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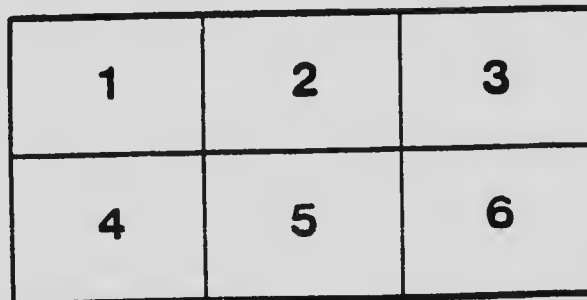
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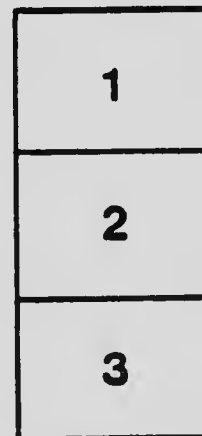
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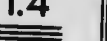
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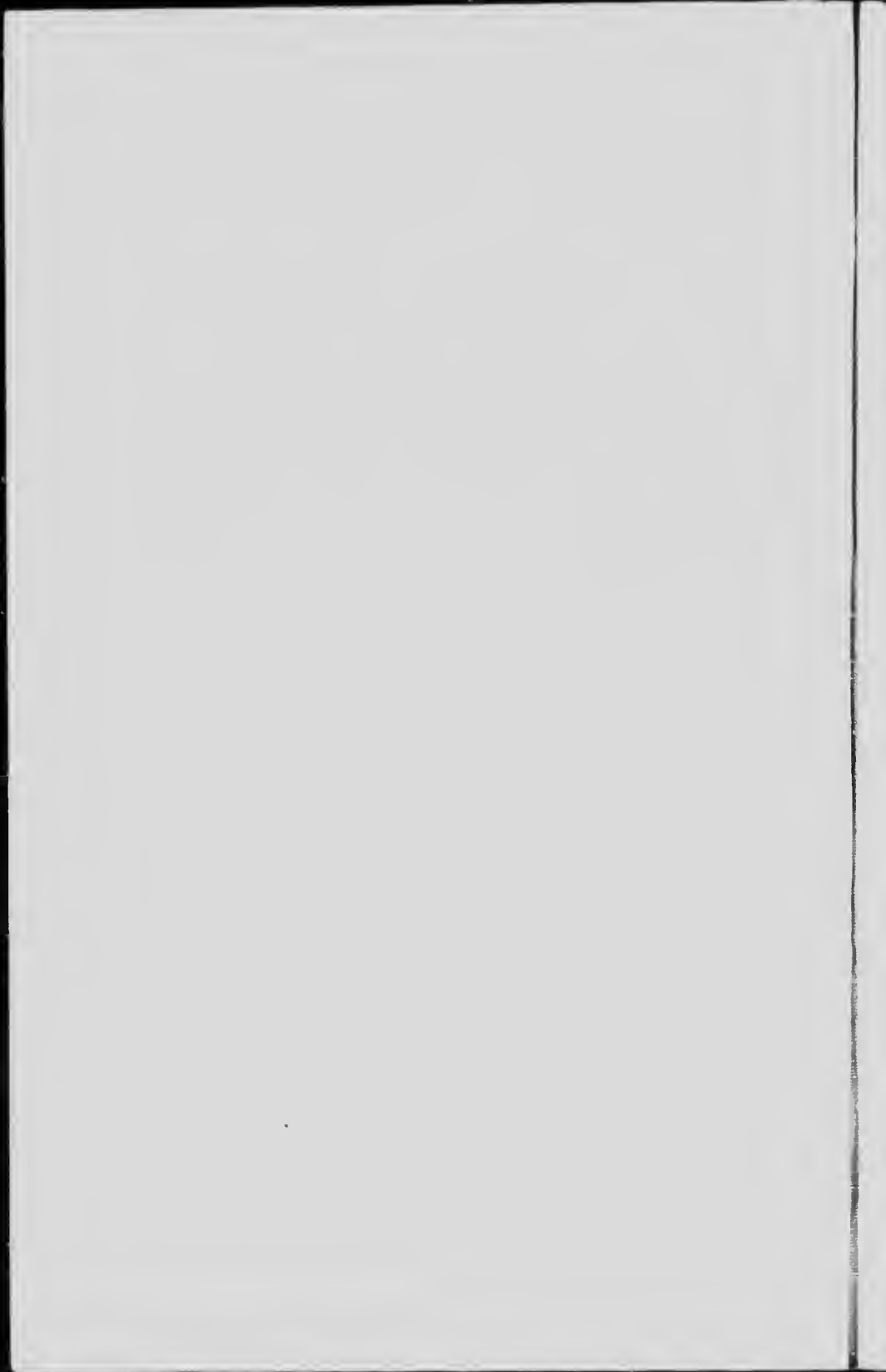
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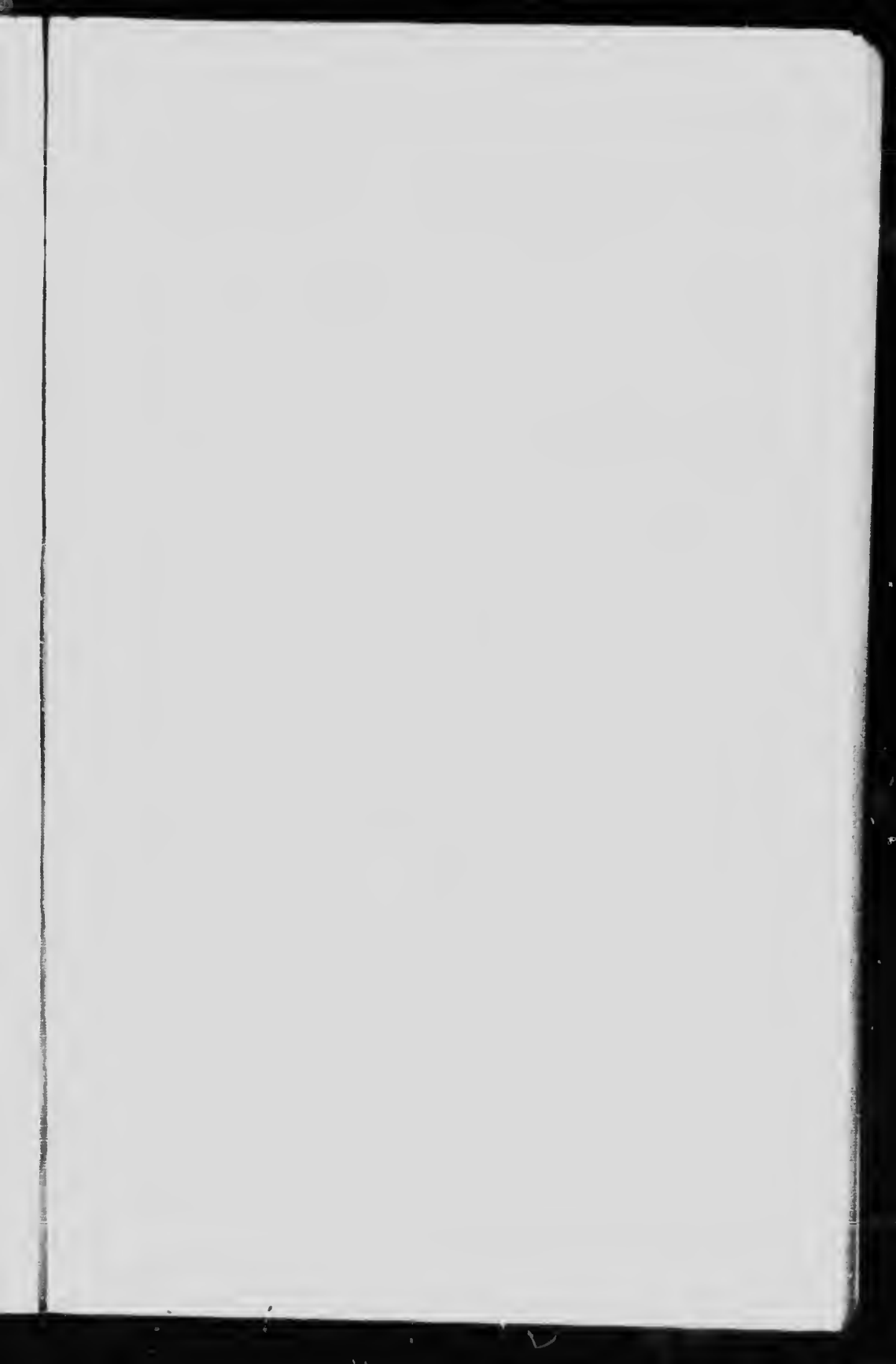
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By **ROBERT E. KNOWLES**

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# THE UNDERTOW

A TALE OF BOTH  
SIDES OF THE SEA

ROBERT E. KNOWLES  
*Author of "St. Cuthbert's"*



New York Chicago Toronto  
Fleming H. Revell Company  
London and Edinburgh

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TO ALL  
BY LIFE'S UNLERTOW BESET  
WHO ARE YET BRAVELY STRUGGLING ON  
AND ALREADY TASTING  
THE VICTORY OF THE SHORE.





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# THE UNDERTOW

## I

### *The VALEDICTORIAN*

“**A**ND now it is my privilege to award the highest academic honour of the year, the Gilchrist medal, to go to the best all round scholar of the graduating class. The struggle has been close and the examiners have had no little difficulty; but it has been fairly won by a student whose honours are already thick upon him. I must ask Mr. Stephen Wishart to come to the platform once more.”

The Chancellor's kindly eyes are turned toward the quarter of the hall from which the prizeman had more than once emerged, smiling as the familiar form starts slowly up the aisle. A storm of cheers sweeps through the Convocation Hall, before which the advancing scholar's head is bowed. Out of the silence that followed the ovation a solemn voice floated over the audience:

“They knew that in the coming time  
Great things would he achieve;  
They thought his name should sort of rhyme  
And so they called him Steve.”

The audience turned and looked up to the gallery,

where they saw a stalwart figure in gown and cap, gravely performing his laureate task.

This poetic outburst provoked fresh billows of applause, amid which the triumphant made his way to the platform, the master of ceremonies greeting him with some words of eulogy that were swallowed up as soon as launched, like toy boats in a storm.

When the demonstration had subsided, Stephen Wishart looked first at the gallery, thronged with his fellow students; then turned his pale face to the Chancellor, the latter less formidable than the others.

The students hush each other into silence, for it is evident that the man on the dais has something he wants to say. Still Stephen stands, gazing at the gallery.

"Speech, Steve."

"Come away, Wishart—let us have it; turn on the eloquence."

"Shut up, he's going to sing—like the lark at the diggings," cried still another student, who was well up on Dickens, though he had failed on Homer.

The Chancellor held his hand up towards the gallery.

"You will excuse Mr. Wishart just now, gentlemen. He is to deliver the valedictory a little later, as you know."

But Stephen interrupted boldly, finding his tongue at last.

"Mr. Chancellor," he began in a very shaky voice, silence settling as he spoke, "a word is all I want to say. I do not deserve this medal. It isn't rightly

mine. It ought to go to one who is a better scholar and a better man ; to one who would have had it in his hand this minute, if a feeble frame and an attack of sickness had not handicapped him." And stepping to the edge of the platform and pointing at a white-faced lad whose pallour changed to scarlet as all eyes were turned on him, " Every one of us knows who he is. Mr. Chancellor, I might take the medal, but the honour is his and I wish he might have both." The speaker paused as if astonished at what he had done and hurriedly regained his seat amid such a salvo of cheers and clapping as the old hall had never heard before.

The graduating exercises were resumed, proceeding a little tamely after the tension that Stephen Wishart's renouncement had created, even the gallery sails flapping in the waning breeze.

But they soon swelled again, the wind returning when it was announced that the hero of the evening would now deliver the valedictory address. Something like seriousness came over the students' faces, especially of the men graduating in theology, as their spokesman ascended the steps to discharge the duty they had entrusted to him ; for they vaguely recognized the solemn significance of it all, their very mirth bearing the pathos of its last boisterous shout. Even amid the hilarity of the night, they could hear the slowly opening gate that led to another lock in life's long canal ; could hear the dull scraping of that gangway by which they must embark, leaving the land-locked bay for the shoreless sea beyond.

Splendid was the type of manhood represented in Stephen Wishart as he stood before them. Tall and athletic, in the strong joy of perfect health, handsome of face as he was commanding of form, the intellectual power that nature had bestowed and culture had enriched, was enhanced by great physical vigour and pronounced magnetic charm.

Great strength marked his face. And struggle too; struggle and peril, the very peril that belongs to a certain kind of strength, and the very struggle that loftier natures are ever doomed to know. For there is a kind of strength that others feel more than the man who bears it, and those who admire know not at what a price it is enjoyed.

Stephen Wishart's power was of the emotions, and a discerning eye could tell that his face was the highway for their intensest action. Affection, poetic feeling, glowing ardour, flowing sympathy, all mingled in his nature, bringing their peril with their charm. The mystic gift of a creative fancy, the very thing that Israel's sweet singer found at once his solace and his snare, was Stephen's birthright. This, joined with rare mental ability, was his jewel gift; and, like other jewels, endangered the very life that it enriched.

His voice, rich of tone and deep of feeling, had yet a note of sadness, as though it knew a secret path to some hidden grave. Those who had ears to hear could have told, as his stately speech flowed on, that there had been conflict in the past, still more of conflict in the days to come.

His valedictory is nearly over, the audience thrilled by its chaste and glowing eloquence

"And now," he said at length, "we bid you all farewell as we buckle on the armour and go forth to life's long battle. Life's battle, I say, whose sternest struggle shall be, not against outward foes or opposing circumstances, but against secret enemies, against ghostly adversaries, against principalities and powers, against some festering memory, some besetting sin, some traitor of our own heart's household who sits with us at the board and eats in defiant triumph the very bread we eat in tears."

Deep stillness reigned over the student throng, so boisterous before, for they felt that Stephen was dealing with the very realities of life.

"My next and closing word," went on the valedictorian, "is a far different one from the last that I have spoken, but one that should be uttered too. It is a word of tribute to the scores of nameless ones, the fruit of whose unselfish labours is gathered in this hall to-night. How many a fellow, now before me, is finishing his course with joy, equipped the better for life's great struggle because of the heroic toil, the uncomplaining sacrifice, of some hidden one whose name is unknown in College annals, to fame destined never to be known.

"I know of one whose name I speak reverently in my silent heart, engrossed this very night in homely toil upon a distant farm, that toil to which he has given his ungrudging hand for years. And for what? For this supremely, that a brother, less



worthy far than he, might scan the ample page of knowledge, rich with the spoils of time, entering into the labours of that humble worker whose only request is the secret joy of the unselfish soul. I know of one who would lay his laurels at that brother's feet."

The responsive spirits of the gallery were not slow to catch the significance of his words, nor less tardy to acclaim.

Long and loud and lusty was the volley that marked the close of his address, the students turning one to the other the while, wondering if the tribute to these unnamed benefactors were founded on his own experience. The desired information was soon forthcoming.

"Of course he means his own brother," one of the theologues assured. "I visited at his father's farm last Christmas and he has described his elder brother to a nicety—he's a brick, too."

"You don't say so, what's his name?" cried the poet.

"Reuben," answered the informant; "they call him Rube."

Armed with which, and waiting till the din had fallen, the poet rose to his feet and called to the excited crowd,

"I say, boys, I know his name—his name is Rube, that pure gold fellow on the farm. Three cheers for Rube, I say—for all the Rubes, everywhere—three cheers, hip, hip —"

And the collegians did the rest, arts men and

theologues, science men and medicals lending their stoutest lungs to the echoing panegyric.

The Chancellor cleared his throat, for the dust was flying; when he broke the silence that came at last, his voice still bore a huskiness that something else had caused.

"Young gentlemen," he began, "the rhetoric of your gifted valedictorian, charming as it was, is still less eloquent than the generous action that we all admired; and his genius has been worthily loaned to the great tribute which closed his speech. I love you all for your noble response to it, and I say: 'God bless the Rubes' (isn't that the name?) I came from the farm myself and my heart echoes every word of Mr. Wishart's. God bless the Rubes;" and the gentle teacher paused, awaiting the answering artillery from the gallery.

As the scattering throng, the exercises of the evening over, was filing slowly out of the hall, many admiring eyes were turned toward the young divinity student who had thus closed his college course with such signal distinction. But the interest centering in Stephen Wishart was soon transferred to others, for he had given his arm to an elderly lady whose resemblance to himself at once announced her as his mother. Sweet and tender was the face which she turned towards her brilliant son, marked by suffering and giving evidence of the bodily weakness which necessitated her full dependence on the strong arm he had extended. The beauty of peace looked out from her gentle eyes, mingling with the

purity and power which marked a devout and prayerful soul.

And just behind, stooping with the growing weight of years, his face strong and thoughtful, his whole bearing lending an impression of simplicity and goodness, came Stephen Wishart's father, his glance, like the mother's, resting proudly on his accomplished and distinguished son.

The garb of both these elder folk was plain and simple, contrasting strangely with the rich apparel of many in the aisle beside them, but none could fail to catch the fragrance and the dignity with which high and honourable hearts can clothe the humblest.

They had walked some distance along the street when his mother said :

"Canna we gang some way that'll no hae sae mony folk, Stephen?"

"Yes, mother, I think we can; there's a short cut to your hotel through this street here. But it's rather dark."

"I'd sooner hae it dark. Come, faither, we'll gang this ither way."

They had proceeded but a little farther when the woman paused, turning her face upward to her son's.

"Stephen, my laddie, kiss me—oh, Stephen, my heart's ower full to speak. I cudna keep frae fearin' ye were slippin' awa' frae me, wi' a' the graua things they were sayin' about ye—but I'm y'r mither, and I'm sae prood o' ye; kiss me, my laddie," and her arm stole about his neck in the darkness, holding

him close in jealous love, breathing out her pride and her devotion.

"Come, come," the father interrupted from behind, "sic like daein': on a city street—they'll be takkin ye baith till the lockup. But yon was graun, Stephen, my son; yir highest honour the night was when ye would have yon puir laddie tak the medal. I was feart the folk wad see me greetin'—and yir mither askit me for my kerchief; she said she wantit to wave wi't. Oh, mither, I'll tell the minister on ye, tryin' to mak me believe a lee like that, wi' the tears rinnin' doon yir cheeks a' the time. Ye're a sly yin, Jean, my wumman."

"That's not worth speaking of," their son replied, disclaiming the eulogy; "it was no more than the right thing to do. Rube would have done it and never thought of it."

"Oh, wasna that fair graun aboot Reuben, faither? To think oor Reuben had his name cried oot afore a' thae great folk at the college. But it was nae mair as he deserved, the guid kind laddie as he is."

"Aye," agreed her husband, "it's no aften a laddie like Reuben gets a degree like yon, and him sittin' in the kitchen, takkin aff his boots wi' the bootjack that verra minute, mebbe. It pleased yon Moderator fine, yon Chancellor, as they call him. Will ye come ben Stephen—it's no' ower late;" for by this time they had reached the hotel.

"They smirkit at me when I was comin' oot wi' yir mither," his father continued as they went up the steps, "but they'll ken wha I am noo, I'll hold ye.

They'll ken wha's faither I am, onyway—we can grow mair than turnips on oor land, can't we, mither? —and he belongs till us baith, even if we dinna wear as fine claes as some folk ;” and the old man swelled with necessary pride as he passed into the hall, looking with the eye of a proprietor on the gracious form that leaned so fondly on her tall and handsome son.

Stephen tarried but a few minutes with his parents, for the hour was late, and the homeward journey awaited them on the morrow. He bade them good-night at the door of their room, his father's voice following him down the hail.

“Ye'll be hame to help us burn the mortgage, Stephen. Yir mither and me'll get oor degrees that nicht—and I'll juist gie them the valedictory mysel. Guid nicht, my son.”

The old man turned and reëntered his room. His wife was seated on the bed, and her husband looked at her fondly for a moment, then went over and took her face in his hands.

“Ye're tired, Jean, ye're tired clean oot, are ye no'?” He sat down beside her and she laid her head on his shoulder, her hand finding its well-known way into the hard palm that had had so much of toil.

“I'm ower happy, Robert, I'm fearin',” she answered, looking up into his face. “Oh, faither, it seems wunnerfu', does it no', that oor ain bairnie should hae sae muckle honour; he's sae clever, faither, and sae learned. But I'm mair upliftit that he's to be a minister o' the Everlastin' Gospel. We've

toiled sair, faither, but the reward is bonnie, is it no'?"

The rough hand stroked the gray locks with amazing tenderness.

"Aye, mither, God's been guid. We've had muckle joy in baith oor bairns. Mebbe we're no sae prood o' Reuben as his brither—Reuben micht hae been a wee thing smarter, nae doot, but ye canna hae——"

But the mither's face, flushed a little, is lifted now from her husband's shoulder, her protest foreshadowed on it.

"Dinna say that, Robert, dinna say that. Reuben's mebbe no' sae quick wi' the learnin' as his brither; he was aye slower wi' the buiks, nae doot. But he can read gey weel, and he's handy wi' the pen forbye, he never had a chance. Ye ken weel, faither, how Reuben bided hame frae the school; an' he aye said Stephen was to hae the learnin', bein' quicker nor himsel', he said. And oh, faither"—Jean's voice is trembling now—"he's been sae guid an' faithfu'; he's been sae true, faither, an' sae unselfish. Stephen's no' sae unselfish as his brither, an'——"

"What's that, Jean, my wumman?" cried her husband, his eyebrows lifted and a queer quizzing smile in the eyes beneath them, "what's that ye're sayin'?"

"Ye unnerstan' me, Robert; I dinna mean naethin' against the laddie we're sae prood o' the nicht. But he's no' sae self-forgettin' by nature as oor Reuben, day in an' day oot, I'm meanin'. Naebody is—an'

I'm juist as prood o' Reuben as the ither. I thoct o' Reuben the nicht when Stephen walkit up the aisle wi' the folk a' cheerin' him. I thoct o' Reuben workin' i' the fields frae the day licht till the gloamin'—an' a' the laddie's pride for his clever brither. It'll be the day o' Reuben's life when he sees Stephen i' the pulpit in oor ain kirk at hame, will it no', Robert?"

Her husband paused, then shook his head and answered slowly,

"I'm hopin' he'll no' preach the theology yon Professor gied us in his prayer the nicht."

"Whatever are ye meanin', faither?"

"Ye mebbe didna tak notice till him, Jean; but I'm fearin' he isna soond. I'm sure o't. And Stephen thinks it's richt eneuch—he tell't me that afore. An' he said he'd like fine to gang till Edinburgh to get the latest learnin'."

"What's that ye're sayin', Robert? The laddie maunna leave us noo. What wasna soond, faither?"

"Never mind, Jean," her husband answered gently; "it's mebbe only a notion o' my ain; we're auld fogies, ye ken, mither. An' noo we'll gang to rest; ye're tired, mither."

"Aye, Rober. I'm tired sair; an' times, I think it'll no' be lang till I'm haein the rest I'm needin'—pit yir hand on my heart, faither."

Jean lifted the furrowed palm and it rested tenderly on her bosom for a moment, a troubled look in the old man's face.

"Dinna vex yirsel', my lassie; it's the same auld

faithfu' heart that's cheered my ain sae lang. I wadna trade it for ony i' the land; God bless ye, mither, for a' it's been to me. Come, my bonnie, we'll leave it in oor Faither's keepin'," as he gently drew her down beside the bed, their hearts together stealing into the pavilion of eternal love.

The following day was fading into twilight as two eager faces peered from the window of the train.

"Look, mither, look, there's Burnetts' place. There's their windinill—an' the stack, yonner, see—an' that's Bessie there, see, wi' the flowers in her hand. She's a sony lassie, is she no'? She canna see us. Bessie an' oor Rube 'll mak a bonnie pair some day, eh, mither?"

Jean Wishart smiled: "I'm hopin'—an' I wadna say it to onybody else—but I canna keep frae thinkin'. faither, that Bessie's awfu' ta'en up wi' Stephen. Mebbe I'm wrang, but ——"

"Hoots, Jean, ye're aye sair feart for Reuben; it's naethin' but her admiration for a scholar laddie. Noo we're at the station—I see yir treasure, mither; Reuben's got Prince by the heid—Prince canna bide the cars."

Twenty minutes later, the setting sun clothed three happy home-goers in its dying rays, old Prince jogging as slowly along the country road as though no rude alarms of genius had ever disturbed his peace. The father and mother sat erect, sniffing the sweet country air, belauding the flowers and blossoms



that enriched it, defining the atmosphere of the city they have left behind in terms of frank ingratitude.

And before them sat the stalwart form of their first-born son, his face suffused with happiness as he listened to the composite narrative of his brother's high distinction, the parental tongues flying in fervid eulogy, the son's eyes beaming with delight. The pale cast of thought was not upon his brow, but the light of a pure and earnest life was there instead, a life whose highest attainments had been those of an unselfish heart.

He turned his head towards his mother as they passed in the gate.

"I drove Steve out that very gate when he first started to the college," he said proudly, "and I'll drive him in again. I always said he'd cut a swath when it came to learning; I knew they couldn't beat our Steve."

## II

### *The LAST of The MORTGAGE*

“**T** WAS maist awfu' kind o' the Duke! A hundred pounds—that's five times as mony dollars—maist five hundred dollars! And it looks bonny to see the Kelso post-mark again! I wonder did the Duke post it himsel' wi' his ain hands. A hundred pounds, it's a lot o' siller!”

“What way did he come to send it, faither, div ye think?”

“What way, Jean?—What way? Read the letter frae the Duke himsel'. It's his sixtieth birthday, and it was my faither that drewed him oot o' the burn when he was a laddie in petticoats—and him like to drown! And my faither did him mony a guid turn forbye that. He served on the estate long years; and so did his faither afore him. That's the way he came to send it, Jean, ma wumman—no ither way,” answered Jean's radiant husband, his strong face glowing beneath the frosting locks.

“Whatever will ye dae wi't a', faither?” resumed the good wife, settling herself by the fire for the delicious conference.

A smiling blaze broke forth from the old fireplace as Jean's familiar form drew closer to it. The back log seemed to feel her influence and stimulated its

sullen vassals into a sudden conspiracy of welcome; her gentle presence had often inflamed it thus before. The room it warmed and beautified was the sitting-room of the cheerful rustic house built in the centre of the land which Robert Wishart's father had selected as his homestead, exchanging the peaceful servitude of Scotland for the struggling freedom of the Western world.

About this hospitable fire, strong men had gathered on many a wintry night, fellow fighters of the forest, the common peril and the mutual dependence making neighbours into friends, such friends as the pioneer alone can know. Here had they been wont to meet, the day's hard conflict with heavy logs or stubborn stumps ending in merry song and genial chat, many a reminiscence of old Scotland, or the long sea voyage, or the first days of forest hardship, mingling with the cheery blaze.

And this very night it was to be the willing agent in the crowning ceremony; toil and sacrifice were to have their coronation at its glowing hands—the mortgage was to be burned, long the cumberer of their fruitful acres and the disturber of their peace.

"Whatever will ye dae wi't a', faither?" Jean asked again, more eagerly than before; for her husband was still gazing into the leaping blaze.

"What'll I dae wi't?" he answered meditatively. "I've been thinkin' o' that. The first thing I'll dae is to take the bit o' paper to the bank in the village and get the siller for it. I want to see it and hear it and feel it in my hand. No' siller exactly, mebbe

—but money onyway—bills, ye ken—twenty dollar bills I think I'll hae, and I'll hae twenty-five o' them. Twenty-five o' them and a' oor ain! Bless me, but it was maist awfu' kind o' the Duke!"

Robert Wishart settled back in his chair, the same in which his father had settled back when life's long fever was spent and gone. He spread the magic paper out anew upon his knee, adjusted his trusty glasses, unchanging with his changing sight, read the wondrous message over again, then turned smiling towards his wife:—

"Is't no' wonderful the power o' a bit o' paper when a Duke taks a notion to pit his hand till't? I dinna like to gie up the signature; but the siller'll be a sair comfort."

"Ye'll write and thank him and ye'll get his name in answer till't," suggested the canny Jean.

"Hoots, wumman! what's the maitter wi' us? We hae his name at the foot o' the letter he sent us—and he wrot it himsel'. We'll aye keep that, ye may be sure; but I'll write and thank him the morn, for a that."

"Stephen'll gie ye a hand at the writin': he's bonny wi' the pen. But ye didna tell me what ye're minded to dae wi' the money, faither. Ye'll no' leave it in the bank, will ye?"

"Na, na," answered her husband promptly. "I'll no dae that—none o' yir new fangled ways for me. A man's ain hoose is the place for his siller. And concernin' what I'll dae wi't after I get it—I've been thinkin' aboot that, as I tell't ye. It's no' to be

scattered foolishly. I'm thinkin' some o' gi'en a pickle o't to Stephen—he's wantin' mair. He's mindit to gang till Edinburgh, as I tell't ye; but it'll no' be scattered foolishly, an' that's a' I can say the noo."

He stopped, for footsteps could be heard without the door; which, opening suddenly, admitted a comely form upon whom the eyes of both fell with a distinct tenderness of affection. It was Reuben, whose glowing cheeks and brawny arms confirmed the suggestion of his homely garb, that the stern toil of the farm and its rich rewards were his. His eye beamed with the light of honour and contentment, beautifully blent, his face enriched with much of nature's kindest gift. This was now intensified by the smile of happiness which played upon it, as became the bearer of good tidings.

"Steve's home," he said quietly, as he closed the door.

"That's guid news," cried the father, "he promised me he'd be here the nicht. Where is he, Reuben?"

"I left him at the gate," answered the elder son; "he was talking to Mr. Shearer. I drove him from the station. Of course he'll be coming in, father; who should be the first to rejoice with those who rejoice, if it isn't the minister? And there'll be many more. I can see some of them from the window—the Elliotts, the Douglasses, the Gillespies,—they're all on the way—and that gray team just turning in the gate, that must be the Olivers. It's a grand time we're going to have to-night."

"Div ye ken, Reuben," said the father, "what I canna help but think o' when I see the teams drivin' sae canty to the door?"

"Indeed I don't," the son replied. "What is it, father?"

"I canna but think how easy it is noo, and how different frae my faither's time, when he had nocht but a blazed trail to guide him hame. It's a far cry since then, but I mind it weel—the deep snaw and the bitter cauld i' the winter time, and the hard work fellin' the mighty trees, and siller sair scarce forbye—but thae days were happy days for a' that, and nae man wanted leal hearts aboot him, and a' the neebours was knit wi' love and kindness. And the guid Lord set His seal to the labours o' their hands, and He has done as muckle for us tae, has He no', mither?"

This reminiscent hymn was checked before the mother's voice was heard, for feet were stamping at the door. It opened in a moment and the good man of the house hurried forward to welcome the approaching guests.

"Guid-nicht and welcome, Mr. Shearer; it's welcome ye are the nicht; come in; draw up to the fire, we're lucky to hae a chilly nicht for this time o' the year. Weel, Stephen, my laddie, is this you? You're welcome hame, my son. Reuben tells me ye twa hae been tryin' a bit argyment aboot theology—that's aye the thing to sharpen the wits, as my faither used to say—the bigger the grind-stone, the better the blade,—that was his way o' puttin' it. Tak h'in, mither, he's as muckle yir ain as ever."

The woman caressed her son with unwonted tenderness, jealous, as all mothers are, of widening horizons, and enlarging spheres, and diverging paths.

"It is always lovely to get home, mother; there is only one home and only one mother—and only one supper worth the eating," he concluded, "no matter how many fine dinners you attend in what they call high society."

His mother flushed with pleasure, touched with pride. "High society," and her own son a sharer in it! Jean was quite feminine enough to feel the thrill of pride that this reflection awakened.

"Whenever you want 'high society,' Stephen, I advise you to come home. I have seen a little of all kinds myself, and my estimate puts these old folks at the top. I think we have some of the true nobility right here beside us—and I see a few of them coming to the door."

This spoke Mr. Shearer, whose quick eye detected much pertaining to both the outward and the inward life. His observation of the former was evidently accurate enough, for in a moment a light rap fell upon the door, and its opening revealed a group of the honest yeomanry who had come to swell, and to share, the gladness of the hour. The nobility of character with which the minister's kindly thought had clothed them was obvious almost at a glance; for their stalwart frames, their genial countenances, their soulful eyes, all spoke of simple tastes and hardy toil and sweet content.

The picturesque hoods of the women, a bonnet

here and there, and the light shawls which wrapped the willowy forms or the wavy hair of many a winsome maiden, lent a pleasing variety to the interesting group.

The cordial welcome of Robert Wishart and his wife was as cordially accepted and only a few mirthful minutes had passed before the whole company was seated at the hospitable board, the host abdicating the seat of honour to the minister, as was the custom of that place and time. The Divine blessing having been lengthily invoked, and the provocations to human gratitude recounted in detail, the good man led the way, his cheerful parishioners joining heartily in the chase, pursuing to its lair and its destruction every toothsome thing that Jean Wishart's culinary genius had called to being.

The cheerful supper done, the company returned to the fireplace. Pipes were filled and lighted with solemn interest, the several streams of smoke finding their confluence at the chimney mouth, joining hands and disappearing with a sudden bound, like children escaping through a schoolroom door. One after another of the worthy farmers gave a final tap to adjust the new-lighted weed, snapped the ashy fire from the fingers, and planted heavy hob-nailed boots upon the trusty fender, settling themselves before the sympathetic flame with a guttural murmur of content.

Then the conversation, hitherto worthy of Babel, suddenly began to flag; for the company, sensitive to the significance of the hour, would thus afford their host his opportunity.



"Will we hae the cider first, faither, or after?" asked Jean in an undertone. Robert paused a moment. It was the habit of his life to answer no question, however trifling it might seem to be, without due reflection.

"It'll be better by and by. We'll hae oor bit word noo."

Robert cleared his throat, whereupon the minister rose and laid his pipe upon the mantel, a signal to come to order that was immediately recognized by his fellow guests and almost as immediately obeyed.

Then their host arose and began to speak, not without obvious embarrassment:—

"My freens, I bid ye a' welcome to Rosehill Farm the nicht. Ye've been a' here afore, mony a time, in baith joy and sorrow. When the day was bricht, ye were wi' us oftentimes; and when the mirk was sair, ye were oftener. Some o' ye helpit to build the hoose itsel'; and ye hae aye keepit it bricht wi' yir kindness and yir love. We hae warstled through thegither; and noo we're rejoicin' because there's nocht o' debt upon the auld place ony mair. I've lived and prayed and work for this hour, and noo the land my faither settled on, and cleared, and tilled, the land that holds his restin' form, it's oor ain, wi' naethin' against it—and the guid wife has done it maistly a'—dinna look doon like that, Jean, ma wumman; ye ken I'm but tellin' the truth—and baith Jean and me thank ye frae our hearts."

The old farmer paused for a moment, his hand forthgoing to the breast pocket of his Sabbath coat,

a fine garment of black that he prized all the more because it had been his father's. He produced therefrom a bulky document, almost as new and unfrayed as when his father first had signed it ; for its contents had not afforded enjoyable reading to the Wishart household since it became their own.

"It's the mortgage," Robert said simply as he drew it forth, unfolding it the while and adjusting his spectacles. Quick glances from his friends to the paper and from the paper back to his friends, light and shade alternating in his eyes, denoted Robert Wishart's confidence in the one and his suspicion of the other.

"There's naethin' to dae but this, I suppose," he said at last, "and that's no' difficult to dae. I'll dae it noo," he concluded simply ; and with a final and radiant glance around the attentive circle, he tossed the once malignant thing, now robbed of its venomous tongue, into the eager fire, which wrought its quick revenge upon it, swallowing it up in the twinkling of an eye and crackling merrily as though it knew the completeness of its triumph.

Robert resumed his chair, Reuben finding a place upon the arm of it, his glance meeting his father's in mute rejoicing. The latter, unaccustomed to the rôle of chairman, nodded towards Mr. Shearer ; who rose to his feet, extending his hand as he did so.

"Mr. Wishart, we rejoice with you to-night," said the minister ; "we congratulate you on this reward of your faithful labours. But you have won more

than your broad acres—you have won the respect and the love of your neighbours, of every man who rejoices with you to-night, and of all the countryside. May your father's God keep and bless you and your dear wife, and all who are so dear to you, and to her, and to Him. And may the eventide be very bright about you!"

One or two of the others followed the minister; but their words were as halting as they were kindly, for public speaking was not in common vogue among these stalwart toilers. They concluded with the hearty proffer of hardened palms, as heartily gripped by their neighbour and his rejoicing wife, well equipped for this exercise by the long practice of a native gift. As each man returned to his chair, he lifted his pipe from the mantel, and soon the separate rills of smoke were finding again their outlet to the ocean blue.

Jean's keen instinct scented the proper moment. "Noo'll be the time for the cider, faither—and the cake." Her husband nodded assent, and both of the aforementioned were speedily produced.

"Here's a toast to ye, guid freens," cried Andrew Telfer suddenly, holding his glass aloft. "A toast to Robert Wishart and his wife, I say; and I bid ye a' drink hearty! Guid health and mony years to them baith! Half o' what they deserve is guid enough for onybody!"

More palatable than speech-making was this fashion of friendship's pledge to these earnest men, who accepted the challenge with a stifled cheer, springing

to their feet at the word, and draining their glasses with equal goodwill to their hosts and satisfaction to themselves.

"Gie us a song, Jock Sudden—gie us 'Bonny Doon,'" called one of the stalwarts, whose great-grandfather had drunk many a toast with Burns himself, unconscious that his boon companion was one of the Immortals. "Gie us 'Bonny Doon,'" he cried again.

"This is no time for ony song but yin," responded Jock; "I'm thinkin' o' the loggin', and the plowin', and the reapin',—the cold and the heat we've stood thegither wi' these true freens o' ours. I canna forget a' the joys and the sorrows o' the years that's ahint us. And there's only ae song that's fittin'—and it's aye fittin' for a time like this. Where's yir fiddle, Reuben?"

Jean knew well its resting-place; and almost as Jock uttered his request she was on her knees before the old settee. Drawing it forth, she handed it to Reuben, who needed no urging to his task. "What'll it be, Jock?" he said, as he imprisoned it beneath his chin.

"Dinna be puttin' on ony airs, Reuben. Ye ken fine, Rube! What wad we sing the nicht, forbye the song I'm thinkin' o'?"

Reuben smiled, drew his bow across the strings, sounded the undying strain, and every ploughman's heart heard again the voice of the mightiest of their craft. Music was wedded now to love, which alone reveals the former as a queen and brings her

into her stately kingdom. Stern lips took up the words, gently caressing them while they sang, every face glowing with tender light. The fire-gleam fell laughingly upon the earnest throng, the same gleam as had lightened their days of darkness and now enhanced their hour of almost solemn joy. The sturdy frames blended in the firelight, moving closer the one to the other, the same faithful frames as had stood shoulder to shoulder in pioneer toil and peril; heavy feet kept time lightly on the oaken floor as the great lines came in unison from their lips:

"We twa hae paid't i' the burn  
Frae mornin' sun till dine,"

soft glances interflowing from eyes that were not used to moistness. Robert Wishart's glance never turned from his wife's beaming face, and hers saw no other but his own; for the long struggle had afforded them a battle-tent, unentered by any but their own two faithful hearts.

"Dinna tak yin anither's hands till the second verse," sang out Jock, an extra breath devoted to the order—for some of the ardent youthful hands were anticipating the climax of this great carol of the heart.

The fiddle bore them on and its liquid stream laved the mighty promontory:

"So gie's a hand, my trusty freen  
And here's a hand o' mine,"

whereat hard hands and tender hearts, both alike

mellowed by the rich summer of a life-long toil, went forth to meet and to cling to hands and hearts as tender as their own.

During much of the evening, Stephen had stood aloof, his face alone denied its share of the almost unshadowed glow that wreathed the happy farmhouse in its genial light. Most of the company had been the friends of his early youth; but, whether due to their shyness toward the young student, or to the embarrassment that even brief absence will sometimes bring to sensitive natures, he had stood all the evening on the shore, watching the flow of happy hearts, rather than mingling with its joyous tide.

His mother's watchful eye had been the first to note the jarring circumstance, but no word passed her lips, nor any glance of eye marked her disquietude. When, however, the happy circle had framed itself in obedience to Jock's cheery summons, and Stephen was not within it, she could forbear no longer.

"Come awa', my son," she called gently; "come awa' wi' the others. Let's hilt Auld Lang Syne thegither."

Stephen arose, compelling a responsive smile, and drew near to the waiting ring. His mother moved slightly to make room for him beside her, but Stephen either saw her not, or pretended that he did not see; and passed quickly to the side of another member of the group. This other was a girl of about nineteen years of age, who turned and looked at Stephen as if much surprised when he chose his place beside her. But the glowing cheek seemed to indicate that sur-

prise was not altogether unmingled with emotion, and the kindling eye confirmed the thought in at least one heart of those about her.

Tall and sinewy, endowed with that peculiar outward grace which culture cannot simulate, Bessie Burnett might well have called to herself the worthiest hands in any circle that wreathed itself for song. Gentle tides of health found their pathway in her cheek, sweet and fair with the health-giving flow; her fair hair hung in artless tresses about her brow, or fell in untrained beauty upon white throat and bosom exposed in girlish innocence. Beauty, rather than character, marked her face.

It was beside this winsome maiden that Stephen chose his place. He had not been careful to remark whose place he had supplanted, or whom it was he had almost pushed aside by his impulsive choice; and it was only when the fingers began to proffer mutual hands that he turned to see. And behold! the face that met his own was his brother Reuben's, paler now than Stephen had ever seen it before; and the eyes had in them a strange admixture of challenge and appeal as they fell on Stephen's ardent gaze.

"So gie's a hand my trusty freen  
And here's a hand o' mine."

Thus rolled the song from every honest heart, and it was swelled by Stephen's robust voice, by Bessie's trembling lips, by Reuben's faltering note. Into Stephen's strong hand stole Bessie's fluttering palm, while Reuben's, expectant of a different trust, hung

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limp and cold within his brother's. Stephen vainly sought, by cordial pressure, to prompt it to a warmer grasp—for a temporary victory affords the victor temporary grace.



### III

#### *HIRAM STIRS The POOL*

**T**HE next morning Stephen was early astir. No one was about, evidently no one up, as he went down-stairs and wended his way outward to the barn, the scene alike of work and play in the days he rejoiced to think were now behind forever. He stroked the faces of the soft-eyed horses, outstretched to him above their mangers, the faithful brutes recognizing no necessity for change. They sounded their breakfast call as they had been wont to do, and Stephen passed on to the bin, returning amid the din of stamping feet and hungry whinnying, to pour their oats before them. He was rewarded by that ever comfortable sound of horses amid-meal, munching in manifest delight.

Then he turned his steps toward the mow, still snugly filled with hay; and memory brought before him many a scene of romping merriment and many a theatre of skill and daring in the days that were now gone by. Yonder had they leaped from the topmost rafter into the billowy straw, feigning the heroic plunge from deck to ocean—there had swung and swayed the swing, of blessed memory; higher still, from beam to beam, they had laid the slender pole which only the daring would undertake to walk, and they only when inspired by awestruck eyes and

bated breath of gentle forms, chief among which he recalled one whose golden tresses they were wont to deck with crown of fragrant clover.

Whereat the stream of memory flowed down, down and back till it paused at the very night before, the night on which this morn had risen. He shook himself from the tangled meshes of his dream as a swimmer strives to hurl the seaweed from his arms. Upon the scene that prompted it he turned his back, walking slowly out to the barnyard.

"Good-morning, Stephen—you are out early—I reckon study isn't good for sleeping."

He turned quickly and encountered an engaging face, that of a man about his own age. Hiram Barker had come a youth from England and had attached himself to the place some years before, indifferent to wage, asking only to learn the farmer's art. Vague rumours were afloat concerning his superior connections in the old world, though these had never been substantiated. His manners were worthy of the highest station, marked by every evidence of refinement; and his mental habits were as vigorous, and their outcome as fruitful, almost, as Stephen's own.

"Good-morning, Hiram," answered Stephen, the vision of the man's tranquil countenance evidently affording him as little pleasure as the sound of his suggestive voice. "It's a fine morning," he continued; "I've fed the horses their grain."

"Much obliged to you, Stephen—seems like old times," the man rejoined familiarly, "not every horse gets its feed from a preacher's hand."

Stephen flushed with irritation as he noticed the derisive tone and caught the gibe so noticeable in the words. He started onward to the house.

But Hiram had no intention that the interview should end so abruptly.

"Don't be in such a hurry, Steve; can't you wait a minute for old sake's sake? I'm uncommon proud of my old chum. It did me good to see you last night, a college bred man like you, among all those hayseeds, even if you didn't exactly join in with them."

"Don't be a fool, Hiram; I don't understand what you're talking about. And I'll have you to understand that I don't want my parents or my friends described that way," answered Stephen, disgust with the man, and fear of him, both mingling in his voice.

"Don't be so crusty, Steve. I meant no harm; but I couldn't help feeling last night that my old friend had outgrown me, swum away on ahead, you understand. You used to be the life of every company like that we had last night. But you seemed so changed and distant that I couldn't help feeling my old chum wasn't there at all. I changed my mind, however—it was something you did yourself that changed it." And Hiram smiled right knowingly.

"What was that?" Stephen asked quickly, prompted by an impulsive curiosity. "I didn't do anything specially remarkable that I know of."

"Nothing very remarkable, Stephen, as you say—but it gave you back to me again. It was when you

broke in between Rube and Bessie. By jove, didn't she look stunning last night? And you made straight for her, Steve—oh, yes, you made straight for her—and the old light was in your eye, and I said to myself:—'That's my old Steve back again, preacher or no preacher, that's my old Steve sure enough.' You always had an eye for the fair ones, Stephen, and the pulpit isn't going to put it out, I'm afraid." And Hiram laughed aloud till the fowl in the barnyard echoed back the strain.

Stephen's face was crimson with shame and anger. "Your insults are lost on me," he retorted hotly. "Nobody but a fool could understand you, for you talk the language of a fool. What has anything you saw last night got to do with you, or the light in my eye, or any of my past that you know anything about?" he cried, conscious of the medley of his words, yet avoiding a directer question.

The laughter vanished from the face of his tormentor as he turned his eyes upon Stephen, and serious disdain could be seen within them.

"Don't try any heroics on with me," he said at length, in lower tones than either of them had used before; "there's no reason why you and I should quarrel. All I want is that we should understand each other. I don't forget so easily, Steve Wishart. You know what I mean—you've done meaner for me than you ever did for Rube! You remember Li—but I needn't mention names. You are no more likely to forget than I am. That was before you were 'called,' as you say, to the ministry."

"You may taunt me as you please," answered the unhappy Stephen, "and I don't make out everything I did to be right. But remember one thing, Hiram, it was you who first taught me the ways of sin—you taught me to take sin by the hand, and God knows the whole warfare of my life is to put out the fire that no one kindled but yourself."

"Yes," broke in the other passionately, not waiting for his companion to conclude. "I taught you, I know, as I was taught by others; and I have had my punishment. You know how I loved her—and never loved anybody else — Yes, I've been punished, as I said. The Bible that you're going to preach says:—'Your sin will find you out,' and you have my permission to say it's true. I'll help you preach that much, Steve. If any of your hearers doubt it, refer them to Hiram Barker, Rosehill Farm—he knows it's true—he'll give them chapter and verse for it all right."

"There's something truer still than that, Hiram—the grace of God can —"

"Bah!" broke in the other derisively, "don't try your preaching on with me, Steve. What do you know about the grace of God? You go to your preaching and I'll go to my ploughing; but don't let either of us talk about that kind of thing—at least not to each other. But you'll need it yet, Steve, you'll need it—and who knows but you'll get it too? Who knows?" he repeated almost musingly.

Suddenly he fixed his eyes again on Stephen's face.

"Steve, you know I've got no love for you, don't you? And you know I've got good cause to hate you, don't you?" pursued the man, the dark shade of anger clouding his face again.

"I don't acknowledge ——"

"All right, never mind about acknowledging. As long as you have your memory, I can afford to care nothing for your acknowledgments. But now I'm coming to the point. Do you know what my worst wish for you is, Steve ——? It's a cruel, savage wish—the devil couldn't wish you worse. Guess what it is."

Stephen gazed wonderingly, fearfully, at the face that peered into his own, and his tongue seemed to refuse to speak. For even the humblest enemy is mighty when the Past is in his hand.

"You would never guess, Steve, what I'm going to wish you. You wouldn't think I'm religious enough to wish you this—but I'm more religious than you think for. And if I get my wish—which I think I will—" "I'll get my revenge all right; I mean, you will succeed enough to satisfy all the enemies you ever had."

"Let me pass," broke out his listener, extending his arm as if to brush Hiram aside.

"All right, Steve, you may pass—on you go. And my wish for you is this, that you'll go on into the ministry, without the grace of God. Understand, Wishart? You're to go on into the ministry—without the grace of God. That's my wish—cruel enough, I'll admit, but that's my wish for you. A

preacher without his papers—secret papers, you know. Go on, Steve, run your mill by hand—no steam, no water, nothing but your own hands; and make folks believe you've got a different power. That's my wish for you, Wishart, and even God Almighty can't disappoint me unless He does a heap of surgery on you; and either one'll suit me all right. Good-morning to you. Good-morning to you, Reverend Stephen Wishart, minister of the Gospel of the grace of God."

Hiram bowed low, raising his hat, then picked up the pail he had been carrying and went on his way, the sinister eyes flashing as he went.

Stephen answered not a word, but hurried forward to the house. He encountered his mother at the door.

"Guid-mornin', laddie. It's a brichtsme day. Ye rested weel, I hope. Come ben to your breakfast. I was juist gaein' to ca' ye. The parritch is lifted and yir faither's waitin'," said the faithful woman, looking proudly on the son whose gifts and promise were her greatest joy.

"Thank you, mother, but don't wait breakfast for me. I slept poorly last night—too much of your good cooking, I'm afraid," and Stephen commanded a faint smile as he spoke, "so I think I'll see if I can't rest a little—I'm not feeling extra well."

"Puir laddie," responded his mother, "it's ower hard studyin' wi' the books that's no' guid for ye, but tak ye a wee bit rest and ye'll mebbe feel mair like yir breakfast after that. Let doon the blinds and ye'll rest the better."

Stephen did let down the blinds, and on the softest of pillows he laid his weary head. But there are blinds invisible which we cannot draw at will, and the unshielded soul that craves them, conscious of other larger eyes than ours that search it through and through, looks and longs in vain for the shelter that is denied. Such a soul was Stephen Wishart's, vainly searching for its cover and finding no pillow worthy of its weariness. The past, with its every turgid tide, its every muddy tributary, surged about him where he lay; and the voice of Hiram Barker echoed in his soul like the voice of doom. And now he lives over again the hour of defeat which Hiram's words recalled. Deep and sincere was the penitence he felt, earnest and true his desire to redeem his sin by a life of devoted service; and plaintive indeed was his secret cry for a regenerated heart that might justify the life-work he had dared to choose.

He was still pondering the past, now sallying into the days that were gone, now fluttering fearfully forward toward their darker descendants yet to come, when a sound from the kitchen below attracted his attention. It was a note of music, roughly but accurately uttered by his father's voice, evidently in quest of a tune. Stephen understood at once—they were beginning family worship, always opened with a psalm. He had often found it wearisome enough, but it seemed strangely interesting now—and welcome too—for it had the subtle charm of reality about it, like his mother's substantial fare, compared with the confectioneries of nimbler hands.



He partly rose, leaning his head on his hand, and listening intently. Once or twice his father cleared his throat, pursuing the note again; then a slight murmur of satisfaction with his search and the psalm began. Up into his room floated the stately words, his father's voice clearly in the lead, followed by his mother's quavering tones, Reuben joining with a rich and mellow bass:—

“Behold Thou in the inward parts  
With truth delighted art  
And wisdom Thou shalt make me know  
Within the hidden part.”

Stephen's soul went down before the mighty numbers; his spirit seemed caught into the current of the noble prayer and he tried to join the singing. But his voice was choked in tears. The vision of the great lives beneath him, whose shoe-latchets he knew himself unworthy to unloose—their simple faith, their unstained purity, their loyalty to God—and the mingling vision of his own warring heart, his treacherous will, his tarnished life, lent to the words a power and to the prayer a beauty that melted his soul within him.

Still listening, he could catch the murmur of words, but too low to be heard distinctly—evidently the reading from the Book. A few minutes more, and a shuffling of chairs, followed by deep quietness, betokened that they had sought the Presence whose reality Stephen knew was the power of his parents' lives. Only two phrases did he hear. Once he caught the words: “Help us to live true lives before Thee

this day"—and the contrite heart coveted the answer for its own. Again he heard: "Give him a great secret for his great work," and the listening son knew well for whom his father prayed.

He rose from the bed, his whole soul bathed in purpose. Kneeling low, he poured out his heart in penitence, while resolve and entreaty mingled in passionate petition.

"Oh, God, save me from the past," he cried. "I was young—and I was caught into the torrent before I knew its danger. Oh, God, give me a clean heart and make me hate sin—make me hate sin, oh, my Father," he repeated, "and let me love Thy will—and Thy work." Then, one by one, he sought to bring the sins of his youth forward for forgiveness; but his mind threatened to linger on them and the stain menaced his heart anew. He forbore, concluding with a repetition of his former cry, struggling back to the shore like one whose garments are wet with the torrent's spray.

Still struggling, he walked to the open window and looked out. The morning sun, far on its calm journey now, was shriving all it touched with holy light. The tranquil purity of all around him seemed to soothe the tumult in Stephen's soul, speaking to him with its silent voice. New life was manifest in herb and flower and leaf, bud and blossom faintly heralding the regeneration of the year. Recovery and wholeness and triumph seemed about him on every hand—and the instinct of life seemed to throb with victory, numbness and decay retreating with ever-hastening

steps. May not the soul have its spring-time too? thought Stephen Wishart.

Suddenly he heard the sound of voices—but nobody was visible.

"I can't wait, Reuben," he heard a familiar voice say. "I only came to get the glass pitcher that mother loaned for last night—and I must hurry back. Father's shearing the sheep and mother'll be needing me. It's churning day."

"Never mind the churning, Bessie," Reuben answered. "Hiram's going to the post and I told him to drop in and give your mother a hand at anything she was at. I knew your father was at the creek. I want to speak to you. Let us sit here by the well."

Stephen, obedient to a sudden impulse of honour, stepped noiselessly back and sat upon the bed. He knew their words were not for him, but the words followed him—only a few random fugitives did he catch, but they were enough to provide his conscience with a hinge.

"Why would you go away, Reuben? Your father and mother surely need you here—and lots of folks would miss you."

"You know, Bessie, you know why I want to go away," answered Reuben's voice.

Then some words followed which were too low for Stephen's ears. "For my sake," Bessie cried in answer, "for my sake, Reuben! Why go away for me? No, I didn't say I'd miss you—I won't say anything about that. You can decide about that your-

self—I guess you know. But what would your going away have to do with me?”

“You know well enough, Bessie—why should you ask me to tell you? You know I’m only a rough uneducated farmer, nothing but a clodhopper and not likely to be anything better—while I stay here. And I can see you aren’t satisfied. Here I am with no prospects but a farm—and it not free from debt till lately; and no money amongst us except that windfall that father got from Scotland. I don’t blame you, Bessie. You want somebody with education, or money, or both—somebody with fine manners, who has seen something of the world, somebody that you can be proud of. That’s the kind of man you want—or ought to want.”

Bessie’s voice trembled as she answered:—“I want something more than that, Reuben—every girl wants more than that.”

