little.

“I truly believe,” he answered, “that he who wins this prayer-rug will not bruise his knees upon the stones of supplication, nor will he mar the beauty of the fabric by penitential beatings of his head upon the ground.”

The young woman laughed from sheer nervousness, but made no reply. She was beginning to wish herself well out of the encounter.

“And the profits of this sacred enterprise?” he asked.

“Oh! They are divided between the Sunday-school and foreign missions, I believe; though I really don’t know much about it.”

“And this gambling is done in the name of God and of religion?”

“Why--er——” she stammered, not knowing what to answer.

“This morning I was in the stock exchange,” he went on.

"I did not reprove the gamblers there, because those wolves yelp like the wolves they are. But you I do reprove, though you are only a decoy, and bleat so prettily to lure the passing sheep. They who turn the house of faith into a gambling-hall and a market-place are worse, because less honest, than they who frankly seek their prey in the open, with no pious pretence or pretty lamb-like bleatings."

The face of the young woman was scarlet; but under her anger burned a fiery admiration for the splendid courage of the man. And he was right—her quick brain told her that. But she came of a race of fighters, and she faced him with clear eyes and quivering lips.

"How dare you!" she half-whispered.

"How dare *you* desecrate the house of God?"

For the space of ten heart-beats they stood eye to eye, spirit challenging and defying spirit. Then, in a tone of womanly submission, she said:

"They must find someone else to carry on their raffle; I shall do it no more."

"I thank you." He put out his hand and she laid hers in it, in token of compact. Then he turned to Mary Magnus, who was among those who followed him.

"Our new friend would like to know more of me and of my work. Will you instruct her?" Then he passed on, leaving the two women together.

Among those who witnessed the occurrence was the Reverend Doctor Claflin. He had seen the entrance of Jesse and his friends, and had quietly made his way to a point which the strangers would have to pass in going around the room. He would have asked him to leave the church if he had dared; but the fair was open to the public, and he could find no plausible excuse immediately to get rid of one whom he felt to be an intruder. He had just been told of the incident of the flower-booth when he witnessed the incident before the Persian rug, and he felt the moment had come to interpose an objection. Surely this was a duty which could be delegated to no person lesser than himself. Walking up to Jesse, he stated his name and position in the church, adding:

"I am forced to request that you do not further interfere with the business of our fair."

In the same gentle voice he had used with the two women, Jesse answered:

"I did not know that faith had become a commercial business. If that is so, then has the world need of a new and purer faith."

"Of which you hope to be the prophet, I suppose."

"He who proclaims the truth for its own sake, asks no reward of men."

"But even you will possibly admit that in the world as constituted at the *present* day, faith needs must be sustained with bread and meat," the minister protested.

"You cannot buy the bread of Jupiter with the coin of Mars," was Jesse's answer.

"I feel that a minister of God cannot ask any orderly person to leave his church," Doctor Claffin said, with rising colour; "but I also feel that you are out of place here."

"My place," replied Jesse quietly, "is in any public assembly where men and women are willing to listen to the message which I came into the world to deliver."

At that moment a crowd of children who had been gathering about Jesse and restraining their desire to touch him, suddenly rushed forward with little hands outstretched and faces tremulous with eagerness. One of them had seen him in the Park the day before, and had told the others that he was "the beautiful man who told us stories and made the policeman's eyes all shiny."

"Oh! don't you remember me, beautiful man?" the girl-child cried, with little gasps of joy. "I sat on your knee Sunday morning, when you told us about the king's son who found the land of loveliness *right down in his own heart.*"

"Yes, I remember you, dear child."

"And, Oh! beautiful man, these are my friends—we go to Sunday-school together—and won't you tell them the story of the land of loveliness? You can sit right here in this big chair . . . that's only a price-card in the seat, and we'll put it on the floor underneath just for now. . . Oh, do! And I'll sit on your knee again, like I did yesterday, and Bobbie can sit on the other knee. Bobbie's my cousin, you know, and I've told him all about you. 'There was once a king's son' . . . you see I remember how it

begins. . . . 'There was once a king's son'
 Go on, beautiful man," and she curled herself on his
 knee, gazing at his face with captivated, glowing eyes, while
 all the other children gathered round in quivering expect-
 ancy.

So Jesse ran the story all over again. And when it was
 ended he told them another, about a little girl who loved
 the moon so much that she wanted to fly away and live
 there, and was not contented in her earthly home; but when
 one night she saw the moon reflected in her mother's eyes
 —two beautiful golden moons instead of one—she was happy
 to stay at home, and desired no more to fly away through
 the air, because there was twice as much moon-beauty on
 the earth as in the sky, if one only knew just how to look
 for it in a pair of loving eyes.

"Who *are* you, beautiful man?" the little girl demanded.
 "Oh! tell us who you are and where you came from."

"I am the messenger of the Spirit, and I came from the
 home of the Spirit, to which I shall soon return."

"Oh! I know what a messenger is," she cried. "A mes-
 senger is one that brings us something. What do you
 bring us, beautiful man?"

"I bring the spirit of Love, and the love of the Spirit."

Jesse now rose from the chair, but no one thought to re-
 place the price-mark which had been removed by the chil-
 dren to provide a place for him.

"Don't go away, messenger of the Spirit," a score of
 little ones pleaded. "We want you to stay with us al-
 ways, messenger of the Spirit."

Jesse turned now to the bewildered clergyman, who had
 watched and listened to this demonstration of instinctive
 trust and love on the part of those beings whom he was
 wont to call the lambs of his own flock.

"When you are in doubt as to the purpose of my com-
 ing," he said, "ask the little children, for they will never
 forget."

Then, followed by his friends, and by many others, he
 passed out of the church.

CHAPTER LXXI

RARE were the hours when Andrew and Anna found themselves alone together. Their common love for their Master, which drew them closer together in spirit than any mere earthly tie could have drawn them, served, by the very nature of the communal life they shared with all his followers, to hold them always a little asunder in person. They were together almost always, alone together almost never. So there had grown up between them a wordless, immaterial communion that was very beautiful and filled their souls with ecstasy; the wings of their love were always quivering in expectancy of the flight they were never allowed to take. For nearly a year now they had looked into each other's eyes across the barrier of the Master's denial; and though the prolonged period of trial had paled their faces and made thin their forms, yet had their love grown stronger with every passing day. Long months before, Jesse had said to them: "Only they who can live without love are worthy of the perfection of love." And they had bowed their heads in acquiescence, and had gone on serving him.

But now, though by no word or look had he given them to understand that there was any change in his intention regarding them, yet instinctively they knew it, and their hearts were afraid. Was the Master's death to give them to each other? Though he had warned them long before that he would die, they had not really believed until now that they could lose him. And because they loved him with a vaster love than that of man and woman, they were now almost afraid to look in each other's eyes.

After leaving the church fair Jesse turned his steps eastward, and as they passed the house in the city where his mother and the other women lodged, he said to Andrew:

"You may remain behind with Anna, while the others go with me as far as the ferry. When they return, you will follow me to the house beyond the river. I have need of

you this night, so do not fail to come—when my mother and the other women return.”

Jesse turned away, and Andrew, too surprised to respond, went up the steps of the house with Anna. Neither spoke a word until they passed the threshold of the sitting-room which the women shared together.

“Anna,” he said, as the door closed between them and the outside world, “the Master means to answer my long prayer.” His voice was low and unsteady.

Anna had walked to the window and was looking out at the faces of the passers-by, touched by the last rays of the setting sun. When she turned to him, he saw that her eyes were full of tears.

“Anna! Why are you sad? The Master is good to us this day.”

He put out his hand timidly, and she laid hers in it.

“Are you not happy, Anna, dear Anna?”

Her voice was so low it was almost a whisper.

“The Master is going to die. That is why he is so kind to us. He has told us so before, but we would not believe.”

They sat down side by side on a little sofa in the corner of the room. Her words had dazed the slower mind of the man; he looked at her in a kind of pathetic wonderment. It was so rare and marvellous a thing to be alone with her, and yet . . . she said the Master was going to die! . . .

Strange dominance of the personality of Jesse! After months of keeping these lovers apart by the presence of others, when at last he gave them an hour alone together the consciousness of some vague danger threatening him stood like a wall between them and the joy which they had earned the right to have.

“Anna, the Master wants us to be happy for this one little hour.”

The sweetness of his presence was beginning to steal over her; though a happiness which has been too long delayed is always slow in making itself realised. It is as if the soul, resigned at last to gazing into vacancy, is incredulous that the angel visitor is really there. So it was with Anna. And only after several minutes of utter silence, in which her hand rested passively in the hand of her lover, did her sur-

prised soul gradually grow aware of the fulness of its present hour. Wistfully, tremulously, she looked into his eyes and smiled.

"It seems too wonderful to be true that he should leave us here together," she said.

He laid his hand softly on her hair. He was not a cultured man, as the world measures culture; though a year of constant association with the rarest and most beautiful of human beings, Jesse, had intensified his naturally delicate perceptions. His love for Anna had been refined by denial until it had become a psychic passion, an emotion of the soul, an ecstasy for contemplation side by side with the Spirit of his Master's adoration. Andrew often, in trying to realise the Spirit which Jesse had taught him to pray to—the pervading Spirit which is God—could only attain a consciousness of its beauty by thinking of it as that hidden, mysterious and lovely presence dwelling in the soul of Anna Martin. The man who finds his love in his religion, and his religion in his love, will never wander far from either.

Having more to say to one another than could be expressed in words, they said almost nothing during their golden hour. Out of the thousand images of love with which their souls were full, which one should they select to speak about now? So they looked into each other's eyes, and smiled, and felt the inadequacy of human language. Little love words, whose simple meaning ages of use have made infinitely expressive, were all the words they needed.

When at last their lips met in the perfect confidence of love, they forgot that their Master had told them he was going to die, forgot the long months of their face-to-face separation, for the past was lost in the fulness of the present, which seemed eternal.

"Do you know, dear Love, that this is ours through all our lives?"

"Through all our lives, dear Love."

"And that nothing shall part us again ever more?"

"Nothing ever more."

"The Master told me once that it would be better for us to love each other only in the Spirit."

"It seems to me *this is* the Spirit."

"Whenever I think of the Spirit, I always think of you."

"And I of you, dear heart."

"Anna, you have heard the Master speak of the self within and the world without?"

"Yes."

"One day I heard him say that if any two join together so that they really become as one, they are both the self within and the world without."

"So that they really become as one. . . . It seems like that with us. Yet he would have kept us apart."

"He will not keep us apart any more, Anna."

"Andrew, what is this danger which is threatening the Master?"

"I do not know, dear Love; but I think he believes that his enemies will kill him."

"Why should they kill him? He is so gentle, so harmless, and his teachings are beautiful enough to change the world."

"That is why he is dangerous to those who would keep the world as it is."

"But how could anyone want the world to remain as it is, when 't might be so much more beautiful?"

"There are those who prefer their own selfish power to the welfare of the world. It is they who are the enemies of Jesse."

"And what are the Master's teachings going to do?"

"They are going to revolutionise the whole earth; they are going to bring about the reign of love and brotherhood, in the place of selfishness, and greed, and cruelty, and oppression."

The eyes of the young man blazed with the fire of Jesse's own enthusiasm. After a year of contact with the flame which he knew as the Master, Andrew believed, as did most of his fellow disciples, that the love and faith of one man could change the consciousness of a world. Oh, sublime illusion, tenuous and seemingly impossible dream, which was destined to survive every solid and material structure of its time! At long intervals in the history of the world there arises such a being, born to rekindle the dead flame of faith in the souls of men. And though they pay the price of their lives for the spiritual grandeur of

the dream they dare to dream and strive to make a reality yet the dream survives; for neither gold nor granite is so enduring as such a dream. The memory of the bow in the cloud, believed to be God's covenant with Noah, will survive the very rocks of Mount Ararat. And in the words of Jesse: "It is worth while to endure many storms for the sake of seeing one rainbow."

CHAPTER LXXII

JESSE was sitting quietly after supper in the little house beyond the Palisades. On her favourite low stool at his feet was Mary Lane—Mary the dreamer, while her sister Martha and the men were here and there about the room. The girl could never hear enough of Jesse's words. With wide eyes and bated breath she drank in his teaching, her young, imaginative soul aquiver with the vision of beauty he invoked for her. He could speak to her even as he spoke to John, using images which would have been unintelligible to many of the others. He said of her, as he had said of John: "Only the born mystic knows what mysticism is; to others it is only a vague word."

"Master," she said to him this evening, "you have opened for me the gate of the spiritual gardens; but I am so slow in learning my way about. The beauty which I see half blinds my eyes; I can only grope, where I would walk upright."

He smiled down at her.

"Be not impatient for the flower of the Spirit to open. Have you not said that you are immortal? What have the immortal to do with time?"

"My soul is not impatient. It is my brain, which thinks more nobly than I can live."

"Dear child, the brain is not the Thinker. The brain is but the tool the Thinker uses to carve his message on the eternal rocks."

"But, Master, I am so sad sometimes! I dwell a little while with the beauty you reveal to me; then I return to the every-day world, where all seems grey."

He answered, "A thing is what it is, only in relation to something else: there could be no mountain without the contrast with the valley."

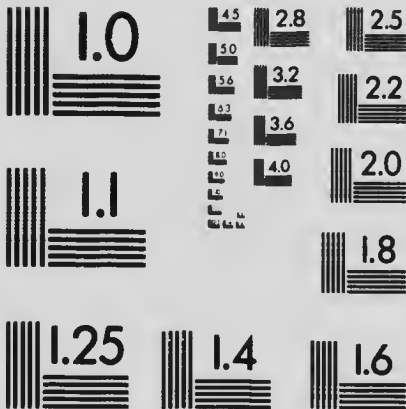
"But why is the every-day world so grey, Master?"

"The greyness is in the eye which beholds. He who sees no marvel in the crawling of the earthworm, will vainly question the marvel of the rushing planets. To him



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who finds no beauty in the wayside weed, the rose never reveal the secret of her loveliness."

"But can I help being saddened when I see the shams and falsehoods of the world?"

"The shams and falsehoods which sadden you are only the broken reflections of some fragment of the great Truth."

"I have often wondered," she said, gazing as though afar off into space, "if I have the true perception of the Spirit; wondered if I see the same God that you see."

"The God in you is your God, and the God in me is my God; but your God and my God are one—the One."

"And what am I, Master?"

"You are the thread whereon are strung the jewels of your deeds and thoughts and feelings. God is the thread whereon are strung the jewels of the generations of men and of the stars."

At that moment Martha, who had gone to answer the ring at the door-bell, returned to Jesse's side.

"Master, there is a stranger in the hall who asks to see you. He does not wish to give his name."

"Please tell him to come in."

The man who entered was about thirty years old, slender and well-dressed, with curling light hair and moustache and restless grey eyes. He bowed before Jesse with elaborate respect.

"May I be granted a private interview?" he asked with the slight accent betraying the foreigner.

"I have no secrets from these friends," Jesse answered.

The man bowed again. "But what I have to say can be said only to you."

"I am at the call of all men who seek the knowledge of the Spirit; and though it is hidden, it is not secret. But you may come with me."

He led the way to the room across the hall, where he had received the multimillionaire the night before, and placed his visitor in the same chair where young Needham had sat.

"I have seen all that has been written about you in the papers," the stranger began, "and I am profoundly interested in your magical powers. I have come to-night to ask you to teach them to me."

"Are you offering yourself as my disciple?"

"I would learn the secret of your powers."

"But they are not secret. I have proclaimed them from the housetops for a long time."

"Yes, but that is only for the multitude. I would know the inner, magical secrets, the secrets of miraculous healing and of power over the wills of men."

"Is then your love so great for all mankind that you would ease them of their afflictions? Love is the potent drug I use, administered by the hand of faith."

"I, too, would be a miraculous healer. I aspire to super-human powers."

The calm blue eyes of Jesse enveloped and subdued the restless eyes of the other.

"The power you seek comes only by sacrifice," he said.

"But I am willing to sacrifice," the young man cried, "I am willing to pay. Here! I have brought five hundred dollars with me. Take them—they are yours. But I expect for them the secret of your powers."

Jesse looked from the young man's face to the money he held out, and though his lips smiled strangely, yet his eyes were sad.

"The price of the powers of the Spirit," he said, slowly, "five hundred dollars—the price of the powers of the Spirit!"

"Is it not enough? For two hundred I learned how to create illusions which have puzzled all the scientists. I see—it is not enough. You must be very great! But I will bring you more—seven hundred—yes, a thousand—for I see that you are a very great magician. I will give you a thousand, though it is a large amount of money, and I shall expect for it the secret of all your powers."

The smile had now passed from Jesse's face, and only the sadness remained in the eyes which held the other's.

"Poor man!" he murmured, "poor deluded man! You are offering me the money you love above all things, offering it to me in exchange for that which I give freely—freely, without price—to all mankind."

"But I do not want to be healed; I want to learn *how* to heal."

Jesse had risen from his chair.

"Though I should tell you everything I know," he said, "you would be no wiser than you are now. They who use spiritual powers for selfish purposes dig with their own nails the grave wherein they shall be buried. I send you from me, and forbid you ever to return, because, such as you, the diamond gates of the City of God would be only so many carats' weight, to be bartered in the market."

Defeated, but apparently unresentful, the strange man bowed again, more profoundly than on his entrance; but his shifting eyes no longer met those of Jesse.

"I perceive," he said, "that you are one of those whom I am forced to respect—against my will. Good-night."

The outer door closed behind him, and Jesse returned to the room where his friends were awaiting his return.

"Who was it, Master?" Peter inquired.

"A swordsman," Jesse answered, "who offered a large sum of money to buy a blade he had not the skill to wield."

A few minutes later Jesse was seated with the twelve men around the bare table in the dining-room, and the door was closed. There were things he had to say to them, and this was the appointed hour; instructions he had to give them, which on this quiet night would sink deeper into their minds than if delivered amid the confusion of the ensuing days. He sat at one end of the table, between Peter and John, while at the farther end sat Judas Carey, and the other men were ranged on both sides. For a little time they sat in silence, Jesse with his eyes closed, voiceless, passionate prayer. The perfume which the woman disciple had poured upon his head some days before made sweet the air around him. His face was paler than usual, and when he opened his eyes and looked at them they were held by the intensity of his gaze.

"Heretofore," he began, "you have refused to believe that the hour is approaching when I shall be with you no longer in the flesh. But listen to me now, and when my prophecy is verified, remember all that I shall have said to you this night.

"Though the eyes of men no longer gaze upon me, y

you and I are one; and you must carry on the work I have laid down. The spiritual future of mankind is in your hands; and though the task I leave with you is harder than any ever yet performed by the minds and bodies of men, you must not fail. Not only must you know what to do, but you must dare to do it, and at the very moment when it should be done. You must be master, not only of inclination, but of disinclination. Remember that if the sun should pause to ask itself whether it felt like rising, the work of the world would be sadly disarranged."

"We who have sacrificed so much already, will not fail you now," said Nathan Evans, from the other end of the table.

"You talk of sacrifice," Jesse answered gravely. "But what have you really sacrificed? A narrow life for a wider and more complete life—one which will write your names on the register of immortality. When the time comes for you really to make the Great Sacrifice, you will not speak of it to anyone."

"Oh, Master! Is there not some way of setting back the hour of our trial?" It was John who spoke, referring to the prophecy of death; but Jesse answered him:

"He who would postpone any lesson, however difficult, is not fully possessed by the desire for growth."

The austerity of all that was implied in these words was like a rock beneath their feet. Jesse went on:

"To know the Law—even to know there is a Law—involves great responsibilities of obedience: ignorance can no longer be claimed as an excuse for failure.