“What is it, Bessie? tell me what is it?” urged Reuben.

Bessie’s answer was low, so low that Stephen could not hear, but the last words were plain enough:—“A true heart that will never change, never, never at all, but get truer and truer the longer they both live—that’s what every girl wants.”

“I know, Bessie. I know all that—but you want something more besides. Something I can never get or give you here. You know you are beautiful, and you are meant for lovely things, and high society, and educated people, even if you do live on a farm like myself. You are meant for somebody

like that—somebody like Stephen," he concluded, and his voice was different, faltering as he spoke the name.

"Stephen wouldn't think of me"—the girl's voice was trembling—"we used to be such friends—but I've got sense enough to know about Stephen now. You remember that paper he sent us about that reception—and the description of all the fine dresses and things—you remember?"

Reuben did remember, for his soul had secretly exulted over it; but he noticed the look of longing pain in the girl's eyes and a shadow crept across his own.

"Steve's too noble a fellow to be influenced by such things as those," he replied. "Steve's almost a minister now, and he loves souls for their own sakes; the rich and the poor'll all be alike to him. I don't think worldly attractions, society things, I mean, have any charm for Stephen."

The girl did not fail to note the shade upon his face and it lent music to his generous words, the love he bore his brother struggling to hold its own against the great supplanter.

Divine authority there was, and Reuben knew it, for the desertion that forsakes a brother to cleave to that same supplanter—but Reuben would cleave yet a while to both.

Stephen was the younger, and the more delicate. A violent sickness in early boyhood had well-nigh borne him off; after he was convalescent, he had been much in Reuben's care; and the latter had

shielded him by day, and had wakened all through the wintry nights to assure himself that the little invalid was covered up and warm. Thus the protection of his brother had become the habit of his life and almost the deepest passion of his heart.

"What is Stephen going to do now, Reuben?" Bessie asked. "Has he got a call to a kirk?"

"I don't know, Bessie—he hasn't told me. But he wants to study in Scotland; I know he asked father for the money," answered Stephen's brother.

Then Reuben's voice dropped lower and Stephen could hear but little of what he said. What he did hear, however, was enough to let him know that he was no longer the subject of his brother's pleading. The poor hungry heart was speaking for itself now. He was speaking louder than before.

"I can never hope to be clever like him, but happiness isn't in being clever, Bessie; it's in being happy—and that's an entirely different thing. Won't you bid me go, Bessie? And won't you promise to write to me, and cheer me on, and wait for me—and let me feel all through the fight that your heart is helping me to try and be worthy of you? I'll try so hard—and I know I can succeed."

"But Reuben, if you could be happy anywhere—if both of us could be happy anywhere," and the blush of ardent innocence gave beauty to the words, "there's no better place than just here where everybody else seems to be happy too. Everything is pure and lovely here—but don't ask me, Reuben—don't urge me so. I admire you so, Reuben—no—

body in the whole world admires you like I do. I think you are so good; everybody does—and father says you could be an elder.”

“I don’t want to be an elder,” the other broke in abruptly, “and I don’t want to be admired; I don’t care whether anybody admires me or not. I want to be—oh, Bessie, Bessie”—and the listener above them trembled like a leaf at the great stillness that followed, broken by no voice of words, but only by the old, old rhetoric of passion’s movement, that semi-savage, semi-heavenly, music of a man’s tender overpowering and woman’s surrendering resistance.

“Oh, Reuben, Reuben,” he heard at last, “you mustn’t—we mustn’t—some one’s calling me,” and in a moment the graceful form could be seen hurrying across the sward. But Stephen knew from their very sound that those lips had been touched by kindred coals of flame—and his own were parched and white. He watched the girl’s lithe frame as it retreated in the distance, the golden hair tossed in the morning wind; and he saw, too, or thought he saw, the heaving bosom and the burning cheek—but all were beautiful, marked more by beauty than by strength, he knew.

He walked across the room and threw himself upon the bed; in a moment he is up again and pacing the floor.

He strides to the window again and looks at the morning’s majestic purity, unnoticed now. A man’s form is visible, appearing above a distant hill. He gazes at it a minute as it plods heavily on, and sees

it to be Hiram, returning from his errand. Then doors of ebony fly open wide, and ghostly memories, black-robed, rush in, the very memories he had fore-sworn forever, upon his knees surrendering them to the destructive custody of God. He bids them be-gone—back, still back he bids them go; and all are driven forth save one, one only, that had long been the favourite of his heart. It lingers—and soon the door is open wide again, and all the banished return rejoicing to the room that hath been swept and garnished—all unresisted now.

Stephen turns from the window, his back turned upon the light; the room is strangely dark after looking at the meadows and the sun; but not unpleasantly so to his ardent eyes. A robin is voicing its pure note from a tree beside the window as Stephen turns away; but he hears it only for an instant, dismissing the sweet suggestion.



IV

*The OLD SCHOOL AND The NEW*

“**I**’VE been thinkin’ it ower to mysel’, Stephen, and I talkit to yir mither about it—an’ I dinna ken weel juist what to dae.”

It was Robert Wishart’s voice; and he was seated again in the familiar kitchen seat.

Jean was over at the Burnetts’, holding high conference upon the high proceedings of the social gathering whose story has been already told. Reuben was still employed with the varied duties of the byre, through whose open doors came the sound of many a bovine vesper song.

“I don’t know either,” answered Stephen. “May I ask a plain question, father? Have you any money except what they sent you from the old country? Don’t think I’m prying into your affairs; but when I spoke to you about sending me abroad to study, I thought perhaps you had a little laid by in all these years.” Stephen’s rather embarrassed face was turned towards the door as he asked the question, fearing interruption.

“Ye’re no’ interferin’, Stephen—no, there’s naebody there; Reuben’s attendin’ to the cattle for the night. Ye’re no’ interferin’, as I said. We’ll no’ begin now to hae ony secrets among us. But about the money—I hae nae mair, forbye a pickle that I’ll gie to Hiram when the month comes round. There’s

no' been muckle money in farmin' these late years. I mind the time o' the war in Russia—wheat was gey high then—twa dollars a bushel for months on end, and glad to get it, tae. It's but three-quarters o' a dollar now. But I'm no' complainin'—war's a wae-some thing to mak money oot o'."

"Didn't you lend some money to Archie Gourlay, father?" Stephen asked after a short pause, his mind still fixed on Edinburgh and all possible assets thereto assisting.

"Aye, I loaned him a wee pickle—puir Airchie, he had aye the manners o' a Duke when he was wantin' siller. I mind how he held the gate open when I started ben the hoose to get it for him—but 'twas sair different when I wantit it back. I had to open a' the gates mysel'," and Robert Wishart indulged himself in a low gurgle of laughter. "He was ceevil enuch for a' that; I mind he told me he wadna ask the note afore he paid the money on't," and the kindly creditor laughed again.

"Did he ever pay you?" Stephen asked.

"Na, he never did—and he died a twalmonth syne, as ye ken. And a fortnicht later his horse was killed wi' lichtnin'—and the stirkie was droon'd—and his puir widow bocht a lichtnin' rod frae a scoun'el that cam' round—and that's waur nor buyin' a farm itse. Sae I cudna be ower hard; and I never pressed her mair. The body seems gratefu', nae doot; says she aye gies me her vote for an elder. And I aye cry back it's a sair pity she canna gie me the fitness, tae," and the old farmer smiled, ending with a sigh.

"Where is the note?" Stephen ventured.

His father paused a moment; then nodding his head forward he replied:—"It's in there."

"In there! Where?" said Stephen, "in the Bible do you mean?" for the sacred volume was often the receptacle of cherished manuscripts; and within its hallowed pages was many a Scotchman wont to read his title clear.

"Na, it's no' in the Buik. I never mix thae things thegither. Though ma faither did—he aye keepit his marriage lines at the thirteenth o' First Corinthians, and his mither's funeral card at the fourteenth o' St. John. Guid bits, tae, baith o' them," he added, his mind evidently more engrossed with these tender thoughts than with the matter in hand.

"But where did you say the Gourlay note was?" Stephen renewed, for he was in no antiquarian mood just then.

"Oh, the note," said his father, reclaiming his thoughts with a start, "it's in there where I tell't ye."

"In where?" pursued the son, "I don't see anywhere where it can be; there's nothing there but the wall."

"It's i' the fire," the head of the house gravely averred. "It ought to be there, onyway. That's where I saw it last—and it's the place for a' such things wi' neebours, to my way o' thinkin'—I'll never hae anither."

Stephen gazed intently into the fire, his mental attitude prompting the stare.

"Ye canna see't," the old man interposed, a

solemn smile playing about his lips. "It's i' the fire, nae doot, but its individuality is gone, ye ken," he concluded, undertaking a word as large as the generous action which had necessitated it; "but the fire's seemed to me to burn brichter ever since," he added, "and it'll no' dae the widow's fire ony harm forbye."

"Oh, I see," Stephen mused abstractedly.

"Aye," responded the other, "that's what I think mysel'." Then silence, that greatest arbitrator, took the ill matched argument into her keeping, judgment to be reserved.

Robert Wishart was the first to renew the conversation:—"Mebbe we'd better be takin' up that maitter o' business again—ways and means hae their ain place, as my faither used to say. Aboot yir gaein' to the auld country, Stepher—I dinna ken weel juist what ye oucht to dae, as I was sayin'. I've gied ye a guid schulin', and pit ye through for the ministry; and I was hopin', mebbe, that ye'd sune be daein' for yirsel'. It's ta'en a heap o' siller—not that I'm grudgin' it, Stephen, far frae that—but yir mither's needin' a new gown, and I'd like Reuben to hae a bit thing or twa—a watch mebbe; and we're needin' a new carriage; and I was thinkin' o' takin' yir mither for a wee bit holiday. She's far frae weel, as ye ken yirsel'. Her heart's ailin', the doctor says, and she maun hae rest, he says tae." Brooding seriousness sat on Robert Wishart's brow.

Stephen's face paled, and he poked the fire meditatively. "I understand, father, and I don't want to

be selfish—I hope I'm not selfish," he continued gravely, his gaze averted from his father's, so steadfastly set upon him. "You've certainly been kind to me—but it does seem too bad not to give my education the finishing touch now that we've gone so far. You see, father, this is a very new—and very raw—so far as its culture is concerned, at least, especially in theology; one really doesn't get the latest thought in theology that's in vogue in Germany. But I don't think of Germany. I've begun to read the German books—and I've heard that in Edinburgh they have some grand theologians, thoroughly modern, up to date, men, who are familiar with the new theology, and that is what a fellow needs for the ministry in these days. You have to keep abreast of the times if you would succeed."

Stephen would have continued, but his father turned and looked at him, wonder in his face.

"What's that yir sayin', Stephen? What's that yir sayin'? 'the latest thocht'—whaur wad a minister o' the gospel get the latest thocht if it isna frae Almichty God? And I'm thinkin' He might be found this side o' Germany, or Edinburgh either, for that maitter. 'A new theōlogy! a new theōlogy!' that *is* summat new, I'll grant ye. Some o' thae new professors'll be wantin' a new sun in the heavens soon; and the yin's as reasonable as the ither.

"Whatever div ye mean, my laddie? Tell me, noo, wad ye like a new mither? Or a new way o' thinkin' about a mither's love? Wad ye, laddie, wad ye, noo? Dinna shake yir heid like that—

they're the same ; and ye maun learn about them the same way—by the heart, ye ken.

“ Ye canna learn about the flowers that blaw beside the burn, oot o' a buik. Ye canna, ye maun learn them wi' yir heart tae. An auld country and a new theology ! God forbid ! ” and the student's father caressed the Book that lay beside him, his cheek glowing with an unwonted colour, and his eyes somewhat dim as they rested on the precious volume ; for his father before him had pillowed there his weary heart when the evening shadows fell.

“ But father, listen to me a moment,” cried his son, almost overborne as he was by the elder's vehemence ; he was dimly conscious of the great power that so often reposes in great hearts like these, breaking at long intervals into geyser speech. “ Listen to me a moment,” he said again ; and his father essayed to do so, settling himself resolutely within his chair.

“ It's like this,” Stephen went on, “ it's like this—new theories come with new light ; and it's our duty to welcome truth, come from what quarter it may. Our views of many things change with the years, even though they may be challenged. You remember Copernicus ? ”

“ Eh ? ” said the old man, suddenly. “ Remember wha ? ”

“ Copernicus,” repeated Stephen, “ Copernicus and the sun, you know.”

“ I canna mind on him,” said the father, ransacking his memory in vain—“ but I'm no' sae guid at mindin' names as I used to be. And of course I

wadna ken the son; a man at my age isna sae ready at takin' up wi' the young folk. What like a man was he? Did they gang till oor kirk?"

"Oh, father, you misunderstand me—I'm speaking of Copernicus, a famous name in science—one of the ancients ——"

"Oh," broke in the other, "it's oot o' the Bible ye mean? It'll be Capernaum ye're thinkin' o'. I ken Capernaum fine—was readin' about it this vera mornin'. That's the place as had a bonny chance wi' the Maister's mighty works—but they didna tak them to their souls; they didna hae 'the latest thoct' or mebbe they got it when it was too late;" and the venerable disputant smiled genially upon his son, his lifted eyebrows betokening the conviction that he had fairly scored.

"No, father, of course I don't mean Capernaum," said Stephen, a shade of irritation mingling with his smile—"I'm speaking of a man, not of a place—a man who had new views about the sun; and the people ridiculed his ideas. Well ——"

"Div ye mean the Son o' God?" his father interrupted earnestly, evidently glad that they were coming to close range at last.

"No, certainly not, certainly not. I'm talking about the sun in the heavens—he was an astronomer."

"Then he has naeth n' to dae wi' the case," the old man retorted triumphantly—"it's foreign till the argyment a' thegither. What has astronomy to dae wi' a minister that has eternal life to preach?"

What's yon vanished sun, black oot half the time, compared wi' the Sun o' Righteousness? It's naethin', simply naethin'. I dinna see as yon Capernaum man has ony bearin' on theōlogy at a'."

"Oh, I'm only using that as an illustration, father. I'm only speaking of the unjust suspicion with which men are regarded when they discover new truths—path-finders you might call them, to change the figure."

"Aye, ye'd better change yir figure," and a note of scorr was in his father's voice; "ye'd better change it again—it'll stand it. That path-finder, as ye ca' it, may do weel eneuch for maitters o' the intellect; but I'm tellin' ye there's nae path-finder for the guilty soul but yin—an' He's the Shepherd o' the soul. We've got to tak the bairns' place, and we've got to hae the bairns' trustfu' heart, or there's nae new path, I'm tellin' ye. Dauvit found the path fine, and sae did Peter, and sae did the prodigal son—when they lookit for it wi' a broken heart. There's nae eye sees sae far as the eye that's greetin'," and the old Scotchman sat erect in his chair as he spoke, like one who felt he was set for the defense of the gospel.

"I don't mean those personal matters, father—not at all—I mean opinions about truths, doctrines, and matters of that kind. For instance these men have given us new theories of the creation, and of authorship—the book of Isaiah, for instance—and a more modern interpretation of the Atonement. It's only ——"

But now Robert Wishart was on his feet, for vague



rumours of this very feature of the new theology had already reached him; "Did I understand ye richt? 'the Atonement; the Atonement,' Stephen! Has it gone sae far ben as that? Wad they fumble wi' the heart o' God Himsel'? Wad they play hide and seek i' the garden o' Gethsemane? My God, laddie, keep yir hands aff the Cross; it's a' I hae; and I'm an auld man, near the grave and the Judgment Seat,—and a' the world has naethin' left forbye the Cross. Oh, Stephen! My son, my son, Stephen!"

The quivering voice is broken now and hot tears are coursing down the simple believer's cheeks. His strong frame shakes with the emotion of his heart, for he felt as if his own son had snatched at the only pillow his weary head could know. He walked a minute about the room, while his gaze still fondly turned, resting on the Book that had lain beside him, then passing in melting tenderness to rest upon the bowed head his hand had so often touched in blessing.

He stopped before a grandfather clock, stately and sympathetic as only its kind can be, holding its historic place against the whitened wall. His father's father had been its first possessor, and it had borne them both out to sea, marking off the years as they had passed, well pleased with the simple ways and simpler faith that had served them to the end. Perhaps his fond look into its face recalled with intenser vividness the undisturbed pavilion of those peaceful days whose tranquillity was nothing more or less than rest in God.

He put forth his hand to the substantial key and

began to slowly wind it. The familiar sound seemed to compose him; he closed the tall door softly, almost caressingly, while his faithful friend, its voice subdued in consequence, pressed cheerfully on its untiring way. Then he came and stood at the back of Stephen's chair, his hand laid gently on his son's partly bended head. Through the father's mind there passed the swift thought that here the hands of ordaining grace would soon be laid. An exultant sense of a father's priestly place possessed his heart and his hand rested more firmly than before.

"Oh, Stephen, my son," he said at length, "I canna help thinkin' o' yir grandfaither the nicht. He died in yonner chair, when his day's hard work was done. And his latest thocht was this, Stephen—his latest thocht was this—that he was the chief o' sinners. Na, na, I'm wrang—he had a later thocht than that—it was this, that the chief o' sinners had a Saviour—and I'm dootin' he's had nae later thocht than that, for a' he's where the Licht is clearer. Oh, Stephen, will ye no' come back? Come back, my laddie, to yir faither's heart."

V

*In The FURNACE TWICE*

STEPHEN passed out the farmhouse door through the creaking gate, and turned the corner of the barn towards the familiar copse whose shadowy outline was discernible through the deepening dark.

Soon he reached the outer edge of the little fringe of wood, and a silvery disc was visible on the horizon. The moon was rising, and Stephen hailed the omen. All things make for light, he thought, to the heart that truly seeks it.

This reverie was interrupted before it had well begun, by a sound of distant barking. Soon the youth heard a human voice mingling with the dog's, evidently chiding it, or pretending to chide it. Stephen took his seat upon a fallen tree. Soon a merry voice was heard:—

“Don't make such a noise, Tonko; look, the moon's peeping out to see what's the matter—and you'll waken all the little birdies in their nests.” Then followed another peal of canine repartee.

“I'll never bring you out again at night, you naughty dog—all good doggies should be in bed by now.”

Often is it said, and ever justly, that a voice owes

much to words—that it is but their poor dependent. But more truly may it be said that words are the debtors unto voice, which is life-giver to them all. What joy there is in trifling speeches if they but employ those lips that thrill us! Which Stephen Wishart proved that night beneath the timid moon; for this bantering speech was from the dewy lips of Bessie Burnett, and no rounded period from Chrysostom's golden mouth could so have stirred his soul. He sprang to his feet in impulsive movement. Whereupon the maiden stood trembling in the path, while the unsympathetic Tonko bloomed into bristling vengeance, low growls signifying that he had good cause for the outburst.

"All right, Tonko—that's a good dog. Don't you know me, Bessie? You know who it is."

With a reassuring word, the girl laid her hand upon the dog, whose armour instantly disappeared. Bessie stepped forward and Stephen was already at her side, his face more eager than her own.

"Where have you been, Bessie? It must be eight o'clock or after," he said.

"Oh, Stephen, you frightened me so," Bessie answered. "I couldn't imagine who it was. I took over some currant jelly to the Gourlays'—Mrs. Gourlay's sick. I saw the light in your house at home and I supposed you were there with your folks. Where were you going?"

"Nowhere," rejoined Stephen, "I was only out for a little walk. Let's sit down a minute, Bessie; it's such a lovely night. It's the first real warm night

we've had. And then you will let me walk home with you after."

"They'll be looking for me home—and I'm afraid there's dew," said the girl.

"Oh, no, there's none to speak of; and they'll think you are just lingering a little at the Gourlays'. Come, Bessie, I have hardly seen anything of you since I came home—and I'm going away again very soon."

"Going away!" exclaimed Bessie, surrendering with the words, and letting Stephen bear her on: "going away! What are you going for? Where are you going? I thought you were going to make us a long visit, now that your college work is done."

"No," said the other, "I'm going very soon—next week, perhaps. And it may be I'll go far away—away across the ocean."

"Will you be gone long, Stephen?" she asked, the slightest throb noticeable in her voice.

"I don't know—but it's likely I will—perhaps a year. But even a year soon goes by."

"Sometimes it does," Bessie said, very femininely.

"I know," Stephen went on, "that I shall often think of the old place and the old friends—and I hope they will sometimes think of me."

Bessie stirred in her seat, the fire kindling in her bosom. She thought of Reuben, brave, honest, faithful Reuben, and the flame flickered lower for a moment. But it was only for a moment; Stephen's hand moved carelessly, resting on her own. Tonko's head was on Bessie's knee, restlessly thrusting about,

the devoted creature looking up at quick intervals to his mistress's face, impatient of the strange delay.

"Oh, Bessie," Stephen said softly, "Bessie, come closer to me."

"Don't, Stephen, don't," Bessie's trembling voice made answer, "don't make it harder for me, Stephen. I can't—I must not."

"I can't say all I would, Bessie—the time will come—but you know, you know; and, before I go away ——"

"Stephen, Stephen Wishart, I'm promised, I'm nearly promised to another, and you are altogether promised—to God—and you ought to help me. You can't tell me what you mean; and I shouldn't hear it if you could—and yet—oh, Stephen."

Her companion was now upon his feet, and a nobler light glowed upon his face. "You're right, Bessie," he exclaimed, his voice ringing with its purpose. "Your love belongs to Rube, and I'm not worthy to unloose his shoe-latchet. Forgive me, forgive me, Bessie; this is a kind of madness on my part—I'm going home, I'm going back, and I won't see you any more, Bessie. Only I want you to pray for me, for I really want to conquer, Bessie—I really do. And I shall always wish the very best for you and Rube, dear old faithful Rube. I'm going home," and without further word or token of farewell, he turned from the wondering girl and started toward his father's house.

"Steve," she called gently, "wait one minute, Steve." But he seemed not to hear, quickening his pace and

pressing on, his heart rejoicing in the battle, but wondering the while at the strange fever that so easily possessed it; for he knew, knew well, the disordered nature of the impulse that had so well-nigh mastered him, and the thought of it clothed him with humiliation. Again and again he cursed this dark current of his soul, again and again beseeching the healing stream.

Thus employed, he has soon outdone the distance that separated him from the ever brightening light in the window beyond. The door opened before Stephen reached it, for his footsteps had been heard. In the streaming light stood Reuben.

"Is that you, Stephen? I've been often to the door looking for you. Where have you been? We were wondering what could have happened you."

"I've been having a little walk," his brother answered. "I didn't know it was so late. What are you doing, father?" he asked as he entered.

"I'm dae'in' what I haena had to dae for mony a year," the old man responded; "I haena had to meddle wi't since yir grandfaither died. All that it needed yir mither could dae easy enouch. It's no' troubled wi' the feckless ways o' the clocks they're makin' nowadays."

His father was standing by the trusty timepiece, taller somewhat than himself, a bulky screw-driver in one hand and a candle in the other. This luminary was never called into service, save for this self-same duty, or to display to admiring visitors what its proud owner called the "innerts" of the faithful horologe.

"Yir mither kens mair about it as I dae mysel'," Robert Wishart said, recalling his tongue from afar to utter the tribute; for he was at a critical point just now; and at every crisis this lingual banner was wont to be displayed.

"Where is mother, then?" Stephen asked, looking around the room.

"She's no' sae weel—and she gaed to her bed," explained her husband. "She'd sune set it richt if she wasna ailin' hersel'."

A voice was heard from the adjoining room, "I'm no' ailin'—no' sae bad as that. Gie't ile, faither; that's what it's needin'. And Stephen, get ye a bannock for yirsel' frae the pantry shelf—and a jug o' milk. I put them by for ye. Ye maun be hungry, laddie."

"Thank you, mother," answered her son; "you may be sure I'll find them. It was just like your thoughtfulness. You'll be better in the morning, won't you, mother?"

"Aye, Stephen, I'll be a' richt the morn. Ye'll find anither quilt at the foot o' yir bed. The nights is cold, ye ken."

He thanked her again, his eyes intent upon his father, the muffled thump of an oil can, prompted at the base by a vigorous thumb, betokening the old man's conjugal obedience.

Robert Wishart emerged presently from the oaken case.

"I've gied her ile—eneuch for the Sabbath-schule at Christmas," he said, "but she doesna answer.



Mebbe it'll no' tak effect till the morn," and he turned, well pleased with his playfulness.

"Weel, weel," he added abruptly, "we'll no' bother wi' her mair the nicht. We'll gang to oor rest and fit oorsels for the Creator's will the morn. The nicht'll gang, if the clock willna'"—and the pious philosopher pushed his armchair close to the fire's cheerful blaze.

This was the familiar signal, immediately obeyed by Reuben and Stephen, who drew their chairs nearer to their father's, settling themselves for the solemnities that no hurry was ever permitted to curtail nor duty to supplant.

Carefully was the psalm selected. With mature deliberation, as though this were the rarest ceremony, Robert Wishart turned over the pages of the book, pausing here and there to adjust a leaf that long usage had disengaged. There were many claims for his favour, and some were with difficulty set aside.

Stephen was curiously interested in the process. His nature had inherited the tinge of superstition that so strongly marks the race from which he sprung; and he had a sort of sub-conscious feeling that his father was wont to choose the psalm under higher guidance than his own.

"'What time my heart is overwhelmed,' that's a grand yin—we'll sing that the morn if we're spared," he said in an undertone, "we'll sing this yin the nicht, the twenty-fourth."

Slowly arose the stately words, according weel with

the strong voice and earnest soul of the man who poured them forth :

“ Who is the man that shall ascend into the hill of God  
Or who within His holy place shall have a firm abode ? ”

When the first verse was finished, he turned to Stephen :

“ What way are ye no' singin', Stephen ? They're mighty words ; and they're weel fittin' for a minister. Did they no' sing it often at the college ? ”

Stephen made some inarticulate reply, lifting his book from his knee and holding it intently before him. But his lips were numb and dry, the outward emblem of an inward drought.

Before his father could push out again into the swelling current, his son interrupted him :

“ This tune is so difficult, father. Let us sing something easier. I'm fond of the hymns—and they sing them nearly altogether at the college. ‘ Whiter than snow,’ that's always suitable,” he suggested.

But the old man readjusted his glasses relentlessly, his eyes still upon his book.

“ Na, Stephen, na. Gin I start a hymn, I'll follow it to the end ; but I'll no' lay by a psalm for naebody. Sing the second verse,” wherewith he cleared his throat sonorously, like some vessel's horn that warns all intruders from the track, repaired the keynote thus disturbed, and launched again into the stream.

“ Whose hands are clean, whose heart is pure, and unto vanity  
Who hath not lifted up his soul, nor sworn deceitfully.”

The psalm concluded, Robert Wishart took up the big ha' Bible from the chair beside him and selected a portion from the Eternal Word with even more mature deliberation than before.

"We'll read the sixty-eighth psalm," he said at last; "'twas grand to the Covenanters—and it's a grand yin yet. 'Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered,'" he began. But again an interruption stopped him. It was Jean this time.

"Faither, that's a grand bit, nae doot, but I'm wantin' anither piece the nicht. It's for the Covenanters tae—but it's the new covenant. Wull ye no' read that bonny bit about the mony mansions and the troubled heart?"

"Vera weel, Jean. I'll read it for ye," answered her husband—"it's sweeter ilka time I turn to it. Here it's," and the wondrous music began to issue from his lips:—"Let not your heart be troubled. . . . In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you."

All hail! Immortal spring whose living waters have quenched the thirst of time! All hail! Immortal path that ledest to that blessed tide! Trodden by weary feet innumerable hast thou been; but no flower hath been crushed, no pitfall worn, on all thy radiant way! The living have drunk and been refreshed at thine eternal fount; the dying have gently sipped, and pressing on, have caught the lights of home! Oh, wondrous words, the far string lullaby for the world's orphaned soul, the unwasting balm for the world's broken heart! Taught beside the moth-

er's knee, but learned amid the din of battle or among the waves of death, thine are the accents that prove those lips Divine.

"The Lord bless to us the readin' o' His holy word," Robert Wishart said reverently as he finished, the formula unfrayed by decades of incessant use:—"Let us pray."

They knelt, the priest-like father and the sons whom he had taught to pray. On simple words, with many a quaint expression, with many a phrase bequeathed from lips now mingling with the dust, with many an aid from the great language of the Book, but always in the new born ritual of a heart that seeks its Lord by virgin paths of penitence and need, plucking its noble plaint as an eagle cleaves the ether with its wing, the soul of Robert Wishart went upward to its God.

They rise from their knees and are all standing now.

"We'll gang to oor beds, my laddies; the fire's low and the clock'll no' need windin' the nicht."

"Good-night, father," they said together, and started to leave the room.

"Guid-nicht; but ye'll no' gang wi'oot a word to yir mither. Mebbe she's restin'. I'll let ye ken. He passed into the room, their unchanged room since he had brought her there rejoicing as his bride. Reuben and Stephen waited for a moment, but he did not reappear.

"I guess she's sleeping," said Reuben, "we'll go on."

They heard a sound, not articulate or intelligible,

but they knew it was their father ; they lingered at the door beneath the stair. A minute passed, silent still.

“ Let us see,” said Stephen, and the brothers turned together to the room. The lamp was burning dimly, almost out, and they could detect the odour of the burning wick. Yet there was light enough to show them a bending form, the same beside which they had knelt in the room without. It was their father’s, low bowed, and his hands were clasped, and pressed against his cheek. They looked closer, and observed that another hand was between his own, tightly held.

“ That’s mother’s hand he’s holding,” Reuben whispered. “ I wonder if she’s worse,” for they were both amazed, demonstrations of tenderness before other eyes being rare in such lives as theirs. They moved closer and looked intently ; but their father seemed unconscious of their presence.

“ Get the other lamp, Stephen,” Reuben said, his voice changed strangely from that of a moment before. Stephen obeyed, and returned in an instant with the light.

Reuben took it from his hands, holding it closer to the peaceful face upon the pillow. Peaceful indeed it was—for the long strife was over ; and the gentle smile, such as every broken lad beholds on his dead mother’s face, betokened that the new-found rest was sweet.

He placed the lamp upon the table, looking long into his brother’s face ; for kinship is never really known till such an hour brings the great illumination.

Then he laid his hand upon his father's head, never thus laid before. The father moved, and turned his face upward toward his sons.

"Yir mither's restin', as I told ye," he said softly; and a wonderful light looked out upon them from his eyes. "She aye tell't me she'd gang hame like this some day—but I never thocht 'twad be sae easy. It's hame onyway—and it's beautiful. Luik at yir mither's face."

They did look, but tears soon stopped their gaze; and they turned to leave the room.

"Come away, father," they whispered to the kneeling man.

"Na, na," he answered, looking up, "what way would I gang awa'? She's my ain Jean—and the room's sweet wi' the Saviour's presence. He cam' again and receivit her to Himsel'—tak the lamp wi' ye. I willna need it."

They went out, carrying the lamp with them as he wished, and sat silently in the room.

"Shouldn't we go and call some of the neighbours?" said Stephen, presently. "We'll need some one."

"Not now," answered his brother. "We'll wait till father's through."

A little later, they went together across the room, looking in at the open door. Their father was still bowed beside the precious dead.

"Sleep on, my Jean," they heard him murmur. "Sleep sweet, my lassie; yir rest is won, weel won, my bonny."

Whereat they took one long look into each other's face, and then the elder brother drew Stephen gently to himself, his arm encircling him with a tenderness like to that they were to know no more. The tears were gushing from his eyes, but he still sought to staunch the flow of his brother's grief, caressing him as he had been wont to do in the days that were now so far behind them.

"I want my mother," Stephen suddenly cried out, the eternal chudlike wailing through his voice.

"Come, Stephen, come," whispered Reuben.

"Our mother is with God—and father."

"Let us go back, Rube," he sobbed again. "Let us go back: father's all alone."

"Come, Stephen, come away; our father's not alone—he's with them both."

## VI

### *The SCHOLAR LEAVES for ENGLAND*

**T**HE morning sun arose serene and bright, to greet with wondering eye the old surprise of sin and struggle, of death and desolateness, caressing each as best he could with his unbroken calm.

The day rolled by on silent hinges, radiant to the last, every hour counted precious by those whose silent treasure was to be borne from them on the morrow. Stephen could not but marvel at his father's calmness; for he moved among them like one girded with a panoply they might not make their own.

Throughout the day, he passed in and out as usual, overlooking the necessary duties that must not be neglected, accepting with grave dignity the kindly words of sympathetic neighbours, responding with tribute to the dead in terms of chaste reserve.

The next day came, whose afternoon was to cast its unretreating shadow over all the evening of his life. This was her burial day, who had come thither as his bride, the fragrance of her coming destined to grow sweeter with the years.

Its morning Robert Wishart spent alone with his beloved and Another. He emerged at noon, passing to the door and gazing at the rising slope before him; but from that hour his eyes were never to be



withdrawn from a richer green upon far other peaks on which they three had looked together.

When Mr. Shearer came, the countryside had already gathered, sitting voiceless, the great anthem of silence arising from the heart of loneliness. They had all known her.

Then Robert Wishart motioned to his sons, inviting the minister too, as his simple courtesy suggested, to enter with them. Mr. Shearer took a quick, longing look at the gentle visage, then immediately withdrew and closed the door behind him.

Four or five of the neighbours, denied admission to the crowded house, were standing by the window, unconscious that the moment of the great farewell had come.

The father called gently to one of them:—

“Ye’ll no’ mind if I ask ye to gang awa’ a meenit, Weelum—tak the ithers wi’ ye. It’s the last time we’ll be a’ thegither here.”

“Aye, Robert, aye; we should hae thocht o’t,” the other answered in hushed tones, and the group moved quickly out of view.

They stood together, together looking down on the unanswering face. Theirs was the old, old struggle, so oft repeated, of those who would look enough to last the yearning years, the years whose vision shall be knocked and thwarted by the grave. Who amongst us that has not vainly striven thus to lay up treasure against this famine of the heart?

A low moan escaped Reuben’s lips. Stephen was trembling.

"Dinna my sons, dinna!" their father pleaded. "She ha'd a gran' hame gaein'—and she was lang spared to us—and she's happy the nicht—an', an' it's the will o' God," he added, his hands tightly clasped, and drawn to his full height—"it's the will o' God," he repeated, finding precious to his soul the shelter of that great pavilion.

And when he opened the door and came forth to the people, the downcast eyes of his neighbours, had they been suddenly upraised, would have seen the glory of God upon the bridegroom's face.

When the evening was come, Stephen and his father were sitting in their accustomed places, Reuben without, and busy as before.

"Put on yir cap, Stephen; let's tak a bit walk thegither—the evenin's fine."

They strolled out, passing the barn, which gave forth its wonted noises; they could hear Reuben's voice within as he moved among them.

"Yir gaein' awa', Stephen," his father said suddenly, concluding a long silence. "Yir gaein' awa', and I'll no' hae ye wi' me; but it'll aye rest yir heart to ken how guid an' faithfu' Reuben is. That's no' to say, mind ye, that ye're no' guid and faithfu' tae. But ye're called awa'—ye're to preach the gospel, and ye canna bide at hame, like Reuben."

Stephen started. He wondered if his father's words had the meaning they would seem to convey.

"Why do you say I'm going away, father? Or

what do you mean by that? Going where?" he asked eagerly.

"I thoct ye'd ask me that," his father replied, smiling slightly, "and that's the verra thing I was wantin' to tell ye. I've decided aboot yon maitter you and me was talkin' aboot."

"What have you decided, father?" asked the son, though he knew well what the decision was; nor did it seem so sweet as he had dreamed.

"I've decided for to gie ye the money I got frae the Duke," said the old man very quietly, "and ye'll gang till the great coliege in Edinburgh. And I'll trust ye aboot the new theōlogy, my son. I wadna wunner if it wad cure ye athegither, gaein' richt to the fountain head—'a hair frae the hide o' the hound that bit ye,' my faither aye used to say. Ye'll mebbe find it's like thae new kinds o' parritch ye hear aboot—they aye come back to the auld oatmeal, they tell me."

Stephen interrupted him. "The old oatmeal's good enough for me, father. Only one might find it purer—free from shells, you know."

His father smiled. "I'll risk the shells," he said simply. "I've been riskin' them since afore ye was born; and sae did my faither—and yir mither, Stephen, yir mither found it pure enouch. But ye'll try the great college, as I said to ye. My mind's made up—'mak a spoon or spile a horn,' as my faither used to say."

"I want to tell you, father, how greatly I appreciate your kindness," Stephen ventured, a little later. "I

value that more than I do the money—and I'll try to make a wise use of it."

"There's no needcessity for thankin' me; I'm yir faither. And it's no' me as should be thankit, ony-how. There's summat I ought to tell ye. Are ye listenin', Stephen?"

"Yes, father, I'm listening; what is it?" answered Stephen, for he knew the significance of his father's tone.

"There's twa things I'm wantin' to tell ye," the old man went on; "the yin's aboot yir mither—and the ither's aboot Reuben. It's to them alane ye're owin' yir trip to Edinburgh. The vera nicht yir mither died—ye was oot haein' yir bit walk—she ca'd me into the room; and what div ye think she said?"

"How could I tell, father? Something kind and good, I'm sure," said her son.

"Aye, 'twas baith kind and guid—' father, ye'd better let the laddie gang'—that was what she said. Then she said as how Reuben had asked her to plead wi' me to let ye gang—and Reuben spoke to me himsel'."

"What?" interrupted Stephen, "Reuben what?"

"Reuben spoke to me himsel'—'twas fair noble o' the laddie. He said we a' had eneuch to dae us here; an' if Stephen wantit mair learnin' we ought to let him gang where he cud get it. There was naethin' he wantit for himsel', he said. And there was something mair, but I dinna ken if I ought to tell't." And the voice that spoke the words seemed husky now.

"What was it, father? Do tell me. I know it was worthy of him."

The one thus importuned was silent for a minute, seating himself upon a stone, the better to give himself up to the necessary meditation.

"Aye, 'twas worthy—'twas worthy, I'm thinkin'," he said at length, "and I'll tell ye what it was—ye'll no' forget it. He said, if I'd gie ye the money, he'd aye bide wi' me to the end. He was thinkin' o' gacin' awa' before, ye ken. But he said he'd bide wi' me to the end—which I'm hopin' 'll no' be ower lang," his voice trembling as he spoke.

"That *was* noble of him, noble of him, father," Stephen said, struggling with emotion.

"'Twas fair beautiful," returned the other, "and ye can hae the money, Stephen—and yir faither's blessin' wi't. If Reuben doesna need it, I dinna need it mysel'. I tell't ye, when ye spoke to me afore, that I was thinkin' to tak yir mither for a wee bit holiday—but she's gone on ahead o' me," and the trembling voice was now choked with tears, the struggling face turned from his son, gazing at a distant window through the bitter mist.

Stephen scarce knew what to do. The heavenly art of comfort had not yet been learned by him, especially toward his father. His own eyes were dim, and he laid his hand helplessly on his father's arm. The latter shook himself slightly, resolved to finish bravely what he had begun to say.

"Sae she'll no' be needin' it, Stephen—and I'll no' be needin' it—I hae treasure itherwhere. An' I'll gie it

to ye—I'll gie it to ye when we gang back to the hoose. Let's gang noo."

He linked the action to the word, rising as he spoke, slowly followed by his wondering son, upon whose mind the greatness of his father's life was slowly dawning.

They came to the house to find Reuben drawing from his faithful violin the strains of the Land of the Leal. Stephen moves to light the lamp, but his father's hand restrains him till the last strain has died away.

"Ye can licht the lamp noo, Stephen," he said.

This done, he rises and takes it from his son; then he turns toward the room in which he had stood but a few hours before. Returning in a moment, he holds in his hand a well-worn wallet, stoutly filled.

"'Twas my faither's," he said abstractedly, "but he never had sae muckle in't. But he had ither treasure, tae, that nae human hand cud hold. It's a lot o' money, this," he added, reverting to the earthly.

One by one he counted out the bills, placing them in Stephen's palm, intoning the increasing figures with a solemn voice till the grand total was announced.

"There ye are, Stephen," he exclaimed, when the operation was complete, "ye hae it a'. My hand's empty, an' yir hand's fu'—mebbe it's the same wi' oor heids," he appended in an undertone; but a certain smile that illumined the strong features indicated that he had his "doots" concerning this, as he would have said himself.

Stephen was clothed with embarrassment, though he knew not why. Alas! He knew not why. He held the money between his thumb and finger for a moment, then bore it toward his pocket. This may have impressed him as unseemly—too hasty burial after death. In any case he recalled the motion, sitting with the unfamiliar sheaf still enclosed as before. He moved uneasily, and the rustle of its foliage could be heard, that foliage which poor mankind accounts as the very fruitage of the tree of life. At length he spoke.

"I'm sure I don't know how to thank you, father. I shall never forget your generosity. And I'm sure I'll try to make a good use of the money; and—and—the lamp's smoking, father," he concluded hastily, hailing the pillar of cloud as gladly as did ever bewildered Israelite of old.

The father sprang quickly to set it right, for it was smoking heartily, doubtless overcome by the unwonted spectacle.

"I know it, Stephen, I know it," his father cried; but whether referring to the lamp or to the language could not be told, "and I hope ye'll aye be carefu' wi' money. A minister that doesna look weel to his affairs is a puir cratur. They maun soar, nae doot—but they should aye keep their feet on the solid ground aneath them."

Stephen felt he should say something more:—"And I'm more than thankful to you, Reuben, for the unselfish part you have taken. After all your hard work on the farm and ——"

"Oh, don't, Steve—please don't," Reuben interrupted; "you're needing it, and I'm not—and it's no more than right. Please don't say a word, Steve."

"And there's ae thing mair, Stephen," broke in the father, evidently aware that speech was difficult to the others, "when ye gang till the auld country, ye maun gang to see the Duke. I want ye to thank him yirsel'. Ye'll find him juist a man, like ither men. Dinna be feart o' him—he likes an honest man, if he's his father's son. He'll ask ye to hae supper wi' him, nae doot—an' mebbe to bide the night. Ye'll find the hoose a grand yin."

"Where does he live?" asked Stephen.

"At Kelso—ye ken where Kelso is. It's no' far frae Jedboro, where mony o' yir forbears is buried—at the Abbey. An' it's no' muckle mair nor an hour or twa frae Edinburgh itsel'. My father used to drive the sheep to the market at Auld Reeky mony a time."

"At Kelso!" repeated Stephen. "I'd better mark that down;" with which he rummaged in his breast pocket, finding no tablet, but taking opportunity to deposit the money.

"Here's a bit leaf oot o' the almanac," said his father as he handed it to him, observing the fruitlessness of his search—"write it doon on that. Ye'll call the Duke 'His Grace' when ye're talkin' to him, mind—a strange kind o' a name for a man, tae," he mused, "but it's what he aye gets—and his father afore him. He has yin servant to lace his boots, an' anither yin to tie them, my father said. The old



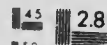


# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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Duke had the like o' that about him—but they could gie him naethin' at the last but a grave to himsel'," and the philosopher looked out from serious eyes.

"Where is he buried, father?" Reuben asked, his simple life far removed from the ways of greatness.

"In the chaipel, Reuben—the chaipel at the castle," his father answered—"but it's in the ground, for a' that," he added sententiously; "and the man wha laced his shoon and the ither yin wha tied them—they're buried no' far frae there. An' they hae a grave apiece. Weel, laddies, the nicht is wi' us; let's mak ready for oor rest."

\* \* \* \* \*

Preparations for Stephen's long journey were soon completed. His trunk was ready, prepared by other hands than those whose benediction, far carrying, hath ever rested on the tender toil. The felicitations and admonitions of his old-time friends and neighbours had been duly received and acknowledged. Introductions, messages, addresses, had been duly entrusted to the departing one, duly forgotten or ignored, as it has ever been since the foundation of the world. A sleeting rain marred the morning of his departure, and Robert Wishart announced that he had abandoned his original purpose of going to the station.

"I'll stand at the door," he said, "and wave ye as far as I can see. I want yir last sight o' the au'd place to be mixed wi' yin o' the auld folks—an' I'll

bide here till ye come back, if it's the will o' God that we're to meet again."

He wrung his son's hand when the parting hour came; but no tear, no breaking voice, could be detected.

"Mind ye yir mither, Stephen," he said in the lowest of tones, "ye ken what made her life sae beautiful, and what made the valley bricht. Yir mither's God gang wi' ye."

Then he turned and went into the house, reappearing to wave a dainty kerchief that Stephen's heart knew well.

The brothers drove to the station in almost unbroken silence. When a distant wreath of smoke betokened the approaching train, Reuben drew Stephen aside.

"Take this, Stephen," he said, trying to thrust something soft into his hand. "It's not much—it's only eleven dollars. I saved it from the wood monee to get a dress for mother—and she's ——"

"Reuben, I can't—I won't."

"Do, Steve, do," the other said again, "please take it. Get some books with it, Steve—and write her name in them. Good-bye! Good-bye!"

But with the memory of Reuben's greater sacrifice still before him, Stephen pushed back his brother's pleading hand. "No, Rube, you keep it and buy something for Bessie. Good-bye. God bless you, Rube."

An instant later the train was off, bearing with it a strangely troubled heart, swelling with many

thoughts. The memory of his mother, the exalted vision of his father, the warm tide of his brother's unselfish love—all these united to stir the tumult of his mind.

His hand is before his face. "Make me true, oh, God," he cries half-aloud; and answering purpose fills his soul. His glance roams through the window, and he sees familiar fields; for the iron road leaves this peaceful neighbourhood by a long and slowly rounding curve. A familiar house flashes on his view. He knows it well, and his heart leaps with a new emotion. Still gazing, he sees a maiden's figure beneath a familiar thorn, already whitening with its spreading blossoms. Golden tresses hang about the wistful face, turned in sad eagerness toward him as though she knew his place. A branch, broken from the tree, is in her hand, and she is waving it in gentle silence toward the departing train.

A moment, and the scene has vanished from his view; the train rushes on—but an old tenant has entered Stephen's heart to find it swept and garnished once again; and conflict rages like a flood.

## VII

### LONDON'S PREACHER-ACTOR

“LET us take an observatory, Mather.”  
“Take what, Wishart—whatever are you talking about?”

“An observatory—a bus, I mean; surprised I have to explain so.”

“Oh, I understand—not bad, either. All right. No, that one’s no good for us—here we are, this is for the Strand: room on top, too—two seats beside the driver. Come along.”

And in a moment, swaying and rocking along the passage, the two companions had gained their places, the vantage points of all London, the right hand and the left of a genial driver of a London bus.

Stephen Wishart has the right-hand seat, looking with all his eyes, and listening with all his ears, enchanted by the magic of the world’s metropolis.

And his companion, Ernest Mather, was a student and prospective minister like himself; on the broad Atlantic these two had met, and there their friendship had been formed. Mather had arrived in London somewhat earlier than the other; his sojourn in the great city was almost at an end.

“This bus takes us to the Lyceum, does it not, driver?” asked Stephen of the man beside him.

“Right you are, gov’nor; that’s what it does.

Leastways, it'll set you down at Wellington, an' that's 'arf a stone's-throw. You'll be after 'Enry Hirving, I reckon?"

"Yes, that's what we're after," Mather agreed. "Would you tell us whereabouts in the theatre we should take our tickets? My friend and I aren't very familiar with such things."

"That's accordin' to 'ow you feels," returned the Londoner, his face a battle-field whereon a grin was tasting victory. "That's accordin' to 'ow you feels; a box is a helegant place if you feels that way; don't care for 'em myself—too hexposed—draughty too, don't you know. I allus takes the dress circle myself—when I takes the kiddies, upper gallery, front row—only seven bob apiece," and the driver winked at all the Strand. A few minutes' drive, enlivened by further comment from the Jehu, brought the sight-seers to their destination, and they were soon settled in such seats as they found it possible to secure. Delicious twilight clothed the great playhouse in its suggestive shades, and the seductive strains of soft music stole about the expectant pair who settled themselves for an experience of unrehearsed enjoyment.

Soon the music sank to silence, the curtain rolled slowly upward, and the great dialogue began, the actors on the stage calling to the silent actors beyond the footlights, each answering according to the measure of tragedy or comedy that life's great play had brought him. Hired hands they are that on the stage hold the mirror before us, but eager eyes

peer into the glass to find the reflection of their own chequered lives. Nor do they gaze in vain. Commonplace and plain though they affirm life to be, here is it clothed with romantic interest as they gaze upon it from without, its pathos and its humour casting a subtle charm they have failed to find in the reality. What they have deemed life's drudgery all the day is now the wizardry of the night; and life's old story takes its sweet revenge on those who had yesterday maligned it and who to-morrow will despise.

"Oh, Wishart, look, look! There he is—there he is at last—that tall one there—that is Mathias!"

A storm of welcome rolled through the Lyceum, the scene of so many of his triumphs, as the great actor came upon the stage, a panoply of power, the unearned gift of heaven, about him as he came.

With intensifying flame the play burned on. It was that modern passion play, "The Bells," on which the mighty actor first entered like a conqueror into the great citadel of his fame, through the shadowy gates of human conscience. Stephen sat, sometimes thrilling, sometimes trembling, but in an unbroken thrall till the last dread scene released him. The murder amid the falling snow, the remorse, the exultation over the ill-gotten gain, the awful stain upon the gold, the haunted merriment, the ghostly interruption of the accursed bells, the skeleton at the feast, the handwriting on the wall, the marriage dance and its awful music from afar, the frightful waking dream—all these blended in the dreadful



message which the great actor's eyes and lips combined to utter with such tremendous power that the shadow of the Judgment Day seemed to have already fallen. Stephen felt a strange tightening about the throat as the writhing actor struggled for escape; and his despairing cry:—"Take this rope from my neck; take this rope from my neck, I say," had a ghostly echo in Stephen's heart.

The actor's choking cry was soon stifled by London's all conquering voice as Stephen Wishart and his friend wended their way back to the hotel at which the latter had made his home during his brief visit to the mighty city.

They walked slowly along the Strand, enjoying its myriad sights and sounds, mingling with the surging throng; for the theatres everywhere have turned their inmates out, and the streets keep Vanity Fair.

"Wasn't it glorious?" Mather said at length.

"Wonderful," answered Stephen, regaining his friend after a moment's separation in the crowd, "let us go back by the Embankment; it's so much quieter there. This street leads down to it."

They were soon upon that noble river-walk, its quietness refreshing them like music, while the hurrying lights on the murmuring Thames gleamed before them.

"Yes, it was really wonderful," Stephen renewed. "I never heard a sermon that impressed me more," at which declaration he felt some measure of satis-

faction—like a man who has paid a debt. "An actor might do almost as much good as a minister," he added, "for he has a great chance to appeal to the human heart."

"Yes, that is, if he's a good man himself," his companion suggested. "By the way, it must be terrible to be a minister and an actor at the same time. I mean, a minister that is merely acting—sometimes all their lives must seem like one long play. And then they must be so afraid that some one will see behind the scenes. When I heard the great preacher at the Temple last Sunday, I felt that any one might see behind and they would find it just as beautiful as it was in front."

"Whom did you hear?" Stephen asked, a hot flush on his cheek. Mather mentioned the name of one of London's, one of the world's greatest preachers, whereupon Stephen expressed his purpose to hear him at the earliest opportunity.

"It's strange," Mather resumed, "but, do you know, that . . . pressed me to-night just the same way it did . . ."

"How?" . . . the other.

"Like a sermon—there seemed to be an awful lesson running all through it; and I thought of a text that it might have been preached from."

"What was it?" Stephen said, deep interest in his voice; for his own mind, too, had been busy with a text.

"It's that one in the Old Testament," said Mather, "that one that always seems to sound like a voice

coming from somewhere you can't see:—'Be sure your sin will find you out.' And yet I'm sure it wasn't mentioned all through the play."

"No, I don't believe it was," said Stephen, "but I thought of the very same text."

"Wasn't that strange? But then I suppose you and I are always thinking of texts. And I believe that was why they listened so intently—the people all listened as if they were in church. Strange, too, isn't it; for I suppose they went there for pleasure. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I presume they did," Stephen answered, "but I shouldn't wonder if most people have something in their past lives that makes them listen to a sermon of that kind whether they want to or not—it's like turning back to some page with a stain on it; and that has a dreadful fascination for nearly everybody."

"Why?" asked Mather earnestly.

"I don't know—but I shouldn't wonder if God has something to do with it," Stephen replied after a pause.

In silence they walked on, both pondering a common theme. Mather was the first to speak.

"Well, I guess we'll have to say good-bye, old man; here's my hotel—will you come in? No? Well, perhaps it is a little late. When may I hope to see you again?"

"I'm hoping we'll meet in Edinburgh," replied Stephen Wishart, and, making their farewells again, each went his separate way.

Stephen had gone but a little distance when the rich sights and sounds of one of London's great hosteleries beguiled him. He remarked the name, recalled that it was the resort of some transatlantic friends of his—and stepped within. The names he sought were not upon the register, and he turned idly to look about him.

Then he passed through the rotunda, marvelling at its grandeur, weaving swift fancies about the forms, richly cloaked, that floated in one by one. The glance they cast on him as they passed seemed to chill him with its haughtiness. Yet the very flavour of the place enchanted him. This was life, and this the vision of the world, so often outlined in ambitious dreams! He took a place on one of the richly upholstered couches, drinking in the scene. His seat was in a secluded corner and he could see, while he himself was almost hidden.

How poor and small, after all, he thought, had been his former life, college-taught though it was, so lustre-lacking when compared with this glittering life and its far-off bright horizon!

Two or three gentlemen emerged from the lift, obsequiously greeted by a liveried lackey who led the way to the curb, his whistle ringing the while. A slamming door resounded, the pavement rang with hurrying hoofs; and the lackey turned, tossing a coin before him.

## VIII

### *The METROPOLIS by LAMPLIGHT*

STEPHIEN rose hastily from his seat and met the returning lackey in the vestibule. "Can you give me some information?" he ventured.

"I'm just the boy that can do that, sir," said the lackey, scenting another tip. "I just gave some valuable information to them gay sports," he remarked significantly.

"Where do you suppose they're going this time of night?" Stephen asked, glad to find a directory available.

The lackey turned and looked at him contemplatively. Such virgin innocence was rare in his experience; for he was a Londoner, and carefully versed.

"Putting up in the house?" he queried

"No," answered Stephen. "I'm not stopping here."

"Oh," said his companion, looking him up and down, "where do you stop?"

"Up near the British Museum," answered Stephen.

"At a lodging house in Bedford Square."

"That's a good quiet part—an awful good part. Nuthin' to hurt you there. 'Tain't far from the Orphanage, nuther—the Bloomsbury Orphanage, you know," he added with a grin.

"How're you goin' home after you leave here?"

"I don't exactly know," said Stephen, glad to be enlightened. "The Underground wouldn't take me there, would it?"

"No, you bet it won't," answered the guide; "won't take nobody there—don't go itself. Tuppenny Tube ain't no good, 'cept for the places it goes to itself," he added seriously; "bus, of course—you could take a bus, but it's dangerous—all sorts of bad uns climbs up on to 'em—sits right down beside you and tells you where they lives."

"I don't want a bus," Stephen interrupted, "don't fancy them this hour of the night."

"Ain't that jest what I'm tellin' you? I've been in 'em—always used to take one goin' to Sunday-school—but never take 'em now—wasn't good for my insides. Then there's a 'ansom. You could take one of 'em—but they're so onreasonable—expects you to pay 'em, you see. Never takes 'em myself—bad for your outsides. Terrible bad place, Lunnon is, every way you take it. You better walk."

"I guess I had. Then you're on the ground—and it seems safer than too far below it, or too far above it. Besides, I'll enjoy the walk,"—and Stephen smiled amiably. "Which streets ought I to take?" he interrogated, beginning to button up his coat.

The director meditated. "Well, you could go along the Strand —"

"I know the Strand," broke in his listener—"went along it to the theatre to-night."

"You could go along the Strand," pursued the authority, looking across the rotunda and despising

the irrelevant digression, "up Chancery Lane to 'Olborn—then follow 'Olborn to Southampton Row, and that'll take you there."

"Say that again," said Stephen, unfamiliar with navigation.

"No, I won't," rejoined the other solemnly, "'tain't the best way after all—too tame—you're here for sightseein', ain't you?"

"Well," said Stephen reflectively, "of course—that is ——"

"Exactly," said his counsellor and friend, "that's what I said—you're here to see life—you ain't here for your health, are you now?"

Stephen's silence was enough.

"Exactly," broke in the other—"I knowed that the minute I seen you. You ain't here for your health, as I was a sayin'—you're here to see life. And when I say life, I mean LIFE, see? What's your business when you're 'ome?"

Stephen hesitated a little. "Well, you see, I'm a—well, really, it's kind of hard to say. My father's a farmer. I'm a—I'm a kind of a student. But, as I was saying"—this with evident relief—"as I was saying, or going to say, I came over here to study—but not to study books altogether, you see. You know what I mean," he concluded.

"Yes, I see; I know what you mean," the other responded in a confidential tone; "you're meanin' to see life—ain't that what I jest told you?"

"Yes," amended Stephen. "Life in its broad sense—human nature, you know."

"Exactly," approved the other, evidently well pleased to find that after all their minds had but a single thought. "Exactly! And there ain't no life in its broad sense on Chancery Lane—nor any human nature, nuther—not the kind you're lookin' for."

"Of course, it's dark," Stephen suggested; "one way would be about as good as another at night, I should think."

"That's jest where you're wrong," said his sagacious friend—"there ain't no real human nature nowhere till it's dark—certainly not in its broad sense—but there ain't none on Chancery Lane no time. Your best way home is Piccadilly—there ain't no spot in Lunnon where there's so much human nature in its broad sense—that's what you said you was after—as you'll get in Piccadilly. There ain't no place can tetch it," he affirmed fervently, after due reflection.

It did not take the adept long to instruct the novice how to find the way. Such bearings are easily taken; for our first parents, pathfinders they, sketched that rough chart of which their every descendant has a copy.

Following which, amplified as it is by the triumphs of such modern discoverers as the one he had just left behind, Stephen was soon walking up Northumberland Avenue. In a moment his senses were thrilled, and indeed almost overwhelmed, by this planet's central place, its mightiest focus, Trafalgar Square, whose glowing vastness unfolded itself slowly



on his sight. He had seen the mighty Square before ; but not when the mystic night, retreating before a brighter light than marked the day, had invested it with significance and beauty. Flashing hansoms and ponderous carriages still gleamed here and there ; varied human currents flowed swiftly in and out of this greatest eddy in the world ; the lion faces looked out upon the human tide with a tranquil patience that well became such sentinels as have the centuries before them ; while above it all, in immortal silence, brooded the mighty hero's face, the victor's kingdom his forever.

The conquered and overthrown were also there—in ragged homelessness they wandered aimlessly beneath, their battle still unfinished ; while, sometimes idly sauntering, sometimes swiftly hurrying on imaginary errand, the despairing wrecks of womanhood could be seen, their skirts fluttering in the chilly wind.

Stephen looked upon the wondrous picture, the moral stimulus of the uplifted Conqueror entering his soul ; upward he gazed at the serenity that was dimly visible above ; and the world-flung message of the great soldier thrilled his heart.

Then he cast his eyes earthward again and marked the stains of sin and sorrow upon the mighty canvas.

A broken man of sixty, having noticed his upward look, approached him with the mendicant's appeal of which he was a master.

“ My grandfather held Nelson in his arms when he

was shot," he averred at last, after several less romantic facts had been recited. "An' he could tell you his last words," he added as conclusive evidence; for the poor creature was not without poetic imagination, which plain living is supposed to foster.

Up Pall Mall he walked, past its glowing clubs and kindled palaces; and soon the rising street brought him to the Mecca which the fervid lackey had bidden him farewell in blessing. It broke upon him in a crash of light. Leicester Square stretched before him like a lane of constellations; glowing crescents and arcs and squares poured down their lustrous melody. The Spatenberg, the Trocadero, the Monico, the Criterion, all turned their glowing faces toward the throng, plying their radiant rivalry of fascination and appeal.

In this magnetic centre, Regent Street and all its lesser brethren found their rest at last, pouring their burdens into its willing bosom, as streams unload their waters in the sea.

Blessed and blessing in its emblem, a fountain claimed the very centre as its own, its rippling waters competing in modest hopefulness with the clanging babel of the myriad voices that promised refreshment to the weary. For sedatives to every passion, draughts for every thirst, breads for every hunger, are offered here. But the untiring fountain, bearing the name of the noble dead and mindful of the universal thirst, still called to all to partake freely of its treasure, forsaking alien springs.

Stephen threaded his way across the street, taking

his position beneath the Swan at the apex of the triangle whose head it marks.

Looking about him, he remarked a constant stream of wayfarers—mostly women, he noted wonderingly. Round and round they floated, reappearing at stated intervals, till he became sure that the same faces were in evidence again and again. He was perplexed; for the hour was late and the night not particularly genial. He moved along the street from which the Circus takes its name, crossed to the other side, and stood gazing back towards the spot he had deserted.

## IX

### *A PEARL of PRICE*

**T**HE significant procession still swam before him. Richly robed, with flashing diamonds and gleaming pendants, the beautiful pagentry passed by, its participants casting arch glances, slacking as they might their mincing pace.

Stephen's first impression had been one of distinct admiration for what appeared to be beauty, richly decked. But it was not long till the painted perjury broke upon him—and his spirit filled with loathing. His thought flew to his mother—for she too was of womankind, as were most of these; and the vision of the simple white in which she rested amid the chill purity of the grave seemed to bathe his soul.

He thought of Bessie, too; and her image recalled the fragrance of that far-off fringe of woods and the sweet cisterns of the evening air. But it recalled, too, the flame that had threatened them both—and his fluttering fancy found again its shelter by the side of her who bore him.

He turned to look again upon the siren throng. And, portentous in the telling—for a man's foes are they of his own household, and the heart's great peril is in its undertow—they did not seem so dreadful as before.

But Stephen was by no means numb to the memory of a moment gone; and he checked his growing conciliation with a word. Which word was that immortal name, the mystic friend, in every age, of the youth who is far from home, casting out devils with its love-bright sound. Nor was the struggle hard. Vermillion vice is nauseous to the soul—and drapery is the dread device of the Prince of the Power of the Air.

“I’ll go home,” he thought; and he started across the street.

Then he looked back, as Christian turned his gaze upon the city of destruction, contempt gathering as he looked.

“How shall I get back to Bedford Square?” he mused; for the servitor’s additional directions had long since taken flight. Ah, me! If informants such as he could but point the further paths!

He is still standing undecided on the pavement, when a cabman draws in to its edge and casts a line.

“’Ave a little drive about, sir? ’Orse nice and fresh; ’aven’t ’ad but three fares the whole bloomin’ day,” he volunteered in a pathetic voice.

“Drive where?” said Stephen. “I want to go home.”

“Oh. All right, sir; I’ll drive you ’ome—only I thought as ’ow you might like to drive about a bit an’ see summat of the town.”

“I understand,” answered Stephen—“it’s pretty late.”

“Yes, sir, it is—that’s wot I meant, sir—’tain’t no

use goin' w'en they're 'arvin' afternoon tea—now is it, sir?" he appealed, chuckling at his wit.

"When who are? Where do you mean?"

"Oh, anywheres at all. Whitechapel's right hinterestin'. I hoften drives Hamerican gentlemen down there of an hevenin'," said the cabman beguilingly.

"Whitechapel!" echoed Stephen. "I've often heard of Whitechapel. Wasn't that where the awful murders were?"

"Right you are," endorsed the other, "that's the place for 'em—that's where John the Surgeon done some stunts—most Hamerican gentlemen likes to see his hoperatin' room."

"But is it safe?" enquired the sightseer.

"Well—that is, certainly, you're safe as a church along o' me. Turrible wickit place—but I'll fetch you back right as a trivet. Never 'ad no haccident yet. My missus has a huncle on the force." This last was intimated with the air of one who held the constabulary of London in the hollow of his hand.

"An uncle on what?" repeated Stephen.

"On the force, I said—the perlice force, don't you know? He's a peeler. Better fix the rug round your knees, sir—Lunnon's jolly cold at night."

The night was undoubtedly cool enough, but Stephen's eager curiosity, spiced with a sense of risk and danger, thrilled him with a sensation he had never known before. It was like one's first glimpse of the ocean. Indeed, this very metaphor suggested itself to Stephen's mind as the hansom rolled quickly towards Charing Cross.

The stately steeple of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields broke into melody as he passed, its sweet chime floating down to him through the midnight air, pure and other-worldly as the song of herald angels long ago. Stephen drank in the delicious notes, his mind instinctively turning to that of which they spoke. He wondered what church it was, and who might be its minister. "I should love to be a London minister," thought Stephen; "how splendid it must be, in this great city, to be a soldier fighting against the vice and sin that abound on every hand. 'Twould call out the very best that's in a man," he mused, contrasting with this the poor stimulus of some torpid country parish. But he would endeavour, he thought, to carry to his field of labour, wherever it might be, the inspiration he would surely gather from this great human ocean. And it is wise, he further thought, to see it in all its phases—the dark as well as the light. For what is more useless than an unsophisticated minister, one who has never seen the shady side, and knows nothing of the dark temptations against which some people have to fight? How could a man fittingly rebuke sin, if he had never seen it? Mr. Shearer, for instance, their minister at home—suppose he should be called to a church where young men were wont to congregate, how could his sheltered life and innocent inexperience render him fit to point out the pitfalls, or to denounce the sins, that beset the feet, and attack the hearts, of youth?

It did not occur to him—for the carriage wheels were flying fast down Fleet Street's easy slope—that

a mother-hen, however unfamiliar, knows when the hawk is near, by the shadow that it casts; nor was it borne in upon him that the starting doe will recognize, trembling as it hears, the baying of far-off hounds never heard before. Nor did he recall, what a minister surely must have known, that it was a Lamb without spot or blemish who laid bare, as stainful lips have never done, the darkest devisings of the human heart.

Across Ludgate Circus and up Ludgate Hill he rode, on toward the Mansion House and its all-gathering vortex, the mighty dome of England's noblest vane pouring its shadow on him as he passed. Its frown was all unheeded; for the hansom onward rolled, Stephen already looking eagerly for the first sign of the dread locality whose darksome deeds had often mingled with his youthful dreams.

It was not long till the locality was reached. The shabby houses, the noxious odours, the protruding substitutes for panes, the plaintive cries of neglected children, the aroma of cheap liquors, the echo of drunken laughter—all these defined the neighbourhood they had reached. Staggerers passed them in groups of two or three, each seeking to aid the other, all equally eligible to assistance.

The cabby has slowed his horse to a walk, the better to enable Stephen to prosecute his studies.

The little window above the latter's head is suddenly uplifted:—"Turrible spot this, sir—lots o' fellows has catched it 'ere, sir—halright, sir, don't be honeasy—I'll look arter you."



The window closes again, Stephen peering cautiously out to see the desperadoes. Everything seems quiet enough. An unhappy child of fourteen or so is helping her mother home, the latter carrying a can as carefully as her condition will permit. But Stephen can discern no peril there.

They pass into another street, kindred to the one they have left behind. Suddenly the window goes up again:—"This 'ere's what they call 'The Bloody 'Ole,' sir—'orful place, sir. That 'ere last one I showed you was a little Sunday-school, sir, alongside o' this. That's halright, sir—don't be honeasy. I've got my heye hout for 'em, sir—we'll soon be hout of it."

Stephen looked eagerly again, this time leaning forward a little, his fears less vivid than before. He sees nothing but an almost deserted street, sunk in the same sodden wretchedness as the other; but with no signs of recent or impending slaughter.

They have not gone far when he hears the window lifted again; and a sepulchral voice calls down:—"Set in the middle o' the seat, sir, right in the middle—that's it—it's the safest place there. See how that 'orse's ears is cocked, an' 'is tail agoin' of itself, sir? That's halright, sir, I'll look arter you, sir. Don't be honeasy—only my missus' huncle very near shot ten men right 'ere, wonst, sir."

This time Stephen thrust his head boldly out, even venturing to disturb the equilibrium on which so much depended. A man was plodding unsteadily along the street, carrying in his arms a spaniel dog;

the animal appeared unappreciative of the honour, and the man's progress seemed impeded not more by the outward burden than by the inward cargo. The man in the hansom was beginning to despise Whitechapel. "I want to see a storm," the swift-retiring say when they first go to sea. But the upper air was troubled enough; for the wooden flap is raised again.

"'Ang on to your watch 'ere, sir. And you better put your money and your wallyables inside your shirt, sir. This 'ere', the worstest place in Lunnon, sir. That's halright—don't be honeasy!"

By this time Stephen was finding it easy enough to obey the familiar admonition, and, tiring of the experience, he abruptly ordered the cabman to drive him home by way of Holborn. The man was nothing loath, and soon Stephen was looking out upon a region much superior to that which the driver's fancy had peopled with its divers perils. Suddenly the hansom drew up to the pavement, coming to a standstill. Wondering what this variation meant, he heard the driver alight; in a moment his ruddy face was presented at the window.

"You don't mind a man 'avin' a beer, sir?" he enquired earnestly. "This 'ere's a place what's always hopen if you knows 'ow to get in."

Stephen had no objections, though rigid teetotalism was his doctrine and his rule.

"All right! But I think you'd be better without it," he answered.

"That's halright," rejoined the cabby; "used to

belong to the Band of 'Ope myself. But a man knows 'is own insides best, sir; and I've 'ad a hawful strain. Look at that 'orse's 'ead and tail, sir—a man takes 'is life in 'is 'and, when he drives that 'ere last street, he do."

"It *was* kind of you," said Stephen, thinking he should make some acknowledgment to the hero.

"I never does it, only for Hamericans," the cabby went on, and they always gives me the price of a beer, sir—always does it 'andsome, too, sir."

"Oh, I see," said Stephen.

"Yes, sir," agreed the pilot. Wherewith the former put his hand in his pocket, extracting a threepenny bit which he handed to the other. The other looked slightly disappointed.

"You won't be long," called Stephen, as the man turned towards a lane.

"No, sir," replied the cabman in a dejected voice; "I shan't be long, sir. You seen wot you guv me, sir?"

"Yes," said Stephen.

"I seen it, too," said the cabman, "and I shan't be long, sir—don't be honeasy."

Thus left alone, Stephen looked about him at the almost silent street. Cramped with long sitting, and weary with the intentness of his vigil, he stepped down from the hansom to the pavement, inoving about for the relief of his tired limbs.

Suddenly a woman's figure glided around the corner of an adjacent street and began moving slowly toward him. Stephen stared at her; and she came

on, till she was almost opposite. Then she paused and turned her face toward his.

"Could you help me, sir?" she began in a trembling voice. "I'm all alone—and helpless—and I'm hungry."

"What?" said Stephen, scanning the face before him.

"I'm all alone—and I've had such a bitter day. And I have to ask somebody—I haven't any home—now. And I knew I'd have to ask—and trust—some one," and even as she spoke, the gentle figure straightened itself with a kind of despairing dignity that stamped her words with truth and pathos.

Stephen was still gazing into the pleading eyes, something in their expression engaging him with no common interest.

"I'm so ashamed, sir," the girl went on, her eyes dropping before his own—"but I've not had anything since eleven o'clock this morning."

The voice which spoke the words was worthy of the face that was now timidly turned away. Stephen was still intent upon his scrutiny.

The girl was perhaps twenty-two or twenty-three, but sorrow had left its mark more distinctly than the years. The face was hungry, but not pinched—and the hunger was evidently not that of mere want alone. For her face bore the signs of a tender spirit, and a rich spiritual beauty rested on it. The very fragrance of a sweet and tender nature, over-trustful, perhaps, but due to unstained innocence, seemed to come from the half-parted, trembling lips. Her

mouth was significant of purity, her eyes soft and docile. Yet, as a light fell upon them, something of sorrow seemed to burn within, as if some great surprise had touched their laughter with eternal seriousness.

Her neck was surrounded by a strong slender chain of steel—and Stephen noted in amazement that this ended in a tiny brazen cross, almost hidden by a piece of faded lace.

“Where do you live?” asked Stephen.

“Nobody cares where I live—don’t let’s speak about that,” she retorted quickly; “won’t you help me a little—just a very little? I’m so unhappy.”

“How do you come to have that cross there?” he asked; “won’t you tell me why?”

The girl looked down at it, then lifted her eyes quickly, and answered:—“It would be hard for me to tell you—I’ve not told anybody yet;” and Stephen could not but notice a tremour in her voice that spoke of an emotion he was at a loss to understand.

At this juncture they were interrupted by the returning cabman, his gait suggesting that he had invested the threepenny bit to fine advantage.

“I met an old pard in there,” he explained, “a pard I ’adn’t seen since Dizzy died,” his mind reverting to the great obsequies they had observed together.

“Lord! You’ve run acrost one yourself!” he exclaimed, his eye falling on the girl.

“I’ve never met this lady before,” Stephen made

haste to avow. "But I'm not going farther with you," he continued, "I'm not going on—I have—that is, I've a duty to attend to," he concluded, not without embarrassment.

"Halright, I understand you, sir," replied the cabby gravely. "Hawful glad I was of 'elp to a gent, a-doin' of his dooty." The significance of his voice could not be misunderstood.

"I would have you know, sir, I'm a minister," Stephen affirmed in a heightened tone—"I've a duty to perform—here."

"Oh, Lord!" broke out the cabman; "Jerry, do you hear that?" he cried, turning toward the horse and snatching the light blanket from its back.

"How much do I owe you?" Stephen asked sternly; "I'll settle with you now."

"No time like the present," replied the cabby. "But I does 'ate to take five bob off a poor parson—it 'urts me more nor you."

"Five what?" said Stephen, confused by the nomenclature.

"Five bob! Five shillin'—I've hearned it, too."

"Oh, five shillings, you mean, do you?" said his now enlightened fare; "all right," and Stephen drew from his pocket the wallet that contained his father's noble gift, now converted into Bank of England notes. "I've got some change here somewhere," he muttered, fumbling among the rustling bills.

"The deacons must 'a' paid you up the salary just afore you told 'em bye-bye," suggested the cabman, denoting the purse with one eye, the other reserved

for a fitting operation toward the girl. "Must be hawful devoted to their pastor," he added, repeating the aforesaid ocular operation.

"Here it is," said the passenger at last. "That's five—isn't that right?"

"Halright; thank'ee sir—and I'll leave you to your dooty. Won't be preachin' in the Habbey next Sunday, will you, sir?" which was too near the high water mark of humour to permit of further control. The cabby abandoned himself for a minute to the hilarity he felt had been too long delayed; and nothing but the honesty of Stephen's purpose could have saved Stephen from its sting.

X

*ITS CASKET for A NIGHT*

**A**S Stephen turned to the girl beside him, the look with which he regarded her was not without genuine pity. He was interested, moreover, from the standpoint of his profession. Here is the first fruit of my search, he thought; and here a golden opportunity to uplift the fallen, joining in this far-pitched battle against London's sin and sorrow. He even thought of the rich effectiveness of such an incident, used as an illustration in some sermon yet unborn. For no theme is so enthralling as that of the prodigal, whom preachers so often seek afield, going forth from Newcastle in their search for coals.

"Where can we get something to eat?" he asked as he turned to her. "I will go with you."

"I noticed a place one street over from here," the girl replied, her thought making a quick review that only hunger could command, "and I fancy it's open all night. We could go back there. But why do you go too?"

"I will tell you later," Stephen replied. "Let us go at once."

They retraced their steps, Stephen trusting himself to the guidance of the girl. She walked with unconscious haste; for a pathetic stimulus urged her on.



He could not but mark the plaintive candour of her eager pace; and pity gathered in his heart. Her carriage was erect and graceful, her hair, disheveled somewhat, showed golden and wavy in the uncertain light, the silken strands wandering over ear and cheek and neck, all blending in a contour of strangely delicate loveliness and charm.

"Aren't you ashamed too?" The words broke in upon his silent observations.

"Ashamed? Ashamed of what?" asked her companion, remarking again the refinement of her voice, "ashamed of what?"

"Well, what made you tell the cabby such a story?" the girl returned.

Stephen started. He had forgotten. "Me! A story to the cabman!" he exclaimed. "I don't know what you mean—I didn't tell him any story."

"No," she amended, "it wasn't exactly a story—it was a whopper——"

"What do you mean?" Stephen renewed, a little testily; for philanthropy knows its rights.

"You told him you were a preacher—why didn't you tell him something he'd believe—— Here we are—that's the place I saw—and there's a light in it yet," she concluded rapidly, the moral swallowed up of the material.

They pushed back the already half opened door and entered the poor refectory. One or two belated ones, just preparing to depart, were concluding their repast, eking out the scanty fare to the uttermost moment. Stephen led his companion to a table in a

corner of the room and the agile waiter had soon departed with an order for a large double steak, a sixpence from Stephen's hand accounting for the cheerful speed that marked his exit.

Stephen was still thinking of the girl's last words and their soft impeachment.

"But I'm just what I said I was," he resumed when they were seated.

The other looked earnestly at him, the sweetness of her expression in this clearer light striking Stephen with surprise.

"I told him the truth," urged Stephen. "I told him I was a minister—and I am. You needn't smile—I am a minister."

The face that looked across at him was serious enough. "Do you know I believe you—at least I almost believe you. Are you really a minister, sure enough?" she enquired earnestly.

For answer, Stephen drew a letter from his pocket and threw it down before her. It was one of the few that had been entrusted to him for purposes of introduction.

"'Reverend Stephen Wishart, M. A.,'" the girl read aloud, evidently impressed.

"You may look at the letter," said Stephen with a glance toward it. She took the missive out and read it through. It was to a Scottish friend, the credential again in evidence.

Then she restored her attention to the envelope, reading the address over once or twice. "'M. A.,' I know what that means," she reflected presently.

"Do you?" answered Stephen smiling. "What does it mean, then?"

"'Master of Arts,'" the girl responded quickly, Stephen wondering at the sound. "Our minister was an M. A.," she pursued, Stephen's eyes wider than before.

"Your minister!" he exclaimed, gazing at the girl and trying to realize the place and method of their meeting.

"Yes," returned the other; "he got his at Aberdeen—he was our minister before I was born. He married my father and mother," she concluded, her lips all a quiver.

"Here's the waiter at last," announced Stephen, blithely assisting in the distribution of the homely dishes. He dropped a fork beside her chair; she stooped to recover it and he slipped a portion of his order on to her plate. Then he led the attack, bidding his companion follow; which she did right heartily, yet with a modesty that explained the embarrassment of her downcast eyes.

She had spread upon her lap a dainty handkerchief, sorely stained, it must be said—but he marked the refinement of the action.

He was wondering how he might best renew the conversation, when the voice of the other suddenly relieved him of that necessity.

"That *was* a whopper after all," she said, as she looked up, the eyes glistening through the dew.

"What was a whopper? What have you discovered now?"

"About what you told the cabby. You said you were a minister—and you didn't ask a blessing," she charged.

"I asked it inside," said Stephen; "they'd think you were ill if they saw you asking it here any other way, I should think—though I was never in a place like this before. But now let me cross-question you—you said your minister was an M. A., didn't you?"

"Yes, I said he got it in Aberdeen," she replied seriously.

"Well then, what church does he belong to? Which is your church?" for the vein struck him as foreign and fascinating.

"It's the Church of Scotland," the girl answered promptly.

"Isn't that strange, that's mine, too. But how do I know you are not telling me a whopper, as you call it? Let me see—I can tell by a question. Now, you tell me something—what do they call the men in the session? Their office, I mean?"

The big eyes stared at him for a minute:—"Oh, you mean the Kirk Session—why, they're elders, of course. My father was one."

"Good, very good—now I'm going to ask just one more question," pursued her examiner; "perhaps it's a little harder than the other—how does the eighty-fourth psalm run? That's a sure sign, if you can tell that."

She pondered a moment:—"I've learned them nearly all—we had to learn them on Sunday after-

noous," she mused. "I can't just remember how that one begins. But I think it has this in it:

• Behold the sparrow findeth out  
An house wherein to rest!—

I thought of it to-night when I was walking around," she added in a voice he could barely hear, her eyes hidden from him as her head bowed till it rested on the heaving bosom, while scarlet clothed her cheek:—"Oh, sir, my heart is broken," she cried at length, after a brief wild struggle for control. "I don't want to eat any more," she sobbed, the tears flowing fast now, unstaunched by the poor handkerchief she had lifted from her lap. "Let us go out," she sobbed, "I can't stop crying—and that man's looking at me;" which very feminine complaint was accompanied by a furious glance at the petrified waiter, transfixed beside his green baize door.

"All right," whispered Stephen. "You go on—wait for me at the door." He hurriedly paid his bill, the recovering waiter asking innocently: "Is your missis sick, sir?" for he knew they were not of the usual class he was wont to serve at that hour.

Stephen made some unintelligible answer, moving quickly toward the door through which his companion had disappeared; but she was nowhere to be seen, and Stephen's heart leaped with a strange eagerness to find her. He called out some word of general salutation—for he did not know her name. Answer there was none. Then he ran quickly down

a near-by street, but his search was unrewarded. Returning slowly, he peered into an alley; and the brightly burning light, London's great custodian, revealed to him what he knew at once to be the skirt of a woman's dress. Hurrying forward, he found the companion of his humble meal seated on a step, still sobbing violently.

"Go away, oh, please go away," she moaned, as Stephen spoke to her.

"I won't—I shan't leave you like this—where are you going to sleep to-night?"

"I don't know," she sobbed, "I don't know—and it doesn't matter—only please go away."

Suddenly a shadow darkened the entrance to the alley and a burly form loomed above them.

"What's the matter here?" and the policeman's voice was stern—"have to move out of this, and quick about it."

The girl leaped quickly to her feet. "Sit down," Stephen said in an undertone; "stay where you are—I want to speak to him."

He motioned the officer aside and a few moments sufficed to tell the story.

"Likely some poor girl from the country," the policeman ventured, heart-tender as are nearly all his kind; "likely enough a thoroughly innocent girl, too," he pursued. "No, sir, there's no hotel just round about here. I'll tell you what you do. There's an Army Home on Parrot Street—there's a drinking fountain three minutes this side of it. She can stay there for the night—comfortable enough, too."

"But won't she have to mix—I mean, aren't all——" Stephen queried, deprecatingly.

"Oh, no, bless you—no, not at all. They've beds there up to six-pence—mebbe a shilling. Lots of the best take 'em. You pay it. That'll mean a bite of breakfast, too. The very best thing you can do—try and get her to go there. And I'll just go on."

"How shall we get there?" urged Stephen, anxiously; "I don't know anything of the locations here."

"Oh, simple enough. See that light there? Well, go down to that, turn to the right for two squares, then turn to the left, and it's the third corner on the right—you'll find it easy enough. Good-night, sir."

The gust of anguish seemed to have subsided when Stephen returned to his companion, and she was persuaded without serious difficulty to follow the course commended by the officer. They walked on in silence for a time.

"I hope to see you again," Stephen said at length; "you're to tell me yet where your home is, and all about everything like that, you know."

No answer coming, he presently renewed:—"You will tell me all about it, won't you?"

The girl looked at him with searching eyes;—"I'll tell you everything, I think," she said quietly after a moment, "I want to tell you everything."

"Here's the place. I guess this is where you ring. Wait a minute—what is your name?"

"Hattie," she answered.

"Hattie who?"

"Hattie Hastie. I suppose they thought it sounded pretty when they gave it to me."

"It *is* a pretty name—and I want to see you again. And you may expect me to come here to-morrow morning about ten o'clock. Promise me you will wait till I come."

Hattie Hastie blushed; and the rosy banner was well pleasing to Stephen's eye: for is not the blush of maidenhood the signal that God's sentinels still hold the inner fort?

"Promise me, promise me quick,—here's the attendant coming."

The girl suddenly raised her eyes, swimming in the light as they were; and a rich aroma distilled through the lips that spoke:—"I will wait for you—oh, God bless you, Mr. Wishart—it was He who sent you; it was my mother's God," and the wonderful eyes, radiant with tears, looked up to his in childlike trust and innocence, the man quivering with emotion as with a few earnest words he committed his new-found charge to the kindly warder who now stood before them.



*HATTIE And The COMMANDER*

**H**ATTIE HASTIE was asked no questions by the attendant at the Army Home. And very clean and comfortable was the little bed to which she was guided by the kindly matron, called from welcome slumber to duty more welcome still. The apartment was comparatively small, some eight or ten beds being beside her own. All their inmates were evidently lost in sleep—that truest friend of the homeless and forlorn. Hattie undressed quickly; and was soon stretched between the refreshing sheets, giving herself up to a review of the eventful day. A quick gush of tears bedewed her pillow, the fruit of an emotion the girl could scarcely understand.

For a strange sense of humiliation and shame mingled with a still more mysterious strain of joy; and of this latter she could not locate the source. Yet she abandoned herself to it willingly enough; for something like the gladness of the spring was about her heart. The magic sweetness that clothes life in the hour of one's convalescence seemed to have come to her.

With quick bounds, her mind flew from scene to scene, covering the whole compass of her life. Aberdeen and its golden twilight days; the removal to

their English home; the unruffled happiness of opening girlhood; the gathering clouds; the wasting of her father's health; the wail of her widowed mother; the bailiff-hand of poverty—from one to the other, her mind flitted, as she lay among the homeless, gathering the bitter and the sweet.

Then it lingered longer amid darker memories—her mother's brush with death; her recovery; her wounded health that soon surrendered; her dying prayer and her child's passionate promise, as dying hands tied the little cross about her neck—then the sombre tunnel of her orphanhood.

Scenes darker still were visited on memory's wing—her dower of unconscious charm; its recognition by another who forgot that she was but a child, and pressed his claim with the approval of her guardian aunt; her first response of love, slighted as soon as it was won; her aunt's increasing severity; and her own worse than homeless state.

Then, darker still, the sympathy of an almost unknown girl who had prompted her to flight; and her half-surrender to her companion's plea for London as a city of refuge from her cruel lot. Her heart burned within her as she recalled the letters that had come from the older girl who had gone on before to the great metropolis. Their deepening tinge of colour, their lavish promise of relief, and pleasure, and success—all so intelligible in the light of what had happened, but so misunderstood as she had read them amid the pure fragrance of her country life—of all this she thought.

And Hattie's face burned like fire as she recalled the innocent joy, the simple hopefulness, with which she had set out for London. Like molten gold it glowed, as she recalled their meeting; the momentary shock as she read her companion's face—the Gehenna of her words and their dread suggestion. Again an indescribable face seemed to look out at her through some shadowy lattice; and the mal-*aroma* of some deadly nightshade seemed again to smite her to the heart.

Then her mind leaped swiftly on, as if seeking shelter from some phantom enemy; and the lights of home—and the locking of a mighty door—were somehow commingled with the tender face which she had last looked upon in the dark without; she confused her mother's voice with the tones that had called her so tenderly by her childhood name. And the memory of her mother's parting kiss—sacramental though it was—blended with a different image; wherewith sweet drowsiness stole about her. Then she surrendered her soul to God in a half uttered prayer that lost itself in the blessed ocean of a dreamless sleep.

When the girl had finished her simple breakfast next morning, the matron took her into a private room and closed the door behind her.

"I've got good news for you," she began, still standing with her back to the door. "I knew, as soon as I saw you last night—that you were different, so different from those that usually come in. And

I've been telling all about you to the Commander—she happened to come down here this morning."

She stopped, smiling; for reverence was meant to mark the name. "The Comm. adm. wants to see you herself," she continued radiantly, mentioning the name of one of London's guardian angels, a near relative of the great Administrator whose fame has filled the earth as one of the most consecrated warriors that ever buckled on his armour. "She's going to see you herself—and you can trust her as you would your own mother. You'll love her as soon as you see her—everybody does. Come, I'm going to take you to her now."

Hattie followed her guide, and was soon shown into an inner room, her eyes falling, as she entered, upon one of the most gracious and winsome faces that ever shone with love's mystic light. Her heart seemed to leap toward the woman as she noticed the compassion of her eyes and the simple sweetness of her whole appearance. She was tastily attired, almost richly it would seem, though the credentials of her office could be seen upon her dress. But, robed though she had been as an oriental princess, the eager compassion of her soul would still have been easily perceived; her whole womanhood seemed touched with the redemptive pity that looked out from great lustrous eyes upon the homeless girl before her.

Like one who had found something she had long sought in vain, she rose and came quickly toward the stranger.

"Come away, come away in," she said, as if she

were speaking to some friend for whom she had been waiting. "Mrs. Yull here has been telling me about you," and, leading her to a couch, she sat down beside her, taking Hattie's hands in hers. This tenderness, long familiar from hands that are hidden now, seemed to awaken fountains of memory in the wanderer, who laid her tear-stained face on the willing bosom of her new-found friend.

"Where are you going, my dear?" she latter said after a time. "Won't you tell me as much as you can about yourself?"

"Oh," sobbed Hattie, "you're so good to me—and I don't know where I'm going."

"Can't you go home, child? Or have you no home?"

"No, none," said Hattie, the blue eyes raised to look out of the window a moment—away past the chimney pots of the houses about her. She was thinking of the honeysuckle on the porch of what had once been home; and her eyes were turned toward the direction in which she thought it lay.

A graceful arm had stolen gently around the girl's shoulders: "Tell me about your home." Whereupon the reverie of the night became the narrative of the day.

"I know I can trust you," Hattie said; "and I think it will help me to tell somebody, any way." And, beginning with the bright and happy morning of her life, she told the hours, one by one, keeping back nothing that bore on all the sad heart-story.

"And that was how I came to come to London,"

she concluded, bolt upright now, turning around and looking at the other with eyes that were aflame: "that was how I came here—she deceived me. She told me I could get lots of money and pretty clothes in London—and I was so poor. And I thought I would get a good home here! Oh, I really thought I would die when I found out what it all meant—it was awful, awful"—and the silken tresses drooped again, the face, hiding like a hunted thing, close to the woman's loving heart.

"And the girl who induced you to come?" asked her protector, "where is she? Does she know where to find you?"

"No, no—she shall never see me again," Hattie answered vehemently. "When I knew what she meant, I turned and ran away—ran as hard as I could run. I didn't know where I was going—and I didn't care. It was at Charing Cross—St. Mark, she called it—that I saw her last. But I'll never see her again as long as I live—never," and the girl's eyes flashed with purpose and indignation.

"Poor little thing," the Commander whispered, fondling her as she spoke; "you never *shall* see her again—if we can help it." Then she asked her another question—in the lowest and tenderest of tones.

The girl blushed furiously. "I don't know," she answered, almost in the other's ear. "I try to forget about him—and I nearly have," a look of wistful memory in her eyes. "I seem to have so much sadness in my life. No, I don't know where he is—he

went to America shortly after, and I've never heard of him since. I was only seventeen then."

Seventeen she might still have been—thought her friend beside her—if one might judge by the sweet complexion, pink and white after her refreshing sleep; and by the golden tresses that had the buoyancy of girlhood still; and by the big blue eyes that filled so pitifully fast; and by the dimpling mouth, and earnest voice, and all the simple artlessness that had so quickly won her heart. For the morning sun was pouring in through the open window, caressing the girlish form with soft and radiant hands, lighting her face with its tender glow, glancing merrily at the tapering fingers that every now and then were raised to adjust the sunlit hair.

And as the Commander looked upon her, looked again, gazing into the eyes that were so full of meaning and emotion, she realized how rarely lovable was this bloom from distant fields, borne by unfriendly winds toward the awful peril of London's fiery flame.

"Tell me about your mother—tell me more about your mother," she said presently, the request following naturally from her immovable confidence in the goodness of the girl. The Commander felt an unalterable assurance that she was heart-true, and innocent, and pure, however darkly circumstances had conspired against her. "Are you like her—do you look like her, I mean?" she added, trying to make it easier for her to go on.

"Yes, mother was fair—she had hair like mine," said Hattie, her hand resting on the other's. "She

was an Aberdonian; and father and she came to live near Chester before I was born. The earliest thing I can remember was looking over the great valley of the Dee; and mother used to sing:—'Mary, call the cattle home'—she had the sweetest voice I ever heard, I think."

"I believe that, dear," the Commander said softly; "have you a picture of her?"

"Yes—but it's in my box. Oh, what will I do about my box?" she cried, suddenly remembering—"it's at that place—that place that I went to first."

"Have you the address, dear?"

"Yes, I have the street; and the number"—and the billowy crimson flowed again over neck and cheek—"but I can't go near it—I shan't—if I should never get my box."

"Don't worry about that, Hattie. You see, I have found out your name—and you'll let me call you by it. Don't bother about that—you'll give me an order, and I'll see that it's taken out for you. You'll let me have it brought here in the meantime, won't you, dear? Let this be your home for a little. Now, let us talk about the future. Is there anything you can do—any kind of employment, I mean? Did you ever prepare to teach—or sew—or give music lessons—or anything of that sort? You say you don't want to go back to the country."

"No, I couldn't go back to Chester—I simply couldn't. I never had a great deal of regular schooling. But mother was a scholar—at least we thought so. And she taught me mostly herself."



"Did your mother ever say anything to you on the subject? I mean, about what you would likely do when you were left alone?"

"No—she thought I would live with Aunt Barbara. But I can't now. Yes, she did speak to me once about what would happen if I should be left altogether alone."

"What did she say?"

"She thought I might do something with my voice—she thought I sang sweetly. But I don't think I do—only I loved to sing to her. She asked me to sing to her when she was dying—and I did," the trembling voice indicating how sacred was the memory.

"What did you sing, dear?"

"It was a hymn—mother loved the hymns. Of course we all belonged to the Scotch church—so father thought of nothing but the psalms. Mother liked them too; and we used to sing them at family worship. But she loved some of the hymns just as well, I think."

"What hymn was it you sang, Hattie?"

"It was, 'When I survey the wondrous Cross'—mother liked it better than any of the others. And I love it too. I sang it to her just before she left me—and"—the girl stopped, evidently doubtful as to whether or not she should go on.

"And what, Hattie—what then?"

"Well, it was then she gave me this cross—this one that I wear—I saw you looking at it."

"Yes," the Commander replied, deeply interested.

"I've been wondering about it ever since you came in—you say your mother gave it to you then?"

"Yes, I'll tell you about it—it has a history. A poor woman near us was a great friend of mother's—and mother nursed her. Well, she used to be a servant in Canon Kingsley's house—it was Canon Kingsley who wrote 'Mary call the cattle home'; and when she left, he gave her this cross. He was such a good man! And when she was dying, she gave it to mother. I had hardly ever seen it before—I guess father didn't like mother to have it very much; for the Scotch people mostly think it's like the Catholics. So mother kept it away some place by itself—but she had it under her pillow when she was dying. Mother's mother was a Catholic in the Highlands; but her father was a Presbyterian—and so was she, of course. But still she loved this little cross, I know."

"And did she put it on your neck with her own hands, dear?"

"Yes, she locked it on herself—and the key was in her poor thin hand when she was buried. She has the key and I——"

"Never mind, dear, never mind—don't speak further of it. I shouldn't have asked you—don't cry, dear"—and the pure lips that gently touched the girl's were as tender as those that mouldered in a distant grave.

"No, no"—Hattie sobbed—"only I remember how the poor fingers touched my neck—he was coughing so—and I want to tell you. She kept the

key—and I promised her—I promised her,” she went on, controlling herself by a resolute struggle, “that I would wear the little cross always, always as long as”—then the voice hushed to a whisper and the rest was breathed into her listener’s ear. “And I have”—she resumed almost violently—“I have—and I always will—always! Oh, my mother, my darling mother!” and the scbbing form was folded tight, passionately tight, in the loving arms of the woman who was sobbing almost like herself.

“Thank God, my child”—the older one murmured low—“thank God, my child—He’ll never let you go—and I won’t either,” she cried, holding her closer still.

The spasm of lonely anguish soon spent itself as Hattie nestled in the loving arms that had been the first to enfold her since her mother died.

“I must go soon,” she said presently, glancing at a clock on the mantel.

“Go where, Hattie?” asked the other; “I thought you were going to stay with us a while.”

“So I am—if you’ll have me. But I promised to keep an engagement at ten o’clock this morning; it was——”

“An engagement!” the Commander cried involuntarily. “Is it about a position?” she added, as if to atone for the amazement in her voice.

Hattie’s face showed her embarrassment. “No,” she began, a little nervously, “it’s to meet a—a friend.” Her eyes turned full upon the Commander’s

face, shining with confidence and candour. "I'll tell you all about it. When I ran away from that girl yesterday, I was so terrified I wouldn't speak to anybody—would hardly look at anybody. Only I tried one or two places where I thought a girl might get work—just common work, you know—but they were all full; and none of them needed anybody. And that went on till it got dark; and I was so tired—and so hungry—I'd never been hungry before like that—and I waited—and walked on—looking till I should see some face I thought I could trust. And I tried at last. I really asked for something to eat." And the wistful face looked up toward the sweet face above her as if to ask absolution.

"Well, dear?"—and the smiling eyes were free from the faintest symptom of reproach—"how did the face turn out? Was it trustworthy?"

"Yes, oh, yes,"—and her experienced listener could not but note the warmth of her tone and the significance of her heightening colour. "Oh, yes, you could tell he was good to look at him—he was tall—and dark—and handsome; at least his face had a lot of kindness in it. And he was so good, so good and kind—and he wanted me to stay here till he came this morning to see me. Oh, tell me"—she pleaded suddenly, the thought just occurring to her—"do you think I shouldn't? Is it wrong? He's a minister, you know—oh, yes," she protested, as the other checked a smile—"he's a minister—I saw his credentials; and he is anyhow, without them—but

I won't see him if you don't want me to," she concluded, slipping her hand into the strong soft palm that returned its pressure.

"My child, do whatever you think is best. I trust you absolutely—and I know ——"

"I'll bring him to see you," Hattie interrupted eagerly, as if the brightest of all ideas had suddenly occurred to her—"and then you'll be sure I'm right."

"Just as you like about that, Hattie—I'll be glad to see him. The best credentials after all are the eye—and the voice. They hardly ever deceive, Hattie,"—and she drew near to the girl in sudden fondness, looking into the still glistening eyes, and stroking the wayward hair. "Hattie, you have the credentials—but remember dear, some cruel people, some men—and women, too—they won't regard them as anything but playthings for their cruelty. I mean your eyes—and your hair—and those dimpled cheeks. But how silly of me to be talking like this—only you are beautiful, Hattie; and I shall always pray that the great Captain will protect you."

Hattie's agitation, as she looked up and listened to the portentous words, showed that their meaning was not hidden from her.

"I know," she answered, her lip trembling—"that is—I know what you mean; oh, do pray for me. I feel as if I had been drawn out of some awful stream that was rushing toward a torrent. Oh, I love you—I do love you"—and two arms were flung firmly about the other's neck, two rosy lips telling out the song of their deliverance.

"And now, dear, if you are going to meet this friend at ten, you'll have to go down to the waiting-room," the Commander reminded as soon as she was disengaged. "But there's just one thing I want you to do for me before you go. I haven't forgotten what you said about your singing—and I must see for myself—or hear, rather. Come with me for just a minute."

She led the way, amid many a servant's courtesy and many a soldier's salute, to an adjoining room.

"Now let us try this," she said, seating herself on a rude bench before a little organ—"try that second verse. I think it's the loveliest thing in the book."

She pressed the keys, played the prelude in part—and smiled her signal for Hattie to begin. Which Hattie did, her voice trembling a little at first; for the transition from other scenes was sharp; and the contrast inevitably flashed upon her mind. But in a moment her voice had steadied itself and the rich words blended with it:

"Other refuge have I none  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

She did not notice the almost startled air of her companion as the quality of the girl's voice smote her ear with a great surprise. The Commander said nothing, but played on, quickly passing to the succeeding verse. When it was finished, she rose suddenly to her feet, a flushed cheek the only verdict.

"I want you to sing this night week," she said, intensity in her tone—"this night week at half past

six or so, at our woman's meeting at the Poplar barracks. I'll be down that night myself—I'll take you down. The room will be full of girls and women—and we'll have a little service, as they always do. I'll play for you myself—now good-bye; I'll likely see you when you come back."

It was a few minutes after the appointed hour—when Hattie Hastie went down to the hallway of what she really felt had been to her a house of God and the gate of heaven. It was a plain bare hallway with a few seats down each side. Yet it seemed thrice beautiful to her thankful gaze; for it linked her to the highest friend, as it had sheltered her from the fiercest foe. She felt, too, though the thought was not defined within her, that it had done more—that it had enlisted her on the victorious side in life's spectral fight, vivid and actual as it had become to her so suddenly beleaguered soul.

She had been there scarce a moment when her eyes fell on Stephen, coming through the entrance. He sees her too—and has already started forward to meet her. He can catch the new radiance upon her face—that face which the darkness of the night, with the dark's suggestive guile, had half concealed and half revealed.

Eager for a fuller verdict, he hurries toward her; for the fainter fascination of the night had merged with the morning into a distincter interest, which he would have been as reluctant to acknowledge as he was unable to explain.

But if this interest in the girl was unjustified by

anything that had passed before, it was not without good excuse for its existence now, as Stephen looked anew upon the face that had not been absent from his dreams. And if that face had claimed the chiefest place in the visions of the night, it was less to be remarked that its rivals were forgotten now, the morning light attesting a beauty which the shadows of the night could but suggest.

"Good-morning, Miss Hastie," said Stephen, taking her hand. "I'm glad to see you again. And I needn't ask if you've had a good night's rest," he averred, the manly face lit up with genuine pleasure.

"And I'm glad to see you"—responded Hattie—"I wanted to thank you again—and oh, I met such a good lady in there."

"That's good; I felt sure you would encounter somebody worth while here," said Stephen. "Now it isn't very cheerful just here. Suppose we step across the street and take one of the seats in that little park." The girl brought her hat and went as cheerily as if to an outing, and in a moment they were at the little oasis of green that could be seen from the doorway of the house. "Isn't London splendidly provided with places like this?" said Stephen. "They must be a haven of refuge for many a weary one," he added, leading the way toward the little seat.

"It's a poor haven," Hattie answered, sighing—"it needs something more than that." Stephen made no reply; and they took their places in silence upon the bench.



The altogether significant feature of their interview was the very silence of it: and Stephen, at any rate, found it full of melody. The embarrassment that seemed, half-conscious though it was, to keep Hattie's eyes turned from his own, clothed her in new sweetness; and her shy silence he thought altogether lovely. A sense of the chivalric, deeper than he had ever felt before, thrilled him with soft gladness, his heart going out to the girl in a spirit that sympathy had enlisted, but which was fast changing to one of distinct and cordial admiration.

By and by the stream of conversation began to flow, the man groping, with womanly curiosity, for the threads of his companion's life-story. Part of which she told him—all that was essential—her natural candour and innocence lending a sweet grace to her words. Nor could he fail to realize that the deepest and clearest note of all her being was the spiritual, the spiritual in its simplest sense; for her nature was essentially religious, and the very atmosphere of her life was of trustfulness and hope.

Freer, and still more free, the shining words flowed on, rippling sometimes, sometimes laughing on their pebbly way, sometimes halting deep and troubled in the shadow; but always clear, always transparent, and true, and full of mirror-charm, the pure stream found its way. And as Stephen listened to the limpid story, and gazed, when he might, into the eyes that bore their evidence, sometimes dancing, sometimes brimming, to that story's simple truth, he heard a new voice calling in tones hitherto unknown, a soft

new hand fumbling with a golden key at the prison-door that no hand had unlocked before.

Again did silence, deep-wooded<sup>d</sup> silence, fall upon them, broken only by those arbour-voices that even London's roaring may not muffle.

"May I ask you now?" he said, suddenly. "Will you not tell me now?"

"What?" Hattie asked, wondering.

"About that cross—you know you nearly promised to tell me about it."

"Yes," Hattie answered, very quietly. "And there's very little to tell. My mother gave it to me—just before she left me. And I promised her always to wear it—and always to be worthy of it: that is all," and the big blue eyes looked up earnestly to his own.

Whereat one of the noblest moods that God grants to men fell upon Stephen Wishart; and his speech in turn flowed forth to the motherless girl in rich accents of sympathy and counsel. As she listened, his whole manhood seemed to expand before her in strength and tenderness. Vague, mysterious glimpses she might have had before, of his limitations, his unsophisticated self-confidence, his inclination to selfishness, his liability to passing impulse. She may even have heard the faint din of that shadowy conflict with which his strange nature filled his life. But now she sees nothing but the glowing sympathy, the strong gentleness, of a soul that dumbly comforted her own by the very trust it reposed in her, seeking to soothe her sorrow, and to

shelter her helplessness, with infinite tact and kindness. The gift and the glory of words, too, were his, and Hattie's heart beat the happiest of time to his musical and flowing sentences.

"There's another thing I hope you'll pardon my speaking about," he said at length—"but it's necessary. What are you going to do now? I want to help you in that, if I can. I hardly know anybody in London—except a man from America who is staying at the Metropole—but I could see a minister—and perhaps we could find something suitable. There are always ——"

"That's so kind of you," interrupted Hattie—"but I'm engaged for a while—yes, I've got a kind of a position"—she continued—"I don't know what my duties will be; but I've got a kind of a position," she repeated, smiling at his expression of surprise.

"Where, what at?" he asked quickly.

"I don't know—at least, I don't know what at. But I'm going back there," she avowed, indicating the Army Home by a motion of her head. "The Commander asked me to come back—and I'm going. Oh, I nearly forgot; I'm going to sing a week from to-night at a little meeting at Poplar. . . . You didn't know I could sing, did you?"

"No, I didn't. Can you? And, oh, won't you let me come too?"

"No, I can't—at least, I can't much; but I'm going to do my best a week from to-night. And do you really want very much to come?"

Stephen's assurance was quickly given, and her

consent secured; but he pleaded gently that they should meet at least once in the interval, and to this at length Hattie gave assent.

"I can't tell you how glad I am that we'll meet soon again. Good-bye for just a little while," he said, and it thrilled him to see the responsive light with which Hattie's face kindled at his words.

## XII

### *The CHURCH of The COVENANT*

**T**HE upturned earth was breathing sweet incense from its wounds as the ploughman stopped his horses now and then to tramp down a rebellious sod, or quickly adjusted it without lessening his speed. One by one, the increasing furrows were changing the surface of the fruitful acres; and Reuben glanced with satisfaction at the land-ocean his steady industry had made behind him. He was repeating to himself the "Lines to a Daisy," that could have fallen from no pen but that of the wonderful ploughboy with whom Jock's great-grandfather had once made merry before Immortality had taken that ploughboy's name into her keeping.

"Wee, modest, crimson-tippit flower," he repeated, the rest flowing half inarticulately from his lips, till an audible: "thy slender stem," betokened that the end of the verse and of the furrow had been made together.

The farther end of the new furrow had been almost reached; and Reuben took a quick glance at the descending sun, the toiler's sentinel and friend, whose relaxing rays advised him that his labours for the day were almost at an end. A gentle word to the horses brought them to a standstill, for they were

accustomed to stop while the furrow was still incomplete; there is more ploughing to be done on the morrow, and it is easier to start in the open. Reuben flung the rope-lines in different directions from his hands and stooped to unhitch the clauging traces. One chain had been released and thrown, resounding, over the horse's back, when a voice broke in upon him.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Wishart lives?"

Looking up, Reuben saw that the question came from a man whom he had never met before, a man of about fifty years of age, whose general appearance indicated considerable prosperity. He had come unheard across the field, following the path of Reuben's latest furrow.

"Mr. Wishart? Yes, sir," Reuben answered, surveying the stranger as he spoke; "he lives in that house yonder, beyond that little bush—he's my father."

"Oh, I see—have you a brother called Stephen Wishart, the Reverend Stephen Wishart?"

"Yes, sir—but I don't think he's exactly a Reverend yet," replied Reuben smiling; "he hasn't been ordained yet, you know."

"I see, I see," said the stranger. "I've met your brother—but he's practically that, being through his college course. I would like to have an interview with your brother. That's what I came here for."

"I'm very sorry, sir—but my brother isn't at home."

"What! Away from home?" said the other, evi-

dently amazed. "Where is he? Will he be back soon?"

"No, not very soon, I'm afraid—he's in the old country—gone there to complete his studies," said Reuben, terminating the existence of a horse-fly with a resounding slap; "he's going to study in Edinburgh," he concluded, brotherly pride mingling with the words.

"Well, that's unfortunate," said the man. "I came a good way to see him. I knew he was thinking of going to Europe, but I didn't imagine he was going so soon."

"He's gone," said the ploughman, with the plainness of his race, scraping the upper part of the ploughshare as he spoke. "What did you want to see him about, might I ask?" he ventured, looking up at the stranger.

"Oh, certainly, my name's Alger and I live in Hamilton—one of our city churches there is without a minister—the one to which I belong; our minister was called to New York—and a couple of us have been sent here to confer with your brother with a view to giving him a call. Nothing technically completed yet, you know, but our congregation are unanimous in wanting him. It certainly is disappointing."

"Oh," enquired Reuben, "is yours the Church of the Covenant, the one Steve used to go and preach in sometimes?"

"Yes, he supplied frequently for us when our last minister was absent in the Orient—and he made a

lasting impression. We were all so taken with his culture—and his eloquence.”

“I’ve often heard Steve speak about your church,” said Reuben.

“Has your brother any idea we are thinking of him, do you think?” enquired the visitor, smiling at Reuben.

“No, I shouldn’t think so. At least, I never heard him speak of it—I’ve heard him say he could get a call to Morven if he liked.”

“Morven! Where is Morven?”

“It’s up north—up by the lake somewhere,” answered Reuben; “you must have heard of it—but it’s not a very big place,” candour inclined him to append. He gathered up the lines as he spoke.

“Oh, yes, I remember it now. A hamlet, a mere hamlet, a man up there used to buy goods from me—it’s hardly likely your brother would consider Morven. But about the matter that brought me here,” he resumed quickly, the business air strongly in evidence, “I hardly know what to do. You think your brother won’t be back for some time?”

“I’m sure he won’t,” said Reuben, giving the lines another jerk backward; for the hungry horses were tired of the conversation. They could see the barn beyond the point of woods.

“Your father’s at home, you say?”

“Oh, yes, father’s there.”

“Well, I’ll tell you what I’ll do—I’ll go back to the village and have supper; then I’ll bring the other member of the committee and we’ll come and talk



matters over with your father. It won't do any harm—he can report to your brother; though of course we'll write to him direct."

"Very good," said Reuben, "father'll be glad to see you."

"Good-bye just now; I'll hope to see you a little later," said the stranger as he turned to go his way.

Robert Wishart was waiting in the house for his son when he came home.

"Weel, Reuben, yir day's work's by," said the kindly voice; "ye'll be through wi' yon field to-morrow, will ye no'?"

"Yes, father, at least I think so—but it looks like rain a little." The last words were lost in another deluge, splash after splash indicating the luxury after the dusty toil.

"I've news for you to-night, father,"—the words came from the recesses of a roller towel.

"News for me, my son? I hope it's guid; ye've had a screed frae Stephen, mebbe."

"No, father, no word from Stephen—but the news is about him though—and it's good, all right."