"He who refuses to follow the hard discipline that is the price of wisdom, shall pay more dearly yet for the undisciplined folly that seems to be easy and free of charge."

The twelve men looked at one another, each measuring his own strength by the firmness in the eye of his neighbour.

"The scattered divine fragments that are humanity have little knowledge of the power of men united," declared Jesse, his voice rising with the force of his feeling. "If you who seem to be twelve could in effect become one, one in purpose and in will, there is no conceivable limit to the deeds you might accomplish. They are one who

love each other, who live for each other and for *one id*
 As heart and brain and hand and foot all work together
 for the welfare of the individual man, whose parts th
 are, so must you work all together for the unity whi
 is the *one apostle* of the Spirit. For such a work the
 must be absolute detachment from the world, with absolu
 devotion to the world. You can never be really an in
 portant part of human life until you are outside of and b
 yond mere human life. You will be persecuted by th
 world you serve; but you will exist only for me and th
 fulfilment of my mission. You will live in the Eterna
 not in the things of time. Immeasurable is your respons
 bility, for on your shoulders rests the burden of my futur
 Can you work thus as one body and one mind, *which n*
untrammelled spirit can use?"

"We can," they promised.

"Then has my power no limits; then shall the dese
 places of life blossom with the roses of faith, and the Spir
 be redeemed from its long bondage."

"Master," they cried, speaking rapidly one after anothe
 and sometimes two or three together, their love and admir
 tion for him breaking through all bonds of restraint

"Master, we give ourselves utterly to the work."

"We are willing to renounce the world." . . . "Yo
 are our world." . . . "There is no task too hard fo
 us." . . . "We are indeed one, in your service."

"We ask no greater blessing than to die to ourselve
 that we may live for you." . . . "Make us your hand
 and feet." . . . "Use us or break us in the servic
 of the Spirit." . . . "Only let us feel your living
 presence." . . . "We have the faith, we have th
 will." . . . "We will never waver, and we cannot
 fail." . . . "We are not afraid of persecution."

. . . "We suffer all for you with gladness." . . . "W
 will make the whole earth to ring with your name."

"You are the sun that warms the planet." . . . "Th
 moon that draws the tides of faith." . . . "You ar
 the beloved of the Spirit." . . . "The messenger o
 God." . . . "We will proclaim you until all men
 believe."

In this chorus of enthusiasm one voice was heard less

often than the others, though in the abandon of the moment no one noticed this save Jesse, and he made no reference to it. But when he spoke again it was to address directly the disciple at the farther end of the table, in tones of melting tenderness.

"Do you not feel, Judson, that he who loves and serves the Spirit has no need of any earthly thing?"

"You have told us so, Master."

"Do you not feel that he who is persecuted for his faith's sake is blessed among men?"

"Of course, and yet—I think we might preach the truth in such a way as to avoid persecution."

"Some things," answered Jesse, "are passively to be avoided, and some things are powerfully to be overcome; he who knows the one from the other is fit to guide the policies of a nation—or to be a disciple."

"But is there not a way of compromise?"

Jesse's voice was still gentle, but there was a strange look in his eyes, and he gazed fixedly at Judson, as he said:

"Did you ever watch a great tree in a storm? The trunk moves not from its deep place in the ground, but the branches bend a little, and the leaves quiver violently. In the storm of discipleship, it is well for a man to know whether he is the steady trunk, the bending branch or the quivering leaf."

The face of Judson flushed a deep crimson. He knew the full meaning of Jesse's quiet words; but he made no answer, and the others were too much absorbed in their own feelings to consider the significance of this brief dialogue, though later they remembered it. Nor did they understand Jesse's next words, which were spoken in a low tone, as if to himself:

"If the teacher learns more from the pupil than the pupil can learn from the teacher, then is the teacher a wise man. A foolish man may teach a wise man more than the foolish one himself could compass in ten lives."

Then drawing a deep breath, and throwing back his head as if to rid his mind of some unbearable weight, Jesse continued:

"The Spirit has given me to know that there is another

who will join you in the future, a powerful one, a giant in spirit and in labour. He will make himself known to you, and when he comes you are to receive him in my name."

"How shall we know him, Master?"

"You will know him by the power of his presence. As I am no more now, for I am weary and would rest, but not under a roof built by man's hand would I sleep this night. You who are to carry the burden of my mission must be indifferent to comfort and discomfort. While I am here to shield you from the imaginary dangers of changed habits, you will come with me to sleep under the open sky, with a rock for your pillow. The soldier of the Spirit must learn to take his rest upon Nature's hard bed. I know a spot, on the edge of the Palisades yonder, where I would sleep under the eyes of the stars—the wise and implacable stars, that do not waver in their courses though the heart of man may break."

"Sleep out of doors? So early in the spring!" exclaimed the domestic Peter, who, until his sojourn with the Master on the mountain during the preceding summer, had always slept in a comfortable bed.

"The day has been warm," said Jesse, "and the night is also warm; but should you wake in the chill of the dawn and feel the need of covering, wrap yourself in the double garment of love and faith, and remember that I am near you."

CHAPTER LXXIII

ON Tuesday morning the newspapers were again full of Jesse, and it was everywhere announced that on that evening he would speak at a great public meeting in Madison Square Garden. This meeting had been planned the day before, and all the necessary arrangements had been made when they left the city the preceding afternoon.

"He who would write his teachings upon the hearts of his own time and country, must use the alphabet of his own time and country; the prophet of the twentieth century in America cannot address his hearers from the door of a bamboo hut brought from the shores of the Ganges," Jesse said.

Such a crowd had never before been seen at a religious meeting in New York. Not only was the immense hall filled to the doors and packed in every inch of standing-room allowed by the police; but the streets on all sides were a mass of moving people, unable even to get near the entrance of the Garden. So great was the attendance outside that Jesse sent Peter, Andrew, James and John, to speak to the multitudes in the streets about the man who was himself addressing other multitudes within the building. The four disciples were aflame with enthusiasm, and the declarations they made about their Master astonished and electrified their listeners. They spoke as devotees might speak of a demi-god, an Avatar, a being beyond humanity, the very incarnation of the Spirit whom he sought to reveal to men. What he had never said of himself, they said of him. Rising to heights of prophecy, they declared that all the religions of the world would be destroyed to make room for this new faith—the faith in the power of the Spirit and in the power of him who preached the Spirit. They told of his marvellous cures, how on more than one occasion he had snatched a soul from the very grip of Death; they told about the stilling of the storm on the lake near Capronville. As there were reporters from the

newspapers outside the hall as well as inside, the most striking of these statements were carefully recorded, especially the claim of divinity made for the prophet by the man who spoke presumably with his authority.

Inside the hall, the appearance of Jesse upon the stage was greeted with a thunder of applause that surprised him. For a moment he was thrilled with hope and joy; then came the realisation that it was more the wonder-work than the messenger of spiritual truth whom the multitudes had come to see and hear. But surely among these thousands were many who thirsted for the faith he had to give; he could feel their spirits yearning to him from all sides. He had never spoken in so immense a building; but whose theatre had been the open air, roofed by the boundless sky, could will that his words should carry their meaning to the remotest corner even of this place. He seated himself in the centre of the stage, and around him was a great number of his friends and sympathisers.

Then, for the first and only time during his ministry in the great city, the choir which Mary had trained so carefully arose and sang. It was a new song, composed by the two women a little while before they left Capronville, and the music was the best Mary had ever written. Indeed it seemed to her that she had not composed it, but merely written it down; that she had listened while angelic beings sang to her. There was a piano on the stage of the Garden, and Mary Lane played the accompaniment.

“ We have heard wild fountains falling,
Heard the thrush's evening trills,
We have heard the thunder calling
To its mate among the hills;
But the day we heard our Master
Whisper softly, “ Follow me,”
Then we heard a music vaster
Than the organ of the sea.

“ We have seen the rainbow leaning
On the cloud's recumbent breast;
We have seen the sun-bird preening
His red feathers in the west;

We have seen the dawn, but fairer
Is the love that leads us on—
Love for him, the message-bearer
Of the Spirit's golden dawn.

"We have felt the breezes blowing
Over gardens full of flowers,
Felt the sands of pleasure flowing
Through the fingers of the hours;
But we stormed the doors of feeling
When our Master's voice we heard,
And our pilgrim souls were kneeling
Round the altar of his word.

"Evermore will spring remind us
We have seeds of faith to sow,
Evermore shall winter find us
Warming hearts beneath the snow;
And the world will follow after,
As we call men's dreams afar
With the wise and mystic laughter
Of the souls that love the Star."

The singing surprised and delighted the listeners. Had there been a brass band playing religious pieces, they would have taken it as a matter of course, and waited patiently for the music to stop and the speaker to begin; but this fresh and naïve expression in song of a real religious enthusiasm, springing spontaneously from the child-heart of the choir, found the child-heart of the audience. The singers were called back, and gave the first song they had made the year before in Vergennes,

"When our mild-eyed Master came
From the mountains of the soul."

Then Jesse arose, and the great audience was utterly still. To those who were near him he did not seem to be speaking in a loud voice, yet his words were audible in every part of the house.

"I have been asked to explain what I mean by the power of the Spirit," he began. "Can you explain the

perfume of a rose, the ecstasy of young motherhood, glamour of the moonlight? The power of the Spirit a state of consciousness; when we have reached that state of consciousness, *we are* the power of the Spirit.

"It cannot be explained to those who know it not; one may be led to its dwelling-place, as a child may be by the hand of an elder brother. The road is precipitous and many things must be left behind on the way. He who would climb the steep mountain of spiritual power cannot carry with him very little baggage from the valley.

"It has been said by men of little understanding that this faith is unfitted for those who dwell in the world of practical things; but the ideal and the material are like the two sides of one gold coin. Fully to possess one side is to possess the possibilities of both. He who considers only the material side of life is the least practical of men. A rose is not a rose without the perfume, a man is not a man without the perfume of the soul.

"The whole world is a slave to the tyranny of petty facts, the facts of the purse, the facts of the cruel warfare of every man against every other man: In the light of the One Truth these are obliterated as stars in the light of the sun.

"Learn to see the poverty of apparent riches, the richness of apparent poverty.

"There are many teachers, but Truth is one; it is like the moon which is reflected in a myriad lakes.

"If you know how to look for Truth, you will find the symbols of it everywhere, in the simple, homely things of the household, the garden and the street, as well as in the complicated measures of the dancing constellations. He who has the eye for beauty, which is the soul of truth, will find it in the coals upon his hearth, and even in the bread and meat which nourish him.

"Last night they brought me for my supper a bowl of chicken broth, and swimming on the surface were innumerable bubbles of golden oil. It was after dark, and the swinging lamp above my head was lighted. I looked . . . and lo! In every bubble in my bowl the flame of the lamp was reflected, like the one flame of the Spirit shining in the hearts of the innumerable children of men. I

asked myself, 'Are the stars in the sky above more wonderful than this?' For size is only relative, and the scale of measurement is based on the physical bulk of him who does the measuring. In the eyes of the Infinite, which, being infinite, can have no such standard of measurement, the light reflected in the bubbles of my bowl is no less wonderful than the light of the sun reflected in the planets which swim in the bowl of space."

Not everyone in that mixed audience could grasp the fulness of his meaning; but the spell of his presence and the sweetness of his voice held even those who wished no good to him. In the Garden that night were many clergymen, as well as representatives of the various modern religious cults, who, though they dreaded his influence, were yet sensitively alive to the power of it. Could they themselves, or any combination of them, fill Madison Square Garden and all the adjacent streets? They gazed at him, and listened.

"It is the power of the Spirit which heals; it is the power of the Spirit which creates. All love that is unselfish, and therefore real, is an expression of that power; all labour performed as a willing service is also an expression of that power. And the feeling of pity, that identifies the heart of the compassionate one with the heart of the sufferer, is the very fragrance of the Spirit.

"But there is a power for evil, as well as a power for good. Men call it the devil, but what is it, really? Only selfishness—the sense of separateness become aggressive. The devil is only the shadow cast by *your self* in the sunlight of God. You say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' whenever you turn your face to the Light, which is Love.

"When you raise your voice in self-defence or anger, which is a declaration of separateness, you silence the inner whisper of the soul, which knows no separateness.

"There are two selves in every man, the separate self and the non-separate. The lower self has free will to work in harmony with the higher, or it may struggle against it. The pain of that struggle is called by many names, anger, avarice, anxiety, jealousy, despair, resentment.

"Alms-giving is great, but forgiveness of injury is greater.

"Anger and resentment are disintegrating forces, which can destroy even the link with the soul; and love is the constructing Spirit, which builds all souls into one temple for the worship of the One God.

"Do you fear the bite of a cobra, and fear not the anger in your own heart? As a frail boat tossed on the bosom of the raging ocean, so is the soul of man on the waves of anger.

"Only he who is free from anxiety, anger and fear can command the powers of the Spirit for good.

"And he who dares to pray when there is anger or resentment in his heart, calls down all the powers of the universe to his own destruction.

"I was not sent by the Spirit merely to sing of the beauty of the Spirit; I was also sent to accuse the world. Few, indeed, are there among you who would not barter your souls for little or much money, and congratulate yourselves upon the opportunity; and these sums of money would not vary with the varying values you set upon your souls, but rather with the difference in your standards of comfort or display. Many of you, not honest even with yourselves, would call upon God to attest the bargain, salving the moral sore with oily phrases, pledging tithes to church or charity of the wages of your soul's prostitution. A candid thief is often nearer to the Spirit than a hypocritical professor of spiritual doctrines.

"Hypocrisy is to the soul what gangrene is to the flesh. Cut it out, before it shall corrupt you in every part.

"You talk about God and the Holy Ghost, and know not what you mean; but when you talk about dollars and cents, you know well what you mean.

"You are afraid to face the royal lion of the Spirit; but you dwell without fear in the nest of the poisonous serpent of hypocrisy.

"If I gave you the very Holy Ghost, which is the poetry of the Spirit, you would make of it a form of merchandise.

"The reason why the spiritual teaching is so unintelligible to you is because your minds cannot grasp any purpose which has not for its end some selfish gain.

"You who hate me, and would gladly destroy me because I point out your hypocrisy, would praise me to-morrow—should I turn hypocrite.

"Having found truth, I come and offer it to you, without charge; and you call it dangerous—asking by what authority I heal the sick and raise men from the grave. Should I withdraw myself, announcing that I had found the secret of acquiring fabulous wealth, and should charge you a thousand dollars a lesson for imparting it, the ante-room of my office would be overcrowded by respectable persons who would call me Master.

"You talk much of your religion; but I say that if the founder of your religion himself should return to you, walking on two feet and clothed in garments like your own, and should give you the kernel—the very seed and substance of the doctrine you repeat mechanically, you would reject him with maledictions, and in the end would kill him.

"When I speak of the beauty of the Spirit, it means little to you; but when I speak of the ugliness of your insincerity, it means much to you.

"As a man may busy himself from dawn to midnight and accomplish nothing, so may a man repeat old texts for a lifetime and touch no heart thereby.

"The worldly man scorns aspiration as a fish scorns walking—and has no more idea of it.

"The less knowledge a man has, the less he desires knowledge; but the more money a man has, the more he desires money.

"Would you know what a man really is in his soul? Then ask him what he would most like to be. Will seven out of a million have any purer dream than worldly wealth or glory—at the expense of others?

"He who prefers his own welfare to the welfare of a nation has erred in putting on the human form; he belongs lower in the scale of being. Aye, there are beasts that walk upon two feet, and sit in the chairs of authority and honour."

Some men and women in the audience twisted in their seats as Jesse went on to point out specific instances of dishonour, hypocrisy and betrayal of public and private trust. He used no names, but the force of his thought was such that he could convey an idea of personality without giving a name. Sentence by sentence his arraignment bit into the consciousness of those who listened. He had

declared that he was sent to accuse the world; but there was no bitterness, no malice in his words. Calm and impartial as the god directing the combat on the pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, he stood there. The motives behind many acts of ostensible public charity were stripped of their veil of plausibility; the hidden purposes of leaders of political parties he revealed in all their immorality; the nakedness of the misuse of the powers of the public press for private ends, the corruptions of domestic life, the falsehoods promulgated in the name of education, the subservience of religion to money, the dark ways they often walk who accumulate vast fortunes—upon all these matters he let in the startling light of truth.

Those who had regarded him as a mere dreamer, with little or no knowledge of the world, were astonished by the breadth and accuracy of his information; for he quoted figures in support of many of his statements, and few men of the world could have shown a clearer knowledge of some of the most complicated questions of domestic and international politics. Several persons who had come to the Garden to hear an idealist spin webs of verbal moonbeams became invisible in the light of day, now knit their brows in troubled thought. Had the man himself a political purpose, some worldly ambition to serve? If so, he would prove really dangerous, they reasoned, not knowing how much more potent for revolution is an idea than an army. But his next words left them even more perplexed, for there is nothing so hard for the world to understand as a man who passionately proclaims the truth for its own sake and not for his.

"You are asking yourselves what political remedy I offer for these evils besetting the path of humanity. I offer no political remedy—*that is for you to find*. But I would direct mankind to another path, lying beyond all recorded human experience, a path which winds up-hill, among the mountains of the soul. By it shall man escape cruelty, deceit and hatred, and all the grosser forms of earthly suffering. Travelling on that path the poor shall find sufficiency of nourishment through faith, and the rich shall find that faith itself is the eternal sufficiency.

"And what is that path? It is the path of the love of

the Spirit, the Spirit that is God and is present in the souls of all mankind. It is not to be sought in any definite place, for it is everywhere; but the way to it is through the heart of man. They who travel on that path breathe the pure air of spiritual consciousness, which is the consciousness of the Spirit in themselves and in all others. And peace is there for all; because no man can struggle against or injure another when he is conscious that in both of them is the one Spirit, whose breath is love. And no man can tread that path alone; for feeling in his heart the oppressive fulness of spiritual love, he needs must pour it out upon others; and the more he gives to others of that love, the greater is the ecstasy of his own fulness. To such a man it matters little whether he has two coats or only one, so long as no one else is cold and shivering; to such a man the possession of two coats would give unhappiness, while there was any who had none. He who thinks that he has found the love of God—the Spirit, and does not feel his soul go out in love to every living thing, knows not the power of the great Name he takes upon his lips; he is like a man who should declare that he had found the ocean in a cistern which he kept covered and fastened with a lock. And as the water in a cistern becomes impure when it is long covered from the air, so does God-consciousness in the heart of man when covered and kept away from others.

“What has the world to offer,—the world whose folly and hypocrisy and moral ugliness I have pointed out to you.—what has the world to offer that a man should choose it in preference to this God-consciousness, the Spirit-consciousness which makes the soul so blessed that it cannot contain the fulness of its joy? The path of wordly ambition for self is through a miasmatic valley where every breath is full of fever; the flowers growing along that path are poisonous flowers, and deadly serpents writhe among the grasses.

“But the path of spiritual attainment, whereon a man forgets himself in love for God and all those other creatures who together are his larger self, leads upward where the air is pure, and sweet with the aroma of the love-breathing Spirit—the Pervader of the universe of souls.

"May you all walk that path with me and with another.

"For the present order of things shall pass away. There will not be left one stone upon another of all the structures of material power you are building for the aggrandizement of self. I am here to proclaim the revolution of the Spirit. It will come like a fiery whirlwind from the upper regions of God-consciousness, and will reduce to nothing your proudest monuments. This is a revolution that no power can stay; no alien laws can bar in its face the gates of the continent, and no earthly ruler can banish the Spirit from any human heart where it has once found welcome. Even persecution shall not prevail against it, for faith is stronger than persecution. The citadels of prejudice shall one by one give way before it, for the fire of love and faith will melt the hardest walls, reaching the hearts of those that would defend themselves against the irresistible onrush. Though you hide yourself in the caverns of the earth, the eye of faith shall find you; though you flee to the regions of polar ice, the fire of love shall melt you.

"You may slay the prophet of the Spirit, but you cannot slay the Spirit. The hour is come when it would manifest itself in the hearts of men, and no hand is strong enough to set back the clock. Its enemies shall fly before it as leaves before the hurricane, as dead leaves which return to dust. It is like a plant which scatters a million seeds upon the wind; though you mow down one field, another will spring up. It is like a trickling mountain stream which will soon become a mighty river, sweeping every thing before it in its onward rush to the ocean.

"The power of the Spirit is supreme, and the hour of the Spirit is at hand. May the Spirit awaken in your hearts to a consciousness of itself!"

He turned and left the platform, and the audience of thousands, astonished at his words, filed slowly out of the building in utter silence.

CHAPTER LXXIV

At eleven o'clock on Wednesday morning there was a council of prominent clergymen and their supporters in the study of the Reverend Doctor Claflin. These men had all been present at Jesse's meeting in Madison Square Garden the night before, and they had come together by appointment to consider how serious was the question of his influence with the people. Other prophets had arisen in other years who predicted the destruction of an order of society grown old in sin; but their power of person and of word had not been deemed sufficiently important to warrant anxiety on the part of those whose long verbal warfare with sin had given them a respectable and even distinguished monopoly of that business. In what was this man, Jesse Bethel, different from those who had come and gone before him? They could not say, but they realised that he was different. That point conceded by all at the outset of the conference, they were ready to proceed with the discussion of questions of expediency.

"I cannot say too emphatically," declared Doctor Claflin, "that I consider this man extremely dangerous."

"But he is so illogical!" cried one of the younger ministers. "Surely in our day the world will not be carried away by the glamour of a personality and by a few alluring promises of the millennium."

"You mistake the world," said a smiling, strong-faced member of the conference, who was not himself a wearer of the cloth but was a generous supporter of the church. "I had not gone far in the study of religious history before I discovered that no great religion has been founded upon logic; but that all of them, without exception, have been founded upon the glamour of a personality and a few alluring promises of a millennium."

"But," persisted the young man, "he talks of a spiritual revolution. Somebody—I forget who, or in what con-

nection—has declared that revolutions are not made with rose-water."

"Just so," assented the strong-faced layman; "revolutions are made with an *idea*, and this man has an idea. He evidently has no personal ambition, an unusual lack in one who seeks to lead a revolution. Whether it makes him stronger or weaker I cannot say, there being no dearth of precedents by which to judge him."

"He may have the ambition of martyrdom."

"If so, his power will prove irresistible."

Several of the counsellors moved restlessly in their seats. Had they acted wisely in asking this cold-brained, iron-grey man of money to take part in their deliberations? They glanced at Doctor Clafin, of whose church he was an influential member.

"I think," said Doctor Clafin, "that Mr. Needham's opinions may be of great help to us. We clergymen, who have given our lives upon the altar of our faith, may not be able to judge these matters so dispassionately as Mr. Needham can judge them."

"There is a rumour," said a suave minister who had never spoken heretofore—"there is a rumour that Mr. Needham's son is interested in this young carpenter-prophet."

The rich man smiled, and with a slight motion of his hand seemed to wave the matter aside as of no consequence. He said:

"My secretary showed me a newspaper containing a snap-shot photograph purporting to be of my son in conversation with this man at the foot of a flight of steps. As you may imagine, I and my family have been for so many years pursued by camera-fiends, that these attentions on the part of the press have lost the interest of novelty. My son, who is my partner, and will be my successor in the ownership of all the Needham interests, can be trusted to converse with a street preacher, if the fancy takes him, without being called to account by me."

"Undoubtedly, undoubtedly," replied the suave minister.

"I regret exceedingly," continued Doctor Clafin, "that it was a member of my own church who was instrumental in starting this excitement. I refer, of course, to Mr. Freeman."

"We can hardly blame her," smiled the youngest man present, who had not lost his sense of humour through the accumulation of learned letters after his name. "The temptation to walk without crutches must have been very great to Mrs. Freeman. And then, you forget that the agitation began with the cataleptic, or the dead man, whichever he was, on the other side of the river."

The man who had pronounced Jesse's teachings illogical now proved, logically, to the last speaker that the sleep of Lawrence Lane *must* have been of a cataleptic character. "To admit any other possibility," he declared, "is to undermine the very foundations of faith."

"Yet he says it was by faith he did it."

"My dear brethren," came in the persuading voice of the Reverend Doctor Claflin, "we have met together to consider questions of profound seriousness. Let us give a few moments to silent prayer."

And the clergymen all closed their eyes and prayed, silently and sincerely, that God would give them light; while, from his chair at one end of the long council table, John Needham watched them, his steel-blue eyes impenetrable as those of the Sphinx. When he saw by the fluttering eyelids of his nearest neighbour that the season of prayer was nearing its end, he closed his own eyes respectfully for a few moments. Did he also pray? He believed that he did. And being a man of indomitable will, whose imagination called railways, steamship lines, towns and cities into existence, even his prayers were not supplications but commands. He told the invisible Power to aid him in the matter in hand, as he would have told his attorney to prosecute a certain case against a rival railroad.

John Needham admired Jesse Bethel more than he had admired any man for years; but it was not in consonance with the famous "Needham interests" that any religious or social agitation should gain headway just at this time, when many important bills were pending in the state and national legislatures. He was himself one of the men whom Jesse had not named the night before, but whose picture he had sketched upon the minds of his listeners by a few telling strokes of verbal image-making. Yet the great financier bore no malice to the prophet. He was so

accustomed to falsetto imprecations and impotent attacks that he respected the man who pierced his armour with telling thrusts of irony. Here was an adversary worthy of his attention. But it was a matter requiring delicate manipulation, and the aid of men who felt the resentment and the prejudice which he himself had long left behind—somewhere along the iron road of political travel on.

"This man who calls himself the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit seemed to me last night to be attacking the clergy," Mr. Needham said. "Did you not so understand his words?"

"There was no other possible interpretation," answered Doctor Claffin. "And yesterday forenoon, when we questioned him about many things, he answered us in stories or parables, the evident intent of which was an attack upon the sincerity of our faith."

"Oh, I did not know about that!" Mr. Needham's eyes opened wider. "Where was this conversation?"

"In the very vestibule of my church. I heard that he was there, and went with several of my friends, fellow-clergymen and others, to question him."

"Can you recall these stories, or parables?"

"Not in so many words, perhaps; but the meaning of them was obvious: that we, in rejecting him, brought down upon ourselves the condemnation of the future. The man's self-confidence, to call it by the mildest term, is certainly colossal. And if we may believe the reports of the newspapers, some of the claims made for him by his followers who spoke in the streets outside the Garden last night were nothing less than sacrilegious."

"Unfortunately, in these days," said Mr. Needham, "we cannot legally punish a man for sacrilege."

"But a man may be punished for inciting disorderly demonstrations," came the sharp voice of another layman from the other end of the room.

The young man who had previously excused old Mr. Freeman for permitting the stranger to restore the use of her limbs, now spoke again:

"May this not be one of those cases in which, by attack

ing a movement too vigorously, you lend it additional force?"

"Are you in sympathy with this man?" asked Doctor Claflin, and there was a challenge in his voice.

"I agree with you that he is dangerous to the church," was the other's guarded reply.

The elder man breathed a sigh of relief. "I feared that you might have fallen under the spell of his personality," he said.

At that moment there was ushered into the room an old man of commanding presence, Doctor Henderson, the father-in-law of their host. In former years he had held the position in the church now occupied by Doctor Claflin; but though advancing years had caused him to lay down the active duties of his calling, he still retained high authority in all the councils of his denomination. The men assembled rose respectfully as he entered the study and took his place in the chair of honour reserved for him at one end of the long table. He had the white patriarchal beard of a high priest of the olden time, and for all his seventy-five years his glance was still piercing and his voice resonant.

"I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of this young agitator," he began; "but he seems to have formed a snow-ball which, if it goes on rolling about, may attain a considerable size. Now we, who bear on our shoulders the responsibility of the church and of society, must try to prevent the growth of the snow-ball."

"Have you any suggestion as to the method we should pursue?" The voice of Doctor Claflin was anxious and uncertain.

"I know but little regarding the man's character," the patriarch replied; "though I went to hear him speak last night, and it took two officers to make a way for me from my carriage door to the entrance of the building. What a mob it was!"

"But, withal, a very orderly mob," quietly observed the youngest of the counsellors.

"I paused a moment before going in," Doctor Henderson continued, "and I heard one of those outside speakers—evidently a Yankee farmer, judging from his accent—

declare that his Master, as he called him, was of divine origin. I shuddered at the blasphemy; but I see that one of the morning papers has recorded it in letters several inches high."

"It would seem," said Mr. Needham, "that the snowball has already attained a considerable size. You said just now, Doctor Henderson, that you knew little regarding the man's character. Shall I sketch it for you, in four words?"

"I shall be glad to have you do so, in as many words as you like."

"Only four are necessary: *The man is sincere.*"

"Is it possible? You do, indeed, surprise me, Mr. Needham, for I know how certain are your judgments as to the character and motives of men."

The shaggy white eyebrows of the old minister were drawn together in perplexity. How could a man who made such claims for himself be sincere? Doctor Henderson was of another and less tolerant generation than that of the present; he was born before the age of modern psychological analysis, born in a period when for the churchman humanity was divided into sheep and goats. For him, even the so-called higher criticism was little less than heresy, and a man who attacked the authority of organised religion was outside the pale of human sympathy. According to the reasoning of Doctor Henderson, such a man could not be sincere—unless, indeed, he were possessed by the devil. The doctor had not a very clear idea of the rationale of demoniacal possession; but he hated the devil with all the passion of those who fear hell-fire. There could be no two opinions as to *his* sincerity, whatever the younger clergy might whisper among themselves regarding his intolerance.

"You surprise me," he repeated, looking fixedly at Mr. Needham. "But if the man is sincere, as you believe, can he not be convinced of the error of his way?"

Over the controlled face of the rich man there flickered the very ghost of a smile. He said:

"I could more easily convince the owners of the Q. & L. of the error of their *rights* of way."

Now Doctor Henderson's modest savings were all in-

vested in the railways controlled by Mr. Needham, and he was superficially learned in the iniquities of the troublesome Q. & L. The comparison was therefore convincing, though not reassuring.

The counsellors reviewed the advent of Jesse Bethel in many lights and in many words. Mr. Needham was the only one who observed that the number of men around Doctor Claflin's study table was twelve, and he mentally compared their council to the deliberations of a jury. When, after two hours of talk, they had arrived at no conclusion as to ways and means of silencing the troublesome prophet of a spiritual era, he arose and buttoned his coat. The others looked at him, knowing from the expression of his face that he had something important to offer.

"I would suggest," he said, slowly, pausing every few words to give his simple proposition greater weight—"I would suggest that the further consideration of this matter be left in the hands of Doctor Claflin and myself. Is that the will of these gentlemen, and of Doctor Henderson?"

"An excellent suggestion," said the patriarch, who admired the practical methods of his son-in-law, without being able always to adjust them to the standards of his own less elastic conscience. And many other voices echoed, in accents of relief, "An excellent suggestion."

It was then agreed by this committee of two that they should meet together a little later in the day, after Mr. Needham had taken counsel from his attorney.

"Oh, you cannot invoke the law against him!" exclaimed the most sympathetic of the younger men. "He is a peaceable and law-abiding person."

Mr. Needham waved his hand, in the conciliatory, casual way with which they were all familiar.

"There will probably be no occasion for strenuous methods," he said; "but it is well for us to know exactly what we may and may not do—in case the matter should become more pressing. It is extremely undesirable, in these unsettled and even dangerous times, to have an agitator stirring up the emotions of the masses, who mean well enough, in their way, but who, by reason of the narrowness of their outlook, cannot take the large view of public questions which we take. I think, gentlemen, that we

can persuade this evidently well-meaning idealist that quiet and remote regions, where he has hitherto pursued the will-o'-the-wisp of a regenerated world, are better suited to his mission than the more complex civilisation of a metropolis. I think so, gentlemen, I think so."

The meeting then dissolved. But more than one of the counsellors went away with troubled thoughts, vaguely unsatisfied with the outcome of the morning's deliberation. Though they felt that the purposes of this new prophet were not in consonance with their own interests, yet there was something about him which stirred their imagination and attracted them against their will. Could it be that the world was really on the eve of a great spiritual awakening? They were themselves weary with long years of battling upon the doors of religious indifference and materialism; though they were obliged to use the weapons of materialism—or so they had supposed. Was it possible that one who fought the great fight differently, who used only the weapons of the Spirit in the Spirit's cause, should succeed where they had failed? For many of them secretly acknowledged that they had failed. Though their churches grew richer, they were not growing in spiritual grace. These men would have been more than human had they not felt troubled when contrasting the uncountable thousands who flocked to hear this stranger with the small gatherings in their own magnificent churches; but they told themselves that they did not wish any harm to come to him. They recalled with some uneasiness the final words of John Needham. It was evidently his purpose that the agitation of the new prophet, as he was called, should not make further progress; but what was the motive behind the purpose? Was it loyalty to the church? They could not think so, though he gave more liberally to churches than did any other man. These ministers called themselves men of God; but they were men of the world in the sense of knowing the world and the world's ways. Many of them were idealists at heart, and honestly believed that they had given their lives to the service of the ideal. He that is without worldly ambition among you, let him first cast a stone at them.

CHAPTER LXXV

LEANING meditatively over the railing above a little stream in a secluded part of Central Park stood Judson Carey, about one o'clock on Wednesday afternoon. He was dressed in new, dark clothing of good material, purchased that morning from the funds of the communal treasury which he carried. The imposing of this trust upon Judson had been Jesse's way of securing for him the confidence of the others. Several of the men carried money of their own; but the common fund for travelling expenses, to which all contributed according to their means, was in the hands of the least popular of their number.

He had made an excuse that morning for absenting himself a few hours from the company of his associates, because he wanted to be alone to think. Walking along the street, he had seen the attractive window of a clothier's and had entered the shop. Surely he owed it to himself and to the Master to make a respectable appearance here in the city where they were attracting so much attention, and his old clothes were shabby. Surely, again, if what belonged to one belonged to all, then a part of what belonged to all might be used by one, if his need were great. And Judson felt that his need was great. Perhaps, he told himself, if he had been dressed as well as the four favourites, he might have been one of those to whom the honour had fallen of addressing the crowds outside the Garden the evening before. He thought himself a much better speaker than Andrew. When the two had been travelling together the preceding summer, the shy young man had always told him so.

Leaning over the railing above the little stream in Central Park, he gave himself up to unhappy thoughts. It seemed that he was not appreciated by the members of their band, for whom, as he told himself, he had made so many sacrifices. His memory went back to many incidents in which he had been made to feel his position as a formerly discharged employee of Peter's. At intervals dur-

ing the winter, when the men were in Capronville, he had worked in the mill for the Bond brothers; and he had been as rigidly held to the time-schedule as any stranger—*he, a fellow disciple with his employers!* Then, again, the Master himself had never given him the confidence which he gave the four men who each owned an interest in the lumber-mills at Capronville; for the father of James and John Dana was even more prosperous than Peter. It was true that Judson had been given the purse to carry when they were travelling; but he was always being asked by somebody how much he had spent for this and that—as if they were afraid of being cheated. He was tired of it. When they came to New York, he had felt that the fact of his having been in the city several times before would give him a certain superiority over men who had never been outside their native State; but no one seemed to consider it. No one seemed to consider him. He was not over-fond of sleeping out of doors so early in the spring as they had done for the last two nights. Though he had roughed it more or less in years gone by, he was the only one among the Twelve who had caught cold during the long nights on the Palisades. And John had bantered him about it, as if there was something disloyal to the Master in catching cold.

Perhaps, after all, it was just as well that he was not one of those who had been chosen to speak to the crowds outside the Garden the night before. Some of the papers that morning had severely censured—even cast ridicule upon the speakers. And, judging by all the Master said about the future, the censure and the ridicule were only just beginning; there was much worse to come. It was all very well so long as Jesse was there, to stand with his charming personality and beautiful words between them and the world; but how about the time when he would not be there—if the prediction of his death should be fulfilled? His death! Why should Jesse think that he was going to die? What malice of Fate could *let* him die, leaving the least fortunate of his followers to battle alone with the prejudice of the others? But, if it was really true that the end of their association was at hand, why should not he himself take some thought of his own future? He

was glad that he had bought the new clothes in which he stood, and certain other little things from time to time for which no one was the wiser.

If the Master should die (he still laid stress upon the if, for he did not fully believe it), would he go on working and preaching with the others? Somehow, he did not see himself in imagination accepting the leadership of Peter Bond. Jesse had always stood between him and the ill-concealed dislike of nearly all the others. Suppose he were to separate from them and start a movement of his own? The idea of future persecution for the followers of Jesse did not appeal to him. Surely the teachings of the Master could be presented in such a way as to win praise and popularity, not persecution. What need was there for flying in the face of the world's prejudice? A little tact, a little flattery, a little modification here and there of the austere ideal of the Master, to suit the time and the people,—what else was necessary? Why should he not use the already perfected machinery of the churches to carry on the work? Let the others rave to the rabble in the streets, if they preferred to do so. He would seek out the cultured and refined, and make himself a power among them. He had written down many of the sayings of Jesse; he had caught the style, and could make other sayings of his own. Perhaps he would himself have disciples—not country people merely, but all sorts of people, including the elegant and the rich. It was true, he was not beautiful like Jesse; but he told himself that he knew more of the world—more of the mean and sordid souls of which the world was made. He would play upon that meanness and that sordidness, would use them for his own ends, all the time worshipping in secret the real Master, whom he felt that he alone knew.

What was the feeling of the prominent clergymen regarding Jesse? he wondered. Suppose he were to find out for himself? Suppose he were to go now, well-dressed and with freshly-trimmed hair and beard, to the house of the Reverend Doctor Claffin? He knew the house. It was not far from the church where the Master had healed the lame woman. Judson had no cards; but he would send in his name by the servant, with the message, "On important business in connection with the Master, Jesse Bethel." Or

perhaps it would be better not to word the message exactly in that way. "On important business in connection with Jesse Bethel"—that would be more politic. Probably the Reverend Doctor Clafin would not think that Jesse should be called Master. It *was* claiming a good deal, from the standpoint of the world, now Judson came to consider it. Indeed, he hardly knew just when they had begun to call Jesse the Master. He thought it had been started by John, when they joined Jesse in Burlington after his sojourn on the mountain.

He turned away from the railing above the little stream whose waters he had been watching with unseeing eyes and walked rapidly southward through the Park.

CHAPTER LXXVI

THE Reverend Doctor Clafin and John Needham were sitting alone together in the clergyman's study, two hours after the other counsellors of the morning had been courteously dismissed. The committee of two was deliberating in secret the problem of Jesse Bethel.

"I have consulted with my attorney," Mr. Needham said, "and he tells me that the simplest way is to have him arrested for disorderly conduct, then re-arrested for inciting to riot."

"But," answered Doctor Clafin, in perplexity, "the man is too peaceable to be disorderly; he will never incite a riot."

Mr. Needham smiled his peculiar, indulgent smile.

"Oh! that can easily be arranged. Leave the matter to me."

"You mean——"

"I mean that the man can be held responsible for any disorder taking place at a street meeting where he is preaching, provided it shall seem to be instigated by his prophecies of revolution."

"But do you know where he intends to speak during the next few days?"

"Not at this moment. But in order to hold a street meeting, he will have to notify the police in advance; that is the law."

"Can the police not forbid him to speak at a certain place, and then arrest him if he speaks?"