"Weel, let's hae't. Has the laddie gotten a scholarship?"

"No, not exactly that," answered Reuben; "and yet I don't know but what you might call it that," he added, smiling toward his father's eager face. "A man from Hamilton was looking for him this afternoon—came up to me where I was ploughing and asked me if I knew where Mr. Wishart lived. But 'twas Steve he meant. There's two of them, he said

—he left the other man at the village. And what do you think they wanted with Steve, father?"

"I dinna ken; how cud I ken? It'll no' be about a call?"

"The very thing, father—they've been sent by the Church of the Covenant; and they ——"

"What's that ye're tellin' me?" his father broke in excitedly; "ye're no' meanin' to tell me he's gotten a call to the Covenant kirk? It canna be."

"Not exactly a call, father—of course they couldn't call him yet because he's not licensed yet."

"I ken that fine—I've aye kenned that."

"Not exactly a call, as I said," Reuben resumed; "but it amounts to that. They have no minister and the congregation's set on Steve. He often preached for them last winter and it seems they took right to him—and these men were sent to approach him about a call."

"They didna ken he was i' the auld country?"

"No, this gentleman—Mr. Alger's his name, he said—he was quite disappointed when I told him that. But still, I thought he looked kind of pleased, too. I suppose a church like that wants a man with all the polish he can get."

The old man's face clouded a little:—"I'm no' much ta'en wi' their pole-ish these days," he returned. "It's a' richt if it's frae a Higher Hand—but if it's frae the hand o' man it'll no' stick lang—it'll no' stand the fire! It's the heart as needs pole-ishin'—no' the heid—an' naethin' can mak that clean but the blood o' Christ," he concluded solemnly, his face

glowing with the thought, for the truth he spoke was a reality to his soul.

"That's what I think myself, father. And I hope Stephen will always preach that old truth just as you've spoken it—and I believe he will."

"I hope so, my son, I hope so," his father answered gravely. "I'm aye prayin' for him. An' his mither aye prayed the same; an' I'm trustin' wonderfu' to his mither's prayers," he added, the voice faltering perceptibly, for Robert Wishart's life was very lonely now.

"Did ye say the men frae the city was gone hame?" he pursued, turning quickly from the more tender vein.

"Oh, no, I forgot to tell you—they're going back on the express that leaves at half-past nine; and Mr. Alger said they'd be up after supper to talk things over with you. I fancy they'll be here before long."

"That's guid," rejoined his father. "I'll be richt glad to see them. But I wish yir mither had been here—she was better nor me at the counsellin'. Did they seem to be speeritual-minded men, Reuben?" he enquired anxiously.

"Yes," Reuben answered slowly, "that is—you mightn't just think so—of course, theirs is a different way from ours. I only saw one of them, you know—the other didn't come."

"You maun be hungry, my son. Ye've had a hard day—but it aye maks the morsel guid to the mouth, an' the pillow sweet to the head. What way did ye no' bid the stranger hame to supper wi' ye?"

"I thought of it, father, but I didn't like to. I was afraid he'd find things rather plain. Mr. Alger had a gold watch—and he wore those boots that you never need to polish."

"It's an awfu' time for pole-ish," and a smile lit up the old man's face; "there's mony a yin pole-ished at that end that's no' ower bricht at the ither—that's no' to say Mr. Awlger is yin o' them, mind ye."

"I don't think he is, father—he seemed a nice sensible gentleman."

"Then ye should hae brocht him wi' ye to supper. Mebbe he'd a' likit the change. Yir true gentleman aye maks little o' appearances. Style's naethin', onyway," the old man affirmed with considerable contempt in his voice; "onybody can hae thae shoon that's aye shinin'. An' my faither had a hat as keepit its pole-ish for forty year—it's i' the room, ye ken—he aye wore it on the Sabbath day," and a gleam of playful humour lighted up the noble countenance.

"They're coming, father—I hear Collie barking," Reuben said suddenly.

A minute later Robert Wishart opened the door himself, welcoming the strangers warmly and bidding them make themselves at home.

An hour or more had passed in discussion of the matter under consideration when the master of the house, warming to his guests, suggested that they draw their chairs closer to the hearth. "The evenin's cool—an' a bit fire's heartsome ony time," he said; "sit doon, sir, and I'll bring anither stick."

As he approached the bonfire, a goodly pile of hickory in his arms, Mr. Whitney interrupted him:—  
“Pardon me, sir, but may I not find pleasure of replenishing the fire? In this season we are unaccustomed to these spacious fires, and I think they are the very essence of luxury.”

“Ye’re richt,” answered the host, “ye’re mair music i’ them than a piano, my faither used to say. ’Twas a guid freen to him i’ the earl’s time, mind ye. Help yirsel’, sir. Rax oot y’ hand to the wood.” Whereupon Mr. Alger did put forth his hand, flinging stick after stick upon the crackling flame.

“You see how generous I am,” he laughed, “with what isn’t my own. It’s easy to pitch on wood that you didn’t have to cut or carry yourself.”

“Div ye ken the way my faither used to express that?” Robert Wishart asked him, gazing reminiscently into the blaze.

“No,” said Mr. Alger, “how did your father put it?”

“’Twas the Scotch way,” returned his host, “an’ no’ a bad yin either. He wad say:—A borrowed horse, an’ yir ain whip, maks short miles,”—and the good man joined heartily in the laugh that followed.

“Very good, Mr. Wishart, very good indeed,” said Mr. Whitney, for such was the name of the other whom Mr. Alger had brought with him. “Do you know, sir, I’m much struck by the beauty and sententiousness of your Scotch language. I love to hear it spoken.”

“Are ye only findin’ that oot noo?” rejoined the

old Scotchman humorously. "I dinna ken about that ither thing ye've mentioned—but I ken it's beautiful, a' richt."

"I suppose you consider it finer than the English?" asked Mr. Whitney.

"Oh, I'm no' sayin' that," his host returned modestly. "I aye use the English mysel'—tor fillin' in, ye ken—but the Scotch bits is like you tufts o' green ye'll find among the wheat, mair rich and sweet, ye ken—a bit o' richer soil, ye unnerstand. But that's no' to say a Scotchman's ony better than ither—only he's Scotch, ye ken—an' that's the Lord's daem', an' me credit to onybody," he concluded seriously.

Mr. Whitney and Mr. Alger cast amused glances at each other. Their host went on presently, encouraged by the cheerful silence.

"English is a grand langidge, nae doot—only it's no' complete—no' feenished like, ye ken."

"How do you make that out, Mr. Wishart?" asked Mr. Alger. "I thought the English language capable of expressing any meaning one wanted to convey."

"No," said the other thoughtfully, "it canna juist dae that. I'm nae scholar; but it canna juist dae that—that is, it canna dae it exactly, ye unner-tand? An' a langidge as canna dae that—it's no' complete. It can gie the meanin', mebbe; but no' the *shade* o' meanin', dae ye see?"

"What, for instance?" asked Mr. Alger. "Give us an example."

"Weel, tak the like o' tins, for instance—tak the

word 'bonny'—that's a shade o' meanin' ye canna get wi' the English. Or tak anither—tak 'the gloamin'—'twixt the gloamin' an' the mirk'—ye canna gie me English for that."

"That *is* rather remarkable," interjected Mr. Whitney thoughtfully, as he laid another knot on the fire. "I never thought of that before."

"There's naethin' like the Scotch to mak a body think," replied Robert Wishart, looking seriously at his listeners; "but I can gie ye a better yin than ony o' the ithers," he pursued—"there's 'Auld Lang Syne'—noo, try yir hand on that;" and he settled back in the old armchair that had heard the liquid language for well-nigh half a century. His guests looked across at each other, pondering the challenge. "You try it, Alger," said Mr. Whitney.

"Well, I hardly feel equal to it," Mr. Alger said slowly. "I suppose 'Old long since,' as far as I can translate the words, is about the meaning of the phrase."

The old man laughed pityingly, giving the fire a vicious thrust with the wooden poker. "Tuts," he exclaimed, "that's haverin'—naebody kens what thae words mean. Even a born Scotchman 'll find it taks him a' his time. I'm dootin' if onybody kens what thae words mean," he affirmed again. Then he turned in his chair and looked triumphantly at the beginners.

"Of course," Mr. Alger broke in, "of course, Mr. Wishart, it must be borne in mind that the phrase

you have just tried us on is only an idiom. I'm not sure that it's just a fair test. It's an idiom, you see; and that should be borne in mind, as I said."

The rural philologist looked at him very curiously for a moment, the slightest flush noticeable on his cheek. "I dinna ken juist what ye're meanin' by an 'eediom,' as ye call it. But I suppose it's what an eediot says,"—and the colour on his cheek was deeper. "Noo, thae words about 'Auld Lang Syne,' thae was sacred words to my faither—an' there was nae eediot about him, I'll hae ye unnerstand—nor ony 'eedioms,' forbye. That's anither thing as must be borne in mind, as ye say," he concluded warmly enough; for the kindly hearth-fire could never scorch his cheek like that.

"Oh, Mr. Wishart, I didn't mean that for a moment," Mr. Alger made haste to explain; "the word means something entirely different from that. I only meant a characteristic phrase; you understand, I think—the peculiar cast of a language——"

"Aye, I thocht it was mysel'," the old man broke in, appropriating the adjective to his comfort. "That was what made me sae warm—but it's a' ower, an' we'll say nae mair about it. I'll gie ye anither. Try this yin—'The land o' the leal'—let's hear ye gie us the English for that."

"It's your turn, Whitney—I'm through," said the last translator.

"'The land o' the leal'—let me see," pondered the novice. "Of course it's easy enough to translate it, in a way. There's only one word Scotch. 'Leal,' that



means loyal, of course. 'The land of the loyal,' that's about it, I suppose."

Robert Wishart withdrew his far-off gaze from the fire, turning it toward the little room, hushed in darkness as it was.

"Yon's blawsphemy," he said.

Silence prevailed for a time; then the delegates resumed the discussion of their case with Robert Wishart. The size, strength, wealth, intelligence and fashionableness of the Church of the Covenant were not overlooked therein. Their listener marked it all. His heart warmed more at the cordial terms in which they referred to Stephen, praising his personal appearance, his intellectual powers and his oratorical gifts.

"What kind o' man was yir last minister?" he suddenly enquired, "how long was he wi' ye?"

"Nearly three years, Mr. Wishart," replied Mr. Alger. "And he was a very worthy man—a little old fashioned perhaps; and our people grew rather tired of him. You see, he fell a little behind the times—not much of a reader—and we have a very intellectual congregation. Dr. Mitchell wasn't what you would call familiar with modern thought—preached the wrath of God a good deal; and more about future punishment than our people care for at present—and other things that are rather out of date. So when he got a call elsewhere we didn't interfere with what he thought to be his duty. But I have no doubt he was a good man—a very good man," he concluded, repeating the baneful eulogy—"but a trifle narrow for our church."

A queer look was on Robert Wishart's face. "I mind readin' somewhere—'twas in an old book," he began, "as how the way was narrow and the gate was straight, if it's life ye're wantin'—but I'm dootin' that's oot o' date wi' the rest," he continued—"an' sin's oot o' date—or gaein' oot fast. An' if they cud only put death oot o' date, they'd hae it a' managed fine," and he gazed into the fire, apparently unconscious of his audience; "but God aye keeps that in fashion," he mused, glancing at the darkened room—"an' it's a winnerfu' friend to the Cross."

The master-word must have awakened some memory within him. "Reuben," he said impulsively, "gang ye to the drawer an' bring me the *Record*—it's lyin' on the top."

His son returned in a moment, handing him a paper that showed signs of faithful reading. The father held it out before his visitors. "Div ye see thae marks beside that bit? Thae marks was put there by her that's lyin',"—and he looked long and earnestly at the wondering men; they were unfamiliar with the term, but could not mistake the significance of the lonely words.

"It's a kirk paper frae Kelso," he went on presently; "an' it's about an auld man tellin' his daughter about the new theōlogy. I'll read it to ye:—

"There's nae cross ava, noo, lassie,  
They've gone cut doon the tree;  
There's none believes it noo, lassie,  
But fules lke you an' me'—

tak the paper back, Reuben,"—and folding it care-

fully he handed it to his son, who in turn bore it to its hiding place.

"May I ask ye a question or twa about yir kirk?" Robert Wishart ventured, breaking a long silence.

"We'll be glad to give you any information we can," said Mr. Whitney, rising as he spoke. "I'm afraid our time is almost up."

"Div ye teach the Shorter Catechism to the bairns i' the Sabbath-schule?"

"I think so. Of course the superintendent looks after that. We're thinking of paying him a salary," said Mr. Whitney.

"Hae ye a guid precentor for the psalms?" pressed the interrogator.

"No, we don't have a precentor," replied Mr. Alger. "We have a paid quartette."

"Ye'll hae an organ tae?" pursued Robert Wishart.

"Oh, yes, a three-manual organ," replied the other— "it's run by water, you know."

"Water an' wind to praise the Lord!" the host muttered to himself. "How many times a year do ye hae the sacrament?" he asked aloud.

"Every three months—once a quarter," said Mr. Whitney—"we have the individual cups, of course."

"It's ower often—it's no' helpfu' to reverence to hae it sae often. Once a year was the way in my father's kirk in Kelso. An' I've heard o' thae ither things—thae cups ye speak o'. Ye'll be feart o' yin anither's insides?" he suggested, smiling grimly.

"No, not exactly that, Mr. Wishart," the other

rejoined, laughing as he spoke; "but in these days of advanced scientific——"

"Do ye hae the fast-day afore the sacrament?" interrupted his examiner, not being in a scientific mood.

"A fast-day? I don't recognize the word. What does it mean?"

"It doesna maitter—ye wadna unnerstand," replied Robert Wishart.

Their host walked with them to the gate, the moon shining bright upon his silvered head as he gravely thanked them for the courtesy of their visit, assuring them he would tell Stephen about it when he wrote.

"Onyway, I'm hopin' ye'll get a guid minister to yirsels i' the Covenant Kirk," he went on in graver vein. "A man that'll feed ye wi' the true bread o' life—a flock wi'oot a shepherd's a sair thing. Oor kirk here has had but twa i' my day. Weel, I mauna keep ye, haverin' awa' like this. Guid-nicht, Mr. Whitney; an' guid-nicht, Mr. Awlger. Thank ye for yir veesit—an' safe hame! I'll write to Stephen. Guid-nicht, again."

### XIII

#### *A LIGHT in The WINDOW*

**T**HE visitors disappeared in the darkness, Reuben leading the way across the fields.

"That old man's no fool, Whitney," said Mr. Alger, in a low tone as they walked on together, Reuben being detained a moment to replace some bars through which they had just passed.

"He's anything else but that," asserted the other; "I only hope he'll say as much for us when he writes that letter he talks about. If the young fellow's a chip of the old block, I'm afraid he'll be no easy one to manage. He hews to the line—the old man, I mean. He's not afraid to speak right out in meeting, is he?"

"Not he—but I don't think the son is like him. At least I wouldn't judge so from what we saw of him. He may hew to the line all right—but I fancy it's a very different line. He's not old fashioned, like his father. You remember the sermon where he told us Abraham only fancied he heard a voice telling him to kill his son? The old man would have a fit if he heard him say that, wouldn't he?"

"He'd kill the son himself," declared the other—"voice or no voice—the son would provide the voice part, I'll warrant you."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Do you know, I was afraid of my life he was

going to have family worship—they have lots of it in the country, you know. Wouldn't it have been terrible if he had asked one of us to lead in prayer?"

"Wouldn't it, though," answered his companion; "let's light a cigar, Alger," he suggested, feeling the need of a restorative.

"We should have offered one to the old man," said Mr. Alger, as they walked on, bright beacon lights now burning before them both. "I know he smokes; for I saw a pipe on the mantel—it looked mighty old and strong."

"Yes, I know; I smelled it as soon as I went in—it looked like an heirloom in the family. But our friend wouldn't have touched a cigar—too modern for him—as bad as the new theology. Nothing but the old plug for him, I'll hold you—the same as his grandfather smoked."

Their analysis of the interesting character under discussion was interrupted, their guide having now rejoined them; and they walked in semi silence to their destination.

After Reuben had bidden them farewell, he hurried to the post-office, finding its obliging head in process of preparation for retiring. A swift descent below, and a moment's search, brought forth two papers and a letter bearing the Wishart name. The indistinct postmark that the letter bore was scanned in vain—and by them both—for the old post-master took a personal interest in his clients, more for his wife's sake than for theirs, it must be told.

He must hurry home, thought Reuben, for his father would be waiting for him. Crossing the fields again, he pressed his returning way, wondering at the probable outcome of the visit that had so agitated their uneventful life.

His eye descries a light in the distance—and his heart throbs with sudden ardour—for he knows whose hands have kindled it. It is not far out of the way; nor would it much detain him should he turn his steps aside. Which he promptly does, and is soon within a few yards of the window. The rest of the house is hushed in darkness. A gauzy curtain screens the window, but not sufficiently to prevent his vision, which rests upon the face whose beauty had long enthralled him. She is writing, he can see, having evidently suspended her preparations for the night to indulge in what is a pleasant duty, if rapt attention and flushing cheek be any mark thereof. Her hair, the crowning glory of her form, hangs about her shoulders; her eyes are fixed upon the paper, diverted now and then to a letter beside her which has evidently provoked her own. And once he saw, torn with maddening tenderness at the sight—once he saw a quick gush of tears, quickly staunched, as she turned again to her writing.

"Bessie," he called gently, "Bessie! You know who's calling, Bessie."

The girl started suddenly, wondering if she had heard a voice.

"Bessie," he called again, more softly than before; "it's me—it's Rube—don't be afraid. Can you come

out a minute, Bessie? I've got something to tell you."

In an instant the light was out and a sweet voice called from the window, now partly raised:—"Oh, Rube, you gave me such a start. Is there anything the matter? I'll come out—just wait and I won't be a minute."

Sweeter than cathedral bell, he hears the rattling latch, the music of the creaking door. And no white-robed priest and swinging censer were ever so beautiful, and so fragrant, as the fluttering robe that melted the darkness through which she passed as she hurried to where he stood.

"Is there anything the matter, Rube? I thought you'd be in bed and asleep by this time."

"No, Bessie, nothing at all—nothing wrong. I wanted to see you—oh, Bessie."

Emotion shook his frame; for, though he knew it not, all the strong forces of his nature were kindled by the mystic torch that the night carries in her shadowy hand.

"Bessie, my darling," he murmured, as he sought to hold her close to him; "come to me, Bessie—why do you hesitate, Bessie? Aren't you my own, my very own—come, sweetheart"—and he drew the half-protesting form down beside him. They are sitting on a rude garden seat; and his arm is about her in tenderness. "Won't you tell me plainly, Bessie, that it's settled once for all? Tell me you love me—and tell me that you'll——"

But Bessie interrupted—for she knew what he



was about to plead. More of sorrow than of joy is on her face. Oh! the anguish of a maiden's heart that knows whom she ought, and whom she strives, to love; yet knows another, whose face must first be banished from her soul.

"Rube, oh, Rube, is this what you brought me out to hear? I thought you wanted to tell me something."

Dark though it was, she yet could not fail to see the pallor that overspread his face at her words. "I don't mean, Rube," she went on, playfully lifting the hand that had fallen from her neck and holding it to her cheek; "I don't mean that it isn't sweet to hear it, Rube—but I was so busy—and I thought you had news for me."

"So I have—I've got some news about Steve. But I forgot about it when you came out to me through the dark. Oh, Bessie, it's so hard to tell what it means—but to have any one you love coming to you nearer—always nearer—coming on through the dark!" and Reuben's face glowed in the night, illumined by a heart as pure as loving.

She moved slightly from him, turning to look into his face. "Stephen!" she said—and her tone was low—"what news have you of Stephen?"

A momentary disappointment cast its shadow over Reuben's face; for he had thought she too would have given first place to other thoughts than those that were linked to tidings of another—and he so far away. But his pride in his brother was great and he was well pleased that others should share it too.

"He's had a great honour—Steve's been offered a call to Hamilton—to the Church of the Covenant. Two of the officers of the church were at our house this evening. I'm just on my way home from seeing them to the station."

Bessie's eyes were shining. And poor Reuben thought their light was all of pride alone.

"The Church of the Covenant! Is Stephen to be their minister? I can hardly believe it—I was there once; and I never saw such a lot of rich and fashionable people. It was when I was at the exhibition, a year ago last autumn. It must be splendid to live among such lovely folks—does Stephen know?" and Bessie's face glowed with eager interest.

"No, I don't think he does," Reuben answered, his joy in his brother heightened by the enthusiasm of the girl. "They're going to give him a regular call, I think; but of course they'll write to him right away."

"I'll tell him first"—and Bessie's chin was elevated after a deliciously feminine fashion—"I'll be the first to tell Stephen—I'll put it in my letter;" and involuntarily she glanced toward the window that a minute ago she had plunged in darkness.

No less deep was the darkness that clouded Reuben's brow as her last words fell upon his ears. It was a moment before their full significance broke upon him; and the tingling gladness of a moment before was now a tingling pain.

"You'll put it where, Bessie?" he asked; and his tone foreshadowed the answer before it came.

"I'll put it in my letter, Reuben, as I said—my letter to Steve," she added, as bravely as she could; though her voice failed her a little, the pleading in his honest eyes looking into eyes that longed to be as honest as his own.

Her admiration of his distant brother—and of his latest triumph—gave way for a moment before something like to reverence for the greatness of this strong loving heart, whose love and strength were never more apparent than now, when his yearning eyes were fixed upon her own. Here, she knew, was a pavilion-heart, holy in its unstained love, wherein she might find shelter till all life's storm was past! Here might a woman's soul soon learn, she thought, to forget all its rival love—to renounce all its ambitious dreams. And yet—and yet!

"Bessie," Reuben said in a moment, hoarseness in his voice. "Bessie, were you writing to Steve when I called you?"

The girl's eyes fell before his own—and no word was needed. Nor was any spoken for a long, leaden minute.

When Bessie looked shyly up at length, she saw the moisture in Reuben's eyes; and a new pity took its place within her heart.

"Rube," she began, "he's your own brother," a quick light on her face indicating her hope of this tender plea.

But Reuben knew—and the vision of the lighted window was still before his mind. The inner struggle was swift and stern, its issue soon decided.

"Bessie," he began presently, his lip quivering as he spoke—"Steve's a far greater man than I am—and better too. But oh, Bessie, nobody loves you like me—but Steve's worthier; and I don't blame you, Bessie—I don't blame you. And I'm going home. Father'll be wanting me. Good-bye, Bessie—I'm going home."

He started, looking back as he went, still peering through the dark into the pallid face, the big shining orbs looking wistfully into his own. Suddenly he turns his away, pressing resolutely forward, the dew gleaming on the long grass as he went.

She can just hear his heavy footfall now. And to another heart the struggle of a moment ago is transferred.

For Bessie has looked further into his soul than she had ever looked before; and his departure had seemed to bring him near.

His shadowy form is almost lost in darkness, denser than it was a moment ago; the distance between them seems strangely great—the ocean not more wide—and a different loneliness takes possession of her.

She starts, and runs a few steps in the direction he has gone. She stops, still peering eagerly. Then she tries to call his name—but her voice refuses to venture far, fearful of the night.

She knows he is almost beyond her call; and the voice is clearer now:—

"Reuben, oh, Reuben," she cries, "come back, Reuben." Then she waits, declaring to herself that

he could not hear; and that he would not answer if he did. She starts violently, for a sudden noise has fallen on her ear. It comes from a different quarter; and Bessie's first impulse is to fly to the door she has left ajar behind her. But there is no time—for the sound is distincter now—and she can make out some fluffy thing, tearing toward her from the distant barn with sharp yelps of recognition. It is Tonko, welcome in the darkness—and the girl pets him as he leaps upon her; "that's a good dog, Tonko—good old Tonko," she murmured, half caressing the responsive animal beside her. Then she fell to listening again, bidding the dog be still—and her hand trembles on his head; for she thinks she can catch the sound of distant footsteps. A moment longer she listens—and now she is sure—sure that they are hurrying too—and the hot blood leaps to her face.

"Go home, Tonko," she orders suddenly; "go home, I say."

Bessie is alone, alone in the night, one hand tightly held in the other as her eyes strain to detect the object of her search. A momentary thought of Reuben's glowing words—about the darkness—and about waiting for another to come to you—flits across her mind; and she herself marvels at the strange eagerness of her heart.

The footfall is distinct now—and in a moment Reuben emerges from the dark. He came right on till he stood close beside her. And the great yearning eyes again sought her face.

"You called me, Bessie," he said quietly.

"Yes, Reuben—I called you," she answered; "I called you back. I wanted you to say good-bye, Rube."

"To say good-bye?" he repeated, wonderingly. "I thought I did—I'm sure I did, Bessie," he concluded confidently.

Bessie unconsciously raised her hands a little, as if to hold them forth—but she remembered—and they hung by her side. Her gaze never wandered from his face—but her lips were still.

"I thought I said good-bye—I know I did," Reuben repeated, breaking the silence. "Was that all you had to say to me, Bessie?"

The girl still stood, looking up into his face. Then she spoke:—

"Rube, I want you to say good-bye to me—I want you to say good-bye to me, Reuben"—and the great illumination shone out from her glowing face.

The man felt the night growing bright about him as he understood; and a great wave of surging joy—the first he had ever tasted—seemed rolling to his lips.

"Oh, Bessie, Bessie," he whispered, looking about him one moment as if suspicious of the dark itself; "oh, Bessie, Bessie,"—and the unresisting form is locked in the clinging arms, the fluttering heart pressed closely to his own. The golden hair, prepared for its neglected pillow, falls in fugitive strands on his own neck; and he feels, but does not understand, the emotions it awakes within him.

"Bessie," he said at last; "tell me, Bessie, my darling—was it for that you called me back?"

But his only answer was in the throbbing heart, fluttering closer to the sheltering heart beside it.

"Tell me, Bessie," he pled again; "tell me you're my own Bessie forever,"—he sought to hold her out from him that he might look into her face; but she clung close, hiding her head upon his shoulder—and the answer was enough for Reuben's long hungering heart.

"You are cold, my darling," he said after a little; for she was trembling in his arms.

"I'm not cold," she murmured—"but I must go in—come with me, Reuben,"—and together they began the walk which Reuben's singing heart declared should be the long, long walk, with no ending evermore.

At the door, Bessie turned, burying her face in its former hiding place.

"I won't send that letter, Reuben," she whispered; so faintly that he could hardly hear; "I'll burn it up."

"Don't," said Reuben—"I trust you, Bessie; or, if you do, send another to Steve. It might hurt him if you didn't—Bessie, my darling!" And again he held her close. "Good-night, my dear one—God bless you, my Bessie."

Looking back across the field, he saw the light re-kindled in the room. Still gazing, he sees another blaze—brighter than the first. It has died out in a moment—and he understands. Whereat a new flame of rapture is kindled in Reuben's happy heart.

## XIV

### *A HUMBLE RIVAL*

**R**OBERT WISHART was still waiting for his son when the latter came in the farmhouse door. Various duties had occupied a portion of his time, the rest devoted to that shoreless duty which furnished the comfort and inspiration of his life.

The open Book beside him spoke its character.

"Ye're late, my laddie,"—he said as Reuben entered—"did the veesitors get awa'?"

"Yes," answered Reuben; "at least, I suppose they did. I left them before the train came in—I've been at the post-office," he added quickly; for there was much time to be accounted for.

"Oh," said the old man—"and did ye get onything? There wadna be ony word frae Stephen, I suppose?"

"No, there's nothing from Steve, father—but there's a letter, though. I couldn't make out the postmark—here it is."

"We'll soon find oot wha it's frae," his father said, tearing the envelope open as he spoke. A long silence ensued; for the old man was not so nimble-eyed as he once had been.

"It's frae Morven," he said, when he had finished,



handing the letter to Reuben. "And it's for Stephen—and a wee bit note for me, askin' me to read it myself and send it furrin' to him—it's a grand letter," he concluded. The younger man was not long in making himself master of its contents; and these were soon the subject of eager discussion by them both.

"Seems kind of strange that both these invitations should hae come the same day," Reuben remarked; "the one from the big city church—and the other from the little country congregation—I daresay it won't take Stephen long to make up his mind which to accept."

"I dinna ken about that," returned his father, nodding towards the letter. "Ye're meanin' he'll tak the Covenant Kirk?"

"Yes, I should think it likely he will—it seems to hae many advantages, at least, that one wouldn't hae at Morven. Don't you think he will?"

"There's summat to be said about the Morven advantages tae"—and his father took the letter in his hand as he spoke; "it depends on what ye ca' an advantage," he continued; "it's an advantage to hae godly folk about ye, accordin' to my way o' thinkin'—that's what he'd hae at Morven, judgin' by the bit screed they send." Then the old man read the letter aloud, slowly, from the beginning to the end; pausing to make the necessary comments.

"That's a fine bit:—We want you to come to us in the power of the Gospel and we pray that such may be your portion wherever you may exercise your ministry'—isna that fair ground," demanded the old

man, with radiant face—"that's the auld way o' puttin' thae things—it minds me o' Samuel Rutherford's letters. Did ye tak notice to the phraseology o' thae men frae the city?"

"No," said Reuben, smiling at his father's intensity. "What did they say?"

"Exercise yir ministry," his father mused, repeating the words upon which his forefinger lay—"that's fine—that's what thae ither men was meanin' when they said it took a smart man to run their kirk—'run their kirk,' mind ye,"—he went on, looking up at Reuben—"run their kirk'—that's the new way—they tell me they dae their coortin' noo wi' yin o' thae clatterin' machines for writin' letters. Mair o' their pole-ish, I suppose."

"You're thinking of those typewriting machines, father—they're going to get one at the store. But what on earth have they to do with running a kirk?" Reuben answered, laughing.

"Machinnery!" the elder responded vigorously—"it's a' machinnery these days—they've got machinnery for the sacrament itsel'—they and their individual cups! Machinnery everywhere! And the poor folk o' Morven has naethin'—naethin' but the Holy Ghost"—he concluded, nodding toward the letter from which the closing words were quoted.

"It certainly *is* a lovely, cordial letter," began Reuben; "I'm sure they're kind-hearted people; a minister would find ——"

"Licht the ither lamp, Reuben," his father suddenly broke in—"and get the pen an' ink off the

clock. I'll write to Stephen the nicht—it's no' sae late. Ye'll write it for me, Reuben; an' I'll gie ye the points—my hand's ower shaky."

"What are you going to tell him, father? How will you advise him, I mean?" his son asked, as he prepared for the important ceremony.

"Ye'll mebbe be able to mak' that oot as we gang along," the old man replied with great gravity.

"All right, father—I'm ready—what'll I say?"

"Tell him I'm livin' an' weel—juist look aroon at me as ye get it doon."

Reuben recorded this important initial fact.

"Tell him the crops is likely to be fine—the weather's no' been agreeable to a' the foiks—but it's pleasin' to the Almichty—get ye that doon exactly."

"I have it down, father—Stephen won't be particularly interested in that, though. Don't you think we'd better get to the point?"

The old Scotchman set his lips, grimly smiling behind Reuben's chair. "That's the introduction," he retorted firmly—"it'll prepare him. Tell h'im I broke the iron bootjack his grandfaither made—my boots was wet wi' the rain—but the smith mendit it as guid as new. He'il find it refreshin' to hear o' thae common things again—they'll be undressin' wi' machinery i' the city. Hae ye got it doon?"

"Yes," said the amanuensis, concealing his amusement; "it's all down. Shall I tell him about the groundhog you fired at and missed?"

"Dinna be sae frivolous, Reuben. It's no' a time

for jokin'—it's a serious maitter, choosin yir' place i' the vineyard o' the Lord—an' the powder was bad, forbye—that stuff they mak' nooadays is guid for naethin'."

"I have it down, father. What next?"

"Ye dinna mean about the grunhog—that's a maitter o' nae importance."

"Oh, no, of course not—the last important thing I wrote was about the bootjack. What's next?" Reuben asked, regulating his features by vicious gnawing at the pen-handle.

"Tell him about thae men that cam' to ye at the plough the day. Tell't yir ain way—a' about how they cam' to the hoose—an' what they said to me—an' about their kirk. Ye ken it a'—set it a' doon, Reuben; I'll wait till ye're through."

The earnest dictator flung two or three fresh chunks of wood upon the fire, startled into sparkling protest by the strange proceeding; for, like those who sought its cheery company, such an hour as this usually found it blinking its way to the realm of dreams. But it was soon as wide awake as ever, beguiled from its drowsy mood by the long familiar hand.

Robert Wishart clapped the wood-dust from his fingers, reached forth to the mantel for his ancestral pipe, and looked defiantly at the clock; for its heightening tone, taking advantage of the silence, betokened that it too felt the same shock of wonder and surprise as had agitated its more explosive companion of the hearth. And the latter, catching the

sympathetic note, broke into comment more fiery than before.

For these were age-old friends—the fire and the clock—each looking into the other's face while year came slowly after year. And in each other's eyes alone they found no sign of age or weariness, smiling back the one to the other in unwrinkling freshness, while face after face departed, stamped with the hand of time and with the seal of care.

And many a colloquy had they had together—these trusted servants—after their masters had sought their rest. Many a long talk in the old kitchen—no other voice mingling with their own—the shadows having their recreation, too, playing hide and seek about the room like happy school-boys, while these two monitors held grave discourse upon the human friends whose heavy breathing could be heard above them. Their enterprises, their failures, their virtues, their foibles too—all these had they discussed, the clock playing the senior part; for it had been old when the new-born fire first saw the dark, hailing it an enemy, as well-bred fires ever do. And, strange to say, it was the younger that always tired first, the older noting by and by how drowsily it answered; then would it chime its mellow lullaby, and go all alone upon its vigil way. All alone—for the shadows were the children of the fire, and crept one by one into their mother's bed.

“Hae ye that doon?” resumed Reuben's father, the scraping of the pen coming to a sudden silence.

"Yes, father; I've told it as well as I can—the pen's not good for much. What comes next?"

"It'll dae my time—tell him to read what the Morven folk say—to read it carefu'; their letter'll be inside his ain."

Another brief silence followed. The writer looked around.

"Is that all?" he said.

"No," responded his father; "ye tell't him a' about thae men frae the city, did ye?"

"Yes, I told him about their coming here—and about their church."

"Did ye tell him they call it the Kirk o' the Covenant?" he pursued.

"Yes, I mentioned it—I suppose he likely knows that already."

"Weel; tell him I'm dootin' they think mair about their kirk as they dae about the covenant."

"What's that, father?" Reuben asked, in mild astonishment.

"It's what I'm tellin' ye. Yon's a great name—the covenant name—it has martyr bluid. An' they're playin' wi't, I'm dootin'" —answered his father, no sign of compromise in his voice.

"Very well; I'll write what you say"—and Reuben recorded the opinion.

"Tell him the stipend they pay i' the city kirk—they mentioned it ten times or mair."

"I did tell him that," answered Reuben.

"Tell him to mind the rich fule—an' tell him a man's life is no' i' his pocketbook—an' tell him what

does it profit a man to gain the whole world an' lose his ain soul."

"Tell him about their sacrament—how ilka man has a wee mug to himsel'. That'll settle Stephen, I'm thinkin'. An' tell him Sandy Fortyth tell't me he saw twa or three o' them kneelin' doon i' the kirk—they had wee cushions to keep the dust frae their fine breeks, he said. An' the street cars was dingin' and dongin' back an' furrit afore the kirk door on the Lord's day—dinna forget to tell him that."

The scribe pressed on in silence, recording one by one the grim details.

"That's finished, father. It's a pretty long letter—is that all?" he said, presently.

"Not quite—tell him their singers, the men buddies, leastways, wears yin o' thae coats wi' tails that droop like a turkey gobbler's i' the rain. An' they wear them i' the kirk—an' tell him they gie them an awfu' heap o' money for their screechin'—about a shillin' a yelp, they tell me—put ye that doon, Reuben."

"All right, father—I'll tell him they have paid singers. He'll understand the rest—he's surely heard them himself. Shall I close the letter now?"

"Juist ae word mair—say as how they're a godly folk at Morven; an' tell him they hae a precentor wi' the fear o' God in his heart—an' a tunin' fork in his hand—an' a decent black coat on his back. Noo, I'll sign it—gie me the pen when ye get that doon."

Which he straightway took in his rather shaky hand, settling himself carefully in the chair, one foot poised on tip-toe behind the backmost rung, his tongue duly appearing, witness for fifty years to his every signature. The operation was in time duly performed, then lavishly attested by a subordinate flourish, drawn with mathematical exactitude, and knotted at the heart by two ponderous strokes.

Reuben had folded the letter and enclosed it in the envelope; which he was about to seal when his father interrupted:—

“Reuben, is yin o’ thae paste things ony harm, think ye?”

“One of what?” asked Reuben, bewildered.

“Yin o’ thae paste things they put at the hinner end o’ a letter. I dinna ken if onybody uses them but wumman buddies. Brownie Barrie got yin o’ them frae a summer boarder, yon weed’ow buddy—wi’ the lang veil an’ the short face, ye mind. An’ Brownie tell’t me it meant ‘paste something’—I dinna mind exactly what.”

“Oh, yes,” laughed Reuben; “of course—it’s ‘postscript’ you’re thinking of. Yes, it’s all right—if you want one.”

“Aye, that’s it—‘scrapit,’ Brownie ca’d it—he said ‘twas referrin’ till the pen. It’s a bonny way o’ feenishin’—it’s like haein’ anither wee bit meat put on yir plate after ye’ve been helpit.” And the old man smiled at the success of his homely illustration.

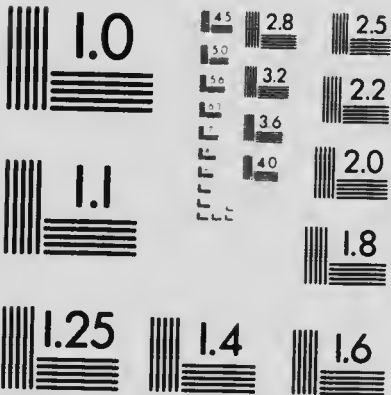
“That’s about what it is, father. Let’s have it, and I’ll scrape it down, as Brownie said,” returned the





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cheerful scribe, removing the letter from its envelope.

"Put it fornent the name," said his father, pointing to the hard-won signature.

"All right. What is it to be?"

"Hae ye the twa letters set doon?"

"Yes, they're both here—'P. S.,' see?"

"Weel, put this after them:—'Yir mither's mebbe watchin' ye.'"

Reuben wrote the words, a dim mist before him, like to that which bedewed his father's eyes.

"Now, I'll seal the letter, shall I, father?"

"There's nae hurry; leave it till the morn," answered the other.

When the morning came, Reuben again drove his team afield, resuming the interrupted labour of the day before. As soon as he had gone, his father took down the old gun from the rack and burrowed in an ancient chest till his quest was rewarded with a powder horn that bore a Kelso name; then he stealthily set forth across the fields. He returned about noon and quietly replaced the gun.

He poised himself upon the chair, as previously described, took the letter from its cover, glanced at the postscript—and shook his head. That was evidently not the proper place. His eye roamed over the manuscript until it fell upon a fairly generous space at the top of the opening page. Whereupon, with many a contortion, he inscribed:—"My sicht's as guid as ever. I kill't a grunhog at forty yard the day. R. W."

*THE GENERAL And The WAR*

**T**HE week was drawing toward its closing hours, that week whose crown and glory was to be Hattie's solo at the army service. Once during its course had Stephen met with her, a long walk affording him a yet fuller glimpse of the nature whose richness he found so grateful to his own.

For Hattie was ripening in the sunshine. "I feel as if the spring-time had come to me," she had said as they strolled along together, "and there's nothing makes one so happy as not trying to be happy, but just trying to help somebody else," which very words Stephen was pondering as he prepared to set forth to Poplar—and to Poplar's song.

He was interrupted by a rap at the door, and two letters were handed to him. Strangely enough, they had arrived together, the communication from Hamilton about the Church of the Covenant, and the appeal from Morven, enclosed with his father's quaint and sage epistle. Sudden rapture seized his heart as it grasped the portent of the honour the city church had done him, tempered but slightly by the claims of the smaller congregation or by the admonitions of his father. He will answer these letters soon, he said to himself, the one to Hamilton to be written first.

But meantime, his engagement at Poplar was drawing nigh: and, within half an hour, he had presented himself at the oft-opening door of the Army Home.

"You're in great good fortune," one of the soldiers said to him as he presented his card—"the General's going through the Home this evening—we just got word of it a few minutes ago. We never know when he may drop in, though he's the busiest man in London and doesn't get around very often."

"The General!" Stephen cried delightedly. "I'm in luck sure enough—will I meet him, do you think?"

"Certainly—the Commander's with him; shouldn't wonder if she's the one that's bringing him down. She seemed to take a great fancy to this lady friend of yours."

At which point the conversation was interrupted by the advent of this selfsame lady friend, who suddenly emerged from an inner room, carrying a huge bowl of bread and milk. She smiled at Stephen. "You're in good time," she said—"and I'm so glad you came. Just excuse me a moment till I take this out to that big room there. It's a woman with a little baby."

Stephen noted in amazement the change in Hattie's appearance; her former garb had been removed, and in its place she had assumed the uniform of the great army to whose midnight tent she had turned for shelter. More fascinating than before, she appeared, in this new guise she had adopted, its honest blue according well with her delicate complexion, her

sunny hair showing fair against its darkness. The significant letters were upon her shoulder, the little steel chain still to be seen upon her neck, its appended burden hidden beneath her dress.

"Don't you want to come and see the baby?" she laughed, disappearing while Stephen waited, too embarrassed to reply. But a few moments had passed, however, when he followed her into the large room whither she had gone. A pretty sight greeted him. The mother—not more than eighteen years the senior of her child—was standing back a little, rapt in the contemplation of her offspring, warmed to the heart by the evidence of its comfort, especially enraptured by this token of interest from one whose face and mien bespoke the superiority of her station. For Hattie had the baby in her arms; or, at least, in her left arm, the right disengaged for the service in which it was employed. Her face shone as she watched the hungry infant, so pathetically abandoned to the long-lacked luxury of an abundant meal, careless alike as to whence it came or the improbability of its being soon repeated. It cared for nothing but the blissful fact of present favour; for which favour it seemed to feel under obligation to nobody, smacking its lips in complacent satisfaction, craning its neck to meet each returning spoonful, sounding an initial note of protest when the interval was accidentally prolonged.

When he regained the outer hall, high excitement met him everywhere. Everything put to rights, spickness and spanness on every hand, betokened expectation of some unusual guest.

"The General's here," announced his former informant in an undertone. "There he is now—coming in with the Commander."

Stephen turned his gaze toward the door; and it fell upon one of the conspicuous figures of the century. The General had just entered and was looking genially about, his air that of one returning from a far journey, who had left his house, and had given authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. His expression was that of a proprietor, a kindly proprietor, it is true—but the ruling spirit of the institution he had so animated by his advent. Eagle-eyed, there was yet something in his face that betrayed the tenderness of which his fame is born.

The glance which Stephen saw him cast about the place seemed to fall like lightning on every part, searching every corner, laying bare its every feature; yet it seemed to be altogether—or almost altogether—centred on the unhappy mortals who had come crouching to the door. His stalwart frame, borne with the easy dignity that belongs only to the soldier heart; and his strong and rugged face—more striking because of the hair of iron-gray and the beard of flowing white—made it easier to understand how the world had taken kindly to his military title, presumptuous and high sounding though it be. The true soldier spirit—an admixture of strength and gentleness—looked out from the picturesque face toward which every eye was turned; for he seemed to expect, as he certainly received, the homage of every heart

that had come to receive his benefaction or hastened to obey his word. Salute after salute was promptly returned; with some of those nearest to him he shook hands in hearty greeting.

"There's the girl I was telling you about, father—there, that one with the fair hair—just coming through that door. Isn't she sweet?"

The General smiled as his glance followed his daughter's. Not over sanguine was the smile; for the old soldier was not easily beguiled by sunny looks and winsome faces, so many of which had but awakened his deeper pity.

"Is the grace of God in her heart, my child?" he asked; and Stephen could just overhear the words. He could not analyze the effect—but he was impressed and charmed by the reality of the tone, though he could not have told what was so effective about the simple speech. The General had asked this information as a teacher might have enquired for his pupil's standing, or a physician for his patient's state.

He strained his ears to catch the Commander's answer:—

"Oh, yes, father, I'm sure she's all right that way. I had a long talk with her; we didn't speak much about those things—but she told me about her mother. She said she sang to her when she was dying; and some other —"

"What did she sing?" the General interrupted abruptly, his piercing eyes fixed on Hattie rather than on his daughter.



"Really, I've almost forgotten—oh, yes, it was 'the Wondrous Cross'; I remember now—and——" The Commander went on with her story; but the General did not seem to hear. Far off and absorbed was the look that suddenly came into the powerful eyes, and a musing smile played on the warlike face.

"The Wondrous Cross," he murmured; "there's really nothing else to sing. What a marvellous expression, 'the Wondrous Cross; the Wondrous Cross'! Bring the girl here, daughter—she looks confused," he said aloud.

As undoubtedly she did; for poor Hattie had marked that the General's eye was resting full upon herself. That it saw her not, she might not know; nor the great reverie that explained its almost rigid gaze. She felt the power of its spell, however, unconsciously surrendering to the giant soul that looked out from it like some hero from the window of a tower. She half realized that one of earth's greatest was before her; for it is the pure in heart that are the quickest to descry God's true lieutenants, as it is they who behold Himself.

The Commander, beckoning, took a step or two toward her:—"Come away, miss—— I've forgotten the name. But I don't need it anyway—come here, Hattie. I want to introduce you to the General."

Hattie stepped timidly forward, the empty bowl still in her hand; her very arm, bare to the elbow, telling forth the embarrassment she could not hide. The Commander presented her to the General, who took her hand in his, nor released it while he spoke.

"Hattie, eh? What is your other name? 'Hattie Hastie,' what a pretty name! They'll be glad to have it in the Book of life, won't they?" he said smiling, yet with nothing but earnestness in his voice. "What's this?" he enquired, looking at the empty dish in Hattie's other hand.

"It's a bowl, sir," the girl answered, looking shyly up at the beetling brow and the kindly eyes above her—"I was giving some bread and milk to a baby."

"That's a true soldier," the deep voice returned; "looking after the wounded—and if a cup of cold water gets its reward, what won't it be for a bowl of bread and milk?" he continued, as he released his hold.

Hattie was about to press on with her burden, her shyness retreating like mist before the sunshine of those earnest eyes, when the Commander asked:—"Where is your friend, Hattie—the one you were going to bring to meet me, you know?"

"There he is," she answered, pointing to where Stephen stood with a couple of the soldiers—"over there by the desk. May I present him now?"

Which was immediately accomplished, the Commander bidding him a gracious welcome, and the General proceeding to further examination.

"What's the name, again?" he asked.

"Wishart—Stephen Wishart," answered the young minister. Then he added a word or two.

"Oh, you're a clergyman? Isn't that good? You're not very clerically dressed, are you?"

"I'm on a holiday," answered Stephen, smiling.

The General's eyes twinkled. "Dangerous things, these holidays," he said; "I never risk any myself—haven't for thirty years. Well, my boy, if you're less clerical outside, try and be more clerical inside—that was my principle when I doffed the black and donned the blue. You know I'm a minister—even if I'm not a reverend any more; that went with the black, when the blue swallowed it up—'mortality swallowed up of life,' eh?" he suggested laughing.

"I don't know about that," ventured Stephen; "you see, I'm a minister of what's really the ancient Church of Scotland. So I've more or less of the ecclesiastic in me."

"Never mind the ancient church,"—the General broke in—"London's heart is rotting while many who should be her spiritual leaders are delving and disputing, trying to make a coupling with the ancient church—and trying to uncouple everybody else. It's all moonshine. Give me the living dog and they can have their dead lion. If I can get a slice of apostolic success, they're welcome to their apostolic succession—are you settled over a church yet?" he digressed.

"No, I'm not," responded Stephen; "but I've had a couple of calls; and I wish you'd give me your advice—I'd like to tell you about them both."

"All right, I'll be glad to hear about them. But meanwhile come away in with us and have a bite of supper. I always dine with the officers at the different branches when I get a chance—come away."

Which Stephen was glad to do, following the Gen-

eral to an adjoining room where they found the others already gathered, awaiting his arrival.

"Who's to do the speaking to-night at the women's meeting, daughter?" the General presently enquired. "You're not going to put all the work on the old man, are you?"

"No, we're not," replied his daughter, "although we always expect a few words from you, you know. But we're to have an address from the Reverend Æmilius Cosgrove; he's a Professor of Exegesis in some college in Canada, and he brought a letter of introduction from Commissioner Coombes. He wanted to study the work, he said, and he said too that he'd like to address the women. So we'll have you both."

A few minutes later they arose and went all together to the spacious room, already nearly filled with the picturesque congregation that was to form their audience. Some were standing by in sullen misery; some, engrossed with ragged skirts they were dumbly pretending to repair; some were arranging dishevelled locks; while others were still greedily engaged on the thick slices of bread and butter which had been given them. A few more lightsome spirits were employed in conversation, broken by the shrill cacophony of heartless laughter.

But the most interesting of all—and most redemptive of the womanhood that seemed all bruised and stained about them—were those who had wandered in, carrying infant children in their arms. Even the most degraded of these, Stephen could not fail to

notice, had tender softness in their faces ; and something like music in the voices that whispered the old sweet nothings to the babes upon their breasts, sin-begotten though they were.

And some were nourishing their off-spring at their bosoms, the hard and sin-stained faces bearing the light of peace the while—even of a fleeting purity—as though the baby lips were drawing the poison from the wound.

Like blighted trees they seemed, lightning riven, stark and bare and frowning amid wintry winds ; yet with one redeeming blossom, significant of the salvation with which they might be even yet redeemed. For the light of heaven played upon the solitary bloom, spreading its caress about the frowning trunk, sweetly whispering that its spring-time too was not forever past.

Stephen gazed long upon the unfamiliar spectacle, his eyes wet with tears as he beheld the great passion which sin and struggling poverty had been powerless to destroy. His heart swelled with emotion as he remarked how more than one of the poor wastrels laughed with fond gladness as she looked into her baby's face, or clasped it in a spasm of tenderness to her heart.

He turned and looked at the General beside him. The latter, too, was watching the scene intently ; and an observer would have said that he had never witnessed it before. For his eye was eloquent of pity as he looked, even of fondness ; and the almost imperceptible quiver of the strong lip lit up the rugged

face with its great suggestion, as the gentle lightning of the spring lights up some noble promontory.

The thought flashed swiftly through Stephen's mind that he was beholding the secret of this great man's power—his helplessness before distress, his chivalric pity for the wounded, his Godlike search for outcast royalty, his sensitive perception of the romantic side that belongs even to the grossest sin and the most despairing sorrow.

The General's eye met his own. "Isn't that beautiful?" he said, pointing in one or two directions; "they often wonder why I don't get old," he continued, "but they wouldn't wonder if they knew all I see that keeps the heart young." And Stephen marvelled at the absolute gentleness that was on the rugged face as it looked out upon the motley throng.

"If a man doesn't feel the spirit of Christ here, I don't know where he will," the veteran concluded.

"You're right, sir," answered Stephen, his own voice shaking a little; "I'd love to be able to help those poor creatures—I pity them so."

"I love them," the other exclaimed abruptly; "we read of One who had compassion on the multitude—that doesn't mean mere pity, sir; it means love, pure love. And if you want to be a successful minister, or a happy one—which is the same thing—pray for love, love for souls—and the most love for the worst ones. When God wants to draw His servants very close, He baits His hook with the vilest sinner He can find. If you jump at that, you'll get your reward,

my son—bring God's worst rebels in alive and you'll get your bounty."

"Some of the vilest seem to come in to you here," suggested Stephen, glancing toward the women.

"Yes, they do, thank God," and the General's eye is gleaming now. "But there's none so vile that there's not some good about them—see that woman there?" he said, nodding toward a poor outcast who was inviting an admiring circle to feel a new discovered tooth of her six-months-old, the proprietor resenting the familiarity. "See the light on that woman's face? Do you know what that reminds me of?"

"No," said Stephen, "I don't think I do."

"Well, sir, it reminds me of a noble vessel I once saw in the St. Lawrence gulf. It was a wreck—almost sunken—and the waves were rolling over it, celebrating their victory. But the poor ship had a bell on its main deck—and I heard it ring; amid all the shame and overthrow, that bell's music was as sweet and clear as ever. It's the same with that poor wreck yonder—you'll find it the same in all your ministry—always some music left. You'll find chimes in ruined steeples—ask God to teach you how to make them ring again—He'll show you how."

As Stephen looked into the glowing face, he felt the poverty of his own ideals in the life-work he had chosen. How different this from the gilded vision of success and distinction he had cherished, intensified as it had been by the latest prospect of a rich and

cultured congregation. But after all, he thought, do not the rich and fashionable need help unto their souls as well as the poor and the degraded? For his heart was set on the Church of the Covenant, and much thereunto pertaining, alien all; though he knew it not.

He followed the simple service with an intensity of interest he had hardly ever felt before, eager to discern, if discern he might, the secret of such power over human consciences as this man seemed to have.

The whole service seemed to be of the utmost simplicity—but every life before him seemed to be in the custody of his will. A few lively songs, with refrains of almost grotesque variety, but all somehow attuned to the melody of the Cross; a few brief unconventional prayers, their familiarity grating on Stephen's academic ear; a few testimonials from the latest salvage—and it is time for the address.

Wherewith the Reverend *Æmilius Cosgrove* came forward, beginning his homily with those terms of patronage and pity so exasperating to the poor.

"If it hadn't been for the grace of God, my sisters, I might have been one of you to-night," he gravely assured them, the keener-minded among the women starting with surprise at his creative fancy, the General taking shelter behind a hymn-book. The details of his address need not be given; but the general drift of his discourse may be inferred from the General's remarks, these being made after the varied worshippers had sung a hymn.

"And now, comrades," the General began when



the music ceased, "one sermon at a meeting is enough. But I just want to add a word—I'm not like the last speaker, for I'm just the same as you, just the same," he repeated, "and, owing to the love of God, you and I stand even to-night—for we're all sinners saved by grace. And we'll be the same when we get home. We're all miracles, every one—and speaking of miracles, my brother will let me say that those scripture ones actually happened, every one of them. They're happening yet," he went on; "and I've seen them myself," his passion heightening with the words, "I've even seen Lazarus raised from the dead, right here in Poplar. I've seen the grave-clothes around his hands and feet, and the napkin tied about his face, and the signs of death upon him—and I've seen him come forth and live. And I'm sure the Master had as much power then as He has now. Now I want you all to come to Him—all to come to Jesus—just as you are! Come to the cross—don't mind its example—we've lots of example; more than we ever made use of. But we want a Saviour. So come, just as you are; come clinging to the cross. That's what we use it for—not for looking at, but for clinging to—that's been our way here for all these years, and that'll be our way to the end.

"Don't waste your time looking in—looking for the divine, or anything else. We're sick of all that's in ourselves, aren't we? Let us look up, and out, and on to Christ—that'll refresh our poor weary souls. And now, my brother," he said, turning to

the previous speaker, "there's one thing I must ask my comrades to forget." He turned to his audience, their eyes raptly fixed upon the speaker. "Don't bother yourselves about the broken pinion. If the One that made the world can't make a wing as good as new, I'll not serve Him any longer. He fixed Peter's wing all right—and Paul's too—he soared pretty high again, if I know anything about distance; and He fixed the dying thief's enough to fly to Paradise with it—and He mended Augustine's—and John Bunyan's didn't flutter much. And I've had some repairing done myself, bless His holy name," he cried in fervent gladness; "Thou hast mended mine, oh Christ, till it's better far than ever," he exclaimed in a sort of rhapsody; "and every poor wounded one here to-night may prove Thy healing power. Oh, come, come to Jesus now and He will make you whole."