"Not legally, unless there is obstruction of traffic; though it is sometimes done in the case of political agitators."

Doctor Clafin rubbed his plump, clean-shaven chin, and there was a line of trouble between his brows.

"I do not think," he said, "that you can get rid of this man merely by arresting him. Can you count on the magistrates?"

"No. But I again say, leave that to me."

"I am exceedingly grateful to you, Mr. Needham, taking so much interest in this matter, for wasting your valuable time——"

"Oh, I never waste my valuable time! I also have interests at stake."

"Will you think me inquisitive if I ask you what interests you have at stake which can be injured by a religious agitator?"

"Why, I have several little bills before the legislature just now, and all this talk about revolutions, spiritual material, is untimely—for my interests. Don't you understand that this man is a *power*? He has a tremendous personality, a tremendous will. His gentleness only makes him the stronger."

"And your purpose is?"

"My purpose is to make public speaking so unpleasant for him that he will abandon it—if I can."

"You are a very great man, Mr. Needham."

"I usually effect my purposes, if that is to be great."

"Sometimes I think there is no other greatness," observed the shepherd of men's souls.

"There I do not agree with you," replied the shepherd of men's wealth. "But I know my own calling, and do not strive for the laurel-wreath which I could never win."

Mr. Needham had recently purchased a world-famous diamond tiara to adorn the empty head of his elderly wife, and the thought of this gewgaw, in comparison with the simple laurel which was beyond his means, brought a smile to his face. He was not without a sense of humour. But, on the whole, he was well pleased with the tiara; for was it not a symbol of the sort of power which was within his means?

Their deliberations were interrupted by the velvet knock of the butler on the panel of the door. He brought the name and message of Judson Carey, "On business of importance in connection with Jesse Bethel."

"Judson Carey," repeated Doctor Claffin. Then, to his guest he said, "I do not know the man."

"He is one of the followers of the young prophet," answered John Needham, who always knew everything which it was his interest to know. "I have here a list

of their names," and he drew from his pocket a slip of paper. "There is no source of private information so important as the mouths of indiscreet enthusiasts. I consider the man's visit as a good omen. You know that even Alexander was a strong believer in omens." And Mr. Needham smiled again his slow, peculiar smile.

"Show the man in," said Doctor Claflin to the butler.

Judson entered the study. His heart was beating faster than usual, but his naturally quiet manner made him appear better bred than he really was. Doctor Claflin did not offer to shake hands with his visitor, but met him with an air half-way between cordiality and reserve, an air which was sympathetic enough to invite revelations but not warm enough to be self-committal. Then he briefly introduced him to Mr. Needham, who did offer to shake hands. It was a simple action, this offer of his hand by the railwaying to the obscure disciple of a rural prophet; but, like all the actions of John Needham, whether simple or complex, it had an underlying purpose. Had Judson Carey sought him in his own office, he probably would not have held out his hand; but in the clergyman's study he was on neutral ground, and he calculated the exact effect which his cordiality would produce. From that moment the soul of the disciple was wax in his skilled hand.

"I met your son the other evening, Mr. Needham," Judson said, glowing all over with pleasure and pride.

It was not the most fortunate remark he could have made; but across the mind of the observing Doctor Claflin there flashed a revealing light. So it was true then, as had been rumoured, that the millionaire's son had sought out Jesse Bethel? Here was a personal motive for Mr. Needham's activity in the matter, a motive more convincing than the one he himself had given—of pending legislative bills which might be affected by revolutionary agitation. On that Sunday morning when Doctor Claflin and the young millionaire had both been listeners to Jesse's first public talk in the city, the clergyman had been so afraid of being seen himself that he had seen no one else.

"I believe my son did mention something of the sort," was the untruthful answer of the imperturbable one.

Then ensued a brief and awkward silence, each man

waiting for one of the others to attack the question before them.

"Were you sent by your teacher?" began Doctor Claflin.

"No," answered Judson quickly, "he is not aware of my visit. I came on my own responsibility—solely on my own responsibility."

"Yes?"

There was another silence, briefer than the first and less embarrassing; then Judson said, hesitatingly:

"I thought . . . It has seemed to me . . . Well, to put it briefly, though evidently such an idea had not occurred to my teacher, it seems to me that we might work in harmony instead of in opposition."

"Is there, then, opposition?" guardedly replied the clergyman. "Naturally we have not looked at the matter in so serious a light as you have. The church has been here a long time, and your teacher has been here but a short time."

The manner of Doctor Claflin carried more meaning to Judson than did his words. It was plain to him that the clergyman wished to put him at a disadvantage, to suggest that the followers of the new religion were not of sufficient importance to be seriously opposed by the church. But, though the colour deepened in his bronzed face, he held his temper well in hand. If he had known what he really wanted to do, really known why he was there in that luxuriously furnished study, talking with this dignitary of the church and his wealthy supporter, he might have had more self-assurance; but his motives were so obscure that they were still hidden even from himself.

"That was a very large meeting we had last night," he said. "Were you there, Doctor Claflin?"

"Why, yes, I was passing the Garden, and went in for a little while."

"Fully a thousand people met the Master at the ferry-house this morning," Judson went on, "and as many as could get near him asked to have their names enrolled as members of our body."

"Is it possible?" asked the clergyman. "Your teacher, then, is founding a new church?"

"He will be obliged to found one; the people will force him to do so. Why, I have never seen such enthusiasm, such adoration!"

The large, smooth-shaven countenance of Doctor Claflin was overcast by a cloud of anxiety. John Needham watched the two men with the same look of intentness with which he sometimes watched the stock-ticker in his private office, when no one but his clerk was watching him.

"There is only one thing that troubles me," the disciple continued, looking from the minister to the millionaire, and back again—"only one thing that troubles me. . . . It is confidential, of course, what I am going to say?"

"Certainly, certainly." Doctor Claflin had forgotten for the moment the distance he had before sought to keep between himself and his strange visitor. "You may speak quite freely."

"Well, it is simply this: The Master has an idea, a fixed belief—almost a superstitious belief—that he is going to die."

Doctor Claflin leaped to his feet and walked to the window, turning his back toward the two men. He felt that the sudden joy which thrilled him must be reflected in his face, and he did not wish for a moment to meet the eyes of even his coadjutor. He would not have admitted to himself an hour before that the thought of death for any of those beings whom he was wont to call the children of God could have filled his heart with such unholy exultation. When he could control his face, he turned from the window and went back to his visitors; but he did not trust himself to speak immediately. The deep and steady voice of Mr. Needham was saying:

"Your teacher is generally very sure in his intuitions, is he not?"

"I may say that every prophecy which he has made in the past has been literally fulfilled. But this new idea regarding his own death . . . Why, it has made me consider."

"Go on."

"Well, it has made me consider the future—my own future, and that of the Master's work."

"I see, I see," said Mr. Needham; but he did not tell

them what he saw. Then suddenly his manner changed. He arose, and after a slight inclination of the head and a meaningful glance at Doctor Clafin, he turned again to the disciple:

"Can you meet us here to-morrow, at this hour? I think it will be to your interest, as well as ours, for us to work in harmony."

"I will be here," was Judson Carey's answer.

The clergyman followed his distinguished visitor to the door, and in order to get rid of the less distinguished visitor he also held out his hand to him. Then, as soon as he was alone, he rang for a servant and ordered a pot of strong tea, to steady his shaken nerves.

CHAPTER LXXVII

JESSE had spoken to thousands that day at the noon-hour in Madison Square, and wherever he went during the afternoon he was followed by tireless crowds. He healed many who were sick, and gave courage and hope to many who were despairing. But already his friends were beginning to be troubled regarding the multitudes that pressed upon him; for they gave him no rest, they blocked the streets, and more than once during the afternoon the police had been obliged to scatter them. When, late in the day, Jesse entered the subway on his homeward journey to Fort Lee, Peter and Andrew were obliged to station themselves at the entrance and to beg the people to leave their Master in peace until the morrow, promising that he would return to the city in the morning.

When he was walking up Broadway in the afternoon an officer had approached him, and, pointing to the hundreds of men and women in his wake, had declared that street parades were not allowed without prior notification to the police. Jesse's answer was never forgotten by the officer, who puzzled over it the remainder of his life:

"Then I notify you now, as a representative of the police, that men will follow me in multitudes for many thousand years."

His person had become so well-known, and the curiosity regarding him was so intense, that he could find no quiet anywhere save at the house of the Lanes on the other side of the river; and even there a guard of his friends remained at the gate until a late hour.

Going across the ferry that night, the boat had a decided list to starboard, by the weight of the people who crowded into the cabin on the side where Jesse was seated.

When they were approaching the other shore, Peter said: "Master, where is Judson? We have not seen him since the forenoon."

"He will follow us—in his own time and in his own way," was Jesse's answer.

"The Master is tired to-night," whispered John Nathan Evans. "I have never seen him look so sad. My strength must have gone out of him through healing and comforting so many."

John felt a hand laid on his arm, and turning he saw the troubled face of Marty White.

"I am anxious about him," the faithful fellow sighed. "He looks as if he had some awful grief that we don't know about."

The eyes of Mary Lane were fixed on Jesse's face. Susan and Martha had followed him about all day, as had also his mother and Mary Magnus, until the weariness of the older woman had become so apparent that Mary had persuaded her to return to their lodgings leaning on her arm. Rose Thomas and the other women had also turned back at the entrance to the subway.

"Why do you look at the Master like that?" Martha whispered to her sister. "The day has been one long triumph for him, and you look as if he had met with grief."

"Maybe he has," the girl replied, in a strange, awestruck voice.

"Why, what do you mean, Mary?"

"I don't know, sister."

Not until after supper that night did Judson reappear, saying that he had eaten his evening meal in the city. Though no one asked him what he had been doing all the day, he explained his absence by a rush of excuses: he had been looking for an old friend whom he wished to bring to the Master; he had been delayed by taking a wrong path in Central Park; he had been making inquiries about public halls for their future meetings, halls which could be rented at a less extravagant expense than Madison Square Garden.

"And where did you get your new clothes?" asked Peter.

Judson flushed, and named the place where he had bought them; but the name made no picture in the minds of his listeners.

"It's a very good shop," he added, glibly; "I'll point it out to you the next time we're walking up Broadway."

"There's no use in doing that," Peter answered; "I can't afford any new clothes this year." As he said this, he watched the face of Judson.

"Where did you get the money for new clothes?" Andrew inquired. "You told me only the other day that you had no money of your own."

"I think," Judson flashed back, defiantly, "I think I have made sacrifices enough to entitle me to be dressed decently—as well as the rest of you."

"And you bought clothes for yourself out of the common fund?" demanded Peter. "What right have you to spend our money in that way?"

"I have a right. It's mine as much as yours."

"I say it isn't! You've acted like a thief!" Peter's voice was loud and harsh. These simple men had not been trained in the courteous control of their feelings.

At that moment Jesse entered the room.

"Are these my disciples?" he asked, gently. "Are these the followers of the Spirit, quarrelling among themselves?"

Peter stated the facts of the case in a dozen quick words, adding, "And I say that he has acted like a thief."

"He who accuses his fellow disciple of theft has himself stolen much from the honour and glory of discipleship," was Jesse's grave reproof.

"But, Master!" Peter's face was long with grief. "Do you approve of his spending our money on himself?"

"The children of the Spirit are one with the Spirit and with each other. To him whose heart is the dwelling-place of Love, there is no mine and thine."

Had this occurred the day before, Judson would have rushed to Jesse's side and pressed his hand; but now he only gazed his thanks and exulted in his triumph.

About eight o'clock in the evening the household was surprised by the appearance of Mary Bethel and Mary Magnus. The face of Jesse's mother was drawn and white.

"My son," she said, going to him and laying her worn hands pathetically upon his heart, "I *could* not remain away from you this night! An irresistible impulse drew me to come and touch your breast, your hands, your face. You will not send me away."

"I will not send you away, little Mother. I also that we were to see each other this night."

He led her to his own room, where they might talk freely than in the company of the others. Mary May whose eyes were burning with unutterable pain, who have remained behind; but Jesse called her.

"You, who are the never-tiring comforter of my mother in her hours of separation from me, may not be shut when she is with me," he said, laying his hand tenderly upon her bowed head, as if she had been a child.

It was the only caress he had ever offered her, save one she had shared with Anna Martin on the night of the making of their first song, and she treasured the memory of it always.

They sat down together on a sofa in the dimly-lighted room, the mother on one side of Jesse and Mary on the other. For a few moments there was no word spoken, Mary Bethel gazing up into her son's face with eyes of appealing love and sorrow, and the younger woman looking across at her with pitying tenderness. Then Jesse said:

"The most devoted soul that has not been extinguished is the flame of a candle shaken in the wind."

"Do you speak to me impersonally, my son, in order that I may be brave? Fear not—I shall not waver."

"He who fears pain will never know the ultimate comfort for the price of it is pain."

"Jesse, I feel that you, too, are suffering to-night. It was that thought which called me to you. When you were a child you used to bring all your little troubles and sorrows to me on your mother's heart. Can she not help you now to bear this greater trouble, whatever it is?"

"He who leans much upon anything," he answered, "even the heart of love, has not attained mastership. Eternity in your presence is sweetly comforting to me."

It was the assurance she craved, and her eyes filled with happy tears. He was still her baby, her little one, though thousands looked up to him as to a strong tower, built to endure the earthquake and the tempest. Her apprehensions for the coming days were vague, and now that she felt the comfort of his living presence she caught at the flying skirts of Hope.

"When we are back again together in quiet Myra, Jesse"

these days of stress and turmoil will seem like a dream that is past, will they not, dear?"

He pressed her hand, but made no answer. At that moment he had not the courage to remind her of their talk in Capronville, when she had accepted as inevitable the tragedy which he foresaw. Let her enjoy her little hour of quiet happiness with him.

"Mother, do you remember how twenty years ago, about this time in the spring, we went to Nash's hill to gather the trailing arbutus—you and I?"

"How well I do remember, Jesse! I can close my eyes and see you, just as you looked that afternoon, in the blue blouse trimmed with braid which I had made for you from the skirt of my poplin dress, turned wrong-side out. How pleased you were with it!"

"You were always a wonder with your needle, Mother. That blouse was very pretty, and all the dearer to me for my having seen you wear the dress so many times. Do you remember, also, how we sat together on the ground under the maple-tree and made a big bouquet of arbutus for old Mrs. Brown, who was sick?"

"Was it a maple-tree we sat under?"

"Yes, for I remember the colour of the buds. We sat facing the west, and there was a large white cloud in the sky, just above the setting sun,—a cone-shaped cloud, with a curl of vapour like rising smoke above it, and under it a redness as of fire. And I told you it was a new volcano which had been thrown up beyond the Adirondacks. In fancy, we planned a pilgrimage that we would make to this mountain of flame—then the cloud changed its shape, the fire beneath it faded into grey ashes, the air grew chilly, and we went home."

"Why . . . I believe . . . Jesse, I *do* remember that cloud!" And she laughed joyously, for the first time in many weeks.

Mary Magnus listened to this talk between the mother and son, looking from one to the other through a mist of unshed tears. Intuitively she knew why Jesse's mind went back this night to the scenes of his happy childhood. She knew, too, why he led his mother's thoughts away from the uncertain present to wander in the byways of the past.

"And you, my sister," he said, turning to her with a

soft and melancholy smile, "you, too, remember childhood days in old Nashburgh . . . the rocky pasture north of the schoolhouse where we played with the other children . . . the rainy noon-hour when I told you favorite stories."

"I remember every hour I spent in Nashburgh, Jesse."

"I wish my brothers were here with us to-night. Would you make me happy to see Fred and Henry again?"

"Shall I not write them to come down?" asked Mary Bethel, quickly. "I'm sure they would be glad to come."

"No, Mother . . . not yet."

"Next week, maybe?" Her mouth was tremulous with love and hope.

"Next week! . . . Yes, dear, you may write to the boys . . . next week."

"Why has your face grown suddenly so white, Jesse?"

"I am a little tired to-night; you know I have been preaching and walking about all day. . . . But let me forget my weariness in thinking of the happy, far-away days in the old home."

He reminded her of a score of things she had half-forgotten, drawing her mind with him back into the past and holding it there, lest any troubling thought of the future should break in upon their idyl. For more than an hour they sat talking together in the little room; then he reminded her that she had need of rest, that she might be fresh and strong to join him on the morrow.

During all this time the younger woman had hardly spoken. She accepted the privilege of being there as a gift from Jesse's heart. To sit beside him, and to listen to his tender discourse with the mother she had grown to love, were enough of happiness for Mary now. But when the moment came for parting, she trembled so that she was obliged to lean against the wall. Even the relief of tears was denied to her overwrought feelings, for tears would have saddened the mother whom her chosen task was to comfort and sustain.

Far into the night she knelt beside her window, gazing into the eyes of the indifferent stars.

CHAPTER LXXVII

THE weather continued warm, and still Jesse and the men who followed him went out each night to sleep under the open sky, with the ever-softening turf for a couch. The moon was young and fragile, and bade them an early good-night.

Thursday morning the sun arose again in a cloudless sky. When the men awoke and turned to look for their Master, they saw him sitting quietly upon a rock, his chin in his hand, gazing eastward toward the city. John came and stood beside him; but so concentrated was the Master's thought that for a time he did not perceive the presence of the other. Then he turned his head, and motioned John to sit down with him on the rock.

"Have you been here long, Master?"

"Half an hour, maybe; but in that time I have drawn away another veil from the face of the great mystery of life. If I could only make you realise what may be accomplished in one half-hour of meditation! The protracted sojourn in the wilderness is not necessary for every disciple; each day you may ascend for a time the solitary mountain of thought. From this time forth, do that. For half an hour each day, retire to some place of seclusion and meditate upon your unity with me, with the Spirit, with all that is. Try to realise that you are the calm, imperishable One, and not this body of warring sensations or this mind of broken reflections. Of all the teachings I have ever given you, this is the most important."

"And I will follow it, Master, from this time forth, every day. But I have already gone far toward conquering the warring sensations of the body; I am far beyond those who live only in their senses."

Jesse turned and looked at him.

"That is well, John, so far as it goes. But do not exalt yourself because you have conquered one, or even all, of your five senses. Go further: conquer the sense of personal exaltation on account of purity."

At that moment they were joined by the others, who always looked with jealous eyes upon John's many sermons and councils with the Master. Then they all went to the house to bathe and breakfast.

Judson was, as usual, the first to ask for the newspaper to him the utterances of the press regarding the Master and his followers were of ever-increasing fascination. That morning he turned from printed sheet to printed sheet with a clouded brow and eyes of trouble. When Martha came to the sitting-room to tell them that breakfast was ready, she carried the papers with him to the table. He was never a hearty eater, but now he scarcely touched his food, passing from one journal to another in quest of crumbs of comfort for his wounded pride.

"What do they say about us this morning?" Andrew asked.

Judson pushed the papers toward him, saying, "Read for yourself."

"Andrew may read for all of us," Jesse said; "but do not allow your souls to be deafened by the buzzing of all these mosquitoes from the stagnant marshes of materialism. . . . Read the one you have in your hand, Andrew."

It was an editorial from a paper in which John Needham owned a controlling interest, though this fact was unknown to Jesse and his friends. This is what Andrew read:

"A DANGEROUS FANATIC

"This journal is not given to prophecy; but we wish to record our belief that the spectacular agitation of the long-haired prophet who blasphemously calls himself 'the mouthpiece of the Spirit' will end in some deplorable scene of lawlessness and disorder.

"We are glad to learn that the Park Commissioner has refused to permit his much-advertised meeting in Union Square at three o'clock this afternoon, and that the police have orders to prevent his speaking there, should he attempt to disobey the law by going against the decision of those in authority. The outcome remains to be seen.

"The following which this mouther of meaningless paradoxes has gained with a certain class of the population of our city is an illuminating commentary on the gullibility of humankind. In any age, a man who claims to raise the dead, to make the lame walk

and the crooked to stand upright, can find plenty of sensation-loving ignoramuses to swallow greedily his assertions that man needs nothing for his health beyond a belief that he is healthy, and that the moon is made of green cheese. Though the educated and progressive portion of humanity has long ago outgrown the geocentric system of astronomy and the belief in the potency of love-philtres, yet survivors from the dark ages still practise their hocus-pocus, and the traffic in charms and talismans continues to be profitable.

"If a bold twentieth century journal may presume to offer instruction to an exalted being who modestly (and we hope blushingly) accepts from his hypnotised followers the modern equivalent of divine honours, who sends his henchmen to the newspapers to whisper confidentially that their master is God himself, we would remind Jesse Bethel that while the iridescent soap-bubble of his divinity may float harmlessly above the meadows of his native valley, in the crowded ways of the mammon-loving metropolis it may blow violently against some towering obstruction, and be shattered.

"We are told that, before he discovered that he was an Avatar, he worked successfully at the honest trade of carpentry. Therefore, we have no doubt that, if his anarchistic principles would permit him to join a trade-union, he could find lucrative employment, should he insist on remaining with us. On the whole, a clear-headed workman is far safer on the scaffolding of a house than in the vanguard of a revolution—spiritual or political."

Andrew laid down the paper. His face was white, and his eyes were full of angry tears.

"How dare they!" he cried.

"I do not understand why," said John, "if they are against the meeting in Union Square this afternoon, they call attention to it by an editorial!"

Jesse's eyes were sad, but his lips smiled as he answered:

"The ways of the wolf are not always understood by the sheep. Our adversaries are even more desirous than we are that the meeting should take place."

"But will it?" Peter's face was lined with care.

"When the clock comes round to three, that square will be packed with people."

"And shall you be there, Master?"

"I have said that I would be there."

"Oh, Jesse, do not try to speak!" cried Marty White, and James Dana echoed him.

"I shall in no way disobey the law, as interpreted those who enforce it," was Jesse's quiet answer.

"But why go there at all?" demanded another of men, from the far end of the table, one who was usually silent but none the less devoted.

"I go because that square is one of the stations on journey to . . ." He left the sentence unfinished.

"It is a hard way which we have chosen to walk," said Judson; then he shut his lips together.

Jesse looked at him gravely, until the man dropped eyes. He said:

"Never complain of the roughness of the road, save the one of whom you would ask a ride."

Judson turned and went out to the kitchen, making excuse to refill the empty water-pitcher. Could Jesse know of his interview with John Needham? Impossible! Yet one week ago he would have stoutly proclaimed that Jesse could read the thoughts of others. After filling the pitcher at the faucet, he let the cold, refreshing water flow over his hands; it seemed to restore his equilibrium. When he returned to the dining-room he was again able to look Jesse in the face, as he refilled his glass.

"May all the cups you give me to drink, Judson, be pure and health-giving as this one."

Then the inherent coarseness of the man came out. "Do you think I am going to poison you?" he asked.

Jesse made no answer, and Judson turned and walked away to the sitting-room, his face dark with anger. A few minutes later, when they started for the city, he went along with them as if nothing had happened; but the contending powers of light and darkness made twilight in his soul.

As Jesse passed through the crowd outside the ferry house on the New York side of the river, he was approached by a messenger-boy who handed him a letter. Raising his eyes at that moment, he met the eyes of John Needham's son; the young man was seated in his motor car, and though he did not alight nor approach Jesse, he bared his head respectfully. In another moment the car moved on and Jesse broke the seal of the letter and read:

"My honoured Master:

"Though I am unworthy to be called your disciple, still must I address you as Master, for that you are to me.

"This letter is to warn you. It has come to my knowledge—it matters not how—that there is a powerful conspiracy to end your preaching in New York city. I beg of you, do not attempt to speak in Union Square this afternoon—unless you are physically stronger than a squadron of police. If you disobey the pre-emptory—and, as I believe, illegal—orders of those in authority, I fear that your very life will be in danger. I, and I only among your friends, know the *power* of those who are determined to crush you. They are many times stronger than I.

"It grieves me to grieve you; but there is one among your intimate disciples who is already disloyal, and will be tempted to still greater disloyalty.

"Will you not let me save you? The captain of my yacht, which is lying at the foot of West ——— Street, has orders to take you, with *eleven* of your friends, anywhere you may wish to go, at any hour, day or night, during the next few days. If you remain in the city, I am powerless. The lion is mightier than his whelp, and the jackals have given the signal.

"Yours in faith and devotion,

D. N."

Jesse twisted the letter between his fingers, and asking a match from Peter, burned it then and there; though the writer had delicately refrained from requesting its destruction. His eyes filled with tears of human longing as he thought of the yacht anchored off the neighbouring dock, thought of the fresh sea-breezes, of the boundless peace between the ocean and the sky, and, more than all, of the love which prompted the princely offer. But security and peace were not the prizes he had come into the world to win.

He passed the forenoon quietly in Central Park. His mother and the other women had joined him at the ferry, as usual; and again, as usual, many children gathered around him as he sat on a bench beneath a spreading tree. He did not preach this morning; but those who came to ask him questions were not sent away unanswered, nor did he refuse any who begged his healing touch. When noon-time came, they ate their luncheon from the baskets provided by the faithful Martha; and a little later, as Jesse glanced around the circle of his friends, he saw that one of them was missing. Judson had stolen away to keep his appointment with John Needham and the Reverend Doctor Claffin.

It was a strange hour which those three men spent to-

gether. The power of darkness in the soul of the wavering disciple had gained ascendancy over the power of light. The inevitable tempter that comes to all came now to him in an alluring form, assailing the citadel of his character at the point where it was weakest. Why should he not seize power and gold, the tempter whispered, making clear to him that the being of light who had been his master was already doomed. From the ruins of the falling temple should he not gather a few stones—enough to build a dwelling for himself? The devil pays his servants well, and the labour he assigns them is never beyond their strength. And the devil always offers a generous retainer, a reminder that the fees in full are well worth working to acquire.

When Judson left the presence of his new associates, having chosen to array himself in the most expensive garments, he would not have been obliged to appropriate the wardrobe withal from the humble treasury he carried in trust, as on the previous day.

Left alone together, John Needham and Doctor Claflin looked into each other's eyes and smiled. Then the clergyman shook his head in doubt.

"Do you not realise, Mr. Needham, that the nightly camping-place of this man is across the river in the State of New Jersey; that our police have no jurisdiction there?"

Again came the little wave of the hand with which the acquaintances of the multimillionaire were so familiar.

"Do not trouble yourself about that," he said. "This fascinating prophet of ours is doubtless better versed in the laws of paradox than in the laws of States. There will be no resistance."

"But why do you not seize him on the spot this afternoon?"

"And precipitate a *real* riot? No, no, my friend. I am a man of peace." And the steely eyes twinkled under their overhanging brows.

Doctor Claflin walked up and down the study floor. Then he stood still, his hands in his pockets.

"Fancy that man—Judson Carey—going calmly and smilingly over to eat dinner with his friends this evening! I would have spared him that, had I been you."

"But it pleases my sense of humour, Doctor. Did you

ever watch a cat at its merry play with a mouse? This mouse of ours will not escape my long, sharp, golden claws. Then, too, I want to make sure of the actual whereabouts of the more important prey. The man will not return to me until his tired associates are settled for the night." John Needham chuckled. "Now this little game is better sport than my famous acquisition of the Croly Railroad.

"But come," he added, "we will now go down to my friend's office, in a tall building overlooking Union Square, and watch the next move in the proceedings."

"If you'll excuse me, I'll stay where I am," declared the clergyman, whose eyes were clouded with anxiety. "You can telephone me."

"As you like," replied the financier.

Then he shook hands with his colleague, and hurried out to his motor car which waited before the door. When with Doctor Claffin, he had spoken lightly of the matter in hand; but now, when alone again in the impersonal streets, his face was set in deep, grave lines. The night before he had had an interview with his only son, a stormy interview, which had placed the final seal upon his determination to remove Jesse Bethel from his path and from the path of his son.

"If I can ruin a railroad, and buy it cheap," he muttered to himself, "can I not ruin a prophet, and buy up his disciples?"

CHAPTER LXXIX

It lacked a few minutes of three o'clock when Jesse came down Broadway into Union Square; but his progress was slow. The people, by thousands, surged toward the square from all the neighbouring streets. One might pass along with them, but it was not easy to pass through them for when those in his neighbourhood discovered Jesse, they tried to crowd round him instead of toward the original centre. Finally, in desperation, his companions forced a wedge-like opening in the wall of human beings, and Jesse went through. Foremost among the men at this moment was Judson Carey, who had been waiting for them on Broadway, just north of the square. He now urged the others on; never had he been so active.

John looked at him suspiciously, and said: "Where have you been since you disappeared from the park?"

"Questioning the police, trying to learn why Jesse is not allowed to speak; but I can get no information except that it's their orders."

The answer was satisfactory to the mind, but not to the instinct of the faithful John. He repeated Judson's words to Jesse, who made no comment.

Slowly they made their way down the west side of the square to the drinking-fountain; there Jesse paused, and dividing the twelve men, he sent them right and left through the crowd to tell the people that the Master could not speak to them that afternoon, having been forbidden by the police. Meanwhile, Jesse waited alone, for he had refused to allow his mother and the other women to follow him to the square. Several officers were posted around him, keeping clear of people the little circle in which he stood. Charmed by his indescribable sad smile, one of these uniformed men stepped up to him.

"I'm sorry we have to upset your plans," he said, cordially; "but the city is full just now of unemployed men and vagrants of all sorts, and we have to watch out for trouble."

"But I am myself a vagrant," Jesse answered.

The man laughed, taking the words for a joke; then, seeing the grave look in Jesse's eyes, he said:

"You're a strange sort of man. I heard you speak the other night in Madison Square Garden, and I was specially interested in what you said about the chicken broth. Now I've seen that same thing a thousand times, and it never meant anything to me."

"Does this crowd here this afternoon mean anything to you?"

"It means a hard day's work."

"Is that all?"

"I dunno."

They were standing with their backs to the west, and the afternoon sun shone down obliquely into the eyes of the multitudes that were gazing at them.

"Look," Jesse said,—“look into the myriad eyes of those human beings there. You will see the same thing I saw on the surface of my broth.”

"Well, I'll be blowed!" exclaimed the officer. "You'd think there were a thousand suns down there, too."

"So there are. And it is because I recognise the light in them that they have come out this afternoon to see and hear me."

The officer looked straight into his eyes.

"Say, you're not going to make us any trouble, are you? I'd hate almighty to use any kind of force with you!"

"I shall not give you any trouble. You and your companions are stationed here to guard me, are you not? to keep the crowd from coming near?"

"Yes; but there are other officers here on other business, I'm sorry to say."

Behind them was the short flight of stone steps leading up to one of the spouts of the drinking-fountain.

"Shall I cause you any trouble if I take a little of that water? I am thirsty."

"Drink away. I'd get it for you, only the chain of the cup isn't long enough."

When Jesse had drunk of the water and turned to descend the steps, facing the crowd and elevated a little above them, from a thousand throats a mighty roar went up:

"Speak, speak!" . . . "We want to hear you
 . . . "Don't mind the cops." . . . "Hurrah
 Jesse Bethel!" . . . "Hurrah for the poor man
 friend!" . . . "Speak, speak!" . . . "We've come
 to listen." . . . "Hurrah for you!" . . .

Then came a sudden clatter of horses' hoofs, and a long, prolonged, inarticulate howl from those same throats, and a platoon of mounted police charged into the crowd, scattering the people right and left and backward. Clubs were swung, hats were knocked off, and even heads were damaged. Bellowing like a herd of cattle, the surprised thousands ran before the onslaught; men and women, and even little children, screaming and crying, were driven back toward the east, the north, the south, anywhere out of the square, which the police had been ordered to clear. All the pain and rage of baffled and conquered humanity were in that roar of ten thousand voices.

The little circle of guardian police closed around Jesse, but not a hand was laid on him, not a word of reproach was spoken to him. With his eyes wet with tears, he touched the arms of the nearest officers.

"Did I cause that—that cruelty—by going up there to drink?"

"No, no," replied the man with whom he had been talking a moment before. "You only hastened it, maybe. They'd had their orders."

"But my friends are among those people, my companions, my faithful ones!"

"Don't take it so hard, sir. They'll find their way back to you. We're not going to keep this square closed off until the Judgment Day."

As the crowd was driven farther and farther back, the guardian officers moved a little away from Jesse, so that his form was plainly visible from all sides. This was to show such of the flying people as were able to look back that no harm had been done to him. Having quelled a non-existent riot, they had been warned not to precipitate a real riot by any show of danger to the man who was idolised by the crowd.

For a short time no one was permitted to approach the cleared square; then, one by one, the scattered disciples of

the Master were passed through the lines of officers. John was the first; he came running, and catching Jesse's hands, cried out with joy at his safety. Then, from another direction, Peter came, then Andrew, and all the others, including Judson himself, who was loud in his denunciation of the outrage. In fact, at the possibility of physical danger to Jesse, the heart of the disloyal man triumphed for a moment over his own avarice and ambition. With a burst of genuine feeling he pressed the hand of his Master, who suffered the caress in silence. Had Jesse at that moment singled him out from the others by any show of preference, he might not have had the courage or the will to carry his treachery any further. But the moment passed, and Jesse turned away, leaning his arms wearily upon the shoulders of John and Peter.

"If you men have a home," said one of the officers, "I advise you to go to it now. The people are beginning to straggle back into the square, and we don't want any more trouble."

"Come," said Jesse to his companions. "We will go at once to the house where my mother is, before any rumour of this disturbance reaches her."

On the way up, every man had his own story of the outrage to repeat to Jesse. "I saw a woman with a child run over and trampled by the crowd," said Peter. Andrew had seen a man knocked senseless by a policeman's club. Philip had himself been bruised against a railing, as a mounted officer came charging down the sidewalk. But however the stories varied in detail, their substance was the same, and Jesse's heart grew sick within him.

"Tell me no more," he said. "I would forget, for a few hours at least, the cruelty of mankind."

Peter's matter-of-fact mind was struggling with a question.

"Master, what sin against the Spirit have those poor men and women committed, that they should be chased like cattle, and some of them even hurt, by a brutal power which they have not the strength to resist?"

"Pain is not always given as a punishment, nor pleasure as a reward. They are the two sides of the page of sensation, in the beginning of the Book of Life, which men are

to study and understand before they pass on to more perplexing pages."

But the answer puzzled Peter more than his own question. Seeing his troubled eyes, Jesse added:

"When men suffer, they should pause and inquire as to the cause of their suffering; and when they have found the cause, they should remove it. The wise physician relieves pain by removing the cause of the pain."

"But will they ever remove it, Master?"

"If I did not believe so, I would regret having thrown upon my own soul the awful burden of living."

When they came to the house where the women lodged, Jesse sent for Mary Magnus and told her briefly the story of the afternoon.

"My mother must not know of this until to-morrow," he said. "See that no evening paper comes to her hands and tell the others they must guard their speech when in her presence."

"And may she know to-morrow, Jesse?"

"To-morrow! . . . Yes, she will inevitably know to-morrow; but let her spend this night in peace. Where is she now?"

"In her bedroom, lying down."

"Is she asleep?"

"I left her asleep, only a moment before you came."

He turned to the men who stood near, saying:

"Wait for me in the sitting-room. I will return to you in a few minutes."

Noiselessly he entered his mother's bedroom, closing the door behind him. He who could always command sleep to visit the pillow of the weary and the sick, could hold sleep now upon the eyelids of Mary Bethel. Peacefully as a child she lay there, with hands folded upon her breast. The light from the one window at her head fell softly on her pale face and fragile form, and cast grey shadows down the folds of the loose white wrapper which reached beyond her feet. The light hair, only softly touched with grey, was like a shining halo round her head.

Jesse stood at the foot of the bed and gazed at her, his face alight with love and sorrow and pity. His mother!

Those worn hands had worked for him; those frail arms had been the defenders of his infancy, that breast his shelter. Hard was the road those feet had walked for him of late, and harder still the road they soon must walk. However great his love, he could not shield her from the inexorable Law, which declares that she who bears a Teacher of mankind must pay the price in pain. His mother! Though unborn generations should cover her grave with flowers and her name with honour, no power could soften for her the hours which lay between this peaceful hour of slumber and the longer peace of death.

Great as his love and pity were for all humanity, yet was he human; and the natural human love of child for parent he had no wish to lay aside. He was not great by being less than other men, but by being all that men are and much more. The tears now gathering in his eyes were for his own loved mother—not the terrible, despairing, universal tears he had yet to shed for his mission, and for the agony of all humanity held in the grip of pitiless destiny.

He did not kiss the unconscious woman, nor touch even a fold of her garment. Noiselessly as he had entered the room, he turned now and left it.

At the door of the sitting-room stood Mary Magnus, her face white, her eyes aflame.

"Are you in danger, Jesse?"

"He who speaks the truth to an unready world is always in danger, my sister."

"May I go over the river with you to-night?"

"You will serve me best by remaining with my mother."

"And to-morrow?"

"To-morrow she will need you even more than to-day."

With a power of self-control which placed her higher than ever in his regard, she stood in silence, while he said good-night to the other women and to his cousin Jim Bethel, who remained with them in their city lodgings. Then, with the twelve men behind him, he went down the stairs and out of the house.

CHAPTER LXXX

MARTHA met them, smiling, in the door of her house. To her had not been given that subtle intuition that senses trouble at a distance, and burdens the soul with grief for happenings beyond the vision of the eyes.

"I've taken advantage of my afternoon at home," she said, "to prepare for you an unusually good supper."

"I thank you, Martha. But where is your sister?"

"Oh! Mary is up-stairs crying her eyes out—because two and two make four, I guess; for I don't see any other reason."

At that moment the missing girl appeared, red-eyed and trembling, having heard their voices at the door. She ran to Jesse, who comforted and soothed her as if she had been in years the child she was in heart. When she was calmer he said, with a smile in which there was no hint of impending tragedy:

"Now go and help Martha with her supper, little one, for she is planning to satisfy our hunger to-night in a way to which we simple men are unaccustomed."

Peter and the others would have discussed the exciting events of the afternoon, but Jesse stopped them:

"This night," he said, "we will forget all things, save only the happy days we have spent together. The sun is setting upon the troubles of the afternoon, and the troubles of the future have not yet begun. Let me rest a little while in the valley of peace, before ascending the hill of suffering. Is it not happiness enough for the present hour that we are here, all together?" The loving smile he gave them with the words was treasured in their memory for ever after.

That night Lawrence and his uncle had been called away from home on business, and Martha had set the long dinner table for thirteen only, she and Mary to do the serving. The girls had placed flowers here and there along the board, and a great fragrant mass of them before Jesse's plate. He buried his face among the cool, sweet blossoms,

then looked round at the faces of his spiritual family. They had no regular places at the table. This evening Peter was on Jesse's right and John on his left; Judson sat next to James, who was between him and Peter; Andrew was on the left of John, and beyond them were the others.

They had never seen the Master's face more radiant than during the first hour of the evening. Not even in the early care-free days of the preceding summer beside the lake near Capronville, had he seemed more at peace. As an artist who is adding the last brush-strokes to an immortal masterpiece, which he has wrought with toil and poverty and tears, joys in the contemplation of his triumphant handiwork, so Jesse now rejoiced in the contemplation of the masterwork which was his life—the ecstatic vision of his secret soul made tangible upon enduring canvas, for all mankind to see. It was really no more strange that Jesse should know that his masterwork of life was nearly finished than that the artist should know when only the final brush-stroke remains to be added to the great picture. The soul power which we name intuition may be only a more subtle mode of reasoning from causes to effects, only the more masterly logic of the spirit.