The General seemed all unconscious of the man whose remarks had provoked his own, leaning over with outstretched hands toward the listeners, who leaned forward with almost equal eagerness toward himself. His eyes were veiled with the vision of the unseen things of God, yet shining with a great compassion, as he looked out upon the melted company.

"We'll have a hymn," he said presently, "and after that, one of our new recruits will sing to us."

"Whiter than snow" was the one he chose; and the sullied lips sang it with pathetic fervour, the chorus chanted again and again.

After they had finished, Hattie timidly advanced to

the organ and soon began her song. A little nervous, somewhat faltering at first, came the rich full notes; but she soon seemed to forget her audience, her friend that the midnight had brought her, even the General himself.

The uncultured poor may disport themselves the most in those religious songs with which their senses are led captive by chiming chorus and refrain of witching melody; but they yield their deepest homage to the sovereign power of the mighty hymns that are destined to outlive the ages. The breath of the uplands is alike precious to peasant and to king.

Wherefore when Hattie began her dying mother's hymn:—

“When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,”

the faces before her lighted up with a solemn joy that neither of the preceding songs had been able to evoke. Their souls, sodden as they were, responded to its stately numbers, answering as to their native tongue. Looking up, Hattie caught the inspiration of their breathless interest; and her soul poured itself into the words, itself aflame with their holy fire.

“See from His head, His hands, His feet  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down,”

she sang, her voice trembling with the passion-note. Her face, too, is glowing, lit up with secret ardour toward the Man of Sorrows, tender with fellow feeling for the wanderers before her, suffused with grateful

joy for the redemption she knows is her own forever.

As Stephen gazes, he thinks he has never seen a face so beatific. All the surprise of it breaks upon him with overpowering effect; he tries in vain to recall different scenes with which that face had mingled, and to review his hasty verdict. It eludes him. He sees nothing but the golden tresses and the tear-dewed eyes; hears nothing but the wondrous voice, the great words borne by it like golden treasure on some shining stream; feels nothing but the rapturous thought that she is pure and fragrant, marked for suffering loneliness it may be, but all the worthier thereby to voice the *De Profundis* of the ages. He feels vaguely that she has learned, in life's hard school, the very truth she sings, that she has drunk at the fountain-head of sorrow; that she has caught, as he never has, the Secret of the Cross.

A new sensation fills his heart as it goes out, as much in reverence as in love, to the girl before him. He thrills anew as the purity of it all, the girlish purity, breaks afresh upon him. And in that hour, by his soul's great motion, he seeks to purify his heart forever. The chamber wherein that image dwells, must be chaste and pure. For he knows—he knows. Life's hour has struck at last!

Gazing still, his eyes meet hers just as the hymn is almost finished. They seem to clasp the girl's, his spirit leaping toward her. And his heart throbs as he sees how Hattie's eyes drop before his look. Her gaze is averted, but her voice flows on:

"Demands my soul my life my all,"

and the words smite him with the sense of consecration on the part of her who sings them.

A great gulf seems to bid him back ; for he feels that the life before him has a motive, and a surrender that his own has never known. Why, he knows not—but the spiritual has its own language to express its life. And its rich tones were in the voice whose thrall was on every listener's heart.

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## XVI

### *The DUEL in HYDE PARK*

“AND had you really a message to a Duke?”  
“Yes, from my father—to thank him for his gift, that I told you about,” Stephen answered, smiling at the eager face.

“And you can't see him after all. Aren't you going to——? Where is it you said he lives? Oh, yes, at Kelso. Aren't you going there at all?”

“No, he's in Italy, as I said, so of course I can't see him. I'm not breaking my heart about it at all.”

Hattie's face, stamped with the reverence for dukes and those of kindred station that had come down to her through generations, still bore a puzzled look.

“I don't believe I ever knew any one before who knew a great man like that,” she averred after a long pause.

“I don't know him,” Stephen hastened to affirm. “But where I'm going to live, there are lots of men I consider just as great as he, even if they haven't any titles. They're untitled dukes, a lot of them.”

“Oh, you mean at that great Hamilton church—the Church of the Covenant. And you say you've promised to be their minister?”

“Yes, I've written them so.”

"And what will that other place do, that country congregation?"

"Oh, Morven, you mean. I guess they'll soon forget about me. Which would you have taken?" he added, turning and looking into her face.

"I'd have gone to Morven," she answered fervently.

"Why?"

"Oh, well, I suppose because I'm not used to rich people—and I wouldn't be happy. And then I could do more good in a nice country place. Do you know what I can't help thinking?"

"No, what is it—tell me?"

"It seems so strange for me to be here with you, as your—your—friend, with all that you are—and the people you know—and all that you're going to be. And I nothing but a simple little country girl—oh, listen," she cried suddenly, her attention diverted by the words, "isn't that fearful? Do you hear what that man's saying? Let us go away."

It was Sunday afternoon in Hyde Park, at which time and place earth and heaven meet—and all that lies between. Stretched in verdant beauty, the great park rang with conflicting voices, like some tower of Babel, prostrate and shattered upon the sward, but echoing and gesticulating still. The world's parliament of religions was revelling in its weekly session, every chime of the exultant and every groan of the disordered finding here unmuffled voice.

The words that had evoked Hattie's shuddering protest were those of a high-browed orator, holding

in his hand a Bible, which, with all its kindred, he was committing to a fitting grave.

Hattie and Stephen lingered, listening as the destroyer went on his way, exceeding hot against the volume whose lifeless form he held up again and again before his listeners' eyes.

Stephen's face burned as he marked the varied modes of attack; some covert, some ingenious, some beguiling, some coarse and savage, but touched with the man's evident ability, marked by considerable grace of speech, all animated by a turbid assurance, simulated or sincere, that the Bible's reign was at an end.

Even Homer nods; happily for what was yet to follow, the debater, amid much that was worthier, indulged a swift and sneering reference to Jonah and his adventures submarine.

Deeper burned the flame on Stephen's cheek and brow as he noted the apparent grip the man possessed upon at least a section of the vast crowd that was now massed about the portable platform from which he launched his finished sentences; indignation gathered in his heart as he noticed here and there among the throng an unsophisticated youth, his whole demeanour bespeaking the initial shock of horror and surprise; which, and here was the pity of it, slowly vanishing before the derisive or destructive of the man's appeal, turned at last into an attitude of judicial wonder sometimes to one of smiling and enlightened approbation.

"And now," he said as he closed his fiery address,



"I pause to give any who may so desire an opportunity to refute my arguments. Does any gentleman wish to take the platform?"

There was a nervous pause, during which Stephen turned and looked into Hattie's face. Two burning coals sat on her cheeks; poor child, she had never heard the like of this before—and the only Bible she had known was her mother's, holy with its stain of tears.

As Stephen looked into the flashing eyes, their light seemed turned to language, and his heart leaped to do their bidding. Neither spoke a word—but the crowd was swaying as if to break and scatter. Whereat he held up his hand toward the platform, to attract attention, pressing eagerly on through the crowd.

"Ah, here's somebody to the rescue. Ladies and gentlemen," cried the lecturer, flinging his voice to the outskirts of the crowd, "here's a gentleman who will try to answer me."

The multitude flowed together again, and Stephen could feel his heart beat as he stood by the narrow steps which the now silent orator descended to make room for the newcomer. Their eyes met as Stephen's foot was on the bottom step.

"Might I enquire your name, sir?" Stephen asked, pausing a moment.

"Certainly. My name is Harstone, Dr. Harstone—I'm a Doctor of Science."

"Thank you: my name's Wishart," and Stephen ascended another step.

The Doctor of Science, meeting his respondent's eye, may have detected within it symptoms not particularly reassuring. In any case, he leaned forward and touched Stephen on the arm.

"Five minutes is all I can allow you, sir; I've promised my platform to a colleague up nearer the marble arch—very sorry, but five minutes is all I can afford."

Stephen looked at the man, answered nothing, and stepped on to the platform. A sudden inspiration seized him; looking for a moment at the swaying crowd, he began:

"I have not ascended this platform for the purpose of answering Dr. Harstone—for such he kindly informs me is his name—or of refuting his arguments. On the contrary, I have taken my place here that I may ask this great audience to join in what is probably a most unusual proceeding for a gathering such as this. I shall ask you to unite with me in an expression of appreciation and gratitude toward the gifted gentleman for the enlightenment he has just afforded us." At which startling announcement, the crowd suddenly grew still, then stirred in disappointed movement, then became quiet again, eager for further light.

That moment, a dapper youth tripped noiselessly up the steps. Stephen turned.

"The Doctor says you may take your own time," he intimated in a low tone, nodding genially the while.

"Thank you," said Stephen, his face a little pale

as he turned again to the waiting throng. He was silent a moment or two, looking, still looking into those more than ocean depths.

And, as he looked, a breeze from afar came and stirred his soul as the night-wind awakes the placid surface of the sea. For the soul of the true orator moved within him, groping for its armour and its sword.

The multitude seemed to turn their faces toward him in entreaty, like men and women whose treasure was involved in the trial under way, unconscious of it though they themselves might be. Eager expectation, clouded now with dark surprise as his first words floated down, still shone from the eyes that had hoped to find a champion for their faith in the man whose power of face and form had provoked their eager interest as he rose.

And there swims before him a picture that fills his soul with fire; far away, beyond the separating billows, he sees the stooped and tired form of one but for whose life he had not been. The thin gray locks are straggled about the furrowed neck; the toil-worn hands are holding in their reverent grasp a volume rich in sacred memories; the noble eyes are glowing with the light of love as the trembling lips move on their eager way. The light burns dim in the old farmhouse kitchen and the clock ticks solemnly as the moments fly. But to Stephen's reverent vision the room is filled with light; and the aged worshipper is none other than one of the kings and priests of God.

The vision swiftly disappears as he beholds anew the eager throng, waiting for the words his reverie has deferred.

"Yes, fellow-listeners," he resumed, "shall we not render our meed of praise unto this man who has so helped and inspired us?"

The faces of his auditors darkened before him.

"When I first heard his words this afternoon, I was a firm believer in the Bible he has so relentlessly exposed; but who could fail to be converted to that orator's position, now that he has heard the striking and original reference to Jonah and the whale which has just broken with such startling power from his lips?"

The dawn of new hope began to play upon the faces of the crowd; and the high-browed lecturer looked uneasily at the dapper youth who had borne his message of extended time.

"Besides," Stephen went on, the inward fire kindling, "he has not told us half that may be said in praise of the noble cause to which he lends his high abilities. His diffidence has sealed his lips. Why has he not informed us as to the hospitals that have been built, the asylums that have been provided, by those who flout the authority of the Bible? Why has he not enumerated the lands in which philanthropy and generosity spring like a fountain, fed by some other spring than that eternal Heart of which the Bible tells? Why has he, in the excess of his modesty, concealed from us the fact that the men who have blessed mankind have been those who

owed nothing to the light and power of that book which in our ignorance we have called the Word of God? Why has he not called to his aid the mighty names of Scott or Gladstone, of Washington or Lincoln, of Kelvin or Carlyle? Or why has he hidden from us the kindred truth that those nations that despise the Bible have won immortal vigour, while those that own its fabled sway, like England and America, have gone down the gulf of time?

“Nor has he been boastful enough to declare that the mightiest conceptions of art, or poetry, or music, have been vouchsafed to minds that drank from purer springs than the stagnant pools of the mythology he has defined. He has refrained from the crushing evidence of Handel’s *Messiah*, and Da Vinci’s *Last Supper*, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, on all of which he might have laid his hand.

“Shall we not, ladies and gentlemen, acclaim this heroic spirit who has so enriched our conception of our destiny, who has in kindness quenched the will-o’-the-wisp our fathers followed even to the grave, who has plucked from our hands the last signal of distress our fevered hands could wave, and filled with honest brine the very vessels our deluded hearts had hoped were the receptacles of living water to quench life’s cruel thirst?”

He stopped suddenly, looking about him while a strange tremor shook his frame. The owner of the platform moved as if to ascend the stairs, but Stephen stopped him. “I am not through,” he said, sternly.

Then he turned again to his listeners, and a wonderful softness was in his voice as he resumed.

"Why should I further pursue," he began in the quietest of tones, "the unusual style of debate I have thus far adopted? I will not press it further. What have I to do with motions, or mock votes of thanks? But I will tell you why I stand before you as I do to-day;" and, as he spoke, he drew his watch from his pocket and opened it. "Even as I speak these words, there sits, far across the sea, an aged man whose life I have seen ripen in all truth and beauty. And the failing eyes, the eyes that are often turned toward the son who stands before you now, the eyes that may soon be closed in death, are fixed this hour upon that blessed Book whose unseen hands have borne him through this vale of tears.

"And I will tell you more," he continued, his voice broken and trembling now, "you are listening to a weak and sinful man. How, or why, I need not say. But if there be in him any lingering hope of final victory, any germ of holier things, he owes it to a mother who is now with God. Yes," he cried, standing at full height again, his voice holding like a bell of gold, "to a humble Christian woman who revered the word of God, and loved it with a consuming love. And it was the pillow for her dying head. And she drank from that golden fountain as she passed through the valley with her Lord. And her dear name is written in my Bible—and I love its every page."

He finished thus, athrill with the great emotion.

Still he stood, looking down upon the wondering throng. His gaze searched their faces—soon transfixed it was on one alone. For it fell on Hattie, her lips parted and panting, her bosom heaving, her wonderful eyes lighted with the flame that clothed her soul—ardent, rejoicing, almost worshipful—a flame that told of coals from a far-off altar in the workshop of the living God.

And Stephen saw it all—in the great illumination of that quick and burning hour, face to face though hundreds stood between, his soul leaped toward her own, both meeting in that holy light. And both were unashamed, and unafraid, and unalone—for One was there, the Bridegroom that attendeth every true festival of love.

Thrilled and gladdened, the great crowd burst into a very frenzy of cheering and applause as Stephen turned to descend the steps. When this subsided, the self-satisfied youth afore referred to leaped to the platform, fumbling in his breast pocket for a document, plaintively appealing to the moving multitude to tarry till he might produce evidence that an infidel had recently given ten pounds to an infirmary. But a laugh broke from the crowd as he announced his outline of reply, followed almost immediately by a rich baritone voice that broke forth with

“Sing them over again to me,  
Wonderful words of life,”

to the music of which the throng slowly scattered, joining in the chorus as they went.

Rejoining Hattie, Stephen said: "Let us go back by the tube; there's a station just outside the gate." Toward which they walked in silence, Hattie's eyes now and then stealing to her companion's face.

Tremblingly she took his arm as they passed through the crowded arch, still clinging to it as they gained the street without. Suddenly a degraded figure placed herself before them, the face leering up at Hattie.

"He's quite a horator, isn't he now?" the unknown woman flung at Hattie with a mocking laugh, "but the public don't know 'im as well as me an' you. Oh, you needn't be a turnin' up of yer noses: I seen the both of you the night he picked you up, an' then pushed you off on the 'ome. I went into the Army 'ome just behind you. Won't you take me out too, mister, some nother afternoon?" and the poor creature laughed at her jibing words.

Without a word, Stephen hurried the quivering Hattie on, blanched and white as was her face. What the girl was pondering need scarce be told, nor what dread inference she was drawing, enlightened as she was by the coarse and cruel words, concerning the future portent of her relationship to the man who now seemed so far beyond her.

But the silence of their remaining way to the buried station was broken by her only once, and then to say:

"Oh, Mr. Wishart, let me go alone—this should not be; oh, let me go." Which he chided in the tenderest of tones, drawing closer to the shrinking



form as they passed down through the semi-darkness.

But as they entered the corridor of their car, she walked swiftly on, Stephen wondering as he followed why she did not take her seat. She gained the farther platform just in time; for the last incoming passenger was aboard and the guard's hand upon the lever as Hattie flew swiftly past him, springing onto the stone platform as the gate slammed shut behind her.

Stephen was too late and the guard roughly pulled him back as he shook the rattling gate. Then the train bore him on past the last twinkling light, and into the impenetrable gloom.

*AN EDINBURGH VOICE*

**A**S Stephen Wishart sat beside his half-packed trunk, the day was as bright and beautiful as his mood was dark and sorrowful. For he was about to set forth for the Scottish Capital, and London, his treasure hidden somewhere in its mighty folds, was to be left behind. And abandoned, too, must be the search for one whose motive in eluding him lended only greater charm to the character whose purity and goodness had so strangely touched his life.

A new source of disquiet had arisen, in the shape of a letter from his brother Reuben, which at that very moment engaged his serious thought. It began with a reference to his call to Hamilton, and abounded in simple felicitations upon the distinction that had come to him, full particulars of which, he said, would have already reached him in the letter his father had dictated. A passing reference to Morven, and his father's preference for the field of labour there, was followed by the annals of the neighbourhood, chief amongst which was the story of a rare piece of good fortune that had befallen Hiram Barker.

The letter went on to tell how Hiram had been left a handsome competence by a far-off relative in England, it being a condition of entail that the beneficiary

should adopt the Roman Catholic faith. Which, Reuben declared, Hiram had promptly done, being more in need of money than religion, as he said himself. Indeed, the correspondent remarked, Barker's new-found faith is more in the nature of an acquisition than a change; as there was very little to displace. "So Hiram has laid aside the tools of toil," Reuben added, "and is going to live a gentleman's life in the city—says he thinks he'll go to Hamilton, so he can be near one of the friends of his youth, being quite set up with the exalted place his old chum is to occupy on his return. And now," the letter concluded, "dear Steve, I've kept the best news to the last. I'm the happiest man in the Province. You know why, I guess—but I'll tell you. I'm going to be married soon—at least before very long—although I can't get Bessie just to say when. She doesn't want to leave the old folks just yet, she says, both of whom are poorly. There, I've let the cat out of the bag—but I reckon you knew. I'm not much at going on over things, Steve—but I'm so happy. She's the dearest, truest girl in the world, as you know—and Steve, we want you to marry us. So hurry up and come home to

"Your affectionate brother,

"REUBEN.

"P. S. Father's fine—he killed another groundhog the first shot. Then he took a walk down to the post-office. R."

At the news of Reuben's approaching marriage—and of Bessie's hesitation—a mysterious riot began in

Stephen's heart. He wondered why. A dark face, only for an instant, stamped with pallid memory, looked in at the window of his soul. Instantly dismissed it was, as the tide of his own chaste and reverent love surged within him; and a deep sense of gratitude, almost of joy, accompanied the thought of his brother's happiness, which brother's name he breathed in blessing.

But this news about Hiram! Not that the tidings of the lucky windfall surprised him very much. Hiram had often thrown out hints regarding possible legacies from England—reservedly enough, it was true; for the man was no boaster. But some property or another that was entailed had been the basis of his expectations. "The devil himself can't cheat me out of it," he had told Stephen more than once, "unless he calls me home before the other fellow." Wherefore it was evident to Stephen that "the other fellow" had outrun the tarrying Hiram, leaving the property behind him, in that spirit of generosity which so often comes with death.

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"Yes, I got my training here in Edinburgh—and I finished in Germany. And I bless the memory of my old professors—it's all useful in its way. But would you like me to tell you, Mr. Wishart, of one little incident that went far to make me a pastor?"

The speaker was one of Edinburgh's most famous preachers.

"Yes," Stephen answered eagerly, "indeed I would.

My old professor, Dr. Kingley, told me the pastoral instinct was your ruling passion—one reason, he said, he wanted me to bring his letter to you. I would like to hear the incident you refer to."

"Well, sir, it was a bootblack; and he did more than any other—or as much as any other—to give me a pastor's heart. It happened on Lothian Road—just when my ministry was begun. He was giving me a shine; and I was in a hurry—was cross and nervous—and he seemed dreadfully slow and abstracted.

"Besides," and the preacher smiled at the reminiscence, "I had a corn—and the urchin seemed bound to polish that corn. So I lost my temper suddenly and spoke to him about as sharply as I ever spoke to a boy. I was pretending to read a paper and I happened to look down a moment later; the poor little fellow was brushing away for dear life—and I saw two or three big tears drop right on his blacking-box. I had quite a time getting the little chap to tell me what was the matter—but he told me his story at last. He lived in Stockbridge—a poor quarter of Edinburgh—and his mother had been buried the very day before:—'Tam an' me wheelt her oot to Airthur's Seat four times in a chair,' the little fellow said, 'for a change o' air—but she got nae better. An' we wadna let her gang till the Infirmary—an' me an' Tam was wi' her when she Jee't. An' Tam an' me's gaein' to pay the funeral oorsels. Tam's my little brither.'

"That was the simple story—but it almost made a

minister of me. A true minister will always feel that he is walking over Waterloo after the battle, trying to help the fallen. It's a choice between the harrowed heart and no heart at all. Pray for the capacity to suffer, Mr. Wishart, if you want to enjoy your ministry."

"I see your meaning," Stephen answered enthusiastically; "and I think it's beautiful. There's nothing so really enjoyable as the cross—that's the idea, isn't it?" he added buoyantly.

The older man cast at him a glance of curious keenness.

"Yes, that's the idea—the idea," he replied half aloud, his emphasis full of meaning that was lost on Stephen. "I guess we'll have to go—our meeting begins at eight."

The attendance at this mid-week service was not large; but Stephen was enthralled by the wonderful words that fell from the preacher's lips. His subject was Jacob—how he had cheated his brother Esau; and how he himself had been cheated in return by his Uncle Laban.

"He was cheated out of his wages; and cheated out of his wife, and cheated, and cheated, and cheated again, ten times cheated, till cheating came out of Jacob's nostrils and stank in his eyes and became hateful as hell to Jacob's heart," and the preacher's glowing eyes seemed fixed on Stephen as he spoke.

"We say that Greek meets Greek," he went on, "we say that diamond cuts diamond. We calculate the length of handle his spoon would need to have who sups with the devil. We speak about the seller

being sold. As a man soweth, so shall he reap, we quote. Other little boys had been taking prizes in the devil's sly school, besides Rebecca's favourite son. And now that the stage is all ready, all the world is invited in to see the serio-comedy of the Syrian biter bit, or Rebecca's poor lost sheep shorn to the bone by the steely shears of Shylock her brother. 'What is this that thou hast done unto me? Wherefore hast thou so beguiled me?' Jacob remonstrates in his sweet, injured, salad innocence. Jacob had never seen or heard the like of it. It shocked terribly Jacob's sense of right; it almost shook down Jacob's faith in the God of Bethel. And so still," went on the preacher, and Stephen knows now that those piercing eyes are fixed upon himself, "we never see what wickedness there is in lies, and treachery, and cheatery, and injury of all kinds till we are cheated and lied against and injured ourselves. Then the whole blackness and abominableness breaks out upon us. As long as Esau lives, as long as that man or that woman lives whom our son supplanted so long ago, he will build his house over a volcano and will travel home to it with a trembling heart."

Which very heart Stephen bore within his bosom as he turned his footsteps homeward, or at least toward the humble room on George Street which now served him as a home.

For he somehow felt that Jacob's experience was not far different from his own. The weeks he had spent in Edinburgh had passed on leaden feet. Disappointment, heart-hunger, loneliness, had been his

portion. Was it to be his lot, he mused, as he walked slowly on, to taste himself of the cup that others had been compelled to drink through the foment of his heart and the inconstancy of his soul?

For his heart was hungering for the sight of that dear face, for the sound of that rich and soulful voice, both of which had so suddenly laid their spell upon his life—a new spell, unlike to those of earlier days that had been so thoughtlessly avowed and so lightly banished. All his efforts to find Hattie, or to see her again before he left London for the North, had been in vain. A brief note forwarded from his London lodgings to Edinburgh, telling him that they must not meet, had been all his eager heart was given.

“You will go your way and be a faithful servant of the Master,” she had said, “and I’ll go mine, and try to be a good soldier of the cross. For I’ve gone into the war; and I shall do all a weak girl can for Him who loved me and saved me by His grace. He kept my feet from the fearful pit and the miry clay—and He has kept my little cross bright and burnished still. And I shall always pray for you—and never forget you—I’ll remember you more than I will anybody else. Good-bye.”

Thus the simple note had ended, and Stephen had read it over and over again, knowing better every time that at last he had learned to love. Learning which, he had learned to suffer too.

One last appealing letter he had written, but it had brought forth no response. Letters to the Army Home elicited the information that she was on duty



away from London—and silence, deep and dark, settled down about him.

The portentous phrases of the sermon he had heard mingled with his thought as he walked along. "The biter, bit! The seller, sold!" Was his own punishment to come to him thus, he meditated? "His house over a volcano!" Could it be that he too was reaping what he had sowed so recklessly? He thought of God and was troubled. After all, does He think of justice, and retribution—in detail? The memory of the Lyceum theatre—and the great actor—and his awful message—flashed through his mind.

The busy weeks and months flew by, filled with ardent study, marked by much of fruitful thought and more of deepening life. The spirit of penitence and pleading, mingled with the sorrow of his lonely heart, seemed to quicken Stephen Wishart's whole intellectual life, devoted as it was in serious purpose to his work in hand. With the result that his old-time record of academic brilliancy was not only sustained, but heightened, winning the highest eulogies of his professors with the highest honours of the term.

And now the time had come when Stephen, with others of his class, was to be licensed as a preacher of the Gospel. The ceremony was to be held in one of the largest churches in Scotia's darling seat, wherein Stephen and his fellows presented themselves for the solemn rite, which was duly performed,

the great duty laid upon them, the great trust committed to their souls. Following this, the Moderator led in earnest prayer, commending them to the great Master whom they dared to serve.

From the platform where they stood, Stephen's eye roamed carelessly over the multitude that filled the church. Suddenly his attention was arrested; among all the forms of head-gear that crowned the bended heads of kneeling women, he remarked one that hurled his mind swiftly back to an association from which it was never long detached. For the bonnet was of one who had enlisted in the army of the Lord—and the flaming ribbon was upon its brow.

His burning eyes fastened themselves upon it, nor were withdrawn till the closing petition released the bending worshippers, and the hidden face was upturned with the rest. The other candidates for the holy office quietly resumed their seats; but Stephen, oblivious to them—attentive to all else but that on which his eager eyes were resting—stood where he was, his gaze still rapt upon the now recognizable face.

It was the same face as had filled his waking thoughts and troubled the spirit of his dreams. The same chaste beauty sat upon it—but lovelier; for the light of faith and trust, that comes with prayer, had softened and enhanced its charm. Her eyes are cast toward himself, the emotion that bedews them plainly visible in the down-streaming light.

She must have felt that she was recognized; for her face is hidden in a moment, low-bowed again, her confusion evident.

"Take your seat, Mr. Wishart—we're just about to close," the presiding officer whispered to the man who stood transfixed before him.

"Excuse me," faltered Stephen, "I thought I saw the face of a friend—excuse me, please; I'll just step down."

"We'll be concluding in a moment—all things decently and in order, you know," and the Moderator smiled his most amiable smile.

But his tact and his text were alike in vain; Stephen had already descended from the platform and begun his rapid way down the aisle. Too late—for the tall figure had begun her retreat as he descended. He made the best of his way to the door—but she had vanished; and in a few minutes he reëntered the church, his new commission all forgotten, his old thirst intensified a thousand fold within his soul.

The end of his transatlantic sojourn was in sight; and the date for his homeward sailing was already set. Stephen knew that what he would do must be quickly done. That Hattie was, or had been until now, in the same city with himself, was now plain; to ascertain her whereabouts and to meet her face to face became the business of his life, or at least, of so much of it as the few remaining days afforded him. His enquiries at official sources only revealed an ignorance which in his bitterness he branded as assumed; or else it provoked the most

laconic and evasive of replies. Wherefore he turned again with renewed purpose to the only alternative left him, haunting the accustomed battle-fields of the army to which she had given her allegiance, scanning every soldierly procession to detect, if detect he might, the face he had sought so long.

The tardy twilight had at length fallen upon the comely city as he bent his steps one evening through the motley life that strews the Cannongate. He had almost gained the foot of the street, the ancient shadow of Holyrood coming forth to meet him, grim in its reaction from centuries of revelry; when the gleam of a flaming torch and the sound of a gospel hymn awoke him from his reverie.

He stands still, gazing eagerly. A man is in charge of the meeting, if meeting it should be called. He is praying now—a loud hectoring prayer—emphasized by many a stamp of his heavy foot and many a thump upon the drum beside him.

The lurid prayer is finished; and the suppliant looks about him, peering into the faces of the crowd, if haply he might discern how far it is likely to be answered.

“One of the soldiers is agoin’ to speak to yez now,” he said, “and she’ll tell yez about the picnic;” which the soldier thus announced proceeded to do right heartily, intimating that all children who could produce the credential of sufficient need would be provided with tickets, on application at headquarters.

“I guess you all know about it—the kiddies have been dreaming about it for a fortnight. We’re going

to Kimlachie, hallelujah! A gentleman has given us his estate for the day. We don't have to pay anything, but God'll settle with him. We're going to have a heavenly time! Remember, we'll leave the Waverly Station at ten to-morrow morning."

"Now we're agoin' to have a word from one of the new recruits—fire a volley!" he cried, turning to the soldiers.

The volley was fired with boisterous enthusiasm, and the new recruit stepped forth, the light from one of the torches falling distinctly on her wavy hair, the delicate pink and white of her tender skin apparent beneath its glow; her neck and face were bathed in the gentle flow that suffused them both, attesting the shrinking of a nature not yet accustomed to such publicity. As she begins to speak, her right hand is gracefully extended, showing clear in the ruddy light.

Stephen is on the outskirts of the group, and his heart is throbbing wildly. For he can see her face, himself half hidden behind a taller listener. And she has begun to speak, the rich tones none other than those he had yearned so long to hear. That her voice was a wonderful gift, he had known for long; but to-night it seems more than wonderful—for its natural sweetness has an added charm that only sorrow can impart, mingling with it the nobler note of a soul's compassion.

That power it possessed, which no culture can acquire, no art can simulate; the power of a deep and real spiritual experience.

"Dear friends, I want to give you another invita-

tion," she began, Stephen trembling as the pure soul breathed through the simple words. "And I want you all to come. You're all tired, I'm sure, tired of the muddy roads and the dusty streets. And your feet are sore—and your hearts are heavy. Oh, I want you all to come and rest—come to Jesus, and He will give you peace.

"Oh, it's hard—it's so hard," she went on eagerly, holding out both hands now, her voice throbbing with an emotion that none of her hearers save one could understand—"so hard to be wandering and homeless, especially if you know you left your father's or your mother's house; so hard to feel you can't prevent it getting dark; and to know there's nobody wants you—and no place to go—and nothing to eat—and so hungry. Wouldn't it just break your heart if any of your own children were wandering like that in the slums of Edinburgh—or London? Well, God's your father—and He knows—He care I want you to come. Come in where it's warm, and where there's bread to eat, and sweet rest for the weary.

"And there's no ticket—no money—no price; for the blessed Saviour has bought it all with His own precious blood. Oh, come to-night—come just as you are, and Jesus will never let you wander any more."

She stopped, the leader struck up the familiar hymn her closing words suggested, and the procession began to wend its way to the barracks on Cameron Street.

Stephen followed for a little, his whole frame

thrilled with emotion. He longed to rush in—yet feared. A sort of awe possessed him. The gulf was a moral one, though he did not so regard it. He feared to press himself on her, as one might shrink from rushing in upon some white-robed priest serving at his holy altar. Far beyond him, he felt vividly enough, the girl's soul had passed; though she was but an exhorter of the street, while he was the minister-elect of a proud and expectant people.

But the new power and grace that seemed to clothe her, conspiring with the thrall in which her beauty already held him, filled him with longing as never before. He even thought of the uplift to his own spiritual life, the assistance to his own work in the ministry, with which this pure and devoted spirit might provide him. And a swift prayer ascends that this auxiliary might not be denied him.

His eyes are riveted upon the willowy form, lightly clad, as she presses on in the middle of the highway. She is at the rear, for her promotion is yet to come. He can wait no longer, casts a quick glance about him to be sure that his action will be unnoticed, then plunges out into the street and takes his place beside the girl, gracefully tapping a tambourine as she walks.

"Hattie," he said gently, "oh, Hattie!"

She turns quickly; a swift pallor puts the flush upon her cheek to flight as her glance falls upon his face. She looks again, still looking as if she could not believe her eyes—then stands still an instant, emotion and surprise almost overpowering her.

"Mr. Wishart—is it you?" she cries in a low

voice. "Oh, why have you done this? You knew, you knew—you must go away at once," she exclaimed, her feet mechanically taking up the march again.

Her words were firm, evidently sincere, almost stern—but Stephen notes, seized with a joy he had no time to analyze, that the voice is trembling, and that beneath all the amazement is a note of gladness. The tambourine, too, is thrust into her right hand, the left going out involuntarily, withdrawn almost before he can seize it in his own.

"Hattie, Hattie—you won't send me away. I've been looking for you so long," he almost whispered, a world of fondness in his voice. "I'll go—perhaps I'd better go," he added, "but tell me when I can see you again, Hattie—anywhere, any time—only tell me when."

The girl turned and looked into his face, indifferent to the curious glances that one or two in front cast back at her.

"No, I won't ask you to go away," she said impulsively after a moment, her voice low and earnest; "I want you to come. You're a soldier of the cross too, and I don't want you to fall out. It was you that enlisted me, you know," she pursued, turning and smiling sweetly as she spoke; "and I think it's lovely for us to march together. We'll go on to the Barracks—and I'll ask the adjutant to have you speak at the meeting."

"Yes, I'll go, Hattie," Stephen answered fervently, her last words lost upon him in his eagerness; for it



was enough to him to know that he was beside her again; "and I've so much to tell you—so much. I saw you in the church the night I was licensed—and didn't you see me?"

"We're not allowed to talk when we're marching, and you're out of step, see. I want you to be a good soldier, you know;" and it was difficult to tell whether there was more of mirth or seriousness in the words.

Little of speech there was as they trudged along the muddy street, Hattie's clear voice now and then lending itself to the song that cheered the way.

Stephen was content to be silent, to feel that he had found her, that he was near to her again, and that his hunger of the heart was strangely satisfied in simply knowing that she was by his side.

Their mutual relation had been strangely reversed since that chilly night in London when they first had met. For his admiration now was of the very spirit he himself had coveted for long, but had not the courage to acquire; in every spiritual sense she was now the protector, and his the soul that needed shelter.

They are near the Barracks now, and the street on which it stands is aflame with light. Looking about, he notices, dismayed, that two familiar figures are beneath the lamp. One is Mather, and the other a mutual friend whom they had acquired in the social life to which Edinburgh gives its student visitors so free a welcome.

They are both looking toward the approaching

procession ; an army on the march can never lose its interest for the most cultured or contemptuous.

The struggle in Stephen's mind was brief.

"Hattie," he said quickly, the expedient suddenly occurring to him, "I'm going to do a little skirmish work—I see a couple of loungers and I'm going to invite them into the barracks—you'll excuse me, won't you?"

"That's splendid," Hattie cried, her face beaming ; "I'll command you. You see, I'm getting to be an old soldier now—I command you to go and compel them to come in. And I want you to speak, remember."

He left her, crossing at right angles to the pavement, remarking with satisfaction that his friends were still absorbed with the head of the procession. Gaining the sidewalk, he walked leisurely along till he reached them, much reassured by their surprise at his appearance.

"By Jove," he heard the other say to Mather, "I haven't seen a prettier girl in Edinburgh than that one there with the tambourine—that one at the end. Hello, Wishart, are you the marshal?" as Stephen suddenly appeared.

"Hello, you fellows," he rejoined ; "no, I'm the commander-in-chief. Won't you fellows go in and enlist?" he added, genially. "I'll go in if you will—will you go?"

The men promptly declined—one of them laughed at the witticism. But Mather's face was serious enough : "might do a mighty sight worse," he

mumbled. "I'd sooner be those fellows, if I meant it, than be an actor in St. Giles."

"Then you won't go in?" Stephen asked. "I think you're making a mistake; let's walk down to Princes Street—I haven't long in Edinburgh now and there's only one other city with a street like that."

"Where is it?" his companions asked together.

"In the New Jerusalem," laughed Stephen; "come on, it's getting late."

XVIII

*PURSUING The PRECIOUS PEARL*

STEPHEN had not forgotten the hour at which the kind-hearted soldier had bidden the expectant children gather at Waverly Station. And long before ten o'clock Stephen was there himself, a trifling fee securing him the ambush of the baggage office and the outlook from its window. From which he watched the moving scene with eyes that were often blurred with tears.

On they came, in breathless haste, early, so early, though they were. Mostly in twos and twos they came, bare-headed some—and all unshod—their need attested by a hundred fluttering tongues. Many had their mothers with them, as excited as their offspring, themselves barred from the excursion, but drinking deep of their children's joy. Pitter-patter came the little bare feet along the pavement in quick agitated steps, the pilgrims glancing hither and thither in nameless fear lest the train had gone, so used were they to the elusiveness of all anticipated pleasures.

Brief and solemn salutations passed between hurrying mothers; between their children, none at all. And many of the motherless, or worse than motherless, were there, guarded by older sisters whose sense of responsibility was pitiful to see. Tenderly they clung to the tiny hands, plunging this way and that

in their search for the coveted positions that long experience had made them think could scarce be theirs without a savage struggle. Some were bearing tiny mugs, others with the sad remains of ball or bat or hoop or shovel, that they vaguely felt might find a place in the Elysian fields beyond.

The crowd is thickening, the combat deepening; for they are being entrained. Stephen was almost in despair. The face he longed to see had not appeared—but all of a sudden he descries it in the distance, glowing with the high industry of love. He breaks out from his hiding place; then restrains himself and returns—for a new purpose has come to him.

The green flag is flying, the whole train palpitating with a thousand organs of delight—and the wheels have begun to turn.

Then Stephen rushes out, thrusts a generous coin into the hand of one of the attendants as he pulls open the compartment door.

"It's for the children," he says, "and I'm going with you—I'll help amuse them;" and he seats himself in the carriage, taking on his knee the grimy traveller he had displaced.

It is a run of forty miles, but it takes little more than as many minutes; for such engines have human hearts. And in an hour Stephen's soul is again in tumult, as he sees the Arabs spilled into the fields, overflowing them like quicksilver suddenly poured forth. Tumult, we have said—for there is no joy so deep as that which springs from sorrow; no pathos so

plaintive as that which marks the joy, the simple and unnatural joy, of those who come into the heritage they should have never been denied, hearing at last the provisions of their Father's will, marvelling at the riches from which cruel executors have shut them out.

Tears run down his face as he watches the enchanted waifs, now scampering in delirious glee, now shouting in incredulous delight, now stooping to pluck some brilliant flower, now leaving it half plucked because of some richer bloom beyond.

The morning has died in laughter, and the long dinner hour too has gone—gone into the immortal keeping of a thousand memories. Stephen has watched it all from the shelter of a distant tree, moving back to the fringe of woodland whenever the approach of one particular form made it advisable to retreat.

With what strong arms she flung forth the creaking swing, echoing with childish shouts! With what tenderness he saw her bind the poor foot that a thorn had pierced or a stone had wounded, bathing it at the sparkling brook! And what would he not have given, could he but have heard that wondrous story that could alone explain the breathless group about her, looking up into the face that glowed with the spirit of the tale! And blessed, thrice blessed, were those smudgy hands that had pinned that bunch of violets upon her bosom!

She must be tired now; for Stephen can see her as

she quietly withdraws from the group of children she has just launched upon their game.

Slowly she walks along the wold, her face turned toward the fringe of woods beyond him. He hides behind an adjoining knoll, still watching as she bends her way farther into the protecting shadows. The violets are in her hand and she drinks of their fragrance as she walks. He follows stealthily—how foolish is the mind of love, affirming secretly that no fabric ever fluttered so gracefully as does that yielding muslin, tossing in the breeze, or pouting as it is thrown this way and that by the hurrying feet. For she is hurrying now, the sweet voice of the woods calling her more quickly on, eager for their shelter and caress.

She has thrown herself upon a sunlit couch of richest green, drinking deep of the delicious sweetness from the trees, gazing in delight at the beams that fall aslant through the gleaming leaves. The spirit of her early home is upon her, and the dream of all its sylvan purity and innocence comes back. Down the stream of memory her thoughts quickly flow—and soon he sees her hand go forth to the soft folds of her dress, some white thing withdrawn in its grasp.

The breeze is chattering among the leaves—and he can draw closer without being heard. He is almost behind her now; and his heart leaps wildly as he sees that the letter she is reading is his own.

As she reads, her bosom heaves more violently, and he can note the girl's emotion from where he stands.

Again her hand goes to where the letter had been hidden, this time bringing forth the tiny handkerchief—perhaps the very one he had seen that night that now seemed so long ago.

His eagerness now is beyond all control. He swears to himself that God is good—that He has meant her for him from all eternity. The summer wind sweeps through the trees again, as with the sound of triumph; the embannered leaves cheer it with myriad voice; the sun breaks forth more brightly—and all things seem to speak of life's passing sweetness. He moves, meaning her to hear—but she is reading, still absorbed—and his movement is unnoticed. Then he makes a distincter motion—and in a moment Hattie is upon her feet, trembling in every limb.

But never a sound she spoke—gazing, gazing as if he had risen from the dead.

"Hattie—don't be so frightened, Hattie—please sit down again. I came out on the train with the children. Let me sit down beside you."

His eyes, careless that she knew, were feasting on the letter she still held in her hand. But she *did* know, as her crimson face made clear; and with a quick motion she thrust it out of sight.

"Yes, it's yours—of course it's yours," she said, blushing; "I always read letters over more than once," she went on defiantly; "I only read it because I wanted to see what it said."

There was a long silence. Stephen said nothing, holding the explanation in rapturous contempt.

"How did you get here?" Hattie said at last.



"Me—I came on the train. I told you so."

"Why weren't you at the Barracks last night? I was looking for you; I was so disappointed—I wanted you to speak to them,"—this last with sudden emphasis.

"I met a couple of fellows I knew—and they wouldn't go in," Stephen replied, "and I went along to Princes Street with them."

"I'm so sorry; we had such a lovely meeting. And there were two conversions—came right out into the light, and everybody was so happy. When are you going back to Edinburgh?"

"I don't know—with the others, I suppose. I'm going away the day after to-morrow."

"Going away! Away where?" and the colour that left Hattie's face found its abode in Stephen's; "are you going back to London?"

"No—I'm going home," he answered, watching her closely. "I sail on Saturday."

"Sail! Where for?" the girl asked, her lip moving in the slightest quiver, "where will you sail to?"

"To Montreal—then I go home from there. And then I'm going to Hamilton to be the minister of the Church of the Covenant. I told you all about it that afternoon in Hyde Park."

"Yes, you told me I hope you'll be happy—I hope you'll have lots of conversions," she added seriously. "I'm so happy in my work—and I want you to be happy too—we're both soldiers of the cross, you know," the delicate lips smiling bravely as she spoke.

"Hattie, where's that cross of yours?" he asked abruptly. She started and looked at him as if she did not understand.

"Oh, my cross—my mother's cross," she said in a moment; "it's here—it's always here," and she drew it forth with reverent touch.

He gazed at it as it lay upon her bosom. "Hattie—I'll try to be a good soldier of the cross. And I'll never, never forget this one of yours—I love it because you do."

"I do love it," she broke in eagerly, "oh, I do love it—and I want to be worthy of it—and to tell its power to everybody that needs it. If I weren't so unworthy, I wouldn't love it so," she cried, the tears standing in her eyes.

Stephen was struggling. The light of love, of pity, of pure religion, was on her face, never so beautiful as now when the sun's rays gently kissed the transparent cheek, her sunny hair blending with the golden glint. He can see the mist before her eyes, and a strange union of compassion and reverence wrings his heart.

"Yes, Hattie," he suddenly exclaimed, "I shall always love the cross because you wear it," and, stooping forward, he took the tiny symbol in his hands and raised it gently to his lips. Her breath, in maddening sweetness, is on his face.

"I thought you were a Presbyterian," she said, the witching smile playing again about her mouth. "I'll tell that old lady that keeps John Knox's house on the High Street."

But there was no smile on Stephen's face. A rapturous look instead, fastened on her till her eyes retreated before the wondrous meaning she could not fail to see. Nor did he turn his eyes away, still looking with fervent eagerness.

"Let's go back," she cried faintly at last, "they'll miss me."

But the billow had overswept him now.

"Yes, my darling," he cried, "yes, they'll miss you—they'll miss you. As I have done, Hattie, Hattie, my darling. You know—you know——" and the half fainting form is in his arms, weakly protesting as she hears the fiery words. "Oh, Hattie, you are mine—you know you're mine," he cried; and the breeze seemed to die away, great peace keeping guard above them, the faint sound of childish cries betokening a distant world. "You've always been mine—and I shall never let you go—mine, ever since that night, my darling," and one hand strokes the burning cheek while the other gently turns the lovely face nearer to his own.

Reverently, his lips descend slowly upon hers, moist with love's anointing—and Stephen tastes the new and nameless wine of a soul that has found its own in pure and holy love at last.

Long, long they sat together, forgetting that there was any waiting world—or any duty—or any mystery, except the new found mystery of love.

"Oh, Stephen," Hattie said at length, "we must go back. It seems to me," she added, as her hand

stole again into his, "that I said that same thing years ago—it seems like years ago."

"So long," Stephen asked, "what makes it seem so long?"

"Oh, it's like as if a lot of years had passed—and all winters—all cold, cold winters. And this seems like the first spring day. I'm so happy, dear—and to think it was for all this God led me out into the darkness—into the forest. But the sweetest flowers grow in the forest—we know that, don't we, dear?" she cried gayly as Stephen kissed the trembling laughing lips.

They are almost beyond the woodland now, the shout of the revellers growing more distinct. Hattie suddenly turned and hid her face on Stephen's shoulder; a slight sob shook her frame.

"What's the matter, Hattie; what's the matter, my darling?"

Only silence for a moment. He pleads again, turning his ear, ravished by their breath, to the sweet pouting lips. At length she whispers:

"It's about Saturday—oh, Stephen, you won't go away from me—tell me you won't."

Gently he tried to comfort her, sinking to the ground and drawing her down beside him. "I must, my dear one—I have to go. I have to take my church, you know—and they're waiting for me."

Still she remonstrated with sweet persuasiveness.

"I've had such a lonely life," she murmured, "and now it'll be worse than ever. I'll be all alone again, Stephen."

His eyes are fixed on unseen glades, peering back into the woods. They see nothing—nothing outward. But had any seen his face they might have known that a great resolve was forming. Still he gazes, still absorbed in some thought that had evidently gripped his soul.

The girl feels the silence and nestles closer, as if she would provoke some response to her plaintive words. His resolve is taken; for his arms tighten about her, and his face is bended low.

“Hattie, my darling—you know I love you, don’t you? God knows it; knows my soul is yours—and His. And Hattie—Hattie, it’s to be till death, isn’t it, my darling?”

The fluttering heart made answer.

“Then, Hattie, there’s something I’m going to say—I say it before God and you—and you shan’t deny me.” Then he takes her anew into his arms, his lips to her very ear, whispering slowly. She listens, breathless. Trembling, she trembles closer. “Oh, Stephen, don’t,” she falters, “don’t—oh, Stephen.”

Whereat he insists afresh; and renews his quest with redoubled power and insistence.

The ill-matched struggle is soon over. “Stephen, my darling—oh, Stephen,”—she is sobbing fast—“don’t force me—let it be my will—my wish. And it is, Stephen—I think it is. I will—yes—I will. You really think God wants us to? Oh, yes, I will—I will—only let it be all over quick,” she cried, the tears flowing hot as she clung to him for some unknown protection.

Whereat he kissed her again and again, calling her tender names, and soothing her as though she had been wounded by some unseen shaft.

"You'll never be sorry, Hattie—no, please God, you'll never be sorry," he whispered as he caressed her; "come, let us be going—the sun is sinking."

Together they started on through the angle of the woods to where the hamlet could be seen in the distance.

She waited in the churchyard while Stephen was gone, her mind numb with a sort of singing joy. He soon came back, the necessary errand over—the necessary warrant in his hand.

The aged minister, in his flowing gown, led the way into the ancient church, his gentle wife and their one faithful servant following in the rear. And as the trembling hands were laid upon their heads in blessing, committing these unknown to one another and to God, the unbidden sun stole in and closed his far flung labours of the day, kissing into beauty the glistening drops that spoke the bridal joy.

"Stephen," she asked as they were walking slowly back, and he could scarcely hear the words; "are you still going away?"

"Yes, my darling," he replied with desperate promptness—for his mind had not been unbusied with the thought.

"Away from me?"

"Yes, darling—I must go. Don't make it harder, dear."

A long pause followed.

"I shan't make it harder, Stephen." Then silence once more.

Soon the voice spoke again, trembling painfully.

"Stephen, are you going to take me with you?"

In answer he poured his love and devotion at her feet. All he said is not for us to know; but all the impossibility—and unwisdom—of it was laid bare, the brave heart bearing it as best she could.

"Stephen, I'm your wife—am I not, Stephen—anyhow—always?"

"My darling, my own," he murmured; "and it will not be long. And I'll tell them all—tell them all about you, and how I love you. And I'll soon come back for you—or send for you. But they wouldn't understand now, as I explained to you—they're such sensitive people."

"I'll try to be brave and strong. But you must pray for me, Stephen—you must help me, for you're stronger than I am. And I'll always pray for you, my—my husband," she said, smiling sweetly up to his bending face.

"Yes, my darling, I know you will—and you'll go on with your work, Hattie; and I'll go on with mine. And soon we'll begin our work together—never, never to part again, my dearest," he assured her, his whole soul in the words.

"Hattie, I'm going to tell you something," he suddenly resumed—"something I've always been afraid of—but it's all past now."

"What?" she asked hastily, herself alarmed; "what was it, Stephen—anything about us two?"

"No, my darling—I'll tell you. I ought to tell you anyhow. You know, Hattie, I've not always been good."

"I don't believe it," she protested; "all good people say that."

"No, I'm serious, Hattie—listen to me. I've been far from good. I can't tell you how—and I was always afraid God would punish me by teaching me to love, and then letting me see I couldn't—I couldn't—have the one I loved. And I was almost sure of it when I thought I had lost you, my darling. But it's all past now—I never believed in the love of God as I do now. I see He has forgiven me everything; what I feared is all past and gone—and my life's happiness is sure now, my darling."

"Yes, God is good," Hattie murmured happily; "nobody really knows it but me."

"And me, Hattie—and me! Yes, the cloud's all gone now—and I'll try to forget—like God has forgotten;" and his face shone with the peace he thought was his forever.

For Stephen had forgotten that there are full twelve hours in God's unhasting day.



## XIX

### *OLD SCENES and OLD STRUGGLES*

“**N**O, it's not so beautiful perhaps—but it's their own.”

The speaker, who was none other than Stephen Wishart, felt a thrill of gladness such as the stately homes, and the mighty oaks, and the rolling hillsides of old England, had never started in his heart by their beauty.

Past many a humble farmhouse, beautiful in its contentment; past many a whistling toiler, following his horses on their homeward way; past many a lowing herd with their faces seriously set toward home; past slowly darkening woods; and over many an unresting stream, donning more sober garments for the long journey of the night, the train bore him quickly on.

“Aye, ye're richt there,” replied the man in the seat beside him, Richard Reynoldson by name; “aye, castles is graun i' their way, nae doot—but I'd raiter hae a bit hoose I cud call my ain, as a castle whaur I was little better as a slave. Yon man owns his land—an' yon man—an' that's the widow Broon's. She sent twa o' her sons to the college—an' she was a milkin' maid i' Scotland. It'll no' be lang noo till ye can see yir faither's farm.”

"I'll be right glad to see it again," said Stephen, gazing far ahead out of the window; "how's everything going with them?"

"Oh, graun—fair graun. Did ye no' hear o' their guid fortune?"

"No—what? Have they struck anything particularly good?" Stephen asked eagerly.

"I should say they hae. They've been findin' ile near the village—an' they're borin' for ile on yir faither's farm. An' there's nae doot they'll find it. It's mair nor likely they hae it already."

"You don't mean to say so," Stephen cried; "isn't that splendid?"

"That's no' a'—timber's gone till a fearsome price. An' yir faither, ye ken, aye keepit that bush o' his—he was aye a far seein' man, yir faither. An' it's the best o' pine, as ye ken. Weel, a Syndicate's been after it; an' they've offert him thoosands—thoosands mind, I'm tellin' ye—for his bush. An' he'll get mair yet. So he'll strike ile, the yin way or the ither."

The conversation flowed on in various channels, Stephen enquiring for sundry neighbours and acquaintances of the old days.

"Aye, maistly a' the countryside's been weel, thank God. It's a guid wholesome land to live in—the saddest thing was about the Burnetts—ye ken about them, nae doot."

Stephen started, turning toward the man with more eagerness than he himself was aware of.

"No, what? I've heard nothing, Mr. Reynold-

son. Tell me quick, please—nothing about—about—Miss Burnett, is it?" his face noticeably pale.

"Na, na, she's a' richt—only sair pit about, as ye might expect. An' she's had to pit her mairrage aff, nae doot. Ye ken about her an' Reuben, of course?"

"Yes, yes—but what's she sore put about for? You haven't told me."

"Her faither went till his rest less th'n a month past. I daurna say where he went for certain, nae doot—for that's wi' God. But I'm hopin'—he had dyin' grace, they say. I thocht ye kent it; they wrote till ye."

"Yes," Stephen interrupted, his features showing his agitation; "but I sailed two weeks ago or so, and the letter wouldn't be there by that time. How are Bessie and her mother?"

"Bessie's weel. An' her mither's better far, I'm hopin'—but it's no' for me to say," the man replied gravely.

"Better far! What do you mean? You don't mean——?"

"Aye, that's what I'm meanin', Stephen. She wasna lang ahint him—a week or thereabouts. It was the will o' God—and bad watter frae the well; ower close to the stable, they say. That was what ailed them baith—they drank frae the same well for forty year. An' she had dyin' grace, they tell me—yon was a deeper spring they aye drank frae thegither. I was a wall-bearer," he added, a touch of pride in his voice; "an' that maks thirty-five—

that's yin guid turn as never gets anither." And the strong Scotch face looked mournfully out upon the fields, pursuing the sombre calculation.

"And Bessie—where's Bessie now?" his companion urged; "is she at the old farmhouse yet?"

"Aye, that's where she is. The hoosekeeper's wi' her—the same kind o' body they hae at yir faither's hoose. Mr. Shearer says she's bein' wunnerfu' upborne by the consolations o' the Gospel."

"Those will never fail," said Stephen, minister-elect of the Covenant Church.

"And she has ither consolations, forbye—she disna mourn like them as has no hope—nor naethin' else but hope. She gets the whole o't." And the good man's face shows how unbounded is his confidence in both these kinds of comfort; "she gets the farm—twa hunnert acres, maistly cleared; an' a guid pickle o' money forbye. Bessie's got naethin' to grieve about—exceptin' her faither an' mither, of course," he added, bent on accuracy.

A long silence ensued. "They'll be glad to see ye hame again," his friend renewed. "We a' kenned when ye was comin'—that's why I was on the watch for ye when I got on. A' the neebours kens—they ken the vera train. We're hopin' ye'll be preachin' for us i' the kirk. Mr. Shearer'll be askin' ye, nae doot."

"How is Mr. Shearer?" Stephen enquired quickly, for the last suggestion was lost on him. He was thinking of something else—of a fair and lovely face

that seemed to pass before him now in the new-born comeliness of grief.

"Mr. Shearer— fine. He wears graun. He's been giein' the old gospel wi' new power— an' the kirk's man— as it was years syne. The folk soon ken where there's a spring—there'll aye be a well worn path to the spring, Stephen. But there's mony a bonnie lassie as whistles as a whistle when ye come thir' the water— ye ken."

"That's true," replied Stephen; "do you have the same old service you always had?" he pursued.

"Aye, juist the same—what for no'? A spring doesna change—not if it's God's, onyway. Mr. Shearer's nane o' yir changin' kind. What div ye think some o' the new fangled folk was wantin'? The session settled them fine."

"I really couldn't imagine," said Stephen; "what was it, Mr. Reynoldson?"

"They was for puttin' oot the auld hoods—wi' the lang stick at the end, that we tak up the collection wi'. Ye'll mind them fine. They was wantin' plates, siller plates, puir bodies. Siller plates! Clatterin' wi' noise—like hens pickin' aff a barn floor. An' after we've had the ither for fifty year, mind ye. An' wi' the plates, onybody can see what ye're giein'. 'Twad be takin' their thochts awa' frae the sermon. Naebody can tell what ye gie, wi' the hoods. Yir left hand doesna ken what yir richt hand's daein'—an' that suits the Scotch folk fine. Onyway, the session settled them."

They were now upon ground well known to them

both, recognizing every farmhouse as they passed. Stephen's communicative friend was engaged with a new-noticed acquaintance across the aisle, giving forth his soul freely as before.

Of which Stephen was sincerely glad; for with the old familiar scenes there came echoes of the old familiar struggle in his heart. Rising, he takes his place by a window on the other side of the car—the side on which he had sat when last he looked upon these spreading acres. (Was it not poor Phable, according to Bunyan's master pen, who clambered out of the slough "on the side nearest to his own house"?)

A strange unrest he felt, touched with something that he thought was past forever. Great joy, great love, great purpose—all these he thought had joined to strike it dead. And a sort of stern anguish came over him as he felt the old struggle begin anew.

His face is pressed close against the window, while the plunging train bounds on as if conscious of the nearing goal. The far-spreading arms of a fence that had been built of stumps, the first production of the soil, breaks upon him. Giant roots, that strong arms had torn from their hiding place, tangled in fantastic fashion, spread hither and thither in picturesque abundance. Nothing like this has he seen since he went this way before. Then his soul catches the fragrance of the thorn—for he remembers—he remembers—how he had mechanically noted this same rude fence while his heart was still riotous with the vanished picture. The blossoming thorn and the

lifeless roots had lingered in his mind together. And his eyes leap onward with the leaping train.

It is but a moment. Its foliage swims into his view, gilded with the dying sun ; and a sensation of dizziness seizes him as he beholds—for he had not hoped for it—he would have prayed against it—beholds a maiden's form again beneath the tree. And the tall figure is robed in black ; but he would know it anywhere—for the flowing tresses have no thought of mourning, while the white hand that seeks to restrain their merriment, and the other that gently waves a snow-white signal toward the train, tell the trembling Stephen that there are certain things against which death and grief are powerless.

Whereupon he clutches at the memory of Hattie. And his love for his wife springs like a fountain in his heart—but the enemy's face, he marvels, does not disappear. " I was here first," it seemed to mutter sullenly ; and it called to its aid a score of loyal henchmen, some bearing the livery of Memory, and some the insignia of Imagination—till Stephen's chaster thought lay among them all like that sacred tomb among the Saracens of old.

" Oh, God, let my deliverance draw nigh," he cries within him. Then he looks swiftly back—and catches but one swift glimpse of fluttering black—then prays again. " I must be quick about getting to my life-work," he murmurs to himself ; " and then I'll have peace at last."

Reuben's beaming face is the first he sees when he

alights at the station. The towering form seems taller and straighter than ever. And the honest eyes that look out at him are filled with an honest joy that had never been there before.

The hearty greeting is soon over and the brothers driving homeward. "Isn't this a new carriage, Reuben?"

"Yes, just bought it yesterday—we've struck oil, Steve," and Reuben's face was jubilant.

"Have you really? You thought I didn't know—but Mr. Reynoldson was on the train and he told me about it; only he didn't know if you had actually got it. Tell me about it, Rube." And Stephen nestled back in the luxurious first-fruits.

Nothing loath, Reuben entered on the wondrous story, pointing to the numerous tripods that could be seen in the distance.

"And we've been offered sixty thousand, Steve—sixty thousand dollars—so that ought to mean a hundred, when they offered sixty. And when these tires get worn out we can get more," viewing the costly upholstery with smiling satisfaction.

Their talk flowed on. "Everything's happy, Steve," said Reuben. "I don't know anything in my life I want that I haven't got. Except mother—and we've still got her; she's more with me, anyhow, than she ever was—and more to me, too—and I know she's happy. And I'm just waiting for one thing, Steve—you know what that is," he added, a slight colour showing through the tan. "Of course we have to wait a while now. I don't see why—I don't



want to—but Bessie insists on it. What do you think yourself, Steve? Do you think that's any reason—I mean about Bessie's father and mother—why we shouldn't get married?"

"I don't know—how could I know?" Stephen answered. Then, after a long silence: "But since you've asked me, I think you ought not to wait—decidedly."

"I don't see why we should, either. You talk to Bessie—Bessie's coming over to-night. There'll just be ourselves, all together—see, there's father at the gate."

Suddenly the gate is thrown wide, and the old man strides forth—more bent, more snowy, than before. But the spring of youth is in his step.

His arms are about his son. "Welcome hame, my laddie," he cries, "welcome back to yir faither's hoose. Ye're lookin' braw'ly. Ye're mair an' mair like yir mither, my laddie. Come ben the hoose; come ben—it's no been like itsel' sin ye went awa'. Ye've been in mony a graun hoose, nae doot—but there's nae place like hame."

Something like peace stole about his embattled heart as the returning wanderer saw again the severe and simple surroundings of the humble house. He threw himself upon the couch, looking about the room, unchanged since he had left.

"Aye, she's tickin' awa'," his father said as Stephen's gaze fell upon the clock; "she's a trusty yin. I haena heard her ring sae blithesome sin that nicht she stoppit," and a shade of sadness fell on the

strong features as he glanced quickly toward the little room. "An' ika time she chimes the hour, I say 'I'm comin'; aye, I'm comin', mith'er'—an' I dinna doot she hears. An' auld man like me has nae friend like the clock."

"Don't talk that way, father," pleaded Stephen; "I hope you'll have long years with us yet."

"It's a' richt, Stephen. I'm no' complainin'. I hae treasure baith here an' yonner—but maistly yonner. An' yir ain lame-comin' the nicht maks me think o' the meetin' i' the better land—it'll be fair rapture, my laddie."

Then Stephen introduced the subject of the rich fortune their land had so suddenly disclosed; but he found his father's pleasure chastened and subdued.

"It cam' ower late," the old man said; "it's ower late. She should hae had a holiday. An' to think the ile was there a' the time. But she's restin' noo," he concluded, deep peace upon his face.

This was followed by a long stillness, broken at last by his father's voice:

"Let's gang oot—there's somebody at the gate. It'll be Bessie; she was comin' ower."

Bessie and Reuben were approaching; and the girl's greeting was full of shy embarrassment as she laid her hand in his.

His earnest words of consolation were fast followed by faltering words of congratulation—but they were interrupted. "Which train did you come in on?" she asked. He gave some stammering answer, wondering the while; but Reuben cried:

"Why, Bessie, what a strange question—I told you only this morning the train Steve was coming on. Besides, there isn't any other."

Little of speech passed between them as they sat together. But Stephen was inwardly aware that the girl's eyes were never withdrawn from his face. The lamp is lighted presently—for the darkness has crept about them—and Stephen starts as their eyes meet at last.

For Bessie looks older—so much older—and the sweetness of her bloom seems to be touched with something that was not there before, as though she had struggled and not prevailed.

And as he looks once and again, and swiftly, into her eyes, he feels how different is the message from that which other, purer depths had given back. But yet—and herein was the bitterness of it,—each, coming, found something in him, and both in turn had fleeting place as the ruling motive of his soul.

"Where is Hiram now?" he asked his father abruptly, glad of the digression. "Reuben told me about his coming into money."

"Hiram! Ye may weel ask," his father answered smiling; "he's far above the likes o' us. About this time, Hiram'll be puttin' on yin o' thae coats wi' the turkey-gobbler tails—like the singers i' the city kirks. Or mebbe he'll be tellin' the butler to open anither crock o' champagne. Or it's mair nor likely he'll be tellin' his gairdner to fling a palm ower the fence an' get a new yin. Or he'll mebbe be bid-din' his footman shove his gairter unner his trowser

knees. But I'll tell ye what he's likeliest to be daein'."

"What will it be, father?" Stephen asked laughing.

"He'll be pickin' oot two or three bonny bit sins to confess till the priest. He's a Catholic noo, ye ken—Hiram gained the whole world an' lost his ain soul—'twas a sair trade for Hiram," and the old man shook his head mournfully.

"Well," Reuben said suddenly, "I don't know what Hiram's doing now—but I know what I'll have to be doing, I'm sorry to say. I promised to meet a man from Cleveland at the village to-night—and I'm afraid I'll have to be going. Hope you'll excuse me for a little, Stephen."

"By all means, Rube—certainly. I'm glad business is so pressing. I suppose it's about the oil," Stephen assented eagerly.

"Yes, it's about selling him a well. I won't be long, Bessie—not long at all; I'll be back in lots of time to walk home with you. You just chat away till I get back."

Reuben is gone. Deep silence fells. Stephen's eyes rest on her who had been almost forgotten till this very day; his thought is still beyond the sea.

Yet, as in many another dwelling-place, the secret guest chamber of the soul may harbour to-night the prophet of the living God; and the succeeding night some leprous face of sin will rest upon the selfsame pillow. Thus came and went, in silent alternation, the shadowy guests that had so often found their rest

in Stephen's unhappy and impartial heart. He thought of the face so far away, rosy now with the kiss of slumber, smiling mayhap with the dream of a loyal heart beyond the wave. Then he thought of the face that was so near, its fevered light still leaping out to his; and Stephen's heart was now an ambrosial arbour, now a jungle lair, each tenant transforming it to its taste.

A quick resolve seizes him, ally to the absent one; and he turns toward his father, introducing some topic of neutral interest. The conversation glides pleasantly along, the girl having no share in it; but the old man feels that something, he knows not what, but in which he had no part, has passed away; and he gives himself up to the exercise he loves so well.

Not more than a few minutes have been so employed when Bessie rises, beginning to adjust her cloak.

"What's the maitter, Bessie? Ye're no' gacin'?"

"Yes," the girl answered in a husky voice; "I must attend to one or two things at home—and I'll have to go—I can find my way alone," she added, her eyes making their way again to Stephen's face.

The father remonstrated: "Reuben 'll be disappointed—he'll no' be lang, Bessie"—but in vain; a quick word of farewell, and Bessie was gone, the door left open behind her as the dark robed figure vanished in the night.

A moment—and Stephen's heart has resolved again. He knew the motive that prompted her im-

pulsive action—and he had resolved to remain with his father. But the vision of the dark way gleamed before him; he persuades himself that the road is too lonely for her to go unattended—he wouldn't have had Hattie go this way alone.

No, it is not right that she should go alone—this is Stephen's final warrant, holding fast to which he flings a word of hasty explanation to his father and hurries out exultant into the dark.

He will have to make haste, he fancies, if he would overtake her—for her step is fleet. But pressing on, he has not got farther than the stile that leads from the field to the familiar wood when he sees the movement of a dress, not easily to be distinguished from the surrounding gloom.

He is beside her in a moment.

"I knew you'd come, Steve—I was waiting for you," she said gently as she rose from the step on which she had been sitting; "help me down, Steve—it's dark."

Dark indeed it was as Stephen sprang to the other side of the fence, turning to see the hand outstretched to him.

He took her hand in his, soft and trustful as it rested there, the girl standing on the second step nearest to himself.

"Help me down, Stephen," she murmured, "it's so dark;" whereat he reached forth his arms, his hands supporting her elbows, hers groping their way to his shoulders.

The old thirst came back, as the traveller's thirst is

started by the deadly winds of the desert. But his promise to another—and to God—called loudly to him to endure.

He helped her gently to the ground, as gently withdrawing his hands and turning from the wood.

“Let us go round,” he said; “it’s too dark to go through.”

“You’ve forgotten the path,” she faltered; “I know it yet.” Nevertheless she turned with him, and they made their way along the edge of the bush, silent as they went. Once he took her hand, to help her over a murmuring stream that coaxed the clinging grasses to let it go its way—but he released it in a moment.

Involuntarily he quickens his pace, though he knows not why; a broken prayer for strength mingles with a blurred vision of the memory he prays may be forgiven—but the vision outlives the prayer.

He hurries on—they will soon be past. And he who has no wax to dullen inward ears to the siren’s voice must outrun death himself.

“Stephen, don’t hurry so—I’m tired.”

“What, Bessie?”

“Don’t go so fast, Stephen. I’m tired—I want to rest—let us sit down a minute.”

“Here—let us sit down here;” and they took their places on the little pile of wood, still undisturbed since last they had rested there. And the wild free breath of the forest bade them welcome as before.

Suddenly she moved, Stephen trembling as he felt her coming nearer. “Oh, Steve,” she murmured,

"I've been here often since—often in the darkness. I'm all alone"—and she pressed nearer, following the direction of the heart whose tumult could be felt. "Oh, Steve——"

The vision of Hattie—and the holiness of another hour—swam far away, retreating and indistinct, crying out that it had never been.

He hears the roar of the soul-destroying cataract toward which these silent waters are swiftly bearing him; and his heart, seized by a mighty impulse, turns desperately toward the shore. It may have been the withered prayers with which his life's pathway had been strewn; or it may have been the ministry of mouldering lips that lay silent on the adjoining hill; or it may have been the sheer pity of his father's God—but he gained the shore, the sullen voice of the torrent dying in the distance.

"Go, go, Bessie," he whispered hoarsely; "and God pity and help us both—go—I'm going home," and he turned in the direction farthest from the torrent's roar, nor looked ever back. Onward, he pressed—swiftly homeward—a great belief in God surging in his soul.



## HIRAM'S PRIEST

**W**HAT the outcome of his silence on the subject of his secret marriage might yet prove to be, Stephen Wishart could not well surmise.

It was the morning after his ordination to the care of the Church of the Covenant, and the varied scenes of the great occasion were flitting before his mind as he sat in the comfortably furnished room, one of a suite that were now to be his home.

One scene there was to which his mind reverted more often, and more gloomily, than to any other. It had had its place at the social gathering of the congregation, convened to bid him welcome, after the solemn ceremony that preceded it had found its close.

There were, of course, varied speeches by varied speakers. And the inevitably facetious man had been in evidence, a brother minister from an outlying town.

"And now," this facetious one had said, "I want to ask you all, my friends, to be in your pews here every Sabbath day. I know of nothing so discouraging as to look down from the pulpit into a lot of vacant faces—that is, I mean," he amended, "as to look down and see a lot of absent faces that are not there."

This poor repair produced a fresh stream of mirth, and the good man, cheered therewith, went cheerily on his way: "And there's another thing I want to say. By and by your minister will find it isn't good for man to be alone—and he'll be looking around for a helpmeet, making a choice among these beautiful faces that I see in the choir and in the congregation before me. And when he makes his choice, and you're going to have a minister's wife. . . ."

Thus ran his speech, and Stephen sat through it all—and after—and in silence, his burning face interpreted by his people as a pledge of youthful modesty.

Ah me! the peril of the unspoken word. For speech itself is easier of recall, and poor awkward hands may repair it not so ill. But silence ebbs with an eternal speed, and no human tongue is fleet enough to overtake the fugitive.

To the dear ones of his father's house, Stephen had never written the tidings of his marriage—he had purposed the rather to tell them when he saw them face to face. Face to face at length, he resolved to wait till Bessie should be absent. Bessie in due time gone, he had awaited a more convenient season, till the very barrier existed that now confronted him in relation to his church.

For he had been silent after the facetious man had made an end, resolving swiftly that not to this public crowd, but to the officers of his church, would he make the first avowal. But this is the grim thought that reflection brings him: how will he explain to

those same officers the silence that his later avowal is to break, the silence that should have never been necessary from the first?

He can see no alternative but—more silence; for a time, at least.

His perplexed and perplexing thought was suddenly interrupted by the intimation of a visitor, and the name was about as little welcome as any Stephen could have heard.

For his caller was none other than Mr. Hiram Barker; whom Stephen met at the door, greeting him with all the cordiality and unconcern he could command.

"Why, Hiram, is this you—and looking so well. It's a long time since I had a sight of you, isn't it? Although I had an idea I caught a glimpse of you last night."

"Oh, yes, I was there last night, Mr. Wishart—never do to call you Steve, now that you're the minister of the Covenant Church. I was there, all right; wouldn't have missed it for anything. Of course, I suppose you know I've changed my religion. I've flitted, so to speak—wasn't much of a contract—did it all with a wheelbarrow," and Hiram Barker's handsome face was wreathed in gracious smiles. "But I'm not above going to a Protestant meeting—I'm no bigot, you know. I'm like you in this, Mr. Wishart, that I don't believe in taking religion too seriously. Good servant, but a poor master, eh?"

Stephen winced under the man's suggestive words. "I'm glad you were there, Hiram—it was good of

you to come. Yes, I did hear you had joined the Catholic Church; but if a man's sincere—if a man's sincere, I say—it doesn't matter much to what church he belongs. I hope you enjoyed the service last night."

"Oh, immensely," Hiram answered blithely. "I never saw a man set apart to the service of God before—it was wonderfully solemn"—he continued in graver tone; "but that was a knock-out question they put to you, wasn't it?"

"Which one?" Stephen asked; "there were so many."

"That there were; most of them were run like an examination for insurance. But there was one run one—about a fellow's motive in entering the ministry—'love of souls, and zeal for the glory of God'—something like that, they asked, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Stephen responded, "it certainly is a very searching question and ——"

"But it did me good to hear you answer it. You see, I wasn't sure before; it was lovely to have it from your own lips—especially when you were being settled over such a gilt-edged congregation. It's the silk-hatted and kid-gloved congregation in the city—and you'll see more of them in the boxes at the horse show than all the other churches put together. The salary they pay would make most men have any quantity of zeal for the glory of God," he concluded, the bland smile upon his face again.

"What's your minister's name?" Stephen asked abruptly—"your priest's, I should say?"

"Oh, I go to Saint Anne's—O'Rourke's his name, Father O'Rourke—and he's a jewel, a perfect jewel—lots of love for souls and zeal for glory—lots of it. He's a damned good Christian—excuse me, that's mixing terms—but he's good as gold; and the best preacher in Hamilton, bar none."

"I'd like to hear him," Stephen said, moving in his seat.

"You just ought to hear him—he often preaches Friday nights and you could go then. He'd be the very man for you; he's great on the past—always dusting up the past; that's his specialty—and you ought to have a treatment." Hiram's eyes were giving forth a glint that tortured Stephen.

"Look here, Hiram," he began in a shaking voice, "what's the use of this? Is that what you came to see me about? Isn't it about time we gave this over? I've nothing against you, Hiram."

The latter looked at him for a moment, and it was difficult to say whether more of cruelty or of pity was in the glance. But the keenest eye could not have read his heart as he suddenly laid his hand on Stephen's shoulder, his voice so changed from a moment before.

"All right, Steve, I won't plague you—I won't. You've got enough; and I wouldn't add a straw, after I heard those vows of yours last night—not a straw; you've got enough. I'd rather help you play the game—blind man's buff, isn't it, eh? If I can help you keep them from pulling the thing off, I'll do it. What's more, I'll tell you what brought me here

to-day. I came to do you a good turn—I did, honest."

Stephen's face turned toward the man beside him.

"Thank you, Hiram, I knew your heart was right. I knew you wished me well—what was it you were going to do for me? I know you can be a great help to me."

Hiram smiled. "Well, I'll tell you," he began, "it's a good thing to have two strings to your bow. Isn't there something like that in the Scriptures, something about mammon and everlasting habitations? Our church isn't much on the Bible, you know. Well, I'm speaking plain. You've got a cursed rich congregation here; and if you're going to keep pace with them, you've got to have the wherewithal. Anyhow, you might find it handy some day—you can never tell what might happen. Do you see?"

"Well, not exactly," Stephen said slowly; "do you mean money?"

"Precisely, Mr. Wishart—the very thing. I wouldn't have thought, after last night, you would have thought of it so quick. But you're quite right—you can't cash those love and glory things at the bank, can you? Well, I can put you next, as the saying is. I know some stocks that are going up twenty to forty points inside a month; and you might just as well have a slice of a good thing when it's going. It doesn't take much to buy on margin. See now, Steve?"

"I think I do," Stephen answered quickly, "and I

certainly appreciate your kindness. But I wonder if it's right—becoming a minister, you know. Wouldn't the people be likely to hear about it? And anyhow, I haven't got the money—you know what I got from father; and of course it's all gone."

"Don't bother about that—I'll lend you the money. You know the Bible says you're not to take to the woods when a fellow wants a loan, the modern version is for the fellow that borrowed it to turn away when you want it back. But I'll trust you, Steve—you can have any quantity, after those vows last night; love and zeal ought to make good collateral, I should say. And you may as well make a little; you'll be getting married some of these days and then you'll need it."

Stephen felt the hot blood bathing his face, for the unhappy secret was already beginning to fester in his heart.

"All right, Hiram; thank you more than I can tell you. I'll think about it—and I think I'll probably accept your offer. A fellow can do a lot of good with money. I'll let you know to-morrow."

"Very good, I'll drop round and see you to-morrow evening. I'm glad we understand each other better—the past isn't easily forgotten, is it?" the old expression on his countenance as he held out his hand. "And oh, before I forget, Father O'Rourke told me to tell you he wants to call on you; he said he'd come on Saturday night if it's convenient for you. You'll find him a jewel, as I said; and I make the prediction that you and he will be great cronies

—you see if I'm not right. Good-bye till to-morrow."

"Good-night, Hiram. I'll be glad to see the father—Saturday night will suit all right. Good-night, and thank you again."

When Saturday evening came, Stephen was seated in his study, glad to escape from the fellow-boarders who seemed desirous of closer acquaintance with so conspicuous a figure in the city's life.

It was still early; and he turned toward the carefully written sermon before him, already well rehearsed, whose delivery on the morrow was to mark the beginning of his ministry in the Church of the Covenant.

But he had hardly taken it in his hand when an obsequious voice without announced the advent of the expected visitor, and in a moment Stephen was at the door, his hand outstretched in welcome.

"Is this Father O'Rourke I have the pleasure of speaking to? Come away in—I was looking for you."

"That's who I be; and I'm glad to mate you, Mr. Wishart," replied a rich Irish voice.

The face of his new acquaintance was full of genuine humanity, lit up with an almost boyish smile, while the seriousness of deep spiritual life looked out from the hazel eyes.

The marks of strife were there, secret and long continued conflict against those principalities and powers which unsheath their keenest swords for worthy foemen, and for them alone.



And upon his splendid brow the chastened banner of the victorious was visible to all who have learned the secret standards of that holy war. The sympathy that shone from his tender eyes betokened him a conqueror; for they who have struggled and prevailed will draw their swords the quickest for the vanquished, and the nail-thrust hand that has endured is ever laid the tenderest upon the sin-wounds of the weak.

As Stephen looked upon him, as he heard his voice, he felt that he might well deserve the place Hiram had accorded him as the first preacher of his city. For his whole bearing attested him a faithful servant of the Church whose narrowness and ecclesiasticism the largeness of his nature had outgrown. His first indenture was to God.

And his voice was the voice of eloquence, with all of love and sympathy and insight and power that the great word implies. A strong Irish brogue marked his speech when it voiced its lighter moods; but, in the glow of sermon and appeal, the whole city had remarked the rich culture of his accent, his words retaining only the delicious suggestion of his native land.

Stephen led Father O'Rourke to a chair, and the two clergymen were soon engrossed in a conversation that bade fair for the future intimacy of which Hiram felt so sure. The far different Churches—and their historic antagonism—to which they respectively belonged, seemed quite forgotten in the mutual pleasure that their new-born acquaintance had provided.

The latest phases of religious thought; the drift of political opinion at home and across the sea; the charm and prophecy of the opening life in their own new and wonderful land—amid such themes as these their talk flowed on, each more and more convinced that he had found in the other a congenial friend.

"I must be going," the priest said at length, "I've got to see a man that's dying."

"Well," Stephen rejoined, "I reckon I'd better get to work myself. I'm just getting in some final strokes on my sermon for to-morrow."

The priest glanced at the manuscript upon the desk.

"I find a visit to the dying a fine preparation for a sermon," he said. "It gives it the human touch; there's nothing in a sermon so fine as a face—a face looking out at the audience. I hope you'll have a fine time to-morrow."

"Thank you," Stephen answered, "I'm just a little nervous over it myself."

"Och, the mischief," the priest returned, shrugging his shoulders; "niver a bit ye nade to be. You've got a swell lot o' people there—but they're only Jerusalem sinners like the rest of us. Wrap the owld flag round ye, my boy, and give it to them straight. But a lot depinds on your first sermon. Don't try to grip them by the brains—they're toired o' that. And don't catch them by the poetry part o' them—and don't deafen them wid noise. I'm older than you; and I tell you, catch them by the heart. Every minister of God should be a specialist; and his specialty should be the heart, always the heart,"

he concluded, smiling at Stephen in a fatherly sort of way.

"Thank you; I'll try it. I believe you're right. You're a priest of the Church of Rome and I'm a minister of the Church of Scotland—but I shall look for your help and advice, Father O'Rourke. I feel that you have helped me already."

"That's all roight—I know we'll be frinds, soine frinds," the priest responded heartily; "there's not such a gulf between us after all. A priest's a minister; and a minister's a priest—and they're both poor sinful cratures. One word—stick to the Cross, my son. Hold you to the Cross. Let the modern thought go to the divil if it stroikes at that. And I hope ye'll be moighty happy here," he went on. "Don't be long wid yere love-makin'; get a wife to yourself—that's an owld priest's advice to ye. Everything depinds on the kind you get. Why, yere people are jabberin' away about it already. They've got it all fixed. She's got to be refoined, and intilligint, and blue-blooded to the quane's taste—and illigant for society purposes, togged up to knock the spots aff anything in the city. That's their oidea. But you tell them to go to Old Harry. Get ye the kind ye want—get a specialist, a heart-specialist, mind ye."

He stopped, embarrassed; for all of Stephen's self control—and all his rehearsal of deception, practised at his father's house since his return—were unavailing against the torrent of confusion and dismay that poured itself into his face.

For when he had slipped into the awful policy of silence, he had not allowed for the trembling sense of danger; for the bitter upbraiding of a heart that still, with all its ebb and flow, clung to his wife with a love that tortured; for the sickening sensation of a double life, knowing that life a lie. And as he listened to the priest's jaunty words, all of these smote his heart in unison.

"Excuse me, Mr. Wishart, excuse me please," Father O'Rourke began apologetically. "It's not for me to give advice about the tender passion. I moight have known you have it all settled by this toime. And what roight has an owld stag loike me to be pratin' about such matters? I was niver in love myself but wanst—wanst at a toime, that is. I was only chaffin' ye—don't think anny more about it."

Stephen's composure was soon regained. "I don't doubt you're well up in the theory, Father O'Rourke, even if you haven't had the practice," he said, walking with him to the door and bidding him good-night with cordial warmth.

When his visitor was gone, Stephen returned to his study, his heart hot with its fiery tumult, but his face blanched and pale.

He sat long, holding his head in his hands, the shadows, unheeded all, closing in about him; darker shadows seemed groping with cruel hands about his unhappy heart. Where now, he thought to himself, is the unpoisoned happiness which so short a time ago he felt was his forever? Where now, the joy

and restfulness of love, the shelter built by unseen hands in which their two nestling souls were to find peace at last? Was there to be no end to this strange tangle, this maddening maze of things? Was God bent on baffling him at every turn?

Suddenly, obedient to an inward voice that seemed to blend with the invitation of the dark, he slipped on to his knees and began to pray. But his floundering soul could find no foothold for his flight; the voice of unreality seemed to mock him with its jeering laugh—and in a moment he arose.

Then he called for a light, and gave himself with desperate earnestness to the mastery of his morning's sermon from the text: "and the truth shall make you free."

XXI

*A DOUBLE LIFE*

**T**HE busy months have passed, and Stephen Wishart, minister of the Church of the Covenant, is again seated amid the encircling gloom; again he holds his hands to his head, crouching among the shadows, giving himself up to the sombre thoughts that were now his abiding portion. To-morrow is to see him started on the most joyous journey of his life; not with this, however, is his thought engrossed, but with the weary way that lies behind. Yes, these bygone months have come wearily, and as wearily have gone, since he struck the key-note of his ministry in his first sermon on "the emancipating power of the truth."

For, to begin with, his first sermon had been a disappointment. As an evidence of his great gifts, as a pledge of his commanding eloquence, it had won the applause of all. He had reaffirmed his reverent faith in the Bible as the living word, proclaimed it with the same eloquent originality as had marked his Hyde Park oration—this general view he emphasized. But he had seen fit to further elaborate his theological position, and to acclaim the new light that was banishing the extreme conservatism regarding the Scriptures. He had paid a generous

tribute to the fruitfulness of criticism, in begetting a spirit of challenge and research, and had repeated twice that "there lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds."

This opening sermon had been published in one of the city papers under the headline of "The New Theology"; but, although it enhanced his fame as an orator, it had brought forth little to encourage him.

All of this had brought him little comfort. There came a letter, too—from his father. It told of the continued lucrativeness of the oil wells; of the further adjournment of Reuben's wedding; of the prosperity of their church under Mr. Shearer; then there was a postscript which read:

"I saw a screed i' the paper about yir openin' sermon. Yon was a grand text ye had."

Many others, too, of the humble folk around Stephen's early home had read eagerly the report of his first discourse. And the next Sabbath day it was gravely discussed by a group of farmers about the door of their little church.

"I'm no' surprised," said one gray-bearded man, "at the kind o' stuff he gave them. He stole twa o' my watermelons when he was a laddie—and I wasna gaein' to say onything about it, till I saw yon screed i' the papers."

"Noo that ye speak o't," contributed another, "yin nicht I was walkin' hame i' the dark—and he fired a pistol frae behind a fence—and the shot banged about my lugs. I wasna gaein' to tell either

He threw the shot wi' his hand, I found oot lang syne—and I ran like a deer. Sae I wasna surprised at yon bit i' the papers."

"I dinna think naethin' about yir melons, or yir rinnin'," said a kindly elder of the kirk; "a laddie's aye a laddie. But yon new view about the auld theology—I canna forgie him that. What say ye, Donald?" He turned to a sweet-faced listener, the minister's right-hand man.

Donald was silent for a moment, smiling sadly, with his eyes on the ground.

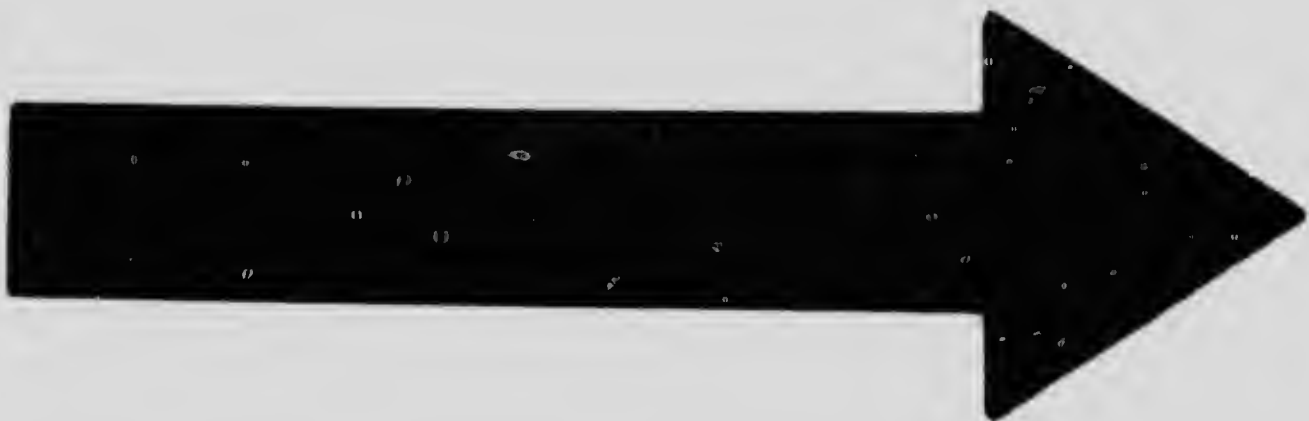
"Puir laddie, muckle he kens about it." And the others said no more.

Nor was this his only disappointment. He was disappointed, bitterly so, in the people he had been called to serve.

Proud, ambitious, frivolous for the most part, their estimate of his worth had laid its strongest emphasis upon various social functions which he was supposed to assist and adorn, but which his soul had learned to loathe. Once he had been urged to tarry at a dinner party, summoned from its revel though he was to the bedside of a dying child. "They do not belong to our church," he had been reassured; "and, besides, nine chances to one it's some contagious disease; you must think of others, you know." But he had scorned their counsel; for, after all, he was Robert Wishart's child.

More than this, a spirit of restlessness was astir; he knew it; he could feel it. Besides, there





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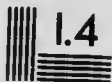
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was good reason for it, poor Stephen reflected to himself, sitting with his burning cheeks still resting on his hands.

For to-morrow he was to set forth for New York—to meet his wife. Her steamer was due to land the following day. And then—what then?

Not that his own love had lessened. Rather it had deepened; fanned by loneliness and longing, it had broken into brighter flame. Her patience, her unselfishness, her heroic endurance of the long separation he had declared as wise and necessary, her sweet and tender letters, aglow with love for him and with eager enquiries for the progress of his noble work; her pathetic prophecies of the happiness and usefulness that he and she were to know together in their toil for souls—these had clothed her in spotless white before his reverent gaze and had kept alive the pure passion of his love.

But he would never forget the awkwardness—the agony indeed—of the dreary time that had elapsed since he and his secret had first entered the pulpit which was his own at last. Many had lightly advised him of his need of a helpmeet, unconscious of the poison that the gayest shaft may bear. Others had whispered to him that suspicion and mistrust and jealousy would surely arise sooner or later among the *eligibles* of his flock. And at last, wrung by the distracting situation, he had thought it wise to tell a few, who in turn thought it wise to tell the world, that he was linked to a heart across the sea.

Whereupon the Church of the Covenant had seized

its inlaid fan in a flutter of excitement it had never known before. Particulars were not forthcoming; details were denied their thirsty souls—and the congregational fan flew fast and furious. Five o'clocks—and even hospitality—grew apace, these hurried councils necessary to the crisis.

The past was ransacked, the future foreboded, with desperate earnestness. Matrons, mathematically and matrimonially inclined, disclosed to mutual hearts the ghastly number of his entertainments at their homes, the dark lightning of expense illumining the estimate. Then they bewailed his faithlessness, entering into solemn compact to risk no more the daughters of their bosoms, which daughters were fervidly congratulated upon the felicity of their escape; and the escaped responded with only moderate enthusiasm.

Debt added to his misery. He had accepted Hiram's offer of a loan and invested its proceeds in stocks that were so sure to rise. Hiram held his note, acting as his broker. And the stock had risen, then halted, then steadily declined. Stephen had continued to cover—for his investment was on margin. This necessitated further loans from the original source till he was deep in Hiram's debt. The latter had eventually taken the stock off his hands, buying at a fatal figure, after which it began mysteriously to ascend. But the mischief had been done; the original and the accumulated debt was still to be paid.

To make matters worse Hiram had begun to throw

out little hints as to the pleasure a settlement would afford him. He had gone so far as to say, even though he laughed as he said it, that love for souls and zeal for the glory of God were no doubt good in their way, but that the kind of religion which paid ordinary business debts was good enough for him.

Of course, he had added, one would see things differently if he had been called to the ministry of the Word; three day grace was a poor affair compared to the large kind Stephen had to preach, he knew!

But chief of all his torments was the secret gnawing of a conscience that was neither dead nor sleeping. The truth is, he was striving desperately to serve his God, unhallowed though the altar to which he clung. In that service he had moments of peace, even of fleeting joy. Swift gleams of sunshine fell now and then upon the stream of his unhappy life, when it would emerge from its swampy way, leaping in the new-found light. But this was soon forgotten in the dark morass into which it swiftly flowed again, swallowed up of conquering shadows that lay in wait beyond

Wherefore these moments of transient light—sometimes in his pulpit; sometimes by the dying bed; sometimes in the thrill of new and holy resolutions—these had come to be the moments of his keenest anguish. For he knew they were only a soul's reprieve. And the waiting Valley of the Shadow held them in utter scorn.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Oh, Stephen, Stephen!"

"Hattie, my darling—my wife, my Hattie—it's been so long; but it's all over now."

The sweet fragrance of spring, undenied even to the great metropolis, is drifting in through the open window of the New York hotel where two long-sundered hearts are drinking deep of the old well-spring of healing.

"I stood four hours on the pier, Hattie—and I saw the ship before any of the others. It fairly seemed to creep; but a man with a glass said it was the *Etruria*—oh, Hattie, Hattie, my darling!"

"Why, Stephen, that's nothing to my wait. I stood at the bow since early morning—of course I went down to dinner—but I just thought I couldn't wait. But I'm here—and you're here, darling—and we'll never, never be parted any more, will we?"

His answer was given not in speech. But the man who held her so tenderly close to him was thanking heaven for the love that he knew had made him independent of the world. The purity of the face he caressed so gently, the sweet wholesomeness of the graceful figure that lay well contented in his arms, the artless speech that told the story of almost foolish happiness—that all these were his, and all this for him—filled his heart with a calm it had not known for long.

For the fear had seized him, and had clung to him even on the pier, that his trial might come in this heart hunger, never to be satisfied; in a burning love that was to torture him because it was denied.

But it was not to be. God is love; and in love He glories; and the fields of the evil and the unthoughtful share His impartial rain. And she is his—she is in his arms; and nothing but death can separate them more.

It is toward evening now, and a peculiar stillness has wrapped itself about them.

“Stephen, why don’t you talk to me? Take me, my husband,” she said, the pure colour that had enchanted him before flowing from neck to brow as she stole into his arms. It was the same rich tide he had first seen the very night they met. “Is anything troubling you, darling? Won’t you tell your wife?” she pleaded.

Stephen waited a moment. “Yes, Hattie,” his voice hoarse and unsteady, “I want to tell you something. Did you ever hear of a Scotch marriage, Hattie?”

“Yes, of course—my father and mother were Scotch; and they got married. Of course—there have been lots of Scotch marriages.”

“Yes, I know, dear. But I mean the ancient Scottish ceremony—a man and a woman taking each other as husband and wife—just themselves, you know.”

“Not before a minister?—And not before any witnesses?” Hattie asked wonderingly.

“No—just before their God. That’s a marriage, you know,” Stephen answered, his eyes aflame as they searched Hattie’s face.

“Is it? It’s a funny kind of a marriage. But I

think I have heard of it—and I'm glad ours wasn't that kind, aren't you? I've got our marriage lines; I have them in here," she said, touching her bosom with her hand, the wondrous eyes beaming up at him in trust and happiness.

"Yes, darling, of course I am. But Hattie—here, let me whisper it; I want us to have that kind of a marriage now—just us two before our God."

The girl started, trembling. "Stephen, oh, Stephen, tell me quick—what do you mean? Aren't we married, Stephen? Aren't you my husband—and I your wife? Oh, Stephen."

He drew her down closer, holding the fluttering form, whispering long. The scarlet face emerged at last. "Is that the reason, Stephen? Just that we can tell them we were married in New York—without telling a lie? Oh, Stephen, you said you'd tell them we were married as soon as you got to Hamilton. Why didn't you? Oh, why didn't you, Stephen? I didn't make any secret of it to anybody."

He repeated to her the considerations that had prompted his silence, Hattie struggling hard to see their wisdom.

"Yes, I think—I think I understand," she said slowly at length. "But I don't see why they should look down on the Army. I tried to be a good soldier; and I'm sure that's what they'd want their minister's wife to be. Oh, Stephen, I'll do anything you want—I'll marry you over again that way—that is, if you think it best. Oh, Stephen, Stephen," she cried, her arms like a vise about his neck, the hot



tears flowing fast, "let us get some other place—some nice congregation in the country, I love the country so—with green fields and sweet flowers and dear kind people, where we can walk and drive—and have each other—and live so near to God," she sobbed in a burst of longing. "I don't want to go and live with a lot of rich people. They'll want you all to themselves. And they'll—they'll ask me where I met you. And it doesn't matter where—it doesn't matter; you're my husband and I love you—and it was God gave you to me—wherever I met you. He sent you to me, my darling. But they wouldn't understand. And I want to be happy, Stephen; oh, I do want to be happy—for it's been nearly all sorrow, and I thought it was all past now."

As best he could, he petted and caressed the sobbing girl, his lips straying among the golden strands or pressed to the quivering lips, his whole soul brooding over her in compassionate devotion.

Then he gently untwined her arms, groping reverently for the little cross; the idea had suddenly possessed him.

"You hold it, sweetheart," he murmured; "and I'll hold it too—and we'll make our vows together. It's all so holy, dear."

She smiled, laying her hand obediently beside his own. And they repeated each to the other the immortal promise that hurls defiance at everything but death. Then all was still, their souls clinging in a new embrace.

The darkness has fallen, the noises of the mighty city stealing in upon them with stealthier tread, as these two sought to take up the past, struggling to believe it as unstained as ever.

But the deepening night was not responsible for all the darkness that reigned about them. A shadowy something, undefined and undefinable—but the more darksome all for that—seemed to mingle with the joy they were striving to protect. Hattie's gaze was fixed upon far distant lights, gravely wondering, question after question coming and going in silent apparition.

Once or twice she laid her hand upon her heart as if trying to locate some secret wound whose flow must be quickly staunched.

"Hattie, my darling. Hattie."

"Yes, Stephen."

"Don't you love me, Hattie? Don't you love me just as well as you ever did, my darling?"

"Why, Stephen, what a foolish question! Yes, of course I do; you're my husband."

For a moment their eyes, so familiar with the touch of tears, turned toward their quest of the far unknown.

## XXII

### HATTIE *And* HIRAM MEET

“**S**ING them ‘The Rosary,’ Mrs. Wishart; they’ve never heard you sing that—and it’s your best. Will you let me turn the music for you?”

“Shall I? Do you really like it, Father O’Rourke?”

“Loike it! Whin oi’m at my work, it’s loike to kill me, me’ndin’ to forget it; it’s loike sippin’ nectar to hear it. Where’s yere husband?”

“He’s busy in his study—I was so sorry he couldn’t come to-night.”

“If he wants to kape humble, he’d better kape away when ye’re singin’ ‘The Rosary.’ Shall I raise the piano-stool—up forninst, loike, a little?” and the genial priest twirled the ascending chair.

Beauty can never be complete till sorrow hath contributed its magic part: and the soulful charm of Hattie’s face mingled well with the splendid plaint of her thrilling voice, as the chastened strains of “The Rosary” floated from her lips.

Nor did this fascinating shade disappear from eye and lip as she returned to her seat in an embowered corner of the room. Some one had taken her place at the piano, turning from grave to gay, convulsing every listener with the mirth that is ever thrice welcome after seriousness, like sunshine after rain.

But Hattie, after a momentary smile, was oblivious to it all. Her thought seemed far away, as indeed it was, busy with its retrospect of the path by which she had been led, since she came to Hamilton as the wife of its most prized minister. And more of thorn than blossom was mingled with the view. She thought, and sighed as she thought, of her rude awakening to the necessity under which she had been laid of concealing her former relations; and she thought, with a yet heavier heart, of the long series of subterfuges, so alien to her nature, that necessarily had to follow.

Signs of suspicion, too, and jealousy, and even of disdain, she fancied she could now and then detect; as was only natural, perhaps, considering the embarrassment of her position. In fact, she was beginning to confess to herself that she was thoroughly unhappy among these proud rich people—or, at least, she knew she would have been but for Stephen and his glorious love. That was an unsetting sun. And yet she lived in trembling dread lest she herself might be the cause, innocent though she was, of staining his proud position, of impairing the sway that his person and his powers had secured him.

Another little sigh broke from her lips, lost in a fluttering prayer for help and guidance, this the habit of her simple life, when she noticed that her hostess had taken a seat beside her.

"Well, my dear, you look sober enough to be still at your rosary. Really, Mrs. Wishart, you have such a lovely voice; I should think you would never have a pensive moment."

Hattie smiled. "Sometimes I think our pensive moments are our happiest," she said; "I like the light best when it's sheathed—if not too much. But I'm sorry I was looking so sober."

"I daresay you often feel lonely enough among us all," her kind-hearted hostess went on. "So far from your girlhood's home. Oh, by the way, I'm expecting a gentleman in this evening who came originally from your dear old England. He's a little late, but we look for Mr. Barker any time up to ——"

"What's his name, did you say?" Hattie interrupted, her voice under full control.

"Mr. Barker, Mr. Hiram Barker; he's an Englishman, as I said. He's just home from three months in California. Why, there he is at the portière—I didn't hear the bell, did you? He's looking for me: just sit here a minute and I'll introduce him."

And as Hattie's gaze followed her hostess' outstretched hand, her thought flew back to the murmuring Dee, swiftly skimming the dim days that were past. The young impressionable heart, the youth's handsome face, the girlish infatuation, slight and fleeting though it was, the sudden disappearance of Hiram Barker and the tidings that he had gone to America—then her heart's swift repair, the quick following movement of her motherless life, then London—and Stephen, the comfort and the crown of all.

Three-quarters of an hour later the whole story was whispered into Stephen's ear.

"And tell me, darling—did you know him as soon as he came into the room?"

"The very instant, Stephen—and I was so surprised. I couldn't believe my eyes; and he stood stock still for two or three minutes. Mrs. Harcourt repeated my name once or twice—and then he said 'Hattie' under his breath—but Mrs. Harcourt heard it. And he sat down on a chair right near the door; and she sat right down beside him and began pelting him with questions. I didn't know what to do—I didn't want to stay. So I asked her if I might use the telephone; that was when I rung you up. And then I told her you wanted me—and I came away.

"And oh, Stephen, I wish you could have seen me when I came back into the parlour. I was just wicked enough to be proud of myself for your sake. I stood up just as tall as ever I could"—Hattie was on tiptoe now—"and I said 'I'll have to go, Mrs. Harcourt, my husband wants me; my husband wants me,' I said, 'and I must hurry on'—and then I said good-evening to them all and came right away."

"And did Mr. Barker say anything; what did Mr. Barker say?" Stephen asked eagerly.

"Oh, he offered to walk home with me—but, of course, I wouldn't hear of it. And I thanked him. And, oh yes, he said he would be glad to do any service for the wife of such a friend as you. And, Stephen, I know it's awful of me to say it; but I saw into his eyes—I'm hardly ever mistaken—and I just believe he just hates you. I just know he does. And if he does, I'll hate him," Hattie's eyes flashing

with the words. "If anybody dares to hate you, darling, I'll just hate them back, I will. And I'm sure ——"

"Hush, sweetheart, hush," Stephen interrupted, his arm twining in fond pride around her neck, drawing the flushed face down to his own, "don't say that, darling. Perhaps he's not as fond of me as some people—but perhaps he has some reason not to like me."

"What reason could he have?" cried Hattie, "why shouldn't he like you—do you know anything particular?"

"I can't tell you everything, Hattie—but I knew Hiram when he first came out from England. And I may have injured him—without meaning to," he went on cautiously. "That is—I made a mistake, I think. I was very young—and Hiram finds it hard perhaps ——"

"I don't believe it," Hattie contradicted; "you have talked like that once before, Stephen; and I won't let you—so there."

Stephen went on: "But I really think he's trying to be a good friend of mine now, Hattie. He has tried to befriend me in one or two ways; and I want you to do something for me, darling. I want you to be nice to Hiram—I want you to be nice to him. You say there was nothing that left any scar between you and him; he was fickle—and—and mean—and you didn't care much. But that's what gave you to me, my darling—look up, Hattie—kiss me. That was what gave you to me, dearie. And he had a

disappointment here—he was in love years ago, as I told you.”

“What was she like?” cried the most feminine Hattie, “tell me about her.”

“She was short and had rather dark hair,” Stephen answered.

“What kind of eyes?”

“Grey, I think—I’ve forgotten since I saw yours.”

“Don’t be foolish, Stephen. Why didn’t he marry her after all? Why didn’t he marry her?”

Stephen’s face was crimson.

“Why are you blushing so, Stephen—Stephen, your face is like a sunset. Don’t look at me like that—were you in love with her yourself? Stephen Wishart, were you in love with her?” and she took his face in both her hands, holding it straight in front of her; “tell me true now.”

“No, darling, I never was.”

“Then why didn’t he marry her—why won’t you tell me?”

“I can’t tell you, Hattie—don’t ask me. There was a mistake—a misunderstanding—I can’t explain it to you. But he got angry—he thought—that is, Hiram is a very passionate man, you know. I can’t tell you, Hattie—let me think a moment.” And an undimmed drama rolled before his eyes, the dread indelible that never fades, since it is kept so carefully in the dark.

“No, Hattie, I can’t tell you. Hiram is my friend, you know,” he went on, brightening sud-



denly; "and he's trying to be friendly, I think; and I want you to be nice to him, as I said. I owe a great deal to him—I can't just tell how—but I'm under great obligations to him. He can either help or hurt me a great deal; and you'll try to be pleasant to him for your husband's sake, won't you, Hattie?"

Hattie pondered. "I'd do anything for you, dear—yes, I'll try. And there really isn't any reason why I shouldn't—if he's nice to you," she added emphatically. Then silence.

"Hattie, what's the matter? What makes this plaintive mood that I notice so often lately about my darling? Tell me what's troubling you."

Softly he wooed her till the golden head was resting beside his, the quivering lips finally breaking forth:

"Oh, Stephen, I will tell you. I'm not happy here—except for you, my darling. If it weren't for my husband, I couldn't stand it another day. I believe some of those great people think I didn't win you fairly—and I did, I did," she exclaimed, the lovely eyes dancing with the words. "You know I tried to run away from you—into the woods, Stephen. You remember—and you followed me. I wouldn't run far now, would I, darling?" she murmured, as his lips fell softly on her own.

"But, Stephen, really, I'm not happy here," she went on; "I believe lots of them half suspect—and anyhow, I don't believe they really love the simple Gospel. And I don't think they bring out the best

that's in you, Stephen—as a preacher, I mean. Your sermons are so brilliant: of course, I suppose they have to be, for people like them. But I do think, darling, anybody could preach better to a congregation that felt they needed something, just what these people don't feel.

“Stephen, do you remember that night-meeting you and I attended at the Jerry McAuley mission in New York? Oh,” she cried, her face all aglow, “I did so want to hear you speak that night—I thought it was lovely there—it was so real; it was like saving people from a wreck. I think about it nearly every day. I'm sure we could be happy there—or anywhere where they really felt their need of us. Oh, Stephen,” and his wife's arms are around his neck, “I want to feel the reality of it, darling—it makes you so much dearer to me. And it's all so much like playing church, with those rich proud people. Do you know,” she went on abandonedly, “I wish you had gone to Morven—I do—I do; that dear old elder that I met that Presbytery day was so sweet and true. Can't we get some place like that, Stephen, some nice country place, with a dear little manse,—and trees—and flowers—and simple souls that really love the Gospel and ——”

But Stephen interrupted her. “You don't understand, Hattie—you don't understand at all. Why, I would be wasted among people like that. You know I'm not vain; but what good would all my books, and all my education, and my—scholarship; what good would they be for a simple congregation

like that? There's a fitness in everything, you know."

"Yes, I know," Hattie said; "but poor people have the same kind of sickness as rich people—and the same kind of hunger. And isn't it just the Bread of Life everybody wants after all, the ignorant just as well as the learned? Everybody's soul has the same kind of hunger, Stephen."

Her husband was fumbling in his pocket, his mind on another quest.

"Yes," he said, "that's a beautiful thought of yours, Hattie; but I've got a little plan. You know, you promised to go to father's in a month or two. Well, I got a railway time-table to-day; and I believe I'll take you to Morven—you can go on to the farm the same day. And we'll have a look at Morven; it's a pretty country place, they say—but I think my little wife will realize it's hardly the place for us. Although," taking her hand in his, "I could be happy anywhere, my darling, if you were with me. It's love that makes the wilderness blossom like the rose—and anyhow, we'll have a happy country day, and we'll forget all our troubles and just remember that we have each other."

And the close clinging form told him that they who have the love and loyalty of one other life can never be reckoned poor.

## XXIII

### *GATHERING CLOUDS*

“**I** SN'T this lovely? Why, there really isn't any Morven at all—it's not a place, is it?”

But there was no shade of disappointment upon the glowing face that looked out so eagerly on the rich fields of green stretched before them on every hand. The birds' sweet music mingled with the droning sound of sauntering bees; the call of the plowboy to his lazy team came floating from afar; soft fleecy clouds drifted here and there across the sky. For the day was not one of those boisterous summer days that laugh out loud for very joy of living; but subdued and smiling, rather, smiling gravely through its sunny veil of cloud, clothing all the earth with its considerate light.

“Let us rest here, Stephen; isn't it lovely on this bank? And what a splendid elm, it's like old England,” and Hattie's voice rang high with happiness. “Let us take long breaths, Stephen. I just love to think how sweet and lovely it is here, and how hot and dusty it is in the city. You remember, don't you, Stephen—don't you remember under another tree?” and the still bridal face looked out laughingly at her husband's. “I believe you've forgotten—I really do.”

"No, dear," and his tall form is flung among the flowers, "I have not—and never will. But you mustn't forget that it was one of those awful city streets that first gave you to me, Hattie; that's the sacred place to me. What's that you're doing?"

"I'm making a crown—a May-queen crown, like what we used to make in England. Isn't it sweet? Go get me those flowers yonder."

Crowned and garlanded she sits, humming some old familiar song and looking out upon the sweeping valley, upon the cattle grazing on the rich hillsides or resting under ample trees, upon the flowing river gleaming far beneath them, upon the modest church and the humble house that seems to sleep within its shadow.

The hours have flown fast, fleet as flowery hours ever are, and Hattie suddenly springs to her feet.

"Stephen, I want to see the church—and the manse. Come on, my train goes in an hour."

"What for?" he asked.

"I don't know; but it looks so cunning. Come on—I'll lift you up." And with mock effort she takes his hand, lifting him ponderously to his feet.

"That's one thing I love about the country, you can walk hand in hand," she said, as they sauntered slowly toward the valley.

They wandered a few minutes around the old graveyard, not in the best of repair, but strewn with many a quaint epitaph and homely text.

"Look, Hattie, here's a specimen of the scholarship in these parts. Their muse has been at work.

That little fellow's evidently buried beside his mother.  
Read that verse there."

She leaned over :

"Farewell, my dear and loving pa,  
God called me home to dwell with ma ;  
And when you come we'll happy be —  
Won't ma be glad my pa to see ? "

"They must be a poetic people here," Stephen said, smiling, when she had finished ; "how would you like your husband to be preaching to talent like that ? "

"I don't see anything very wrong about that," Hattie defended ; "they believe it anyhow—and that's everything. Besides, they're not all like that. I saw one over yonder—there it is ; did you ever read anything better than that ? "

He read it aloud.

"Behold what witnesses unseen  
Encompass us around —  
Men once like us with suffering tried  
But now with glory crowned."

"Yes, that's very good," he said, "it's an old phrase—my father loves them."