In that hour it seemed to him possible that from the sandy soil of present-day humanity should spring the radiant blossom of human brotherhood, of which his life was the seed. His soul was dizzy with the vision; it rose superior to the remembered trouble of the past and the dread of the immediate future.

"O, children of my faith," he said, looking from one to another with love-melting eyes, "how certain seems the harvest of the Spirit, when such strong and willing labourers as you stand ready with the harrow and the sickle! Surely your faith will not falter between the spring and the autumn."

They thought he referred to the autumn of the present year, and John cried joyously:

"Will the harvest of the Spirit come so soon, dear Master?"

"The seasons of the Spirit do not follow those of the earth," he answered; "but even with the Spirit, the summer and autumn invariably follow the spring."

"Then we must wait a little longer?"

"You must wait, but not in idleness. The field is large in which you have to labour, and the oceans are its fence on the East and on the West."

"And must we carry your message to the West?" asked Peter, his face lighting with enthusiasm.

"Yes, and to the North and South. Before you have cultivated all the ground, the harvest-time will come. Meanwhile, you will listen for the orders of the Spirit as your servant listens for the orders of his master."

"And shall we hear the voice of the Spirit, the voice of the Lord?" It was James who asked the question, breathlessly.

"It may be that if you listen, your Lord will speak to you. And if he should speak, obey his orders though you die for it. But for every Lord who sits above, a devil lurks below; so be sure the voice is that of your Lord before you do its bidding. If the voice commands you to injure or betray another, be sure it is your devil that speaks, and not your Lord."

At that moment a change came over Jesse's face; the joy went out of it, and a shadow fell between his eyes and theirs. He was silent for a little time—then he said:

"There is one among you to whom the devil has spoken, one among you who has listened to the messenger of hell—one who will betray me."

A shudder of consternation passed over them. They searched the faces of one another. To whom had the devil spoken? Who had knowingly listened to the treacherous voice, or had ignorantly taken it for the voice of his Lord? Who among them *could* betray the Master whom they loved! Then every man asked Jesse if it could be himself; even the lips of Judson did not falter as he pronounced the question.

In the excitement of the moment, John had thrown his arm around the shoulder of Jesse and leaned against him. He now whispered something which the others did not hear, nor did they hear the answer; but they saw Jesse lean forward across the table, and taking a choice morsel from the dish, place it on the plate before Judson Carey. Then he quietly said to the man whom he had fed:

"What the soul has chosen, that must the man find strength to do."

Those who listened—all save John—supposed that Jesse had merely reminded him of some duty to be performed. Never had the Master's voice been more gentle, though his face had turned an ashen white.

Stumbling over his chair as he rose, Judson turned and left the room, without a glance behind. A moment later they heard the banging of the street-door.

Peter was still troubled with heart-searchings. He was sure that he had not listened to any inner voice of evil, sure that he never could be guilty of disloyalty to Jesse. He now appealed to him to set his heart at rest, saying in a voice hoarse with anxiety:

"Master, tell me that you did not mean me!"

Jesse laid his arm lovingly on the man's shoulder.

"No, it is not you."

Peter shook from head to foot with the gladness of his soul's relief.

"But do not be too certain even now," Jesse added, "that you will never be found wanting in loyalty."

Peter declared his readiness to follow the Master even to death. After a deep look into his eyes, Jesse half turned away; then, facing him again, he told him that even before the morning his soul would fail in a great test. Grieved and incredulous, the poor man once more avowed his unswerving loyalty; but Jesse stopped him, saying:

"As the earthquake comes when no man looks for it, so does the heart's hidden cowardice suddenly shake the foundations of man's faith and honour."

Martha and Mary Lane, feeling instinctively that Jesse would prefer this evening to be alone with his men companions, when they had finished serving the supper had eaten their own meal in another room; then, bidding the men good-night, they had gone up-stairs together. Jesse asked Andrew to close the dining-room door: they would remain there until the time should come for them to seek their nightly sleeping-place on the Palisades.

Then he began to speak of the devotion that should bind them all together.

"Whenever your hearts go out in love to one another,

you will feel my invisible hand reaching to touch you from the Silence wherein I dwell.

"When the soul of one of you shall expand with love for its brother, the response will be my presence among you.

"The proof which I leave to the world of the Spirit of love for me, will be your love for one another."

Then, realising at last that he was certainly about to leave them, they began to question as to which among them should be supreme in leadership, which one should command the others. And Jesse's answer to this question was, that whoever should be most willing to yield his rights and opinions should be the guide of the others.

"For," he said, "the one who desires the welfare of the cause above his own desires, will be wise enough to seek wherein that welfare lies.

"True leadership is like a shadow, which ever eludes the pursuer; but follows swiftly along with him who speeds upon the quest of something greater.

"He who humbles himself before something greater than himself, shall be exalted above all lesser beings.

"There is a degree of humility that can command the homage even of kings.

"And there is also a purity that is more powerful than an army. A helpless child in the way of a rush of soldiers would be strong enough to deflect the line of their attack.

"Be humble when you seek the crown of wisdom; but be humbler still when you wear it upon your forehead.

"Never challenge analysis by boasting: there are flaws in the fairest fame.

"And be not envious of anyone. He that envies another thereby acknowledges his own inferiority.

"As long as you cherish yourself, Truth can never embrace you.

"In order to view yourself, you must get away from yourself."

He spoke again of the Presence which was to be their comforter when he should be no more with them in the body; and though they only vaguely understood his meaning, yet was he able to create around their souls an atmos-

phere of expectancy, to fix their attention on the unseen.

"So long as I am visibly present with you," he said, "you will not yearn for the invisible Presence; and only to him who yearns for the invisible will it ever reveal its beauty.

"When the world seems empty, then do the heavens open.

"When in the agony of your desolation you shall beat your breast and hurl your prayer for me into the seeming void, then will the very power of your supplication make it a command, to which my unseen presence must respond.

"The soul of man, being one with the Supreme Spirit, can draw from the storehouse of the Spirit whatever it imperatively needs. This, my children, is the secret of the power of prayer.

"Though I become invisible, I shall not pass into the realm of inaction, for there I could not comfort you nor guide you with my unseen presence; between that realm and the earth there is a high barred gate. But I shall remain in the nearer region of ethereal forms, ever-conscious, and ever-active, until all humanity shall have attained the right to enter with me into rest.

"To you, my children, I entrust the labour of hastening that day."

For a time he sat silent, gazing as though at some vision far away—some vision which they could not see. They watched him with uneasy hearts, no longer doubting that the time was soon to come when he would leave them; but no man guessed how near was the hour. The clock ticked steadily on the mantel, telling the seconds in a tone which seemed louder and more insistent than usual. The wind was rising; they could hear it whistling through the branches of the trees outside the window, and a loose blind rattled now and then against the side of the house. Though their minds were full of questions, yet none dared to speak. They only watched him.

He turned his eyes again to the circle of his loved ones, and the tense stillness was broken by his voice:

"When I am gone, all things will speak to you of me. You will feel me in the fire that warms you; the touch of

the cold wind on your faces in the winter you feel to be my challenge to renewed activity. In the sun will I greet you every morning, and the darkness the night will be my mantel which I lovingly draw round you that you may rest and sleep in my embrace. Whenever you place to your lips the cup of refreshing water is I that you will drink; whenever you eat bread, you taste of me. I am in the air you breathe, I am in the meat that sustains you. When the fleecy cloud passes across the sky, you will see in it the veil which hides my face. When the stars look down at you, you will know that my eyes are watching. When the young leaves unfold their tender greenness in the spring, I am the life that has arisen in the sap; and when the dead leaves fall in the autumn I am the wind that rustles them about your feet."

Then Jesse reached out his hand to Andrew, the patient lover, who had learned the master-lesson of self-denial through placing the work of the Master above his own desire for happiness, and so had grown strong. And when Jesse felt the devotion of the young disciple in the firm clasp of his hand, and saw it shining in his steady eyes, he said:

"For you, my son, I have this night a special gift: my blessing on the love which has been purified by sacrifice. When the moon that is now young shall shine round and perfect upon the earth, you may take to yourself the maiden singer of sweet songs whom you so love—and in your happiness remember me."

With eyes suffused in tears, and the voice in which he strove to speak his thanks made inarticulate by emotion, the young man arose from his chair and fell upon his knees at Jesse's feet.

CHAPTER LXXXI

THE night was colder than any of the previous nights they had spent upon the Palisades; but, though every man save Jesse would have been glad to remain in the comfortable shelter of the house, no one was willing to suggest it. Not a word was spoken as they walked over the uneven ground. A strange depression, such as they had never known before, weighed down the souls of all. For the first time since their coming to the city, they thought with longing of their homes and friends.

When they reached the spot where they were wont to sleep, Jesse took James and John and Peter a little to one side, and after quietly bidding the others good-night, as usual, with no added word or tenderer hand-clasp to arouse their premonitions, he led the three who understood him best a few yards further south, and told them to sit down upon the rocks and wait for him while he went away alone to pray.

His soul was very sorrowful. Though he had long held discourse with the thought of death, it had been as one may realise in youth that sometime he must die. The solemn word of a physician, who says that a suffering man has but a day to live, is less convincing to the watchers by the bedside than was Jesse's inner certainty to him, that the trouble of the afternoon was the prelude of a persecution that would, somehow, end in his death. Step by step from the beginning of his ministry he had gone on, always foreseeing what lay along the path immediately ahead. And now he could not doubt, or hope, that his prevision was less vivid than of old. He had long looked forward to death as to the signature of God upon his work; but now, when the final chapter was so nearly written, he longed with a natural and human longing to have the end less cruel.

Not for a moment did he waver in his determination to pay to the last coin of suffering the price demanded by

the world for the jewel of a consistent spiritual faith; for a little time that night he allowed himself to wish the payment might not be demanded. Not for a moment did he dream of taking advantage of the offered possibility of escape; yet he saw in imagination the safe and spacious vessel owned by his young friend lying quietly on the waters just across the river, under orders to take him and his companions whithersoever he might say.

At that hour the visible world seemed beautiful to him. He thought of the green and peaceful valley of his birth, of the thought of the far-away wonderful lands that as a boy he had yearned to visit, of the approaching summer with its splendid pageantry of flowers and bannered trees. His tears of longing filled his eyes.

Throwing himself face downward on the ground, he pleaded with the all-powerful, indwelling Spirit—pleaded as a child might plead with its father to be allowed to remain a little longer in the sunshine. Was it not possible? Could not the Spiritual Sun ripen for the harvest the field which he had sown, even though the sower should remain above the ground? It was so sweet to be alive and to breathe the pure air! The mystery of the change from the visible to the invisible was shrouded in darkness, even to his eyes. His prayer was an agony of supplication; yet with every appeal he pledged anew his resignation to the will of the Spirit.

All was now dark to his eyes. The human prayer for life had veiled the superhuman vision. The cold of the ground penetrated his body, and seemed to his overwrought imagination to be the cold of death. But though he shuddered, there was no fear in his heart; for he remembered that the Spirit has its dwelling in the darkness as well as in the light; that life and death are but the positive and negative poles of the infinite magnet, whose current is without beginning and without end. All this he remembered only; for in those moments of his anguish the face-to-face communion with the Spirit in which he had lived so long was interrupted. Souls of development far inferior to his have known this hour, and have called it the Great Dark.

Staggering to his feet, he turned to seek the three friends whom he had left to watch with him while he struggled

with the Spirit that was himself. He felt a passionate need of their sympathy and companionship; for the loneliness of his soul was more than he could bear. But, coming to the place where he had left them, he found them all asleep.

With words of sad reproof, he woke them. But in their drowsy attention there was no comfort for his heart. Never had he been more vividly awake, more keenly conscious; and again he left them, with the request that they should pray for him and for themselves, that they might avoid the Tempter that was ever watching.

Alone again, he sat down upon a rock and looked up at the stars which shone that night with unusual brilliancy. How far away they seemed and how cold! Though his heart should break with love for a thankless world, the stars in their indifference would shine as brightly. Between his eyes and theirs the slender, naked branches of the oak-trees swayed restlessly in the wind. Movement, everywhere movement and life! But neither in the swaying trees nor in the dancing stars was there consciousness of him or of his pain. Even the disciples of his heart, whom he had loved beyond their understanding, had failed him at this hour. Among all those who had followed him and had partaken freely of the cup of spiritual strength and healing that he offered, there was *one only* who would not have failed him now. . . . And he had denied her last request to be allowed to come with him across the river to-night!

The disloyalty of Judson was a bleeding wound in his heart. So intimate was the sympathy between him and the Twelve, that for days he had felt the wavering of this man's faith as a constant drain upon his own vitality. With all his love for humanity and his belief in its perfectibility, no sneering sceptic ever knew the weakness and the cowardice of the human heart as Jesse knew it. Only a love as vast as his may *dare* to draw aside the veil that hides the secret motives of men. He knew that even of the eleven who slept yonder, believing themselves faithful, the greater number would weaken and fly like cowards at the approach of real danger. They who had loudly proclaimed so many times their willingness to follow him to death, would find a score of worldly reasons for not following him to jail.

And if this was true of his intimates, to whom he given some measure of his own spiritual strength, loyalty and faith could unregenerate men expect from another! What hope was there for a world wherein trust and cowardice were universal! He suffered less from the fact that the hearts of those whom he loved could not be made to follow him, than from the awful realisation that such failure was a part of the universal failure of mankind. The personal grief, the personal grief, was but a symbol of a vast more inexorable and overwhelming fact.

Oh, the suffering of the world! He felt it surging over him, bearing him down, crushing him with despair. In every care-free heart that joyed in the sunshine, there was a hundred bowed beneath the weight of irremediable work, hunger and endless toil, pain of the body and pain of the soul, ignorance, hatred, strife, the apathy of hopelessness, and over all the cold and nagging fear of the future, starvation, of death.

And he had dared to dream that his one life might pay the whole world's debt! He had dared to believe that he had only to show mankind the path to a purer life, and they would walk in it! He felt now that they would not walk in it; that all his words were written in the sand to be obliterated by the rising tide of evil whose roar now deafened him. Oh, to escape one moment from the paralysing consciousness of failure! To hear the assurance of some soul that believed in him and in itself!

He would go back to the friends whom he had asked to watch and pray; surely their greeting would revive his fainting hope. But when he came to the place, again he found them all asleep. . . . Why, in the months gone by he had known one of them, the imaginative John, to outwatch the stars, because, as he had said, the night was so beautiful that he could not bear to shut out the vision of it by closing his eyes in sleep. And now he was as heavy as the others! It seemed as if the spirit of Darkness, eternal mate and enemy of the spirit of Light, had decreed that Jesse should drink to the bitter dregs the cup of mortal desolation, before he could be crowned with the wreath of immortality.

He woke the three men a second time, and in a voice

choked with grief reproved them for their lack of understanding. And they, being convicted by their own conscience, did not know what to answer him, and so answered nothing.

Then he left them and went away, to be again alone. His heaviness increased with every step. Never before, not even in his darkest hour, had he been visited by this haunting fear that his life and work might, after all, have been in vain—that men might reject the message he had brought. His love for the world was tenderer than that of a mother for her only child, and his life had seemed so small a gift to bring to it. . . . But if the gift were useless! . . . Must the orphan child, Humanity, still go on suffering through countless ages, a homeless wanderer in the wilderness, bruising its naked feet upon the rocks of life, now burning on hatred's treeless sands, now freezing on the icy steeps of selfishness and cruelty? He reached his arms into the empty air, as if groping for the world to draw it to his breast. Oh, that he might take upon his own soul the burden of the sin and failure of all mankind! That he alone might bear the sorrows of the whole world! Surely there could be no greater anguish than that he now endured. Why could he not so suffer alone, *for them*, through eternity—and they have joy, and peace, and love? He offered himself to the indwelling Spirit as a sacrifice, praying, beseeching that he might go on suffering like this throughout eternity—to pay the price of happiness for them.

The pitiless light of the future shone full upon his mind. He saw that all his preaching of the Spirit, his love, his death, would not carry mankind more than one step farther forward; that even those who should take his name upon their lips and call themselves his followers would not really follow in his footsteps. He saw himself as only one of a long line of the world's saviours and redeemers—a line extending back into the misty beginnings of time. The tears of all these labourers in the sterile human desert burned his eyes; their yearnings and despairing love were more than he could bear.

He threw himself upon the ground and buried his face among the dead leaves of preceding summers. With every year new leaves would grow upon the trees, only to fade

and fall; with every cycle new messengers of the Spirit would come into the world, to suffer and to die. He felt the whirling of the earth through space upon its boundless journey, till his brain was dizzy with the motion of it. He felt, as cutting into his own flesh, the chain that bound the Spirit to its dark brother, Substance. He was bathed in the sweat of his tortured body, as humanity is bathed in the agony of its struggle to be free from the merciless Law, from which it never can escape until the countless suns and systems of suns shall fall asleep in the darkness of dissolution.

Then, gradually, there came upon him peace—a peace beyond the understanding of all save those rare beings, far isolated in time, who are capable of suffering to that uttermost point where the great circle of feeling returns upon itself, and suffering becomes joy. Its touch was like that of a ministering angel, soothing and strengthening the soul. It seemed to whisper that everything was in its place, in time and in eternity; that nothing, not even evil and despair, could be in vain; that what seemed lost and dead was only being transformed, to re-emerge a little farther on.

There returned to him now the memory of the dream which had come to him in youth, of the iron face of the Law revealed upon the mountainside, the pitiless iron face with blazing eyeballs, which, when he gazed upon it fearlessly, melted into the smiling face of Love. He had never fully understood the dream until this hour.

He turned his eyes again to the stars: they seemed no longer cold or unconscious of him, but in the depths of their myriad eyes he saw the recognition of their brotherhood with him and with each other. Even the eternal Tempter that had come to him in visible form during his sojourn upon the mountain the preceding year, he now realised anew to be only a servant of the Great Law, stationed for ever beside the gates of power to test the souls that would pass through.

Again he looked at the naked branches of the oak-tree swaying in the wind against the sky; their life no longer was remote from his, and their every movement seemed a conscious caress.

Then he thought of the three men, his loved disciples, whom he had left a little while before. Poor tired ones! What matter though their eyes had been closed in sleep? Their souls were still awake, their souls that were one with his.

With a light step he crossed the intervening space and stood before them. This time they awoke without a word from him, as if electrified by his approach. In a voice more gentle than the gentlest tones they had ever before heard even from him, he told them to sleep on and take their rest.

But they did not return to sleep. For suddenly the sound of approaching footsteps brought them to their feet, startled and alert.

CHAPTER LXXXII

COMING toward them was a company of men—how great a number they could not be sure at first, because of the uncertain light, but apparently there were no fewer than thirty. And there was something peculiar in the way they came, not irregularly, or walking two by two, but in a broad curved line, as if they sought to cover every foot of ground for a wide space. Though the line was broken here and there, because of the rocks and trees, yet the men seemed to be making for a definite place—the group of oaks whereunder Jesse and his three friends were standing.

“What can they want?” said Peter hoarsely, and John’s heart began pounding with sudden, unexplainable alarm.

“What can they want?” echoed the gentler voice of James. “Master, what can they want?”

“They seek me,” Jesse answered, “led by one who sought me with a different purpose but a little while ago.”

Then he went forward to meet the advancing men. They stopped when they saw him coming, tall and majestic in the starlight; they stopped as if uncertain what to do for the power of his presence surprised them. But one rushed forward and caught him by the arm: it was Judson Carey, and he had been drinking.

“Master,” he cried, breathing his unpleasant breath into Jesse’s face, “come with us now across the river. You will come, won’t you, Master? It is very important that you come with us now across the river.”

His speech was thickened. He had been nerving himself for an ordeal. The grossness of his state was like the devil’s grinning commentary on the sublimity of Jesse’s last half-hour—like the gargoyle on the face of a cathedral. Even reproof would have been wasted on him; though Jesse said, more for the others who stood near than for the fallen companion:

“He who betrays the soul will himself be betrayed by the body.”

Then he asked the crowd what they desired of him

and a large, soft-voiced man, who was the butler and trusted servant of the Reverend Doctor Clafin, stepped before the others, who had been recruited from the lower ranks of hirelings, the hangers-on of saloons and livery-stables. These men had made the trip across the river as they would have gone on any rowdy excursion that promised a few free drinks; they did not even know whence came the money on which they were to regale themselves when their easy work was over. The dignified clergyman had of course not soiled his lips by giving orders in such a matter; he had merely granted his faithful servant an extra night off. He would have been profoundly and sincerely shocked had the details of the affair in which he acquiesced been forced upon him. The man who was seen to leave the Clafin house with the butler that night had not long before succeeded in breaking a strike on one of the Needham railroads but he had never come in personal contact with John Needham, being but the deputy of a deputy thrice removed. If an officer in citizen's clothes was also of the butler's party that night, why, any citizen has a right to cross the North River on a ferry-boat. On this night Heaven and Hell shook hands, each helping the other to achieve a masterwork of the extreme and opposite kind of each.

The soft-voiced butler answered Jesse's question:

"I have been requested to request you to accompany me and my friends to the New York side of the river."

Here Peter Bond sprang forward, and would have laid hands on the man had not Jesse restrained him.

"Master, you shall not go!" he cried.

"What matter," said the Master, "whether I go with these to-night or with my friends to-morrow? I came down here to preach the faith of the Spirit to the dwellers in the great city yonder, and I should certainly re-cross the river at the usual hour to-morrow morning."

At that moment the other men, who had been sleeping a few rods away, came running to the spot, having been awakened by the sound of voices. James Dana told them in a dozen words the meaning of the unusual scene; and they, not knowing what to do, and being outnumbered three to one by the intruders, did nothing.

Jesse now said to the man who seemed to be the leader of the crowd:

"I am going with you, and of my own free will. Did I not wish to go, I could at this moment call upon the Spirit within me, and the Spirit would utter through my lips such words of power that even those who follow you would be electrified by the awakening of the Spirit in themselves, and would defend me against you. But this is the hour of darkness, and the hour of my sacrifice of self—the proof of my renunciation. One thing only I ask: that these men who have followed me shall go their way unmolested."

"Oh, we don't want them!" answered the man. "They don't count."

Without another word, Jesse strode forward across the uneven ground toward the little winding road which led down-hill to the ferry, and behind him came the band of ruffians. He had not asked his friends to follow him, and only two had followed, even at a distance. The others, bewildered by the sudden appearance of the hostile-looking crowd, frightened at the possibility of violent opposition, and driven to despair by their remembrance of the Master's prophecy of death, had fled away into the night. And when Jesse turned to look for the half-drunken Judson, whose beastliness made even treachery grotesque, he also was not there. Alone, as at the outset of his ministry; alone, as on the mountain of illumination, Jesse passed down the flight of wooden steps at the beginning of the winding road.

Where the road turned sharply, about half-way down, stood the stump of a dead tree which had been sawed off evenly. Here he paused and sat down for a moment. On one side of him rose the almost perpendicular wall of rock, on the other side were the branches of trees which grew on the hillside below.

"Tired?" asked the lackey leader of the rowdy band, as he paused and waited beside Jesse.

"I shall not be loath to rest, when my hour strikes."

"Well, don't rest too long here, or we may be obliged to hurry you. That boat won't wait for us."

The tone was insolent, but Jesse hardly heard it. The

exaltation and the peace of that last half-hour of meditation were with him still. He was so far removed in consciousness from what was merely personal, that insolence could not find him. He realised only that the man had said the boat would not wait, and they were going to cross the river on the boat; so he rose immediately and went on down the hill. The butler, having himself a coward soul, assumed from this that he was afraid of him.

A moment later Jesse stumbled over one of the small tree-trunks which were laid across the steep road at intervals, to prevent the washing away of the soil; and as he caught himself, the man cried:

"Hi, there! Can't you keep your feet?"

The boat was in the dock when they reached the ferry-house, and they went immediately on board, the butler paying Jesse's fare. On that same boat John and Peter crossed the river; but they did not go near the Master, only keeping him in view. Even now Jesse was hardly conscious of his surroundings. He went forward and stood at the bow, just behind the gates; but though his eyes were upon the foam that glistened below, he did not really see it. His thoughts were rapt in the realisation which had come to him a little while before, as he prayed alone beneath the stars—the realisation that *everything was in its place*, in time and in eternity. He knew that he was being carried forward across the water of this river toward some unknown and cruel fate; but it all seemed prearranged, and in accordance with a beautiful design; his sorrows were only the dark threads in the pattern which the Supreme Artist was weaving on the loom of faith. Without the contrast of the black, the brilliant colours would seem less brilliant, and the fabric would not so strongly appeal to the eye of beauty.

As the boat drew near the shore, the lights glittering before his eyes drew Jesse's thoughts back to the earth which bore him. Though the hour was late, the great city was still illuminated; it lay beside the river like a dragon shaking its gleaming scales. On an elevation to the right of him he saw the twinkling lights of that gay hostelry which nightly watches late beside a hero's tomb; to the left of him the colossal ribs of a now nearly depleted

gas-tank stood, like a giant skeleton from pre-human ages, black, threatening, against the sky. He even smiled at a grim fancy which flashed across his mind: the black ribs of that colossus yonder protected the lungs of the fire-breathing dragon; in imagination he could smell its awful breath—that breath which is slowly inhaled through the daylight hours and slowly exhaled after dark. These were his last impressions as he neared the shore of the river he had loved.

The boat bumped against the piling, the chains of the windlasses rattled, the gates were thrown back with a metallic snap, and the ferry poured its passengers into the State and City of New York.

An officer in uniform laid his hand on Jesse's arm, telling him that he was under arrest. He was then taken down-town and cast into a jail, like any common malefactor.

CHAPTER LXXXIII

WITH trembling hand John pulled the door-bell of the house in the city where the women lodged. It was long after midnight. Could he gain entrance at that hour? He would, he must! The small considerations of propriety were not for times like that. Somewhere in the dark, silent house was the one soul who was strong enough to help him in his hour of terror and despair, and he must force a way to her. He pulled the bell a second time. Oh! would not someone come? At last he heard a light step, and the inner door was opened; there was the rattling of a chain, the sliding of a bolt, and a woman's voice:

"Who is it?"

"Oh, Mary! It is I, John. Let me in."

"Hush!"

Her whisper was commanding; but the door opened, and she drew him into a dark room on the right, the reception-room of the house.

"What is the matter? Where is Jesse?"

"I do not know. They have brought him over to the city. Oh, Mary! What shall I do?"

She closed the door into the hall and lighted the gas. She was dressed as in the daytime, but her hair was loosened and fell about her shoulders. Her face was white.

"Tell me everything, John, quickly."

"We were sleeping, as usual, on the Palisades. . . . A crowd of men came. . . . Judson was with them. . . . They brought the Master to the city, Peter and I following. . . . An officer arrested him."

"Where did the officer take him?"

"Oh, Mary, I do not know!"

"Where is Peter?"

"I lost him in the crowd. . . . I do not know. . . ."

"There is no crowd at this hour, John."

"But I lost him."

"You mean, that Peter followed Jesse, and you did not?"

"I meant to follow him. A heavy truck came between and a motor car. . . ."

"Oh, that I were a man! Since first I followed the Master, I have longed to be a man. I may not go out and preach about him, I may not remain with my fellow disciples on the other side of the river, I may not hold long counsels with him in the dawn, like you; but I would have followed him to prison or to death."

"Oh, don't, sister, dear sister! . . . I am so unhappy!"

"Yes, yes, poor child! You are unhappy, but what of him?"

"What could I have done, Mary? I could not have made the officer release him."

"You could have proved your worthiness to be his friend. You could have followed him."

The boy—for he was still only a boy—suddenly sat down in one of the satin chairs, and laying his head upon the padded back, burst into tears. For a minute Mary stood looking at him; then she came over and laid her hand on his hair. When she spoke her voice was rich with tenderness, but her words were strong:

"This is no time for tears, little brother."

He raised his head, dashing the drops from his eyes; then he stood up, facing her.

"What can I do, Mary?"

"Let me think. . . ."

"You are fully dressed, Mary! Haven't you been to bed at all?"

"No. I feared—I knew not what, this night. I could not have slept."

He remembered, with a sudden rush of shame, how he and the other men had slept, while Jesse prayed alone.

"How great you are, sister!"

She seemed not to hear him; her eyes were brilliant with thought, her face was flushed. After a little time, she said:

"I could learn where he is by telephoning to the office

of the city editor on any of the great papers. He is illustrious. His arrest would be immediately reported."

"I had not thought of that," John said.

Mary was silent, looking straight out before her.

"Shall we telephone now, sister?" His voice was hesitant, unsteady.

"Let me think," she said again. "Let me think. . . ."

He stood looking at her. Deeply as he had always loved her, he had not realised before how beautiful she was. And she had been watching and listening all these weary hours, feeling that some danger threatened Jesse; she had come down herself to open the door. . . .

"John."

"Yes, Mary."

"I have been asking myself what he would wish us to do. I do not think that he was surprised by his arrest. He must have been expecting it, after that scene in Union Square this afternoon—I mean, yesterday afternoon. It seems a century ago!"

"And you think"

"I *feel* that he would not wish us to make any effort to release him. He will be taken before a magistrate in the morning. He can then speak for himself."

"But he is in jail, Mary. It is horrible!"

She smiled.

"What is a jail to him? He can make heaven of the darkest place."

John's eyes lighted at her words.

"Why," he said, "the Master at this moment is doubtless comforting the wretches who are confined with him in the prison!"

"Yes," Mary answered. "And now I think further about it, I am more certain than before that he would wish us to do nothing. But, tell me, what became of the other men when the crowd took Jesse away?"

"I do not know."

"You mean, they disappeared?"

He nodded his head.

"And you and Peter followed him across the river?"

"Yes."

"What time was that?"

"Two hours ago, perhaps. I wandered about the streets alone for a long time . . . and then I came to you."

"And all the other men disappeared," Mary repeated, musingly, "all the other men."

John made no answer, for he realised that, to the Master, he also had disappeared. After another silence, Mary said:

"Now I think you had better find a public telephone, for there is none in this house, and learn where Jesse is. I have told you how. Then go to the place yourself. I believe that you will find Peter somewhere around the outside of the jail."

"And what are you going to do, Mary? "

"Wait for the morning. Then I shall take the other women with me to the court."

Suddenly she caught her breath with a choking cry.

"What is it?" he whispered, frightened by her look. Her self-control had given way all at once, and she was weeping, pitifully.

"Oh, John, *I shall have to tell his mother!*"

CHAPTER LXXXIV

It was ten minutes before nine in the court of Magistrate Palmer. Though the bench was still empty, the room was packed to the doors, the hall outside was packed, and a mass of people obstructed the sidewalk before and around the building. A dozen newsboys reaped a generous harvest of coppers by selling "extra" journalistic comments, headed in three-inch letters, on the trial which had not yet taken place.

The portly outer guardian of the temple of justice was bewildered; no such crowd had ever been seen before in that court. He was a good-natured officer, in sympathy with the ardent curiosity of these people; and long before the hour for court to open he had yielded up one of the benches usually reserved for lawyers, and had packed all the available spaces in the room as an expert might pack a box of sardines. The majesty of the law being still absent, he made no attempt to keep silence in the courtroom. As he moved here and there, preserving order, he heard the comments of the crowd:

"What will they do with him?" . . . "Disorderly conduct, the paper said." . . . "I was there myself; he hardly moved." . . . "This is an outrage!" . . . "Will they send him to the Island?" . . . "You never saw him, you say? Why, where have you kept yourself these last few days!" . . . "I told you so! I knew 'twould come. I said" . . . "That's his mother, down there in front." . . . "Oh, you don't say! Which one?" . . . "It's a conspiracy, I tell you!" . . . "Why didn't somebody bail him out?" . . . "He says he's God himself, but that so is every other man." . . . "It's nearly time for court to open now." . . . "Will his case come up first?" . . . "I wonder who that handsome woman is, down there." . . . "He can't succeed. The world is not ready for that kind of thing." . . . "I'm glad they took him up: he's a

blasphemer!" . . . "The paper says he wants to s
up strife." . . . "I heard him preach in Madis
Square Garden the other night." . . . "I'll bet y
a drink the magistrate lets him go."

Seated near the railing were Peter and Andrew Bon
James and John Dana, Marty White, Jesse's mother, Ma
Magnus and the other women. They did not know th
in the crowd outside, unable to get into the courthous
were Lawrence Lane and his sisters, with two of the m
who had disappeared the night before.

Mary Bethel was paler than Lawrence had been as l
lay in his coffin one week ago that day. She had know
nothing of Jesse's trouble until six o'clock that mornin
when Mary Magnus had come to her room and told he
with more than a daughter's tenderness, that Jesse, t
prove the power of the Spirit was all-sustaining, ha
consented to spend a night in prison, and that they we
to meet him in the court that morning. Then, as th
softened truth broke gradually over her consciousness, sh
had hidden her face for a few moments from even the lov
ing eyes of her companion. That was three hours ago
and though she had not wept, she seemed to herself t
have suddenly become an old woman. She had been born
and bred in New England—and her son was in jail!

During that hour of waiting Mary Magnus suffered les
than she had suffered many times before. She knew tha
the shade and dampness of a prison could not quench the
flame which burned in Jesse's soul; she also knew tha
wherever he went his ministry went with him, and her
heart swelled to think of the peace and hope his presence
must have brought to the poor wretches who were his
night companions. What dangers lay beyond this hour
she could not imagine; but she realised that Jesse had
done nothing for which the laws of the country could
punish him. That there might be interests strong enough
to stand for a time above the law was a possibility she had
not considered. The dread which had appalled her on
their first day in the city was present with her still; but
it seemed to point to something beyond this pleasant court-
room with its ruddy-faced attendants . . . to some
vague and still unseen danger. She had even slept a little

toward morning, knowing there was nothing she could do for him until the daylight.

Peter had not slept a moment during the long night. As Mary had supposed, John had found him walking up and down before the building, having been denied admittance by the officer in charge. The other men had learned from the morning papers where the Master was.

"Hats off! Hats off!"

The quick, sharp order of the officers meant the arrival of the magistrate, and in another moment a large man with iron-grey hair and beard, in the flowing black robes of Justice, passed across the platform and took his seat upon the bench. If he saw the unusual crowd which packed the spaces of his court, he gave no sign. The clock pointed to five minutes past the hour. Justice is always rather late when it comes to deal with the world's Teachers.

Through a door at the side, behind the rail which separated the spectators from the court, came several men and ranged themselves at the bar. Some words were spoken, inaudible to the breathless group of men and women from Vermont; then in a sharp, mechanical tone came the question of the magistrate:

"What have you got to say?"

"He hit me first, yer Honour. I was goin' about me business, and up he comes and says to me, says he: 'What for do ye try to git me job away, ye blasted son of a gun?'"

"And so you hit him?"

"I say, he hit me first, yer Honour. I wouldn't hev blacked his eye if he'd kep' a civil tongue in his head, and——"

"One dollar."

"Next case!"

And the belligerent one was hustled away to make room for another prisoner, a man with a bandage round his head, only a "drunk and disorderly," who was promptly sent to the Island for ten days.

A fat negress followed, and, from what the listeners could gather, the charge against her was the stealing of a garnet scarf-pin from a dapper little negro whom she afterward referred to as "ma bo'der."

"What have you got to say?"

She denied the charge with firmness, and as the evidence of the only witness in the case was insufficient, the magistrate discharged her with a warning, and she passed out of the courtroom muttering something about "spoiled gen'lemen as wears brass sca'f-pins with glass beads stuck in 'em."

The degradation of it all, the squallor, broke the proud heart of Mary Bethel. Her son, her Jesse, a fellow prisoner with such as these!

"Next case. Jesse Bethel."

Suddenly all the seated spectators leaped to their feet to get a better view; but the loud voice of the officer in charge rang out above the sound of moving feet and rustling garments.

"Sit down! Sit down!"

Jesse was standing before the magistrate, who looked at him gravely while the charge of disorderly conduct was stated by the officer.

"What have you got to say?" repeated the magistrate using from force of habit the form of words he had addressed day after day, year after year, to thousands of prisoners standing in that same spot.

"Nothing."

Jesse's clear voice was audible in every part of the room. Though his back was toward the spectators, the power of his presence was felt by everyone; and two or three unfortunates who had been brought in with him from the prison were seen to edge nearer and to touch his garments furtively, as if they fancied there might be strength and healing in the contact.

The magistrate motioned Jesse to the small platform immediately before him, and Jesse went up and stood there, eye to eye with his judge. The tenacious perfume which had followed him everywhere since it was poured upon his hair some days before stole over the senses of the puzzled magistrate. In all his long experience no prisoner like this had ever stood before him. The colour rose in his bronzed face, and for a little time there was utter silence while the two men looked at each other.

"What did you do at the moment mentioned by this officer?"

"I drank a cup of water."

"Was that all?"

"That was all."

"Why did you go up those steps?"

"I was thirsty."

"Was that your only reason?"

"That was my only reason."

"Had any of the officers forbidden you to go up?"

"One of them gave me permission to go up."

"What did you say to the crowd?"

"Nothing."

"What motion, or gesture, did you make to the crowd?"

"None."

"How long had you been standing there facing the crowd when they began shouting—when they began shouting disorderly?"

"I merely turned and came down."

Jesse's answers were given with a simple directness which made the questions of the magistrate seem to himself an impertinence.

"I find no fault in this man's conduct," he said to the officer who had made the arrest. Then he turned again to Jesse, saying:

"You are discharged."

The gate was opened, and Jesse found himself outside among the spectators. His friends gathered round him in silence; they were afraid even to whisper in this place, so great was their dread of the grim machinery of the law. Mary Bethel put out her hand and touched the hand of her son, who responded with a strong clasp and a confident smile which changed the colour of the world for the frightened mother. Perhaps, after all, she thought, the matter had not been so serious as it seemed; it was a mere mistake, a technicality, an officer's stupidity; for Jesse was free again, and everyone in the courtroom seemed to be following him now, with admiration in their eyes, as he made his way slowly toward the door. She looked at Rose Thomas and smiled.

Among the faces in the crowd, Jesse saw that of the man who had led the band of ruffians over the river the night before. He did not know that a small steam-launch had waited in the neighbourhood of the ferry-landing and that

he would have been a passenger thereon had he demurred at crossing with the men who had climbed the hill. The sight of the butler's oily smirk made Peter clench his fists.

As they came down the steps of the building, the people in the street gave rousing cheers, and Lawrence Lane and his companions forced a way to Jesse's side. Their gladness at seeing him was unrestrained. Half a hundred voices were shouting for a speech from Jesse Bethel; but a line of officers came round the corner at that moment and began to clear the sidewalk.

"Won't you come home with me, Jesse, and rest?" his mother pleaded. "You must be very tired. Did you sleep at all?"

He smiled at her reassuringly, but did not answer the question.

"Come to our house, instead," cried Martha Lane. "You can rest there, and the mother can rest, too."