They went silently around the corner of the church and at a little distance saw the unpretentious manse.

The sight was a pretty one. For the ancient walls of stone were almost hidden with the flowering vine that clung to them ; the old rain barrels, relics of the past, still kept their place beneath the spouts that

marked every corner ; an ancient lightning rod kept its lonely vigil far aloft.

But the spreading lawn before the house was full of animation. Three children, of adjacent ages, were striving to smother each other with the garlands that were now in ruins ; tiring of this, they bedecked the patient horse that frisked his tail lazily beneath the shady apple tree, submitting to the coronation with a meekness that spoke of long experience. And almost at his feet, sound asleep, a baby boy slumbered sweetly, his pillow a sunbonnet that one of his seniors had discarded.

Peering toward the window, they could just make out the form of a man—evidently the minister—poring over some book that engrossed his whole attention. From what was evidently the kitchen, the sound of singing came, mingling with the rattle of dishes that explained the savoury odour floating out to them ; once they saw the mother's comely face as she stepped into the study for a moment—and they saw her bend an instant above the man with the book, then disappear, her song more blithe and her face more radiant than before.

Hattie's eyes were full of hunger. They lingered long on the happy scene, taking in its every detail, coveting the sweet simplicity.

"I'm afraid we'll have to go, Stephen," she said presently ; "I'll just have time to get my train. But oh, Stephen, doesn't it make you envious ? Only it's wicked to be envious, I know."

"What," her husband exclaimed, "envious of what?"

"You know, Stephen—oh, if we only had a church and a dear little house like that—and everything they have; isn't it the loveliest place for children, Stephen?" she added, her eyes upon the ground. "And on Sunday, to see them coming from all around—not rich or well dressed or anything—but true and sincere and good, really good. And we could have the windows open in the church; and maybe a little bird would fly in sometimes—they used to in England—and you could smell the flowers. And everything would be so true—so real. But we'll have to hurry on, Stephen. What time will I get to Rosehill?"

Stephen told her; and in a few minutes they were at the rustic station. The approaching train could be already seen flying across the verdant fields.

"Good-bye, Stephen—don't work too hard."

"Good-bye, darling. Try and help Rube and Bessie on a bit—tell them what good time you and I made. And be back in a week, remember. Good-bye, Hattie."

Two days later, a half-bared arm was flinging a sun-bonnet at the head of the giant figure on the verandah of the old farmhouse.

"No, Reuben, I don't want it—the sun is almost down. And I'm going all alone; I don't even want Collie with me. I'm going to roam over some of the



scenes my husband used to visit when he was a boy—and I'm not going to think of anybody but him."

"If I had it as bad as you, I think I'd take something for it. Bessie and I are going to Hamilton in a day or two. Shall we consult a heart specialist for you?" and Reuben's laugh shook the blossoms hanging from the lattice.

"Tut, tut, Reuben; let nature hae its course. Only mind ye, lassie—if it hadna been for me, ye wadna hae had him at a'."

"All right, father, bless your dear heart. If he only grows old just like you have, I'll be satisfied. Good-bye, I'll help you with the milking when I come back."

"She's a bonny yin, Reuben; Stephen struck ile about the same time we did oorsels," the old man murmured happily as the tripping form disappeared around the fringe of woods.

Hattie wandered on, the pure fragrance of all about thrilling her with nameless joy, her heart singing back its answer to the sweet twilight silence that chanted the evening's ancient hymn.

By and by the woods, never so beguiling as in the failing light, called her to their side. She wandered in a little way, seating herself upon a moss-grown log, her thoughts mingling with the whispering voices that joined the sylvan lullaby.

She is startled suddenly by a crackling footfall—and in a moment Hiram stood before her. Hattie leaped to her feet.

"Where did you come from, Hiram? What

brings you here?" she cried, and her face is pallid in its agitation.

"Don't be frightened, Hattie—I just ran down here for a little holiday—having another look at the old scenes and faces." Then followed a more detailed explanation.

The gloom deepened about them as they sat, still talking intently. Hattie is pleading for something.

"Oh, Hiram," she said, her voice full of entreaty, "I thought you promised me before; and I was getting happy again. Don't, Hiram—I implore you, don't. You know I love him; and if you do what you say he'll be ruined. For my sake, Hiram."

The man's face darkened. "I've got him where I want him now—and if it weren't for you I'd crush him like an egg-shell. Either one of those things would settle him—it's years ago now, but I don't forget. He ruined me, as well."

"Oh, Hiram, Hiram! If God——"

"And then he dared to come and preach the Gospel right at my back door. And the fool took a hand in with me at stocks—stocks on margin—at my expense, too; there's his note for what he owes me; too bad that grace wouldn't pay it—the kind he chatters about from the pulpit. You're a fool to cry, Hattie—he's not worth it."

"He is, he is," poor Hattie cried desperately; "I know him better than you do—and he wants to do right; he really does. And I don't believe what you say about him; and even if he had—had—gone astray, he's trying—I know he's trying. And we can save

up and pay you that money—and I believe in him—I love him so. And you shan't ruin him, you said before you wouldn't. You couldn't. I'll save him myself—oh, God, help me."

Low and musical, with a wild melody of anguish, her cry surged from her trembling lips, her face turned wistfully toward her tormentor, the bitter tears standing on her cheeks. Again and again the cry broke from her lips; "Poor Stephen, poor, poor Stephen," rocking to and fro in her distress. A shade of pity played on Hiram's face, mingling with the power and passion that were written there. "I have your letter, Hattie," he said at length. "I have it in my pocket. And I'll admit it moved me a good deal—especially at the close, where you asked me not to do it if I loved you—if I loved you. Did you mean that, Hattie?"

Hattie pondered a moment. "Mean it? Yes, of course I meant it," she finally answered, turning and looking full at the strong face above her. "You said you did."

"Yes, by God," he answered passionately, moving toward the white-robed figure beside him. She sprang quickly beyond his reach.

"Don't—you shan't, Hiram." Her tone sufficed. He took his seat again. "Yes, you know I love you," he continued. "I've always loved you—though I didn't know it once—and I was a fool in England." Then his voice grew softer. "Don't you love me at all, Hattie? Not the least bit like long ago—just my own place, Hattie?" he urged, his turn at plead.

She glanced a moment at the powerful and handsome face turned down upon her. Something of the old spell she could remember—but it was only a memory.

"No," she said resolutely, "no, Hiram; I'm all my husband's—nobody has any place but Stephen. And I don't want you to love me, Hiram—you have no right to. Nobody has any right, only Stephen. But if you do," and the girlish voice is full of simple earnestness, "if you do, I don't see how you could carry out your threat—that's what I meant, Hiram."

Neither spoke for long. The man was the first to break the silence.

"Hattie, you can trust me—you can trust me implicitly."

Hattie made a quick movement of joy.

"What do you mean, Hiram?" she asked eagerly.

"I mean what I say."

"Hush, what's that moving, Hiram? Did you hear anything? I thought I heard a noise."

"No—it's only the wind—you can trust me, Hattie. I will disclose nothing—I promise you. But it's only for your sake."

He had been drawing closer to her as he spoke; and, suddenly flinging forward in uncontrollable eagerness, his lips just touched her cheek as she leaped from him to her feet.

"Forgive me, Hattie," he cried a moment later as she stood panting, her eyes burning in the dark.

There was a long silence, and Hattie's voice was full of calm dignity when she answered:

"Yes, I'll forgive you; I'll forgive you. If you never knew how much I'm Stephen's, you know it now. And I know you'll believe in him yet. I shall never forget your promise. And—and—we'll pray for you. Good-night, I'm going back to father's."

Working in strange emotion was the cruel face that turned silently toward the village. Hiram strode swiftly on, his eyes upon the ground.

"By heaven," he muttered, "I can crush him without telling anybody anything. He thinks everything's forgotten—but my memory's not so short as God's."

And his hand wandered toward his pocket, savagely clutching at a letter that he knew was there. "I was afraid she'd want it back," he mumbled.

And through the gathered gloom a rustling form flew quickly homeward; and a dimpled hand was holding a tiny cross tight against a burning cheek; and trembling lips were saying half aloud:

"Oh, God, save Stephen—save him for me, oh God."

## XXIV

### *The GRIP of The UNDERTOW*

**T**HE apartments which Stephen and his wife had taken were more elaborate than those he had occupied alone. Yet, richly furnished though they were, they seemed desolate enough as Stephen sat, forty-eight hours after his visit to Morven, reading a letter from his wife. For he was alone; and he begrudged every hour that separated him from one in whom his whole life was centred now. Besides, the letter in his hand was redolent of the sweet tenderness that her nature possessed in such rich abundance—toward him at least; and he smiled with happiness as he read over again the endearing words.

Then he carelessly picked up another letter that the same mail had brought; it was addressed to his wife. He examined it idly, wondering whether or not he should send it on. But he noticed suddenly that it bore "immediate" written over the left-hand corner. The writing looked familiar—and his curiosity is aroused. Undoubtedly it is something she ought to know at once; perhaps it has a message that should be telegraphed. Besides, he feels sure Hattie would wish him to open it; he has often told her to do the same with his when he was absent.

A moment's hesitation; then a quick resolve—and he tears the letter open.

How thin the veil between happiness and anguish! Between eternal day and eternal night! "Thin as a piece of paper," we often say, little recking the cruel fitness of the illustration. A letter lies unopened; and life's current flows on in unconscious calm. Open it, break through the wafer thinness; and that same stream flashes in the sunlight never more. The wafer thinness was all that held back the billows, to beat mercilessly now upon your head till it finds shelter in the grave.

The warrant of your doom, it is true, was signed and sealed all the while; but it had never been executed, nor had you ever known it, but for that simple movement of the finger, that rustling page, that quick eternal flash, followed by the blackness of darkness that no earthly torch can banish.

The letter began, "My darling,"—and Stephen smiled as his eye fell upon the words. Some hysterical woman that's going to tell her what a glorious voice she has, he thought, turning the page over to see the signature. He gasped violently, his heart bounded till he could hear it, and he felt the sweat starting on his brow. The signature was Hiram's.

Could it be a joke? Yet it is surely Hiram's writing. He will make sure; he has more than one note from him, reminding him of payments long past due. He snatches his keys from his pocket and fumbles desperately for the little one that opens his desk. Why can he not find it? And why must his hand

shake so? He has it now—no, it's the wrong one; this is it—and in a moment the object of his search is shaking in his hand. Stern, contemptuous, threatening, he had remembered it to be—but its fangs are drawn now; all its poison is dead and gone. Into insignificance and contempt all its former dread has fallen—a veriest trifle, as he holds the two together; and he is conscious, even amid his anguish, of a swift wonder why the paltry thing had ever troubled him.

For the writing is the same.

"I have thought it over," the letter said among other things, "and I believe you are right about your letter to me. It's a little dangerous, as you said; for if anything should happen to me, there's no telling whose hands your letter would fall into. But I would sooner burn up the original of the Gospels than destroy one of your letters—so I return it to you to do what you think best with it. I'm only sending the risky part—I have torn it off, for I want to keep the rest. I think you said the night before last (oh, Hattie, I shall never forget that night), that you'd likely be home to-morrow. You ought to get this then; and anyhow, S—— will most likely be out visiting when this letter is delivered. So it ought to be all right. I'll drop around soon. Meantime . . ."

Where is her letter to him—or the fragment of it that he speaks of? He tears the envelope apart, shaking it over the floor—but it does not appear. Ah, here it is, lying at his feet! He snatches at it—but it is hers to him and his eyes fall upon a tender



phrase as he flings it from him, a half cry, half sob, breaking from his lips. What is that white lying yonder? His fingers grope for it; he recognizes the familiar hand—and he knows that his fate is there. His eyes burn so that he can scarcely read. It is a tiny piece of paper and he can see where it has been torn from the rest.

. . . "If you love me, Hiram—if you love me, don't do what you said. You understand, you know what I mean, though no one else would understand."

Nothing but her first name is signed, but it is enough—the writing is his wife's.

And Stephen knows now that his life is done. He walks dumbly from one part of the room to the other, looks out on the busy street, marvelling at its jostling throng, marvels as he sees an Italian passing round his hat, smirking and grinning at his benefactors. Perspiration is standing wet on his forehead—he wonders why. Then the clock on the mantel strikes; and he thinks of the future, dark, hopeless, alone, his life's treasure fallen and shattered on life's stone floor, never to be repaired.

That it is forever—forever; this is the thought that throbs through his brain. Whatever life may bring to him of success or happiness or pleasure or friendship or travel or influence, still it must be all dark, all bitterness, all failure.

That happiness—the thing everybody loves—that this can never be his again; the thought filters slowly through his mind, renewing its attack again and

again, its channel smoother with each return. That he has failed in the chiefest thing of all, the part on which all depends, that he is wounded for life in the very heart of him; this, in shadowy outline, grows clearer and clearer still. That there can be no real healing; that to-morrow, and the day after, and the day after that, and all the days, can never give him back what he had before. That other men will love and marry and be happy and keep their happiness fresh and pure to the last; but his chance is past, his joy is dead, his life, his real life is done; and for him nothing now but the ashes of disappointment and the lash of memory; all these pledges of his doom pass one by one before his eyes.

The winds begin to rise within; and soon they are storming in great gusts about his heart.

His only hope is in getting free from her, from her spell, from the fascination of her beauty and of what he had thought was unmixed purity and grace. He must break loose from the torture of love at any cost, he declares bitterly to himself. He may lose much—but he will refuse to suffer. This he boisterously repeats; this awful cataract over which he has plunged so suddenly may tear his treasure from him, but it shall not leave him drenched and trembling always. He will take life up again, love alone left out.

"No, thank you, I don't want any," he says sullenly; for a knock at the door calls him to the waiting meal.

"Excuse me," he calls to the receding messenger, "I have changed my mind. I'll be down directly."

He locks his door behind him, reopened ten or fifteen minutes later as the landlady says to the others below :

" I never seen Mr. Wishart so noisy and funny before. He just seemed sot on makin' us all laugh ; he wouldn't take no dinner himself and he wouldn't let us eat our victuals neither—he's a funny man."

Meanwhile their entertainer was restored to the suspended storm. His former vows were violently renewed. He would give himself to his work, his books, his profession, and he would find his happiness there—thus ran his resolve of healing. He would rise higher and higher—and the increasing gulf would be her punishment.

Deep bitterness soon mingled itself with his tumbling thoughts ; bitterness and self-pity, that go ever hand in hand. She is not worthy of me, he thought—she is not worthy of me or of my love. And the opinion pleased him well. Strange, passing strange, he reflected, that this should be her return for all his devotion, his fondness, almost idolatry, pouring its love before her as he had, ever since that far-off picnic day that now danced before him in its shroud.

A sense of hardness toward God comes over him. Still walking, his eyes fall on his half-written sermon on the desk. He picks it up—how different life was when I wrote those words, he murmured. Then he reads the text. "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."

He tears the sheets in two, flinging them into the

basket at his side. Then he seems to relent. Yet why has this befallen him, if God is just? The old instinct for prayer returns.

"Oh, God," he mumbles, bending above a couch, "why hast Thou dealt thus with me? Thy ways are mysterious indeed. Can it be that whom Thou lovest Thou chastenest—oh, God, have mercy on her."

Rising, he turns to the basket and picks up the scattered sheets of his discourse, searching for a paragraph he could vaguely remember writing. Here it is:

"The Heavenly Gardener knows best, my brethren, which plants to put in the sunshine, and which within the shade; for some flower best in the sunshine, but others amid darksome shadows. Therefore accept sorrow with reverent curiosity, even with subdued and submissive joy."

He pondered long upon the words; this must be the purpose of this mysterious dispensation—he could conceive no other explanation. Yet, as he pondered, the malproportion of it grew upon him till his spirit was aflame again. While he was musing the fire burned; for his musing was of the final and irreparable nature of his sorrow. This consoling sentiment may last a week; this sorrow for a lifetime. This is not a tunnel, he muses, with healing light beyond; but a tomb, where his dead hopes and he must lie together.

A rap at the door suddenly interrupted him.

"If you please, Mr. Wishart, there's a couple of people wants to see you," his landlady announced.

"The man said as it was your brother and Miss Burnett. Will you see them in the parlour, sir?"

"No," Stephen answered, "I'll be obliged if you'll show them up here."

He struggled for the control he knew he would require; and the face that greeted Reuben and Bessie was full of tranquil welcome.

"Why, Rube, is this you? and you, too, Bessie?—don't know which I'm gladdest to see. Come away in; this *is* a pleasant surprise."

Entering, all three took their seats, the visitors evidently restless and embarrassed.

"What makes you so serious, Rube?" Stephen felt constrained to ask after a brief and solemn silence. "You look as if you'd lost your best friend. Nothing the matter at the farm, I hope?"

Reuben's eyes were still upon the ground.

"Tell him, Reuben," Bessie faltered.

Then the earnest eyes lifted themselves to Stephen's face, and Reuben's lips began to slowly frame the words:

"Well, Steve, I did have something to tell you. Bessie and I came up to the city to do a little—a little shopping," Reuben flushing shyly as he spoke, "and I honestly thought I ought to tell you what she told me. It's more than hard to do it, Steve—it seems cruel—but I do it because I love you, and——"

"What *can* you mean, Rube? Don't keep me in suspense. Anything about money matters?" and Stephen's voice betrays that he has had burden enough already.

"No, Steve, I wish it was; no, it's about—it's about Hattie, Steve. About something Bessie saw; she happened to be in that sugar-bush last Wednesday night, just about dark, and she saw Hattie—and she was talking to—to ——"

"To whom," Stephen urged, leaning over, "to whom was Hattie talking?"

"To Hiram, Steve; to Hiram Barker," and even Reuben started as he saw the pallor of death fling its sheet over Stephen's face.

Bessie sat, shaking like a leaf, while Reuben's voice, hoarsely whispering, told his tale as gently and hopefully as he could, the strong lips quivering with love and sympathy as he watched his brother's anguish.

It was soon over: "But about that last thing, Steve, Bessie says Hattie was trying to resist. I don't blame Hattie at all, Steve. And oh, Steve, it's hard to tell you; but I think you ought to get her home at once. And then I thought you could protect her for the future. Don't let her ever meet that man again; I know Hiram hates you, and I believe he'd like to wreck your life if he could, Steve."

There was a long silence, Stephen's face working in a slight movement as he looked far out of the window. Grief, and pride, were both visible there. In a moment he stepped to his desk, thrust a couple of letters within it and turned the key.

"You don't mistrust my wife?" he asked in a rather trembling voice as he turned about. "Hattie's all right, you know," he said, looking appealingly at Reuben.

"You're right she is," and Reuben's voice is shaking more than Stephen's. "Good for you, Steve; it's because she's all right that I wanted you to save her. Why, Bessie, where are you going?"

"I have to go, Rube—I've got an engagement at the dressmaker's. Please don't ask me to stay; Steve'll want to see you alone," and as she reached the door, she cast backward at the broken man a glance that was full of pity and noble yearning and sincerity of friendship, such as had not been there for years.

As Reuben returned from seeing her to the door, he saw his brother sitting where he had left him, his face buried in his hands; but now his breast is heaving heavily, his whole frame quivering with his lonely grief, while the tears crept slowly down, visible between the parted fingers.

Stooping with almost a woman's tenderness, Reuben laid his arms about his brother, caressing him in the strong gentleness of his heart. No word he spoke, lingering thus till the gust of grief was past. Then they sat long together, talking of many things.

"Steve," Reuben said at length, "I've got to go—but I want to speak to you about something else. It's something that's been bothering me a good deal—and it's about you, old fellow."

"About me?" Stephen responded wearily. "What have you been hearing about me?" His voice was unnaturally calm. For his thought was elsewhere, busy with those letters in his desk of which Reuben

knew nothing ; making up the dread account of evidence, the letters and the news that Reuben brought, each one such a dreadful confirmation of the other.

"Weil, Steve, I may as well tell you straight. They say it's rumoured all around the city—and we've heard it even where we live—that you're in debt. And, of course, Steve, it's bound to do you a lot of harm ; it is doing you harm—and I'm so afraid father might hear of it, and it would finish him, I know."

"Father doesn't know anything about it, then, does he?" Stephen interrupted earnestly.

"Not a thing ; he thinks you're the pride of Hamilton. But I'll tell you what I came for, Steve. I want to help you, and if I only knew how ——"

"Oh, Rube," and the moisture is gathering in Stephen's eyes, "I wish to God I were worthy of you—I'll tell you who my creditors are, Rube, and how much I owe—and everything. Hiram, of course ——"

But Reuben stopped him imperiously. "I won't have it, Steve, I won't have it ; it's no business of mine who your creditors are—I knew you owed Hiram. But all I want to know is how much it is. I'm going to pay it, Steve."

The giant-framed, giant-hearted brother sat looking shyly about the room, now and then turning his kindly eyes full on his unhappy brother.

Distracted the latter was in very truth, as the thought of all Reuben had been to him, all he still wished to be, passed before him. And his requital !

"But Rube, you know—you know I've never paid



back that money father got from Scotland. And I've no claim on the farm or any of its product—my share on the farm went for my education; and a sad lot of digging and delving you and poor father had to do to finish it. Oh, Rube, I can't—I can't take money from you, Rube."

Reuben's face is grave. "Now look here, Steve, you don't want to hurt me, do you? Now don't, don't, old fellow. I'm so happy every other way—no man ever was so happy; and it'll spoil everything for me and Bessie if you won't let us help. You'll take it for Bessie's sake, Steve—and mine, too. Now tell me—don't say anything, only just tell me how much it is, how much will make you all clear."

Stephen was bended over in his chair, his face hidden. Reuben's heavy hand, light as a woman's now, went forth to his shoulder.

"Tell me, Steve; I've got the money right in my pocket."

Silence reigns a while; then Stephen lifts his worn face and his eyes fall on his brother with a glow of fondness Reuben had never seen before. "I owe twenty-seven hundred dollars altogether," he said in a low despairing voice.

Reuben's hand is already in the breast pocket of his coat, no sign of hesitation or even of surprise appearing.

"I've got more than that," he said calmly, "I got it that night I went to meet the man from Cleveland—the night you walked home with Bessie, you remember." He is opening the wallet carefully, and

does not see the ashy wave that drifts across his brother's face, knows nothing of the wild outcry in the hunted heart beside him.

"Shut that window, Steve—draughts are dangerous when you're counting bills," and he smiled to relieve the embarrassment he feared his brother felt. "Yes, I got it that night; and that was only for one of the wells, for an interest in one. And I drew the whole amount to-day, so I'd be sure to have enough. . . . I think that's right, Steve—you count it and see."

Reuben rose after a few minutes, picking up his hat and moving toward the door.

"Hold on, Reuben, hold on—I've just finished. Rube, you've make a mistake—there's three thousand here. Rube, hold on, I say, Rube!"

But he hears the door opening below and a joyful voice calls up:

"You never were any good at arithmetic, Steve—good-bye."

*ASHES On The HEARTH*

**T**HE evening was spent in torpor. A hasty note—with its glad enclosure—hurriedly despatched to his arch-creditor ; a brief and portentous telegram bidding his wife return at once, were all that broke the drear monotony. The night was passed in bitter musings, falling now and then into troubled slumber, waking in feverish agitation. Broken by the night, the morning found him less able to resist the torment. The sense of wrong that had been done him returned with greater vividness than before. He sought feebly to resist the bitterness that kept gathering in his heart—but in vain.

Hattie's train was due in a couple of hours, and Stephen gave himself anew to the accursed letters. Their very touch wrung him with an increasing pain ; but their cruel fascination seemed to grow.

He is sitting, wondering how he shall begin with Hattie, when a servant announces that Father O'Rourke has called ; and a moment later the well-loved priest is sitting at his side.

But his demeanour is marked by a seriousness Stephen has never previously observed. Without preliminary, he drew his chair close to the minister's.

" I've got bad news for you, my boy. It's about one of my parishioners—he means mischief for you.

It's Hiram Barker; he's entered suit against you, and it's going to go hard, I'm afraid. And I want to see if I can't help you."

Then the priest went into details, telling of Hiram's evident purpose to ruin him. "It's a gambling debt, he says—gambling, in stocks. And he seems delighted to death about it. Now I haven't got much—I'm only a poor priest—but you can have it all. Only Barker must never know it, mind. And sure, you can borrow the rest," he urged.

Forgetting for the moment all other troubles, Stephen joyfully informed his friend of what had happened; of Reuben's visit, of his generous gift, of the letter that had been sent to Hiram paying his claim in full.

"Howly Moses," cried the delighted priest, "why the divil didn't you tell me that before? That's a darlint av a brother you've got; give him an owld priest's benediction and tell him I'll dance at his weddin' and cry at his wake. And I'll kiss his broide for him, begorra—and drink both their hiltis wid a wee drap o' the cratur into the bargain. Now I'll have to run away. Good bye and God bless you, my boy." And the loving-hearted priest went on his way rejoicing.

The trembling hours have passed and Stephen is waiting for his wife. As he hears the thunder of the approaching train he tries in vain to control himself. His hand is shaking violently as he holds it to his eyes, scanning the faces of the alighting passengers.

There she is now, tripping merrily along the plat-

form, glancing this way and that with eager eyes; and Stephen marvels as he notes the unconscious air, strangely foreign to all that has been so bitterly revealed. In a moment her gaze falls on her husband, and with a quick cry of joy she runs impulsively toward him. Her hands are full of little parcels, delicacies from the farm with which kind hands have laden her, so she can but turn her lips up to his face, waiting to be kissed.

Stephen's cold and repellent gaze meets her loving eyes, and he turns his cheek to her, which the fragrant lips, pallid now, touch in quivering wonder.

"Stephen darling, what's the matter?" she murmured, glancing quickly around at the hurrying throng; "what makes you look that way, Stephen?" the wondering eyes looking out through gathering mist.

Stephen was silent, looking sternly down at her. "I guess you know," he said meaningly; "let us go home."

Hattie's cry of protest and amazement was stifled as they hurried toward a cab, which they entered as Stephen said:—"Don't speak to me now; let us have silence till we get home."

Dread is the hour when husband and wife stand alone and look into each other's faces, the one on trial for life's honour, both on trial for life itself. Cruelty and piteous appeal, bitter censure and wistful pleading, angry strength and crying helplessness; all these belong to that grim tribunal. And happiness,

girded and sandaled, staff in hand, bids her old-time friends look their last on her departing face.

All of these were gathered together; and fear was there, and love, pleading that the past be called in witness; and faith, wounded, but struggling hard to speak; and hope, most pitiful of all, fighting for her life, crying for the portion she would not be denied. Like wandered things on some bleak hillside, these latter two withstood as best they could the cruel storm, shuddering now and then before its lightning, huddling together in the pelting rain.

The violence of it all is partly spent, Stephen standing apart, the fierce flow of utterance checked for a moment, the fatal letters crumpled in his hand. Hattie is trying pitifully to come nearer to him, stretching out her hands in pleading.

"Oh, Stephen, forgive me if I have done wrong. I didn't mean to—God knows I didn't mean to. I have explained what that letter meant; surely, I have explained it, Stephen. And—about the other—about—the woods, he did, he did do what you say. But I couldn't help him—and I thought of you at once, darling; I was thinking all the time of those other woods, that picnic day—and I never loved you more than then."

He flung some word of contempt concerning her explanations.

"If I had acted as you have acted," he said, the sense of injury growing on him as he spoke, "I would tell the very same story that you tell—any one

who would do the one would do the other. And why shouldn't they?"

He looked keenly at her a moment, then thrust a fierce question from which she recoiled as though she had been struck.

"You can answer or not, just as you please," he cried hotly; "I can't force your answer. I suppose I'll go to my grave with this cloud of doubt about me," he went on bitterly, "but there's one thing I'll tell you—I'd sooner be in my place than yours. I'd sooner have my anguish, and have a clear conscience than have the remorse you'll have to feel. If I have to suffer, it's not for my sin I'm suffering—and I can bear it," he exclaimed, walking up and down the room.

"Oh, Stephen," she moaned, "even if I had—even if I had done wrong; and perhaps I did—but I didn't mean to. But even if I had, Stephen, couldn't you forgive me? Haven't you ever done any wrong too, Stephen—not now or nearly now—but somewhere, perhaps, sometime, can't you remember feeling that we are all liable to do wrong sometimes—look, Stephen, look."

She had been fumbling in a little bag; and now she holds in her hand, smoothing it tenderly upon her lap, a tiny garment, the bodkin still entangled where she had left it—one of those unstained garments, holy with the fragrance of new-born reverence and love, a secret that only God, and the mother heart, and the oncoming pilgrim, are privileged to share.

"See, Stephen, see," she sobbed, while the tears

fell fast; "this is what I was working on when I was in the country. And I was so happy—oh, darling, I was so happy," she cried, clasping it to the hungry bosom in a passion of tears; "and I sang over it, and prayed over it—and your face was before me all the time—I kept thinking of you, Stephen, all the time. I did it on purpose, Stephen, because—because—I was your wife; and because I wanted, I wanted it to—oh, Stephen, you know what I wanted." And the sweet face, suffused with tears, pleading with pitiful entreaty, is turned upward as the trembling girl rises quickly to her feet. Still holding the dainty fabric, her hands outstretched, she tries again to come to him. But he moves aside and resolutely draws his chair up to the desk.

"Don't, Mattie, don't," he said sternly, a wave of tenderness sweeping across his face; "don't make it harder for us both. This only adds to the curse that must blight our lives; another will have to share it with us, the innocent suffering for the guilty."

Then the poor broken thing crept away into the shadow that seemed to hem her in on every hand.

In a numb and lifeless way he gave himself through the day to the work in which he was to find his solace. Once or twice the impulse seized him to take her again to his heart, to forgive all the wrong that she had done him, to bow with her in prayer, and begin all over again the life that had till yesterday promised so much of happiness to them both. But the old maddening sense of injury returned with augmented force; and he felt that the only just course before



God and man was that their lives, even if spent together, must henceforth be lived apart.

Once he arose and went into the room where she lay flung upon the bed, his purpose fruitless though it was, to insist on her going down to the belated meal that was waiting for them both. The sun was setting, the long day nearly past.

"Stephen," she murmured faintly, her face almost hidden on the pillow, "aren't you going to let me stay with you, Stephen?"

A long silence. "Yes, I'm going to. We must carry our secret in our hearts." Then he went out.

A couple of hours later a faint voice called him.

"Stephen, Stephen dear."

"What is it?" he answered, holding the door partly open.

"It's dark, Stephen—aren't you coming? It's so dark, and I'm all alone—and afraid. Come, Stephen."

She hears him sigh, but the door is closed.

Another hour goes by on lagging feet and the same trembling voice is heard.

"Stephen, oh, Stephen"

"What is it, Hattie?" the door slightly opened again.

"Won't you say good-night to me, Stephen? I can't sleep. Stephen, won't you have a little prayer with me? It might help us, dear. I'm so lonely."

"Good-night," and his voice is trembling; "I have prayed; we can pray apart—apart, like other things have been."

Then he closes the door again gently, wondering at

the madness that starts in his brain at the sound of the distant sobbing. For life hath no tragedy and torture like love, at anger's bidding, playing the alien part of hate.

By and by he falls into a restless sleep. Suddenly he awakes, helpless, before the storm that has taken advantage of his slumber, brewing in the silent dark. The clock strikes two, lingering heavily on the strokes. He arises, groping through the gloom, fumbling for the door. She is on her elbow, her sleepless eyes fixed upon the opening door, her heart wild with the uncertainty of what it means.

He stood at the threshold, his eyes blazing in the dark, his parched lips hurling the delirious words that he had kept at bay during the waking hours, but which had crept to his tongue while he slept, the very dew of the darkness that brooded in his heart.

Then he closed the door, retracing his steps to the couch from which he rose. His anguish is complete; the corpse of joy, he knows, is bedfellow to them both. And the deathlike sleep that so often waits on anguish takes him to her bosom, as the ocean takes the hammocked shroud.

There came to him but one dream, passing before him in ghostly silence; he thought that the old pure lips, purer than they had ever been, gently touched his brow, hot and throbbing with some nameless pain.

Like that billowy sepulchre whose restless host shall be one day reclaimed, the most unfathomed sleep gives up her dead. From which the next morning

Stephen emerged, dazed and wandering, recalling one by one the happenings of the day before.

Rising, he stumbled heavily toward his chair, taking his place mechanically at his desk. His eyes returned again and again to the still closed door; it reminded him of that door in the distant farmhouse, toward which his father's gaze was cast while one lay within, amid the pomp of the unbroken stillness.

In a moment he arose and went over to it, listening; but no sound meets his ear. She is sleeping, he conjectured—but he could hear no heavy breath of slumber. Returning to his desk, his eye fell upon a stray piece of paper with a strange straggling handwriting on it. Uneven, spreading letters, who could have written them? One glance more, and a loud cry escaped him as he rose and rushed toward the room. The door was flung open, and the fevered searcher stopped not till he was standing right above the pillow, though his first glance told him the truth he dreaded; for the room was empty.

Still standing above the crumpled pillow, turned and overturned as it had been in the long misery of the night, he finished the letter whose opening sentence had started the fear that was now so bitterly confirmed.

"Oh, Stephen," it ran, "I want you to forgive me—but I'm going away. I'll be gone when you get this, and I know you'll be happier without me—after what you said. And Stephen, my darling, I can't do anything else; you were all I had in Hamilton; now my heart is broken and I could welcome nothing so

much as death. But I love you, Stephen, I love you, and I shall always love you, and I'll always be your wife and will always be true to you. And I always have been, dear, always have been true to you, though I can't blame you so much for thinking what you do; for everything looks so strange. I'm writing this in the dark, and it will look strange too, but you will be able to read it when it gets light. And I shall always pray for you, Stephen, always, always, that God will bless you, and make you happy again, and make it all up to us both for what we've suffered—and perhaps He'll give us back to each other in heaven. Good-bye, Stephen, I'm going away for your sake.

“Your own broken-hearted

“HATTIE.”

He started blindly to the door, looking pitifully up and down the street as though he would discover the way she took. But the awakening tides of traffic were flowing indifferently on, and he went back to the silent rooms, locking the door upon his anguish.

“Oh, God, why hast Thou dealt thus with me? Pity me—and bring her back,” he moaned beside the deserted bed.

## XXVI

*The BREAKING of The DAY*

**W**HAT power it was that held him to his work for two long sorrow riven weeks, Stephen himself could not have told. Once and again he started, blindly plunging, striving pathetically to discover some inkling of the direction Hattie's flight had taken, all the while compelled to explain her absence as naturally as he could to enquiring friends. His sense of duty to his Church, his wounded pride his purpose of intenser toil, had thus long held him to his post.

Not like the Stephen Wishart of noble carriage and springing step was the sad-visaged man whom the strollers noticed one placid evening as he slowly pressed toward the secluding shade of a familiar park.

Though the passers-by could hardly fail to note the weight of care that clouded the handsome, thoughtful face, they could not know the agony of tumult that raged within. For Stephen's thought was of his absent wife, and strangely varied was its strain. But the great opportunity that comes alone with anguish was ripening no harvest in Stephen Wishart's soul, except the baneful fruitage of self-pity and half-embittered wrath.

The shadows were deepening about the spacious

square as Stephen took his seat under a far-spreading tree, his heart full of yearning for his vanished wife, tossed and torn in its loneliness.

He noted the figure of a man who took his seat not far from him, apparently watching him closely; but soon he dismissed all thought of the stranger from his mind, occupied as it was with the meditations that now absorbed him night and day.

Suddenly he leaped from his seat, startled by a voice that was like to freeze his heart within him.

"Good-evening, Mr. Wishart; enjoying the air? You seem to have plenty to think about."

It was Hiram. And Stephen, intent only on making distance between them, seized the hat he had thrown on the grass and started toward a distant light that marked the entrance to the park.

"Wishart, come back—come back, I say. I've got something to tell you."

Whether it was the imperiousness of the man's voice, or the strange fascination of what is most painful and repellant, Stephen himself was probably not aware. But he halted, then stood still, and finally, retracing his steps, came back and stood before his destroyer.

"What is it?" he asked huskily; "I should think you'd let me alone now, after wrecking my life as you have."

"Sit down, Steve, sit down—I want to speak to you. I've not wrecked your life, my boy; you did that yourself."

"Don't probe wounds," he cried, and the other

started a little at the anguish in his voice; "I'm going away—let me go; I've got enough to bear."

But yet he did not move, standing as if rooted to the ground, gazing into his enemy's face.

"Why didn't you keep her when you had her? What made you let her go?" Hiram's voice is low and cruel.

"You know," the answer coming heavily.

"Yes, I know—I know what you *thought* was the reason; it was that letter, wasn't it? Well Steve, I'm going to tell you something—that's what I followed you in here for. I guess I've got you, Steve. Do you remember that morning in the barnyard at the old farm? You remember my wish for you, don't you, that you should go on into the ministry without the grace of God? That was all the revenge I wanted, for what you did for me. And I got it all right," he cried, moving in his seat, the old fierce light blazing from his eyes, "I got it, by God. You went on, and you thought I'd forgotten, and God had dropped the thing—and everything was lovely—till the clock struck; and then you saw I wasn't such a fool at wishing after all."

"That's a matter between me and God—vengeance isn't yours; is that what you had to tell me?" and Stephen's pale lips were trembling as he spoke.

"No, I've got something else, something interesting—it's about that letter; she wrote that letter to save you, that scrap I sent you—and you bit at it like I knew you would. She wrote it to save you, because she knew I could crush you like that weed,"

he went on, stamping his heel upon the ground; "but you wouldn't believe her, of course—her explanations were no good to you. Anybody with an experience as irreproachable as yours couldn't imagine such a thing happening innocently. I've often noticed it's the fellows that need forgiveness most themselves, who can't believe anything good about anybody else. They wonder what God's doing with His time, when anybody they're interested in seems to be allowed to do anything that hurts them—somebody they're not worthy to touch themselves. Here, you can read the letter—the part you didn't see." Stephen took the letter, and, as he strained his eyes to read it in the failing light, as he saw the love that pleaded for her husband, his trembling hand could scarcely hold the page, his face blanched and white.

"I've had my punishment,"—Stephen's voice could be scarcely heard—"but this—but this," he moaned; "oh, God, I should have known it all the time. Leave me. Leave me to myself and my God."

"That's what I'm going to do, Wishart. I'm going away where you'll never see me again—but it'll always make me glad to think my little handiwork is complete and will be bearing fruit, no matter how far away I am. You're not worthy of her, Wishart, you stung her into madness, and God never made a truer heart than hers. Go home now—home with you," he cried in a rising voice, "and write that sermon on your sin finding you out. You remember, don't you, I asked you long ago to take that text, that morning at the stable, after you had been too



smart for poor Rube the night before. I've been waiting a long time for that sermon. Good-night, Mr. Wishart, minister of the gospel of the grace of God; sweet dreams to you."

Dark as the evening shadows that had fallen round him were Stephen's meditations as he turned his steps toward the haunted rooms that had once been called their home.

A familiar voice, rolling now in the cadence of public speech, broke in upon those meditations. Looking up, he found himself before the imposing portals of St. Anne's; and the voice, he knows at once, is that of Father O'Rourke, rich and musical with tides of feeling. Almost unconscious of his movement, Stephen turns his steps within, still under the spell of the voice.

Unnoticed, he steals into the church. Early teaching and prejudice had clothed every Catholic church with unholy mystery or with the scarlet robe of sin. But he had no sense of this as he pressed silently within the dimly lighted building, beguiled by the heart-tones of a man whose soul he felt would shrive a heathen temple, flowing pure about its walls.

Taking his place in the corner of the crowded edifice, his eye roved over the assembled worshipers. Rapt and earnest, in all the majesty of spiritual need, their faces were toward the preacher; theirs faintly showing in the semi-darkness, his illumined by the pulpit light that burned beside him, the changing currents clear marked as they ebbed and flowed upon

it. The flickering candles, mingling their feeble lustre with the dying light of day, played upon the upturned countenances of the congregation as upon a single face.

The old were there, seeking to discern the evening star that should replace the garish light so nearly vanished; the careworn, some with the pledges of their care beside them, bowing before the preacher's words as flowers greet descending rain; some there were, marked with the scars of inward conflict, waiting for the terms of truce, mayhap of final peace; some, whose eyes were glistening through darksome veils of widowhood; some, sighing heavily as their glances fell on childish forms around them; some emaciated and pale, and some stifling the suggestive cough, their faces full of the pathetic peace that the secret sentence of death so often brings. But it seemed to Stephen, as he gazed, that there were none but needed help, some openly claiming it in candid pleading, some needing it the more because of hidden wounds whose life-blood the sternest armour could not hide.

He had not listened long before all others were forgotten, the preacher's message transfixing his own soul. It is of Jacob, Father O'Rourke is preaching, of his mysterious struggle with the unseen wrestler till the breaking of the day.

"Why then was Jacob thus held back?" the preacher asked, his tender glance seeming to penetrate to every heart, "when on the very eve of attaining his soul's desire? Why was he thus balked

and thwarted? Listen, it was for this; Jacob thought he had outwitted the Almighty. Because of fraud, years before, he had been exiled from the land he now sought to reënter, meeting hostility with guile. And Jacob is thus arrested that he may learn this wondrous lesson, a lesson some of us may be learning this very night, that our sin will find us out; that we can't outrun God; that penitence must precede resistance; that all our smartness and cunning, however they may deceive and outdo our neighbours, must yet be pitted against a Nameless One, outcoming from the darkness to challenge the victory we had thought complete. How many a sturdy swimmer, victorious over angry waves, panting with desire when he thinks the shore is won, has yet felt the awful talons of the undertow seize upon him like a living thing, drawing him back to the depths of darkness and despair. Esteem no shore of human happiness as fully won till you have reckoned with that undertow, which teaches men their need of God.

“Every man who strives to prevail, while still unforgiven of his sin, must learn that in the last appeal the struggle is with God; and every misfortune, every disappointment, every strange scourging of affairs that seem by accident to thwart and baffle us; nay, every cruel blow from unseen hands, every shock of sorrow, every bitter enemy who lays our hopes and lives in ashes, all these are but the varied movements of that Antagonist who seems to have forgotten, but whose shadowy hand, emerging from the darkness, holds us back when our feet are already

touching the long sought promised land, whatever it may be.

"And oh, my brethren," the priest cried, his voice athrill with tenderness, "the greatest lesson of this ghostly tournament is this—that a better victory may be ours, a statelier Eden may be won. For it was thus with Jacob, when struggle turned to prayer, when, recognizing at last against whom he fought, he ceased to wrestle and began to pray, the voice of anger and ambition hushed in the noble threat: 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.' As blessed he was; never the same again; to go halting ever after, it is true, but walking humbly with his God, chastened to a deeper peace than the joy of triumph ever could have brought him, his heart deep gratitude now to be evoked at thought of the great overthrow that had purified the stream of his desire and filled his life with blessing.

"And many a man has lived to bless the hand that smote him, even to thank God for some relentless enemy, when he has come to see that this very enemy was God's minister to his soul. The very man who has blighted his darling hopes, or laid his hearth in ruins, or plunged his life in unrelieved eclipse, is recognized as but the messenger of that great Power who hurls us back from happiness that He may lead us forth to it again by purer paths of sorrow, who robs us of our rapture that He may save our souls."

The priest's voice had fallen to the low tone of im-

passioned pleading; and as he closed, the organ in the loft above poured forth some vesper melody, the service blending with it according to the Romish way. But Stephen heard it not, nor paid attention to the succeeding ceremonies.

For the hour of his light had come at last; and his soul was engaged with God, doing homage in that eternal ritual with which no priest can interfere, before which cathedral rites are put to shame.

That his soul has been trifling with the Eternal, and that the Eternal has been in earnest with his soul—these two mighty truths shine out from all the storm of years. And with the great conviction his refuge of lies vanishes like the mirage of the desert; all his dexterous efforts to serve God and mammon; his outward zeal and his secret infirmity; his mad attempt to foster holy love and unforgiving sin in the selfsame heart—all pass before him in the awful candour of reality. His soul cries aloud for mercy as they pass, wrapped in unconscious ecstasy that at last it has given up its dead.

The faces of his fellow-worshippers are hardly distinguishable in the increasing darkness, their eyes fastened on the altar lights before him. Some few, recognizing him, turn curious glances where he stands. But he heeds them not, nor knows that any are beside him save alone that nameless Wrestler whose name he has learned at last.

That this is a Catholic church, branded to him from infancy, he remembers not. For it has become to him the house of God, the very gate of heaven, as

his lips move silently in the first true luxury of prayer he has known since the sincerity of childhood. He thinks of the Publican ; but dares to lift his eyes toward heaven.

And lo ! They fall upon the central figure of the ages ; looking down upon him, ineffable pity in the dying eyes, was the face of the Crucified, His arms wide outstretched upon the cross. Luminous in love appeared the wistful gaze, finding him out amid the throng, and calling him to the pardon and the peace His passion had provided. In great and holy loneliness that figure bended over him ; and Stephen's melted heart acclaimed his Saviour, standing as he was amid other sinful men, but beholding the great Redemption as for him alone.

The baying voices of the past, of an accusing conscience, of a threatening future, of a ruined life, are all hushed in silence, as he looks, the tears rolling down his cheeks at the mighty revelation, its newness smiting him with overwhelming power. He sees the crown of thorns, the wounded hands, the pallid brow, the fragrance of welcome death ; and his trembling soul crept into the great shelter of the Sacrifice, without voice of praise or sound of vow, with nothing but the blessed sense of need and guilt and sorrow—and refuge from them all.

XXVII

*"AND GO UNTO MY FATHER"*

**N**ATURES meant for greatness may be, often are, capable of mysterious weakness; but great occasions will reveal their latent strength, in swift and decisive action.

Thus was it with Stephen Wishart, his soul's awakening flowing into great resolve. The prowess of noble natures is attested by their capacity to choose, not between a right and a wrong—but between two rights. Which two now laid claim to Stephen's loyalty—his duty to his sacred calling and his duty to his departed wife. These rival claims were soon adjusted.

For on the succeeding Sabbath day the spell-bound worshippers heard his last sermon in the Church of the Covenant. It was preceded by a brief and irrevocable statement of the immediate severance of the tie that bound them, for which he suggested no reason and volunteered no explanation. Nor did they suspect the truth, nor any part of it. Vaguely had the impression spread, exciting no comment, that their minister's wife was gone on a visit to distant friends; though who these were, or where they dwelt, was wrapped in the uncertainty that had long baffled the very curiosity it first aroused.

Reawakened though this was by his strange announcement, it was soon lost in wonder as they fell

under the charm of his parting sermon. For the chastened face, radiant with its great emotion, and the rich voice, thrilled and thrilling with the new tide of feeling in his soul, and the copious flow of speech, strong, tender, eloquent even beyond his wont, breathing a simplicity of faith and a strength of purpose that found their other voice in the soulful eyes which a holier vision than they knew had kindled—all combined to enhance a thrall the most careless were compelled to own.

The following Monday morning, a committee called upon him to remonstrate. Hastily organized, it was almost as hastily dismissed, marvelling at an intensity beyond their understanding.

And the lengthening shadows about his path were cast by that same morning's sun, almost vanished now, as Stephen hurried along the familiar way from the station to his father's house. Not waiting to knock, he opened the door and entered.

Warm and loving, subdued and reserved though the voice that uttered it, was the welcome of Robert Wishart to his son. An instant told him it was a wounded fledgling that had crept back to the nest; and all that tender tact could do was soon availed to learn the cause.

"Ye're the minister o' the Covenant Kirk, iny son—but I'm yir faither; aye mind ye that, laddie. I'm yir faither—an' ye canna suffer wi'oot I suffer tae," he said in mother tones. "Licht the lamp, Reuben; it's ower dark."

"Please don't, father," Stephen interrupted, his



voice low; "I'd sooner talk in the gloaming. Sit here beside me, Reuben, and I'll tell you and father everything."

Reuben drew his chair nearer, and the three profiles, deep seriousness upon every face, were barely visible in the deepening dusk.

Stephen began; and sometimes with faltering words, sometimes with half-torrent speech, sometimes with choking voice, sometimes with gusts of silence, he told all the tragic story. As he finished, the bitter plaint of his loneliness, of his love for the pure spirit that had fled from him, broke from his lips in a surging cry he tried in vain to stifle; and slowly, with the caress of an infinite compassion, his father's arm stole about his neck, tightening, tightening in answer to his soul's strong pity, as though he would shelter him forever. And as Stephen leaned his face against the great true bosom, with a trustfulness he had not known since boyhood, a sense of warmth and comfort crept about him as he realized that a wounded son hath no refuge like a father's love.

The father's quivering voice broke the stillness.

"My bairn, my mitherless bairn, I'm faither and mither to ye baith. Oh, Stephen, my son, my son." Then he stroked his hair, even touched his cheek—and the other hemisphere of his father's soul unfolded itself in that moment as Stephen had never known it before.

Soon the old man returned to his chair, all his old control restored; amid the now fallen night he talked on, reviewing, estimating, comforting, counselling.

"Ye maun gang an' find her like a man, Stephen," he said at length. "Ye maun follow till ye find her. Ye did richt to gie up yir kirk; an' ye maun start the morn. . . . It disna maitter where. I think mysel' she'll hae made for her auld hame—that's aye the way wi' the fleein'. Aye, she maist likely struck for the auld country. Did ye no' say it was Chester she cam frae? The money ye gied her afore she cam doon to visit here—toward a seal-skin coat, ye said—that wad be plenty to tak her hame. An' it's nat'ral for onybody to gang hame."

This opened a new vein; the conversation had wound its way but a little farther when the father's voice broke in again.

"Reuben, licht ye the lamp."

"Pardon me, father—but why?" Stephen ventured. "It seems so much easier, for me at least, to talk all this in the dark."

"We're through wi' talkin'," his father answered almost sternly; "the time for talkin's past. I'm gaein' to dae something; Reuben, kindle ye the lamp."

Which, duly lighted, the old man took from Reuben's hand, passing straightway into the adjoining room. They heard the click of a lock, the scraping of a reluctant drawer, then the rustling of a hurried search; and in a moment the father was back again.

"Reuben's great for thae banks," he remarked, as he set the lamp on the table, "but I aye keep a wee pickle where I can pit my hands on't; I dinna believe in sendin' a' the cream till the factory," he added

as he sat down beside Stephen, slowly beginning to count out a roll of startlingly large bills.

"Here, Stephen," he said after a pause, "ye canna gang to the auld country wi'oot siller—nor hame again—and it's been botherin' me what wad I dae wi' this; this is the Lord's daein'. Tak it, my son; there's an extry pickle there to buy the lassie's ticket back—to bring the lassie back, mind ye. I'm thirstin' for a blink o' her bonnie eyes. Na, na, ye maun tak it, Stephen."

Stephen was trembling as his father thrust the rustling notes into his hand; the grandeur of this great life, far more than the money he had just received, overbore his wondering soul, towering before him like a distant peak, more and more revealed as it came nearer to the light of heaven. Rising with an impulsive movement, he flung his arms about his father's neck.

"Oh, father," he faltered, "I don't deserve it—all you and Rube have done for me. Oh, God, forgive me. My father, my father!" he sobbed, as he held his father close, the bills now fluttering about his feet.

Reuben stooped to recover them, and as he handed them to his brother there was a wealth of sincerity in his voice.

"Why, Steve, why shouldn't we—both? We'll all work together, Steve, till everything comes right again. I know you'll get her back."

Meantime the old man had found shelter at the clock, winding awa, as though the sands of time

were sinking. As he closed the ponderous door he turned his head toward his sons.

"There's juist ae thing I want ye to mind, Stephen."

"Yes, father," came the subdued voice, "what is it?"

"I want ye to mind there's mair where yon cam frae—there's mair when ye're needin' it. Now we'll gang till oor rest."

*The PRODIGIOUS CRUSADE*

**A** LOITERING stevedore, proudly defined as greyhound boat, was, steamed the vessel that had been when seen across the sea. And as it steamed down the Mersey his fellow travellers could not but note the stern earnestness of the gaze with which he searched the approaching shore, though they knew not how great the treasure he had come to seek. His had not been a familiar form among the passengers; for much of his time had been spent after a fashion that was growing sweeter to his taste, alone with that conquering Wrestler who was now his friend, perfecting the anguished convalescence of his soul.

Liverpool was soon left behind. An hour later, the shadows lengthening about him as he walked, a sad faced man was pressing slowly along the torpid streets of Chester, little noting its claims to antiquarian fame. For a far different past, and a throbbing present, and an uncertain future, filled his mind. This was the city whose name had been so often on her lips in the endearing terms of home.

He found himself unexpectedly beneath the shadow of the great cathedral; he smiled as he recalled how the iron Cromwell had once stabled his horse within its walls, by way of demonstration that he was low-

churchman to the heart. Beguiling strains of music called him, and he entered the noble portal, walking toward the aisle with that ocean of loneliness about him which only eventide, and twilight music, and a shadowed heart can combine to furnish.

What would have given him a sort of peace in other days seemed now but to probe and torture. He soon turned again toward the light without, dim light enough without cathedral shades. And, reappearing, he suddenly realized how helpless was this aimless wandering; yet he knew not what else to do. He wandered on. But a few minutes had passed when he found himself crossing the park that leads to the great cliff overhanging the placid Dee. He took a seat in the little arbour at the very edge, pondering how best he might begin the chase. Soon he noticed that an old man with flowing beard had taken his seat beside him. The stranger was the first to speak.

"That's a wonderful bit o' music, sir," he remarked in a decidedly English voice, "the best bell in all Hengland, sir," as the rich tones rolled from the cathedral tower.

"It is," Stephen answered, "it's lovely music; what is it ringing for?"

"It's the curfew, sir—it's to call the wanderers 'ome. That's the bell as Mr. Gray was a thinkin' of when he wrote 'is helegy, sir. My great-grandfather knowed Mr. Gray; he wrote poetry 'imself, sir—but he never 'appened to think of a helegy. It was a grand idea, the idea of a helegy," he concluded, shaking his head sagaciously at Stephen.

"Have you lived long in Chester?" the latter enquired, after a sufficiently respectful pause.

"All my life, sir—that is, in the country near-by—I 'ad a little place in the country, sir. But I retired to Chester; came in when I 'eard the curfew ring the hevening, as I might say, sir—that's my great-grandfather in me; did I tell you he was a poet, sir?"

"Yes, I think you did," Stephen answered absently, bent on different information. Which he proceeded to seek.

Concealing his errand, he began to cross-question the old man; for Hattie, too, had lived in the near-by country. An eager quarter of an hour had passed when Stephen rose to go.

"I think I can find the way. I'm sure I can—but you say there's none of them there now?"

"No, of course there ben't any of them there now—the girl was the last to go, and she went to Lunnon not long after her mother died. Her mother 'ad some of the best blood of Haberdean in her veins, they say—and the lassie looked it. She was the prettiest they ever 'ad round here, sir—you say you knew her?"

"Yes, I knew her." Stephen's voice was low and lonely as he looked far out over the tranquil valley of the Dee, the clatter of happy boaters floating up to him, "and I thank you warmly, sir; I'll go out to Hazleside in the morning. I'll see the Hadleys, of whom you speak—I have the name in my notebook."

He walked with strange hurry back to the quaint Westminster Inn, dear to all lovers of quiet

elegance. When he reached its hospitable portal he was bathed in perspiration—and he marvelled at his haste; for it could avail him nothing—she was not there. Through its dim halls, richly strewn with ancient treasure, he hurried to his room, where, seated by the window, the subdued tumult of the classic city floated up about him. He dreaded the waiting night and knew not how he could get it past. What was this that so worked like madness in his brain?