Mary Magnus made no suggestion, but only waited, with her eyes on Jesse's face. Why was he so pale? More than once she had known him to pass a night without sleep, and seem no different on the morrow. The haunting dread, which she had scarcely felt while in the courtroom, was gathering round her again. Oh, that she dared to persuade him to go away now, far, far away! Though the day was warm, she shivered as in winter, and her teeth were chattering. Why was he still standing here in the street?

"Come, Jesse," said the mother, appealingly. "You must rest for a few hours."

At that moment a group of officers approached them, and one laid his hand on Jesse's arm, telling him that he was under arrest.

"Again?" shouted Peter Bond. "What trumped-up charge have you against him now?"

"If you're not quiet, I'll arrest you, too," said the officer. "Clear out!"

"Arrest me! I wish you would. That's what I want," cried the now thoroughly angry man.

The officer laughed in his face. "If I remember rightly," he said, "you weren't so dead sure last night that he was a friend of yours."

A flush of shame overspread Peter's face, and he dropped his eyes.

"We don't want anything of you," the officer added. Then, turning to Jesse, he said:

"Come on, now!"

The two re-entered the grim building, leaving Jesse's friends standing on the sidewalk, bewildered and despairing.

"What shall we do? Oh! what shall we do?" cried John, whose nerves were stretched to the breaking point.

The mother was now crying bitterly on the breast of Mary Magnus, who had no words of comfort ready for this unexpected need. For the moment she was no less confused than the others. What could it all mean? She turned to the quiet Andrew for the strength she needed; but he was engaged in comforting Anna Martin, who was weeping on his arm. Peter was beside her; but from the look on his face she realised that he was going through some harrowing mental struggle. What words could have passed between him and that officer last night, that a mere allusion to them should cover him with shame? The only one among them who seemed to have any presence of mind was Martha Lane; she was the only one who had slept unbrokenly for the last seven nights. She now said to James Dana:

"Come with me to the desk of the police station. We will try to learn when Jesse will appear again before the magistrate." Then to the others: "Wait here till we come back."

"Shall we not get a lawyer for the Master?" Philip Manning asked. "Surely it is our duty."

Mary answered for the others:

"Can any lawyer speak as Jesse speaks?"

"He would not wish us to do anything like that," John said.

"Oh, my son, my son!" sobbed Mary Bethel. "God, our Father, do not forsake my son!"

CHAPTER LXXXV.

JESSE stood a second time before Magistrate Palmer, charged with inciting to riot. And there were witnesses who swore that when he stood on the steps of the fountain, in plain view of the people, he had raised his arms dramatically, as if appealing to them for a demonstration; that he had sent his followers through the crowd to urge the people to revolt against the orders of the police that there should be no speaking; that the word "revolution" was heard on every side that afternoon. The powers which stood behind this effort to incriminate Jesse Bethel did not appear in the police court, for fear their dignity might be defiled. In a republic, where all men are equal, dignity is a delicate fabric and easily soiled; but there is plenty of rough serge and homespun to be bought cheap and used for common purposes.

Peter and John, with their brothers, who watched and listened in the courtroom, heard false testimony to the effect that they, as Jesse's representatives, had told men in the crowd at Union Square that they were expected to shout when Jesse should give the signal. They also heard that Jesse had declared that he would start a revolution which no power could stay; that he was sent by God to destroy the government, and to establish a new order with himself as ruler.

The magistrate listened to all this testimony with a clouded brow. When the last witness had been questioned, he sat looking at Jesse for some moments. Finally he asked him, quite irrelevantly:

"Have I not seen you somewhere, before to-day?"

"It may be," was the answer; "you may have seen me a long time ago. The memory of man is brief, and the experience of the soul is long."

"What have you to say in answer to the testimony of these men?"

"To false testimony there is always but one answer."

"Can you prove that their statements are false?"

"I cannot prove, by witnesses, that I have never told you what I hold to be the truth; and yet you know that I have never told you what I hold to be the truth."

The magistrate fingered his watch-chain; he turned over and over a bundle of papers which lay before him; but his blue, penetrating eyes never shifted from Jesse's face.

"Are you hoping to revolutionise the world?"

"I hope to change the heart of the world."

"Do you believe in government?"

"I believe that the soul should govern the man."

"Do you claim to be—have you ever stated that you were God himself?"

"I have said that God is in all men."

"Have you ever told any man to disobey the law?"

"I have told all who would listen that every atom of the universe moves in obedience to the Great Law."

"Why did you go to Union Square yesterday afternoon, when you had been forbidden by the police to speak there? Remember that you are under oath."

"I am always under oath to testify to the truth, though there are few who understand it. I went to Union Square because I knew that my bodily presence, though my lips were silent, would remind all who saw me of the Spirit in themselves."

Among those who listened to this colloquy between a prisoner and his judge, there were only three who knew the struggle that was going on between the brain and the soul of that judge, and two of these three were practical politicians, so-called. The other was young Daniel Needham, the fabric of whose dignity had been strengthened by a triumphant faith. He had figured carefully beforehand how far the brain of the man on the bench might compromise with his soul, and he was prepared for any emergency which he foresaw. But his vision being slightly clouded by his own integrity, he did not see beyond the next half-hour.

The magistrate did not seem to be weighing the evidence; he seemed to be weighing Jesse. There were reasons why it would not be expedient for him simply to discharge this prisoner for the second time; but he was bound, if he could not save him altogether, to shift the responsibility from his

own burdened conscience. The form of questioning which he adopted, so unusual in a police court, made Daniel Needham wonder if he were not merely playing for more time in which to settle with himself the terms of his soul's compromise.

"What is the purpose of all your talk about a spiritual revolution?" he asked.

"I seek to incite a spiritual revolution."

"What?"

"I seek to excite the Spirit, which slumbers in every man, to a degree of aspiration that shall transform his life, his thoughts, his purposes, his heart."

"But the word 'revolution' is dangerous."

"The Spirit of God is dangerous—to those whose ways and purposes are evil."

"What are you trying to prove by your preaching?"

"I am trying to prove by my life that a man may live the faith he preaches; that a formula, if true, may be demonstrated; that the ideal and the practical are one and indissoluble. I am a miner who does not fear to test his gold with acid; I am a mower who sharpens his scythe on the grindstone of experience."

"And do you, then, fear nothing?"

"Fear is the only thing that man need fear."

Then Magistrate Palmer, having settled with himself the terms of compromise, told Jesse that he should be obliged to place him under bonds to keep the peace.

At that moment Mary Bethel, who was half-blinded by despair, felt the pressure of a hand upon her arm; and looking up, through the mist of her tears, she saw the strong face of young Daniel Needham bending over her with filial tenderness.

"Have no anxiety," he said. "I will arrange this matter of the bond, and your son will be free in a few minutes."

CHAPTER LXXXVI

WHEN Jesse was again in the open street, free, under bonds to keep the peace, he stood still for a minute or two, looking up at the sunlit sky. The Law, in the person of the magistrate, had compromised so far with Persecution, which had not appeared in person, but through representatives. The beauty of the day, the glory of freedom, came to him now as new and real experiences, thrust forward in his consciousness by contrast with their opposites. He had not realised that he suffered in the prison, save from mere bodily fatigue; for he had reached and passed the climax of personal suffering the night before, in that dark hour under the indifferent stars, when his spirit had wrestled with despair and conquered it. But freedom and sunlight were good, and he enjoyed them. His friends, respecting his desire for silence, waited a few moments before approaching him.

The crowd which had attended his first trial had become weary of waiting for his second appearance, and as the hours wore on the people had gradually drifted away. Even the early afternoon papers only casually mentioned the fact that he had been discharged and re-arrested, whereas the morning issues had been full of him. One might have said that the city was taking breath, in preparation for another and even more pronounced sensation.

As Jesse stood with bared head, looking up at the sunlit sky, two rather rough-looking men a short distance from him were talking together, keeping all the time an eye on Jesse and on a group of men who lounged in apparent idleness around the steps of a building across the way.

"Queer job, this! Wonder what it all means," observed the smaller and shabbier of the two.

"Oh, it's Bill's job, and he always knows what he's about," replied the other.

"But I don't even know what I'm s'posed to do."

"You don't need to know nothin'. All we've got to do is to follow Bill, till he gives orders."

"It's an easy job—too blamed easy fer my taste."

"Oh, don't growl yet awhile! You ain't done with it yet."

"Seems to me we hain't begun, though we've been standin' round here fer hours."

"Waitin' is sometimes doin', so Bill says."

"Well, I prefer strike-breakin'; leastways, there's some excitement, and a feller knows just what he's up against."

"What's the difference, so long as you get the money?"

"Wonder why they want to worry the man."

Look at 'im! Mike says he's a preacher. Say, who's behind this job, anyway?"

"Ask Bill."

Bill? He never tells nothin'. Even that time they jailed him in Chicago, he never opened his mouth."

This conversation was overheard by John Dana, who told his brother in a whisper the substance of it. They looked at each other in dismay. Only four of the men, with Lawrence Lane and the women, were near Jesse at this hour. The others, overpowered by weariness during the long hours of waiting for the second trial, had stolen away to snatch a little rest, and had not yet returned. Daniel Newman, too, when his brief but important duty was performed, had gone back to the duties of his daily life.

"We must get the Master away," John said to Peter, under his breath. "He is in danger."

"I don't understand him to-day," was Peter's answer.

"He seems to be in a kind of haze."

"I think we're all in a haze, from lack of sleep," said Andrew.

"That is true of us," John replied; "but it's something more than the lack of sleep that troubles him. His soul seems far away, as if it had left the earth."

"Yet he was never more vividly himself than when he answered the questions of the magistrate a little while ago."

John now approached Jesse and laid a hand upon his arm, saying:

"There is nothing more that we can do here, Master: let us go."

As they started to cross the street, the rough-looking men who had been lounging around the steps of the building opposite suddenly moved forward, and the two groups met at the corner. In telling the story afterward, John said that the one who ran violently against Jesse was of a swarthy complexion; but Peter was sure that he was blue-eyed and fair.

"Look where you're going!" shouted Andrew, as he tried to throw himself between Jesse and the men; but he was carried off his feet by a rush of other men from behind.

There was a sudden roar of voices and immediately people began running toward the spot from all directions. The women ran up the steps of a building, and huddled together in fright. Though there seemed to be a score of men pushing and tossing around Jesse, they could not see that any blows were exchanged. In the centre of the uproar stood the Master, tall and calm, with the sunlight glinting on the gold of his uncovered head.

"Oh, my son! my son!" wailed the mother, wringing her helpless hands.

In the bellowing of voices words could be now and then distinguished, insulting words directed to the one who stood there so calm and beautiful in the centre of the tumult; but though the bellowing was in many voices, the words were not.

"How can he stand so quietly?" one of the women cried.

"Because they are not touching him," said Mary Magnus.

At that moment, as if her words had been a challenge, they saw an ugly ruffian strike Jesse in the face.

"My God!" wailed the mother. "Save him, Oh, my God!"

Down the whiteness of Jesse's face there ran a line of scarlet. On the hand which had dealt him the blow there had been a jagged ring. At the sight of his blood, the women gripped each other; their lips moved, but no sound came. Again they heard insulting words to Jesse above the babel of voices.

But the passers-by, who had gathered at the sound of

the tumult, were now pressing forward, pushing to right and left the rowdies who had manufactured the affray; and cries of "Shame!" "Police!" and "Give him fair play!" were mingled with the coarser words of the rioters.

"The police are coming!" someone cried, and other voices took up the cry, "The police, the police!" Several officers were making their way through the crowd.

At that moment Jesse was seen to raise his hands above his head, as if to quiet the people, and his lips moved.

"He wants to speak!" . . . "Be still, and let him speak!" . . . "He's going to speak!" shouted those who had joined the crowd from the outside.

A burly teamster, who had witnessed the cowardly blow, now thrust himself forward, and pointing to the ruffian, said to Jesse, in tones of rage and sympathy:

"I saw him strike you! Have the law on him, sir! It's right that you should have the law on him!"

Above the noise, which had subsided a little at the officers' approach, Jesse's voice rose clear and strong:

"I know no law above the law of love. In each of you is the all-powerful and immortal Spirit. Awake, and It will revolutionise——"

"Hi, there! No talk about revolution," shouted a policeman, as he made his way toward Jesse, with club uplifted.

"Awake," Jesse's thrilling voice went on, "awake, and the Spirit will revolutionise your lives with the glory of Its presence. Its love——"

The night-stick of the officer descended on the speaker's head, and the appeal—his last appeal to the groping souls he loved—was never finished. The women who watched saw only a gap in the crowd where his Spirit-lighted face had been. He had gone down, like a soldier in battle, his last words a ringing call, his last thought for the cause to which he had given every breath of his dedicated life.

A sudden stillness held the people; for several heart-beats no one moved nor spoke. The officer who had dealt the blow stood like a figure of stone, staring down at the motionless form on the ground. Why was it so still? Could it be . . . Then a heart-breaking cry, which

those who heard it never could forget, penetrated the stillness:

"Oh, my son, my son! They have killed my son!" And Mary Bethel, staggering through the crowd that drew back to make a way for her, fell forward across the body of him who had been her babe, her hope, her glory, her despair.

Master, it is finished. Crowned with the thorny wreath of death, you lie in the dust of the earth you dreamed to save. Upon the cross of human life you have suffered, nor have you drunk the vinegar and gall, the self-deception and the bitterness, that cloud the consciousness of baser souls. Lifted up, by the Spirit that inspires you, to a height where every passer-by may see, you shall draw all men unto you by the beauty of your soul. As you passed from the outer to the inner life, the world seemed dark because you were leaving it; the veil of the temple of a dead and formal religion was rent from the top to the bottom, and the earth shook in the birth-throes of a new and living faith. For what heart can fail to be touched by a love like yours?— a love that understands all things, that forgives all things, knowing that when men cause suffering to one another and to you, *they know not what they do.*

CHAPTER LXXXVII

FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARY MAGNUS

The Presence! I have seen the Presence, the promised Comforter, the living Master—after three days of darkness and despair. With all my faith, I only half believed that I should see Him, only half grasped the promise; nor did I dream that it would be like this—so real, so visible—that He would come to me.

I have spoken of the inner vision, but knew not what it meant until this day. I used the words as others use them; they were to me a phrase, a figure of speech; I did not know that they were literally definitive of a new and undreamed of faculty of the soul.

I write down calmly, simply, as a witness testifies, the wonder that I saw; though my pulses quiver and my spirit is on fire. Will any understand?

It was this morning, before dawn. All night I had not slept. Until a late hour I had remained with the mother, who would not let me go; but made me repeat to her over and over the talk I had with Jesse in Peter's garden, when He first told me that He would die, but that I should see Him again. Even then I did not understand. And yesterday, when I repeated Jesse's words to Daniel Needham, he thought them figurative. "We see the dead," he said to me, "even as we see the scenes of our childhood, with the eye of memory alone."

As I have written, it was this morning, before dawn. I had risen from my bed and sat in a large chair by the open window; though the air was rather cold, I did not seem to feel it. It was the time of deepest darkness, before the grey begins. I had closed my eyes, which were burning with tears and sleeplessness; yet I seemed to be looking out, out into the void that His death had made of all the universe.

Suddenly, vividly, against the blackness of my inner eye-

lids, I saw *His face*. . . . I saw it clearly as I see my hand, now when I hold it up before my eyes, only the vision of His face was far more vivid than my normal sight, the colours were intenser, the light was clearer than the light of earth, and seemed to shine down upon Him from above, making the whiteness of His high forehead startlingly apparent. At first the eyes were downcast, the face was in repose; though it was not the repose of death but of calm life at rest, and the colour of His face was as I have always seen it—revealed in a light brighter than that of the sun and more transparent.

Then He raised His eyes and looked at me. . . .

How can I tell this story with the calmness of a witness giving testimony—I who have seen *the living Master!* How can I make those understand to whom the inner vision is only synonymous with imagination?

He raised His eyes and looked at me. It was the Master, the *real* Master, consciously present there in that inner world of which the seers have told us. No, I was not dreaming. To verify my certainty of that, I passed my hand along the arm of the chair to a place where the fringe was ripped away, and felt the well-known rent with my fingers. Never was I more vividly awake.

The vision still remained, and a faint smile further illumined the illumined face. He was at peace, then, and happy! In a sudden rush of joy I breathed His name, and He responded with a brighter smile.

Then, by what means I know not—but let no one dare deny the truth of what I say—I caught these words, which seemed to come from a great distance:

“I am with you always, and with all men and women who believe; and I shall here remain until the universe of souls can enter with me into rest.”

That was all! The face was gone, and I peered for it in vain through the darkness behind my eyelids. The voice was gone, too; only the rumble of an elevated-train disturbed the stillness of the night.

It is noon-time as I write, and I have told them all what I have seen; but do they understand? As He said to us one day, “Can you describe the rainbow to a man

born blind?" They know I would not speak what I do not believe; but do they think me self-deceived? A child would say that I had dreamed a beautiful dream; a learned psychologist would say that I had been the victim of a strange hallucination. But I am wiser than the learned psychologist, and simpler than the child. And I shall see Him again—of that I am quite sure.

He has said that He will be always with all men and women who believe. The eleven men believe, and many of the women. Will they not also see Him? To the mother He will surely come, and I have hope that He will come to all. Even the new believers, and those who in the future, shall open their souls to the indwelling Spirit, may see Him, if their faith is strong enough; for the Master is not dead, and He has promised to remain in the inner region of ethereal forms until all men can enter with Him into rest. Oh, sublime sacrifice!

He who has earned the right to merge His consciousness in the universal consciousness of the One Spirit, to be at one with the Father, the selfless Self, has sacrificed that right—that He may dwell for ever with the souls of men! He will suffer with us for our sins, will patiently endure the long effect of every cause which mankind in ignorance or folly shall launch upon the shoreless sea of action. He will wait for us, postponing His own bliss until all humanity shall, by countless lives and ages of experience, become as pure as He. But will they—can they become pure? Hopeless the waiting seems, yet He will wait for them. What mind can grasp such love as this? To help men to aspire, to make the long and heartsick journey easier for them, His soul will wait for theirs.

Whoever hates another; whoever fails in charity and love; whoever speaks evil of another—which He has said is just as bad as doing evil to them; whoever turns his back upon the spirit to revel in the coarser pleasures of matter, retards His rest. For He will wait for man.

Where will He wait? In the inner region of ethereal forms, He has declared; and I, who saw Him in that region, can vouch for its existence on the universal map. In the darkness behind my eyelids I beheld Him; then must

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that inner region co-exist with the universe of matter, interpenetrating it, as another dimension of space.

Bewildering thought! Yet He has said that the Spirit is within us, so must the Spirit dwell in that ethereal region. Will He become the link between the Spirit and the world of material beings? Was it for that He sacrificed all thought of happiness for self? How clear become the mysteries of faith when seen in this new light! How real becomes the dream of the indwelling Friend! No loneliness can ever sadden one who has found Him; no grief can be too heavy to endure, when He endures it with us.

And yet the question rises: how can even He be consciously present with *all* men at the same time? Can He be *personally* conscious of us all? But wait a moment before answering. . . . If He dwells in another dimension of space, may there not also be another dimension of time? The mind will reason, even though the heart be satisfied, and in such reasoning there is no wrong. It may be that to the very ones who are most learned the assurances of simple faith will seem most reasonable.

I close my eyes, for I am still a little weary from long watching. Behind my eyelids there is darkness, even in the day; though nevermore will the darkness seem a void to me. To-morrow I will write to my faithful old servant, who also loved Him, and tell her—

Oh, again He is here! The Master! . . . Shall I see His face whenever I am moved to do a loving act? He smiles, and the vision fades. But in my soul there is the strength of many—a sudden rush of power, a lightness, a determination to make my life an instrument for the service of the world.

Master, anoint my lips and guide my hand, that I may reveal you, as a *living reality*, unto all men.