Suddenly he sprang to his feet, obedient to a quick resolve. No night for him, when perchance but an hour's search lay between him and eternal day! He hurried to the street below; five minutes later he was driving swiftly past God's Providence House, and a fiercer fever than any it had escaped was burning in his heart.

Soon the blessed country air fanned his fevered face. Enquiring, knocking, retracing the way, enquiring again, he at last found the cottage wherein dwelt the Hadleys, to whom his earlier informant had referred him. A light burned dimly in an upper window, evidently the last; Stephen flew to the door and knocked. In a few minutes a middle aged man appeared.

"Excuse me, sir," Stephen began, "for disturbing you so late; but I am on important business." Then followed his eager veiled enquiry, the enquirer thankful for the dark.

The man blinked heavily, rubbing one foot against the other.

"Aye, I know the name," he said reflectively, "the



Hastie name used to be well-known round here ; the Bostons are in their house now. I knew the girl, too—but we've lost all trace of her—she left here about the time you said. They're all gone now—I was speakin' to the missus about them to-day. The burying-ground's a mile farther along the road, and Jake Boston told me there's a new stone in their plot.

“What's that you say? Oh, yes, easy enough—it's about ten minutes' drive ; I see you've got a trap—it's on the right hand side. Good-night, sir, good-night,” for Stephen was already hurrying to his carriage. “Their plot's in the very centre, under the highest elm in the place,” the man called after him.

Half of the ten minutes were still unspent when Stephen stepped from the cab.

“Drive on a little ways,” he ordered the wondering man, “and wait till I come.”

The moon was veiled as he groped his way through the long grass, turning this way and that, to violate no slumberer's bed. Soon he marked the tree, and beneath it found the stone, its surroundings indicating that it had been newly placed. A strange fear seized him, full of unreasoning dread—for it could scarcely be—and he sank down, heedless of the soaking dew, upon the grave. The imperfect light was just sufficient to let him see that there was lettering on the stone. His eyes fastened themselves in a rigid gaze upon the characters—but in vain.

Yet what letter was that, that initial letter? His hand shook like an aspen as he fumbled in his pocket

for a match. He struck it violently and held it up in a torment of fear; the distant driver chided his restless horse, and the hollow sound echoed about him like a profane voice amid the stillness of the dead. Then the match fell from his hand, faintly dying among the glistening grass, and Stephen's head fell forward on his arms, his hand resting on the gloomy marble, a low groan gurgling from his lips.

"'Hattie Hastie,'" he murmured to himself. "Oh, God, Hattie—Hattie." Yet even then a dim, dead query floated through his mind as to who had discharged the sacred trust. It vanished, and his head sunk lower, despair clutching at his heart.

In sudden triumph the silvery moon swam forth from behind the clouds, gilding every sepulchre with light. Stephen started at the silent crash, raised himself up, turned his staring eyes again upon the stone. The distant driver started in fear as he heard the sudden cry; it was the cry of a sudden ecstasy.

"Hattie Hastie, wife of Alexander Hastie," the inscription read, "in the forty-second year of her age."

Stephen sprang to his feet, his face brighter than the night, devouring the words again, glorying in the tale of death.

The moon, still generous with her light, gilded the two mounds that lay before him in majestic stillness. Then his heart leaped within him as he sprang forward, seizing a rich cluster of flowers that lay upon the mother's grave; pale as the dead beneath, he gazed at it, holding it out before him, even burying

his face within it to taste its rich perfume. For the flowers were fresh and new—therefore was his face so pale. Had he found the living among the dead?

In a moment he was striding along the road, soon coming up with the waiting driver; the latter sprang to the box as his passenger approached. Stephen walked close up, his hand extended, a half sovereign gleaming in it.

"You can go back to Chester," he said, "I shall not need you further."

"Thank ye, sir; goin' to stay 'ere?"

"Yes," Stephen answered.

"Funny choice o' lodgin's," the man muttered, as he wrapped his rug around him, "but there's lots as does it—lots o' them doesn't come back after you drives 'em to the graveyard," he mused with grim English humour.

The night went past; and Stephen kept his vigil, sometimes beside the silent forms that linked him to the absent one, sometimes farther afield by many a hill and brook and tree that the friendly moon, and a harrowed memory, called to a clearness of outline he could not fail to recognize.

Many a secret vow, and many a muffled prayer, and many a gentle tide of love, coursed through his heart, his now expectant heart, while the pulseless mounds, and the sleeping vales, and the hills she loved so well, were traversed in the silent light. Expectant, we have said—for what other hands could have laid that fragrant tribute on the grave?

The sun had called the peasants from their beds an hour or so before Stephen turned in to the open door of a thatched cottage that commanded a full view of the little graveyard. A kindly faced woman, busy with domestic tasks, bade him enter.

"You're early about, sir," she said. "Can I be of any service to you?"

For answer, Stephen craved the favour of an hour's rest. "I couldn't find it in my heart to sleep last night," he said. "This is my first visit to this district—I was at the cemetery; and I found the graves of some who were very dear to one who was—who is—very dear to me," he concluded evasively, "and the night was fine—and I recognized some of the spots, too; but I'm feeling a little exhausted now, and if you could let me stretch myself for an hour or so——"

The woman interrupted him. "Certainly I can. There's a couch in that wee room yonder, and you're welcome to it." As she spoke, she picked up a light shawl that lay beside her, which she carried in and threw at the foot of the couch.

"Excuse me, sir," she said, as she returned, "but are you not from America?"

"Yes," Stephen answered wonderingly; "how could you tell? Were you ever there?"

"No," the woman responded, sighing as she spoke, "but my heart's often there. I have a son there, sir, and I haven't heard from him for over two years now. I had another son, and he was buried from his vessel—lost at sea—isn't it an awful expression,

sir? But he doesn't seem as much lost to me as Laban."

"Laban," Stephen repeated, "Laban who? What is his second name?" Something of eagerness marked his tone, for the name was not a common one.

"Laban Shortill—his father got the name out of the Bible. Why, sir, why?" and the woman's cheek was blanched as she drew nearer Stephen, roused by the expression on his face.

"Laban Shortill," the latter repeated. "Has he dark brown hair, with a lock of white just over the left temple?"

The woman sank into the chair, deathly pale. "Oh, God," she faltered, "don't disappoint me—yes, sir, he was only ten when he got hurted there with a horse." Then she stopped, her eyes appealing to him to go on.

"I knew him," Stephen said quickly, steadying his voice. "He's coachman for one of my friends in Hamilton;" and as he spoke the woman rose and seized him by the hands, as if she would wring out information of the absent one. Which Stephen was glad to give, all he could, finally writing down the wanderer's address with the utmost care; the next half hour was full of glad emotion to them both, his own loneliness filling his heart with pity for this fellow sufferer.

Then she insisted on his lying down, which he was nothing loath to do, soon falling into a heavy slumber. In his dream, he stood at the cottage door and saw, with

enchanted eyes, the graceful figure of a girl, her golden tresses floating in the wind as she pressed toward the towering elm, a rich cluster of flowers in her shapely hands, the yearning of love and loneliness upon her face. He moved uneasily where he lay, and the woman stood over him exultantly, almost lovingly; his lips moved, burning hot, and she heard them murmur "home . . . together," while a sweet smile played upon the weary, noble face. She bent as if to kiss him, confusing him with the wanderer he had found—then refrained, and turned to the room without.

A few minutes later Stephen appeared, walking straight to the door and looking intently across the fields.

"Did you get any rest, sir?"

"Yes, thank you, I had a sleep. Do you know the graves in yonder cemetery?"

"Some of them, sir—I have a little girl there."

Stephen paused. "You don't know whose plot that is at the foot of that great elm there, do you?"

The woman came to the door. "Yes, sir, I do—that's the Hasties'. The father and mother lie there; their daughter Hattie—she was the loveliest thing you ever seen, sir—she went to Lunnon a long time ago and never came back since. Did you know them, sir?"

"Are there any relatives here yet?" Stephen pursued, disregarding her question.

"No, sir, none that I know of. But I've noticed a strange thing lately. Two or three times I've seen

some one, a young lady, going there in the early morning; and she had flowers. At least, as far as I could see, I was sure it was flowers she was carrying. I've often wondered if . . . you're looking so faint, sir—I'm just going to get you a bite of breakfast; maybe some one done as much for Laban, poor boy. What's the matter, sir?"

For Stephen's face was ashen white, and he stood, no word escaping the pale, trembling lips. His hand was outstretched, rigid, pointing with the intensity of death across the fields, his great eyes fixed and shining.

She, too, looked—and saw, the morning light glinting on the golden hair, a woman's form slowly winding toward the stately elm.

She turned toward Stephen—but he had started on, silent, no word or sign coming from him, his hand outstretched a moment longer as he swiftly leaped the dyke and bent his way straight across the fields.

Not once were his eyes withdrawn from the form that was now at the foot of the tree. It was the same he had seen in his dreams. Midway he came to a stream six or seven feet in width—and he leaped it as though it had been the furrow of a passing plough. His lips moved slightly as he walked, in praise and prayer, invoking the aid of God, promising his soul to the new life that would begin beneath yon nearing elm.

And in that hour he knew, as he had not known before, how deep the wound from which his heart

was bleeding, riven by some knife that had been whetted in Eternity. An infinite desire, pure and holy, bore him on. That the wreck of time was to be saved, that his reprieve had come at last, that the long eclipse was over, that life's golden fruitage was not to be torn and trampled after all—these blessed joys of love, love true and tender as the heart for which it longed, flowed like a river in his soul.

As he stealthily descended the stile that led into the little cemetery, he saw the object of his eager gaze seated on the grave. Tenderly she untied the cluster of flowers in her hands, proceeding to distribute them about the lowly mound, adjusting them with reverent care. A swift fear flashed through Stephen's heart as he crept softly toward her, the torture of the thought that she might after all refuse to return with him overwhelming him for a moment; only for a moment, for he felt assured that his presence there, his long journey, his loving search, would convince her of the reality of his love. Closer, still closer, he crept, her face still turned from him, her hair a shade darker, he thought, than when he had seen it last, the sunny hair that in sunnier days his hands and lips had loved to fondle.

He made some trifling noise; she turned her head quickly. As the face swung around toward him, he outheld his arms, making as if to run, for some distance still lay between. But the face turned fully on his own—and he stood as still as the sleepers at his feet, his hands outstretched in horror, his face pallid in its agony. Then slowly, indifferent to the



stranger's wondering gaze, conscious only of emptiness and loss and the cruel weight of hopes that had fallen dead, he sank down upon the ground, his anguish gurgling like a hemorrhage through parched and quivering lips.

The startled stranger rose and walked quickly to where he sat, or knelt, upon the grass. She stood a few paces away for a minute or two, then said gently :

"Are you ill, sir? Can I do anything for you?" He waited a moment, then turned his staring eyes upon her, looking hungrily at her face, his gaze deepening into darkness, almost resentment, as though that face were counterfeit. Then he spoke—but the words could not be heard, and he buried his face in his hands again.

"What's the matter, sir?" she pleaded. "Do tell me."

"It's the hand of God," he murmured, but the words were meant for himself alone. "Oh, Hattie, Hattie!"

"Do you mean Hattie Hastie?" the soft voice asked timidly. But if the question had come from mouldering lips beneath him, Stephen Wishart could not have sprung more quickly to his feet, nor could the banished blood have flown back more swiftly to the quivering face. He leaped to the girl's side, seized her arm, then as quickly released it, her eyes arrested by his fiery gaze.

"Yes, Hattie Hastie—that's what you said—what know you of Hattie Hastie? In God's name tell me

what you know. Is she here? Has she been here? Have you seen her?"

He paused, his quick breath suspended till she should make reply.

"I used to know her," the girl said quietly. "I used to know her—but she went away to London. And I went to Liverpool soon after. I'm in service there—and this is the first time I've been back."

She paused. "Yes," Stephen urged; "well, go on—why did you come here to-day? Was it you who put the flowers on the grave yesterday?"

"Yes, it was. I put those flowers on her mother's grave to-day, too. I do it for Hattie's sake—she used to do it before she went away. She was so good to us; my own mother died a little while before she left—and Hattie sat up with her four nights before she died. And it was a catching disease, too—it was scarlet fever; my little brother died of it just before. And nobody came near us except Hattie. She used to sing to mother—and that's all I can do for her now. There's my mother's grave, that one with the rose-bush at the foot. And when I bring flowers for mother I always bring them for Hattie's, too."

The girl stopped, and the eyes that looked up to Stephen were filled with tears.

He stood silent, listening to the story, touched by its beauty, oppressed by the doom with which it swept his hopes away. He walked murely back and picked up his hat.

"And have you never heard from her since?" he

asked in a frozen voice, half turning toward the maiden as he spoke.

"No, I never did. And she never came back—you couldn't tell me anything about her, could you, sir?"

"No," he said with averted face, for her fondness touched him. "I can't tell you—here, get some little keepsake of her;" he slipped a sovereign into her hand, "and whenever you come back here I'll be glad if you will always put flowers on the grave. Good-bye."

The girl thanked him, and Stephen turned away, beginning to retrace his steps toward Chester as rapidly as his heavy heart allowed. He saw his kind friend of the cottage gazing toward him as he strode across the fields; but he turned his face away and walked heavily on. Had she been closer, the woman would have seen a face like to the face of one baptized for the dead.

Blessed is the ministry of sorrow, laying upon the heart that bears the burdens of another, healers to the earlier wound. The soul that echoes with its own cry is ever the first to catch the whisper of another's grief, stifling the louder wail within.

Wherefore Stephen slackened not his pace till he paused before the door of the telegraph office in the ancient city, and the beads of perspiration that his quick walk had started were still upon his brow as he wrote a cable message to Laban Shortill:

"Your mother's suffering. Write at once."

XXIX

*LONDON And The CHASE*

**T**HAT very afternoon found Stephen on his way to London. Past the richest scenes of English beauty, past shrine after shrine of historic interest, his train whirled him toward the waiting city. Stratford, Warwick, Kenilworth, Oxford, all marvelled at his contemptuous haste. He had never visited them; but the voice that called him to tarry was faint and unavailing. Enough of drama and tragedy and knightly war; enough of discipline and schooling too, deeper than the classic Oxford could impart, were mingling in his life already. He scarcely noticed the glory of the day, or the beauty of the varied landscape, or the splendour of a hundred mansions as he passed; his gaze was backward turned, fastened still upon two half-neglected graves that owned the scanty decoration of a stranger's hand; for, beside them, invisible to every eye but his, was yet another lowly mound above which his heart bended in silent anguish. The deepest graves are unseen of human eyes, nor have been digged by human hands; and toward these shadowy sepulchres there winds the long procession of those who go to weep, their wailing heard by the Eternal Heart alone.

The panting engine was sobbing out its story of

exhaustion as Stephen pressed slowly out of Paddington station to the ampler spaces of the Edgware Road. Mounting a bus, he looked about him at the tossing crowds. The whole spectacle struck him as strangely familiar, as it does all returning travellers to the mighty Babylon ; the separation of years dwindles to the absence of a day. Yet his reverence for London, his surrender to its magic thrall, seemed to be no more. He recalled faintly the day-dreams of early boyhood and the place that London ever had as an enchanted city ; but now he found himself scanning its living tide for the treasure that perchance was hidden in its bosom.

The omnibus rumbled on, and soon the resonant voice of the guard announced the Marble Arch. Starting quickly, Stephen's eye fell on the very spot that had been the scene of his encounter with the infidel, and, moved by an impulse he was careless to examine, he descended to the street and walked quickly to the very ground on which he and Hattie had stood together. Musing, he sat down on an adjoining bench, memory flowing again around the place ; but the graceful form and the earnest face were wanting—and he soon arose. For he had other work on hand than brooding over paradises that were lost ; his, rather, to regain that life without which there could be no further paradise for him.

With this resolve he started on and had made his way as far as Oxford Street, along which he hurried, glancing indifferently now and then into its gorgeous shops, but ever peering eagerly, yet almost hope-

lessly, into the faces of the passers-by. He knew that this street would lead him into Holborn and thence to Gray's Inn Road, near to which was the Army home that had sheltered Hattie on that momentous night. Fired by the memory, upborne by the hope, he was striding with swift pace when suddenly he leaped from the pavement, wheeling quickly round; for a strong arm was round his neck and a familiar voice was saying:

"Howly Moses, if this isn't foinding a needle in a haystack! I followed ye half a block before I struck."

"Father O'Rourke!" Stephen gasped in astonishment, the crowd dividing about them as they stood. "What on earth are you doing here? I thought you were in Hamilton."

"It's not in Hamilton I am, my boy—it's in London, begorra; and London's the place for me. I came away a little suddint—that was the last sermon I preached, the toime I saw ye in St. Anne's. I saw ye, my boy—ye came in late, shame on ye. But ye paid soine attintion, and I'll forgive ye. The loikes of us, d'ye see, can get away widout askin' the lave o' the congregation. My intintion was to go to Rome, to see his Holiness, God bless him. But I've just heard that poor ould Maloney is down wid paralysis; he's been care-taker of St. Anne's for over forty years. And they say the ould sinner's askin' for me noight and day. When will the father be back, he keeps sayin'—and they tell me there's an outbreak of diphtheria in Lower Town—three children dead al-

ready. There's not been as much sickness in Hamilton for years, they say. Come, let's be movin' on."

"Well," Stephen said as the old priest paused, "you're not going back, are you?"

"That's the very thing I'm going to do. I'm going to ould Ireland to see my sister first—then straight home. The Pope'll keep—and Rome won't vanish in a day. To tell you the truth, I belave ould Maloney's dying blessing'll be just as good as the Pope's. Duty, my boy; there's always blessing there. Anyhow, I'll be glad to get back to wurrk; I was niver meant to be galivantin' round the globe. Where moight ye be going now?"

"I'm going to—to ask for a friend," Stephen answered hesitatingly.

"I'm afraid this'll be my last noight in London. I tell ye, Wishart, come and take dinner wid me to-noight—let's dine at the Holborn; there it is yonder, across the street—see the gold letters? Mate me there at siven-thirty. Sure it's Froiday, and I'll have to lave the mate alone; but I'll ate a couple o' whales. We'll have some plain livin' and high thinkin'. Siven-thirty, moind. Good-bye just now."

The noble hearted priest departed down Chancery Lane, and Stephen hailed a hansom, ordering the driver to hurry to the Army Refuge, the mention of which stirred his heart to its profoundest depths.

One by one familiar places went flying past. Last came the fountain, the tiny park, the bench on which they had sat together in the morning sun. Then the

carriage stopped before the door and in a moment Stephen was within. His first enquiry was for the Commander.

"She's not here," he was informed briefly, she's in America—but we expect her home shortly now." The informant wondered at the shadow that fell on Stephen's face. He stood irresolute. Suddenly he heard a voice that he had heard before.

"Why, Mr.—what's the name now? Oh, yes, Mr. Wishart! Aren't you Mr. Wishart? I'm so glad to see you again. It was you that came here with that lovely girl. Come away in and sit down."

"Why, Mrs. Yuill, is this you? I'm just as glad to see you—no, thank you, I can't wait. But I wanted to ask you about that very person. I wasn't sure but she might be in London—and I'm here myself as you see," he added, smiling, "so I thought I would call and enquire."

He looked as carelessly as he could into the matron's kindly face; a glance convinced him that she knew more than he had allowed for.

"Why, Mr. Wishart," she began nervously and in the gravest of tones, "why, Mr. Wishart, I thought—I thought . . . you know Miss Hastie was sent on to Edinburgh after she enlisted here. And . . . didn't you see her there afterward? And we were all told that she . . ." The matron stopped, embarrassed.

"Yes," Stephen assented, in a tone scarcely audible, "yes, I understand—and she is not here?"

"No," the woman averred delicately, taking the



cue and avoiding further questions, "did you fancy she might have returned to Army work?"

"Yes," Stephen answered sadly, "I fancied perhaps she had. But she is not here? No, you're sure of that? If she should be with the Army anywhere in London, how could I find it out?"

The matron pondered a moment. "I don't think it's likely," she said, "but the nearest to any exact information, you could get at the Headquarters on Victoria Street—near the Mansion House, you know."

Stephen turned toward the door. "I'll try there," he said heavily; "but the Commander's not in London? Nor the General?"

Both enquiries were answered in the negative, the Commander being in America, the General visiting at a Scottish country-seat.

A quarter of an hour later Stephen was plying his quest at Headquarters. But the result was as fruitless as before, and he trudged back with leaden heart to keep his engagement with Father O'Rourke at the Holborn Restaurant.

Whatever the altitude of the thinking, the living was certainly plain that night; for it was Friday to them both.

"Come away and have a smoke," Father O'Rourke said when they had finished, "it's only a step to the Inns of Court where I have a room. You're toired out, my boy. Come away and have a chat."

Gaining the hotel, but a few minutes had passed in

general conversation when Stephen introduced the subject to which the priest had referred earlier in the day, that of the former's visit to St. Anne's. Timidly, yet with kindling emotion, he told the wondering priest of the influence his sermon had had upon him, of the new vision of the Saviour that had been given him in the failing light, of the awakening his soul had experienced in the Romish temple.

The priest's face was aglow. "It's the Lord's doing, my boy," he said in a thrilling voice, "and the Lord works in all the churches—sometimes in none. I'll tell you something about myself. I was a poor stick of a priest till I happened one night to hear that great American preacher, Moody—you know him. Well, I got a blessing that night that'll last me till I die. By the way, I heard a great Protestant preacher here last Thursday. Be sure you go to hear him—right down here on the Viaduct; were you ever there?"

"No, I don't think so. What's his name?"

"I can't just recall it—but his church is called the City Temple, and he preaches there Thursdays at noon. A funny thing happened when I was going in; just as I got to the door, I met a chap I used to know at Maynooth—a priest too. Well, he was making straight for the Temple door, but when he saw me, he got ever so embarrassed. After we shook hands, he said, 'Could you tell me where I'd find the Brompton Oratory?' I knew what he was after, so I winked at him. 'I'm not sure about Brompton,' I told him, 'but if you're looking for oratory, come on in with me.' And I tell you we found it. That man

should be a Cardinal. It was great. And at the close, if O'Gorman and I weren't standing up, both holding on to one hymn book for dear life and singing away :

'Just as I am without one plea.'

Then a lady sang a beautiful solo—haven't heard anything so sweet since I heard your wife."

The priest paused, looking keenly at Stephen ; for the expression of pain upon his face could hardly go unnoticed. Father O'Rourke walked to the door and closed it.

"Wishart," he said as he came back, "there's something the matter. I knew it this morning on Oxford Street." Then he sat down beside Stephen, his arm about the bended shoulders as the burdened man bowed low ; and gently, lovingly, he wooed the whole sad story from the lonely heart.

True symptom of the chastened spirit, true pledge of his redemption, Stephen's plaint was not more of his later sorrow than of his early sin. Blood-relations seemed the two. At long last Stephen said, "Do you know, I've been wondering if I have any right to continue in the ministry. Do you think such an one as I should dare to preach to others?"

The old priest fixed his eyes earnestly on the young minister's face. "Don't give up your ministry, my man. This is going to make you into a true priest of God ; you've got your commission now," and his voice, trembling with compassion, fell like music on Stephen's troubled heart.

"But you know I'm not worthy," the latter began.

"Hush," interrupted Father O'Rourke, "that's for the Master alone. You've got a great chance now, my man—a great chance, and don't you miss it. There's nothing so sad as a wasted tragedy—or a wasted sin; a wasted sin, I say. Do you know what I can't forgive Judas for—the only thing I can't forgive him?" he asked abruptly.

"No," said Stephen; "his treachery, I suppose."

"Not that, my boy—I could overlook that, I think. But I can't forgive him this, that he didn't turn at the last and show to the ages how great was the grace that could save even Judas. He'd have been the trophy of the centuries; Paul wouldn't have been a circumstance to Judas. And whenever a man like you—or me—has his feet taken from the miry clay, he owes God the new song that no man can sing as it should be sung till he's had the same deliverance. So go you on, my boy, and sing that song every chance you get; sing it as the angels can't, and make the most of all God's done for you."

Gradually their talk turned to Hattie; and the small hours of the morning had crept upon them before Stephen rose to go. Arm in arm they walked a little way along the silent street.

"Well, I guess I'll have to say good-night—and good-bye," the priest said, "but I'll not forget you. My heart will be searching with your own. From what you told me, I think it's Edinburgh she'd make for—a woman's heart never forgets the grove where she first heard the love-birds sing. I know more

about that sort of thing than they imagine in St. Anne's. Now cheer up, my boy. Remember, God's a great detective; leave the case with Him and He'll find her for you yet."

Then they parted with mutual pledge of fidelity and love, each going his priestly way and each a priest unto the other—nor by different hands ordained.

Early the next morning Stephen presented himself again at the Army Headquarters on Victoria Street. Recognized and admitted, he asked the officer who received him for a note of introduction to the official in command of the Army's forces at the Scottish capital. This being provided, Stephen thanked the Commissioner, adding: "Could you go with me down to the Royal Bank of Scotland? It's not very far—down at Bishopsgate Within."

The Commissioner complied with great alacrity. "I could go right now," he said with a cheerfulness worthy of their destination. Whereupon they set forth together. Arriving at the bank, Stephen presented his letters of credit and identification.

"How much do you wish to draw?" asked the clerk.

"A hundred pounds," replied Stephen. Which were soon handed out to him in spotless notes, musically crisp.

Stephen drew the wide-eyed Commissioner into the waiting room. "I want you to take this money," he said; "and I want it spent on an outing in the

country for as many poor children as it will provide for. The time and the place to be determined by yourselves. I went with a lot of poor Edinburgh children once for a day in the country," he added softly. "It was the happiest day of my life—and I want to commemorate it this way."

The Commissioner was recovering as best he could. "Hadn't you better make it a draft payable to the General?" he suggested first, the business instinct uppermost. "I'd sooner not take the money, sir—you can get the draft marked."

"All right," agreed Stephen, as he called a clerk, handing him the notes and requesting him to frame the document.

Then the Commissioner opened his lips, that the avalanche of gratitude might flow.

Stephen stopped him. "I'm doing this for another man," he said; "it's trust money that was given me by an old farmer in Canada—he's my father—and I know he'd approve of the enterprise. Will you kindly make out a receipt to Robert Wishart? I'll just mail it to him here."

When this had been effected, the clerk was back with the draft, which the Commissioner reverently deposited in a wallet that had abundant room. The two men walked together out of the bank, parting on Leadenhall Street, Stephen glad to escape from the aforesaid avalanche which the gallant soldier seemed powerless to repress.

The days came and went, but the now half-despair-

ing searcher still lingered amid sad familiar scenes. Where they first had met—the very spot; the little park, the fountain whose untiring stream flowed on, the humble room in which he first had heard her soul in song, the bench in Hyde Park on which they had together rested—all these were visited again with aching heart, as though he were looking his last upon them, even as mayhap he had looked his last on her whose memory lent them their plaintive beauty.

The hope that finally began to languish in London was turning on swift wing to Edinburgh, where even now it had purposed to rebuild its nest. And the north-bound train that leaped outward from King's Cross one darksome night bore among its passengers the unwearied man whose heart, now high with hope, now sickened with despair, was still resolute upon its sacred purpose.

Cramped and weary, the chill air of Scotia's cherished city smote him as he alighted the next morning at Waverly station. He shivered as he walked along the platform; for Edinburgh's climate was sent upon it to wring from its idolatrous inhabitants the admission, reluctant though it be, that they who seek another city, even a heavenly, have anything to gain.

Stephen was standing, intent upon the stream of luggage from which he would extract his humble share, when a hand was suddenly laid upon his shoulder, and a rich voice accosted him:

“Look here, aren't you on the wrong side of the Atlantic?” He turned to look into the strong face of the great preacher, the same whose narrative of

the tearful bootblack—and whose sermon on “The outjacobed Jacob”—had left so deep an impression on Stephen’s mind. Warmly he greeted the venerable orator, his very presence a strength and comfort to the lonely man.

“I intended calling on you this very day,” Stephen exclaimed, “are you still at Charlotte Square?”

“Yes, but I’m sorry I won’t be at home. I’m going to Berwick; my train leaves in a few minutes now. But you’re the very man I wanted to see. I’ve something of importance to tell you—step over here.”

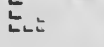
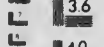
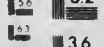
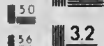
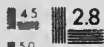
They moved aside from the stream of hurrying passengers. “Mr. Wishart, this seems nothing less than providential. I was just wondering whom I should ask to preach in——side Free Church next Sabbath; they’re vacant—and I’m the Moderator. As you know, it’s one of our strongest churches. But the wonderful thing about it all is this—they’ve been enquiring for you. Professor——, of the New College, recommended you; he remembered your brilliant career. And stranger still, the very last Sabbath you preached in your church at home, two of their elders who were touring Canada happened to be there. And they brought back a great report of the grapes of Eschol—I shan’t tell you what they said. But the church has had its eye on you; they spoke to me about you. Of course I presumed you were three thousand miles away—but here you are! Now Mr. Wishart, you’ll preach to them next Sabbath; it seems an open door,





# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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doesn't it? I'll have to run—just two minutes left. But mark that down for next Sabbath—and I'll notify their session clerk; they'll be delighted. Good-bye." And the master of assemblies hurried to his train.

Stephen made his way out of the station up to Princes Street, past Scott's monument, along the comely thoroughfare to the side street that led up to the lodging house that had been his home before. Within which he found the selfsame landlady, who welcomed him with delight, ushering him to the very room he had occupied so long.

The tidings he had just received, grateful as they would have been in other days, seemed strangely unimportant now. Indeed, his mind speedily dismissed the matter, so utterly was it occupied with a different quest. One hour later, he was closeted with the commanding officer of the Scottish staff of the Salvation Army.

"I've come to ask, sir, if you have in your ranks—or anywhere in your service—a lady that I know was once with you here. Her name is Hattie Hastie—or possibly, Mrs. Wishart, Mrs. Stephen Wishart; you might look for both," he added earnestly.

"I think I should be able to let you know, sir," the man rejoined; "we keep a fairly exhaustive list. Was your friend an officer?"

"Yes, I'm almost sure she was one of the subordinate officers—I'm sure of it, in fact. I've heard her say so."

The officer rang a bell, gave a brief order, and

soon a ponderous book was placed before him. Adjusting his glasses, he scanned it for several minutes, turning from page to page. Suddenly he paused and looked up, struck with the white rigid face before him.

"Would you know her signature if you saw it?" he asked.

But Stephen made no answer except to rise, almost spring, from his seat, bending over the book, his lips trembling, his eyes leaping hither and thither over the page.

"There, sir," said the man, "there in the right hand corner," placing his finger on the name.

"Yes, yes," the other cried in feverish haste, "yes, I see it—that is her writing. Where can I find her, sir—of course she must be here. Where shall I find her? I wanted to—to see her," he exclaimed with passionate simplicity, no longer seeking to conceal the flame that leaped from lip and eye.

"Please be seated, sir," the man urged, looking keenly at him. "I'll try and find that out for you," and he touched the bell again.

"Send Captain Latham to me," he ordered the messenger.

"Would you please let me know, Captain," he said a moment later, "where this lady is to be found? This gentleman wants to know. Look, here's the name," and the two men bent over the book together.

Stephen stood a little apart, his hands tightly clenched, his lip caught between his teeth, his whole

soul in a ferment of longing. For she was here, somewhere here—that much was certain; and he would see her—not to-morrow—or some later day—but to-day, this very day! His brain, tired and dazed, swam with the rapturous thought.

Suddenly there came a knell of words; his eyes closed and he sank dumbly into a chair.

“I knew there must have been a mistake somewhere,” he heard Latham saying in a low tone to the other; “that’s an old list you’ve got—you didn’t look at the date. That name, Hattie Hastie, isn’t to be found over here,” he added, turning over the pages, their cruel rasping falling like the stroke of fate on poor Stephen’s tortured heart.

His first informant looked up in a moment “I’m afraid we can’t give you any information, sir. There’s no trace of her since she left us. It seems Miss Hastie left for America more than—why sir, what’s the matter? You’re white as death, sir. Wait a minute till I . . .”

But Stephen heard no more. Blind and broken, he groped for the door and in a moment was out upon the street, walking on, he knew or cared not whither, struggling still to cling to God, now and then clutching wildly toward the hope that had fled shrieking from his heart.

It was the following Monday morning; and Stephen sat in his lonely room, his thoughts busy with the days and nights of suffering that had passed since his outstretched arms had been cheated of the treas-

ure he had thought so near. How they had passed, he scarcely knew—for his heart was numb. Yet the despairing search had been maintained, in a drear unconscious sort of way, so difficult was it to renounce his confidence that she was somewhere within his reach.

Then the Sabbath had come on; and he had preached twice in —side Free Church, to the enchantment and delight of its rich and cultured congregation. A great throng had filled the splendid edifice; but the vastness of his audience and the grandeur of the church, and the splendour of the music, had made but little impression on Stephen Wishart. Unconscious of it himself, he had been girded for his work by the hands of sorrow, his lips touched by that living coal, his thought and speech enriched by simplicity of motive and earnestness of heart. He knew not with what power his eloquent and burning words had thrilled his hearers, the majesty of the gospel message captivating their hearts as it possessed his own.

But he did know, this Monday morning, that the echoing bell beneath announced the presence of a committee from the church whose pulpit he had occupied the day before. They had informed him of their intention to wait upon him.

The grave and responsible representatives of —side Free Church did not require long to inform him of their mission. The congregation, so far as they could learn, were a unit in his favour; their purpose was to ascertain whether or not they might pro-

ceed with the formality of a call. A noble church, an ample stipend, a generous vacation, a loyal and superior people, an inviting field for toil, were the features they begged to submit for his consideration, themselves urging that it might be favourable.

Stephen's response was as cordial as it was brief and simple. A splendid independence, which his interviewers could not fail to note, deepened the earnestness of their appeal. To all of which Stephen's answer was a quiet promise that he would give them his decision in a few days at the longest.

His visitors departing, Stephen resumed the reverie they had interrupted, this new claim upon him giving it a wider range. Yet he himself was compelled to note, and with no little wonder, how slightly he was impressed by the mere attractiveness of the proposition that had just been made. He recalled, with a pathetic sort of humour, how intoxicated he would once have been by such a prospect as now seemed powerless to allure. Professional distinction, social rank, almost certain popularity, financial comfort—these had still a glittering light; but he knew the difference now between the glittering and the golden. How paltry seems the treasure, erstwhile precious, to a man who is struggling for his life!

Besides, his vision was growing clearer. Clarified by sorrow's ministry, his eyes were coming to recognize realities, his mind dimly groping toward the master truth that duty, and not happiness, is the end of life. The hope of happiness, the purpose to pursue it till it could no more elude him, was fast ebbing

from his mind ; and in its place was welling up a tide of noble longing, of high resolve to take up his cross and bear it to the end. Even if his was to be a widowed race, he would strive to run it patiently, remembering the Man of Sorrows, gleaning through his tears an ampler harvest than the scant sickle of happiness had ever reaped.

His reflections were disturbed by a gentle knock ; a servant opened the door and handed him a letter. He checked an exclamation of surprise as he remarked the foreign stamp, quickly recalling that he had given his father his old-time Edinburgh address.

To his amazement, he saw the Morven postmark on the letter. Eagerly he tore it open and plunged into its contents, a sense of awe upon him, as though the Master of the harvest-field were standing in the room. For the letter went on to say that, having secured his address from his father, the elders of the Morven congregation wished to inform him of the vacancy that had suddenly fallen on their church ; moreover, that their people had not forgotten their former choice, and, knowing that he had resigned his charge in Hamilton, were anxious to ascertain if they might now hope to secure him as their minister. They were conscious of the apparent presumption, of the comparative obscurity of their church, etc., etc. ; but the feeling was unanimous and strong, and the leading of Providence would seem to indicate that they at least should lay their case before him. Would he be so kind as to reply at his earliest convenience ? Should he entertain their proposal, might not arrange-



ments for his settlement be completed in his absence? And more there was, of equally earnest tone.

Stephen read the letter again and again. It was the same hand, he noted, as had penned the appeal of so long ago, an appeal so condescendingly declined. But how different the heart that hearkened now to their reuttered call! For Stephen felt almost a transport of joy, as though he had been called to the ministry anew. He remembered, too, sweet softness in the thought, the yearning of an absent one for the very field of labour that was now within his reach; and the humble folk of the distant parish grew precious in his sight.

No sense of sacrifice, no misgiving as to duty, no rival claim of statelier church, shadowed the eager gladness with which he took up his pen; nor did he lay it down till he had written the Morven session his full acceptance of the call, promising them an unstinted ministry, asking their unstinted prayer.

As he posted the letter that was to gladden the hearts beyond the sea, Stephen's mind reverted to the visit he and Hattie had made to the placid country scenes that were now to be mingled with his life. A quick association of ideas called up before him a day of kindred memories, sweet and rural, though more sacred far. He stood still for a moment, looked at his watch, then started hurriedly toward the Waverly station. An uncontrollable impulse bore him on. He was just in time to purchase a ticket to Kimlachie, and board the train that steamed out of the crowded

station, as it had departed once before with its load of raptured misery.

Soon he stood where he had stood long ago among the boisterous children from the slums, the sunlit woods still decking the noble hill, as on that golden summer day that had poured the blessedness of heaven into his brimming heart.

He walked reflective across the fields, so vivid when he saw them last with their stream of happy waifs. Once and again he caught the thrilling sight of a busy flitting form, once and again he saw the wayward hair and glowing face of her who had moved as queen amongst them all. But the laughter died, and the vision vanished, and the hills were bare.

Reverently he made his way into the woods. A sort of awe possessed him, as though venturing within some great cathedral whose paling grandeur waits as vassal on the silent form before the altar, vested in statelier pomp. Of a sudden, he felt that he should walk no farther; and, lifting up his eyes, he saw the grassy mound—now life's altar place to him forever.

But no trembling fell on it. The slanting sun still kissed the quivering leaves; the gentle wind still went its whispering way; the faithful flowers still plied their lonely tack of love—but the soul, the soul of things, was gone.

Still standing, still with uncovered head, his broadening heart gleaned the place of its every memory, laying up treasure against the famine that must fall when he went his way.

Timidly, faintly, he called her name.

"Hattie, my Hattie." But the cry was really meant alone for God and no human voice made answer.

Heavily, as men turn from the grave where their children's mother lies, he began his way backward to the open, the heartless sunbeams laughing about him as he went.

He had barely emerged from the sheltering woods when he heard the sound of voices. Looking upward to the brow of the adjoining hill, he observed two men walking arm in arm toward the distant mansion. The one nearest him, he knew at a glance. That stalwart form would be recognizable anywhere. It was no other than the General, his uniform distinguishable from where Stephen stood. The great soldier looked even younger, more martial, more alert than when he had seen him last, that memorable night on which he first had heard his darling's voice in song.

Quickening his pace, he was soon sufficiently close to attract the attention of the General and his friend. The former's eye fell upon him first, and Stephen raised his hat, advancing with outstretched hand.

"Let me see," said the General as he returned the salutation, "I surely know your face—just a minute now; don't tell me. Why, certainly, you're the young minister I met once at our Poplar barracks; I remember you distinctly now. It was a lady friend of yours that sang that night, and I don't know

when I have heard such a glorious voice. I'm glad to see you. How goes the battle?"

Stephen answered briefly, then enquired for the General's health.

"Oh, I'm all right—have no time for anything else. Excuse me, I should have introduced you. This is my friend and faithful ally, Sir Hector Sinclair—he's got a higher title than that too," he added, as the men shook hands. "He's one of our best advisers; and he gives us the freedom of these heavenly fields every summer for our waifs."

Stephen expressed his pleasure at making so worthy an acquaintance; the latter invited him to accompany them to the arbour and join them in a cup of tea. As they walked along, Stephen ventured to enquire for the Commander, expressing his disappointment that she was in America.

"If you're spared to reach that summer-house yonder, I expect you'll find her waiting there for us," said the General laughing. "She landed at Glasgow last night—at Greenock rather—and came on here to meet me this morning. It doesn't take long to trade continents nowadays."

Stephen concealed the emotion that he felt as he looked again, which he did a few minutes later, upon the winsome countenance that so vividly recalled another. Presented to the gracious hostess, the little company gathered about the table.

Presently the Commander began archly:

"Mr. Wishart, I've a little crow to pick with you."

"A very black one?" responded Stephen.

"Yes, pretty black. Theft's a dreadful thing, Mr. Wishart—and however did you dare to steal away that lovely girl they all admired so in Edinburgh? Oh, you needn't blush like that; I know all about it."

Stephen's reply was inarticulate, and the blush was paling fast.

"It would just serve you right," the Commander went on, "if I wouldn't tell you the little bit of news I have. Especially as you should have brought her with you—were you afraid we'd keep her? But I'll forgive you—a woman can't keep news anyhow. Well, it's this—I saw her in New York. I was driving on Broadway the day before I sailed, away down near the City Hall, and I saw her from the carriage window as plain as could be. I made the driver stop at once—she hadn't seen me—and I got out and hurried to where I saw her. But there was such a crowd, and she had gone and . . ."

The Commander stopped, amazed—for Stephen's desperate struggle for control was over. He was standing up, his arm half outstretched, while the cup rocked in its saucer, the hot tea spilling unnoticed on his hand. His face was blanched and his eyes were staring at the Commander with glassy steadiness.

"You saw her?" he whispered in a ghostly voice, "you saw her, did you say? And are you sure it was—it was—my wife?" he added, coming closer to her, his hand outstretched as before.

"Oh, do tell me . . ." began the Commander, "what can there ——?"

"Are you sure it was my wife?" Stephen broke in again, his voice loud, almost stormy.

"Yes, Mr. Wishart," the other said quickly, the colour retreating from her cheek; "it was Hattie Hastie—isn't she your wife?"

Stephen's smile was pitiful to behold, so strong, so anguished was it.

"Yes, please God," he answered in a tone so low that they could scarcely hear, "but you didn't find her? You didn't speak to her? You don't know where she is?" he cried, the voice rising again, and the questions spurting from his lips as if by no volition of his own. He laid his cup and saucer on the tray, but his eyes never moved from the Commander's face.

"Oh, Mr. Wishart, I'm so sorry—of course, I don't understand! No, I couldn't find her; I've told you all I know," and the words were gentle, full of pity. "But I'm sure she is in New York—at least, I'm sure she was there ten days ago."

Then a dense silence fell upon them all. Stephen's eyes were far away, fixed upon a distant fringe of woods. Then they turned toward the now setting sun, looking far beyond it, searching the farthest west that held the treasure of his life.

Suddenly he turned to his silent company and began to bid them a grave farewell. His host remonstrated gently; "We would have been glad to have you stay till morning," he said earnestly.

"Forgive me, my friends," answered Stephen, looking toward them all, "I can't tell you what is

in my heart. Perhaps you know. But you will let me go without further words—I shall not rest anywhere till the morning comes.”

Then they every one spoke some farewell word of comfort—except the General alone, whose quivering lips refused.

XXX

*By WAY of The CROSS*

**T**HE next morning found Stephen in Liverpool, and at the booking office of the White Star line. An intermediate passage was the best he could secure on the crowded vessel, but this mattered little, since the second cabin is not one whit less fleet than the saloon. Neither the one nor the other was swift enough for the silent traveller who smiled with sad contempt at the boisterous eagerness of the men who gambled daily on the mileage; for he knew the deeper hazard of one whose own soul's happiness was the stake.

The first day at sea was spent in unbroken pondering. Hope was reviving in his heart; for had he not met one who had certainly seen her face? Perhaps, too, the sense of homegoing upheld him more than he realized. He found himself counting eagerly on seeing Reuben and his aged father once again. The thought of Reuben started a little stream of joy in his troubled mind, and he took again from his pocket the letter from Bessie that had reached him but an hour before he left Edinburgh for the Southern port. It had had little consideration amid the ensuing excitement, but now he pondered its contents with subdued and thankful gladness.

For Bessie had written the momentous news that she and Reuben were at last man and wife, quietly



married by Mr. Shearer at the country church. Stephen's heart melted within him, the tears refusing to be bidden back, as he read Bessie's story of how she had insisted on telling everything to Reuben, all about her fickleness, her childhood's love for his younger brother, her weakness in cherishing all that she would now disclose. "Oh, Stephen," the letter went on, "you should have seen Reuben at his noblest. I really don't believe there ever was another man as good, as truly good, as Rube. He just took me in his arms and kissed the words back—even when I wanted to say more—and he said he wouldn't hear any more; he said it was only natural for any one to care for you—and a lot of other lovely things. But what comforted me most was when he said he knew I loved him the best in the whole world now, or else I wouldn't have wanted to tell him everything. And oh, Stephen, I love him more and more since we got married; and I'm going to give my life to prove to him that my whole heart is his forever. And we're going to live right here with father—and we're so happy. And Rube says all we want now is you and Hattie."

Then followed some eager enquiries for the well-loved fugitive, Stephen's fancy leaping to join the chase.

The next day was a torture as it dragged its crawling way. A torment of impatience seized him—but relief came from an unexpected quarter. A steerage passenger was reported to be dying. Stephen asked to be shown to his quarters and for a time his soul

forgot its burden in its ministry to the suffering man. This experience opened the door for a service he found it the keenest joy to render to one and another of the lowly travellers; and when at last the vessel rounded Sandy Hook the name oftenest upon the lips of the poor foreigners, the sick, the friendless, was that of the man whose transient ministry had brought as much of comfort as it gave.

Stout indeed the heart would need to be that fain would ply its search among the millions of New York. Yet this was what Stephen had resolved to do, unable though he was to form any plan as to how it should be done. No sooner had he disembarked than he hurried eagerly to lower Broadway, walking up and down for nearly an hour in the neighbourhood that the Commander had described. The restless crowds rolled about him, the roaring traffic never ceased, the chime of overhanging bells mingled with it all, as Stephen wandered to and fro himself pitying the poor faint clue that held him to the spot.

Thus passed the days, seeking here and everywhere his lost one, the search still unrewarded. Foiled and despondent, one late afternoon found him in his room at the St. Denis. The chimes of Grace church, immediately opposite, sprinkled their sweet melody about, somehow intensifying the loneliness that settled round him like a cloud. His torture lay in the assurance that his wife was in the same city as himself, yet beyond his reach, hidden somewhere in the billowy depths of an ocean he could not penetrate.

Suddenly the thought drifted in upon him that of all the thousands of New York he knew no other one but her. Half curiously, he fell to searching the accuracy of this; and suddenly remembered, his face lightening a moment, that his old travelling companion and Edinburgh classmate, Ernest Mather, was now a minister somewhere in the mighty city. He had heard of him incidentally once or twice.

A moment later he summoned a servant and asked for a directory of the city. A brief search yielded him the name he sought, "Rev. Ernest Mather, B.D."; nothing the address, he set forth to find his friend.

As he alighted from the car he noted with surprise the humble character of the houses, nor was the one at which he ultimately paused much superior to its neighbours. A plate at the side of the door informed him that this was a mission-house, the headquarters of the workers. He felt a thrill of admiration for the whole-souled Mather, whose gifts and culture he well knew could win him a conspicuous place. Happy Mather!

Stephen rang the bell and the door was opened instantly by an elderly woman, who answered his enquiry with the disappointing intelligence that Mr. Mather was away from home.

"He's at a conference in Albany," she said, "gone for three days."

Stephen had given her his hotel address and was about to turn away, when a tiny voice rose from the neighbourhood of his knees.

"Please, Totty wants some one to pray."

"What?" said the matron in surprise.

"Totty's worse, and mother sent me for a preacher. Totty wants the lady—but we don't know where she is."

Very gently the kind-hearted housekeeper told the child how helpless she was to aid her, not a single worker being in the house. The poor urchin began to sob broken-heartedly.

"Ain't there nobody to pray? Totty won't be long."

Stephen stooped over and turned the tear-stained face upward with his hand.

"Would you trust me, little one?" he asked, almost reverentially. "I'm a minister, my child."

The little waif dried her tears as she looked up into the strong, loving face, hailing the pity that shone from the eyes of her new-found friend. Her answer was to slip her hand into the man's sheltering palm, leading him away. Ten minutes later they halted at a sagging door, one of its panels broken in. Pushing it back, they climbed the rickety stairs and stole into the room of death.

Squalid and poverty-stricken though it was, the Majesty was there: for a child of eight short years was awaiting her coronation at death's impartial hands. The father and mother, sunken and degraded both, were sharing in the silent pomp that clothes the humblest when they wait on this august ceremony. Their faces, marked though they were by signs of low indulgence, were lightened now with

the glow of a tenderness that wantonness could not destroy, and in each coarse and stainful palm there rested a hand of their little girl, whitened by disease and pain.

"Take out them rags, Sarah, and let in more air—she's worsen."

The woman turned and plucked the obstruction from the window, letting it fall upon the floor as she sank on her knees beside the bed again.

"Don't be afeard, Totty," Stephen heard the father say, the tears running down his grimy cheeks. "Mind what the lady told you—about that Jesus. You mind she said He said there was lots of beautiful, of beautiful—apartments, in heaven. She said as how He said if there hadn't 'a' been, He'd have, He'd have—have let us know. Wasn't that it, mother?"

"Yes, Joe," and the broken woman laid her face beside her child's on the soiled and crumpled pillow; "an' He'll come for you, Totty—the lady said He'd come an' get you. Keep a lookin' for Him, Totty, till He comes."

The dying eyes turned toward her father. "Ain't there nobody to pray?" she murmured.

Stephen drew closer and touched the unobservant man upon the shoulder. He started, looking questioningly into Stephen's face.

"I brung him," volunteered the guide, tiptoeing toward the bed, "there wa'n't nobody else—an' he's a preacher."

Without another word Stephen bended over the dying child, spoke a few words of heavenly comfort,

then dropped on his knees beside the bed. And his soul poured itself out in a prayer of simplicity and power, the very peace of God seeming to descend in answer upon the anguished hearts.

When he arose, the childish eyes were fastened on him with an intensity before which he almost quailed, for the challenge and searching of death looked out from them. Suddenly they forsook his face, roving downward toward the bed, then upward to the mother.

"Where's the cross?" she whispered.

The mother thrust her hand under the pillow—then withdrew it; she groped a moment under the scanty coverings.

"Here it is, darling, here it is," and she placed it in the wasted hand, the tiny steel chain that was attached lying on the clothes in a little coil.

Stephen glanced at it—then glanced again: and his brain seemed to flame with fire. He half reeled where he stood—for he knew it, he knew it! The size, the material, the colour, especially the chain, all these he marked with burning accuracy; and a vision of London, a glimmering street lamp, a trembling girl, a faltering story, passed before him as in a flash of midnight light.

"Where did you get that cross?" he burst out, forgetful of the decorum with which watchers wait for death.

The startled look of the father and mother recalled him to a sense of the occasion; swiftly he passed toward the door, beckoning the older girl to follow

him. She did so, and Stephen drew her half way down the creaking stair, repeating his enquiry in hoarse, beseeching tones.

"It was a lady, sir, what came to see our Totty. She seen the mother holdin' Totty at the window, an' she heard her coughin'. I think she allus goes in w'en she knows as there's sickness anywheres. It was her that guv that little cröss to Totty. She was a speakin' a lot about the cross—an' about Jesus; an' she showed it to Totty. She had it roun' her neck, an' Totty took an awful fancy to it—an' last night she guv it to her, chain an' all. She didn't want to give it at first—b'ut Totty cried; an' when she guv it, she had to pry one of the links open to get it off. She said as how it wasn't never off her neck afore, since her mother fixed it on."

Stephen's eyes were flashing into the girl's. "Where does she live? Where does she work?" he asked in a tense whisper.

"She's at some mission," the girl answered promptly; "I don't know nothin' about where it is—only it's called the Jerry Mission, or something like that. I heard her say so; I know mother said it was the same name as our Jerry that works in Harlem and . . ."

Stephen heard no more. Down the decrepit stairs he strode, out into the street, turning to the left in the direction he thought would lead to Brooklyn Bridge. Looking at his watch, he saw that it was but eight o'clock—the very hour! He had gone not more than half a block, when he

suddenly stopped, stood still, pondered a moment—a moment of inward battle—then turned and hurried back to the poor tenement with flying feet.

A glow of shame burned on the mantled cheek. "Forsaking a dying child," he muttered as he scanned the shabby doors for the broken panel. Resolutely he climbed the shabby stairs again and stood once more beside the lowly bed.

"She was asking for you," the father whispered, wondering at the hungry eyes that the stranger kept fixed upon the little cross.

With infinite tenderness he soothed the pillow for the dying head, quoting the sweetest promises, singing portions of gentle hymns, praying sometimes for the children's Friend to come.

They were all standing above the struggling one when suddenly the struggle turned to peace. A holy radiance shed the light of joy upon her face, and the little cross fell from the pallid hand, outstretched in eager signal.

"Oh, mother," she cried faintly, "He's a comin'—He's a comin' now."

The eyes that Stephen softly closed were still the homes of rapturous wonder. But the crying mother saw it not, engulfed in the billows of a sorrow she had never known before. Her husband knelt beside her, his hand caressingly upon her shoulder.

"Don't cry that way, mother," he said, himself, sobbing as he spoke. "I couldn't stand it neither only it was Him as took our Totty. He come and



took her, mother; I know it—for I seen our Totty's face."

Kneeling beside them both, Stephen prayed; and all his prayer was to the One who had taken Totty home. When he arose the mourners thought him beautiful, for tears like to their own were upon his cheeks.

He asked them, reverently, if he might have the precious symbol their child had held in her dying hands. It was reverently given; and soon, with a parting word of sympathy and love, Stephen resumed the quest from which he had been recalled by the same Voice as now bade him forth.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Yes, this is Water Street—and that's the Gospei mill ye're lookin' for. See that bright light in the next block? No, the other side the street, the side nearest the bridge—yes, that's it."

"That's the McAuley Mission the Jerry McAuley Mission, is it?"

"Right you are; that's what it is—never been there myself, but some terrible bums get made over there . . . when you get to the door just go straight in; they'll make you welcome. Good-night," and the wayfarer was gone.

Warm indeed was the welcome Stephen received as he stepped inside the narrow door of the famous mission. This was extended to him by the janitor, himself a beaming trophy of the place. Declining to be shown forward, Stephen took a seat near the

door, thinking but little of the service that was in progress, caring for nothing but the chance of finding his love again.

Soon, however, his curiosity and his emotion were awakened. For the mightiest enterprise on which mortal eyes can look was going on before him.

The address had evidently been already given, for the leading spirit of the place, successor to the great McAuley, had left the platform and was moving round among the men. Lame though he was, leaning heavily upon his staff, the infirmity was scarcely noticed when once the greatness and beauty of his character were recognized, as they were sure to be by any one who had the eyes to read them in his face, so marked by suffering, so full of yearning and compassion, so tranquil with its distant peace. This leader moved among the human derelicts, sitting down beside one and another, casting his line hither and thither like an eager fisher of men, wooing them to decision, promising them the strength of God, cheering them with visions of victory; and, above all else, plying the great advantage of his own rich experience, whispering the story of his one-time bondage to drunkenness and all its kindred vice, his face glowing and his eyes moistening as the story swelled into the song of the redeemed.

Then the testimonies began. One by one they faltered forth from lips long familiar with far other sorts of speech. The drunkard told his story, told how the burning thirst was gone, acclaiming the magic of grace Divine; the outcast too, his soul once

honeycombed with vice he might not name, chanted the song of his deliverance. And Stephen noted, his heart melted in pity as he saw, the faithful wives that here and there, sobbing to themselves, listened to the wondrous story, mutely praying that the summer day might last, trembling lest even yet they might be bidden forth from Paradise.

About the time the testifying had begun, a poor wastrel from the street had stumbled in and taken his seat beside Stephen on the bench near the door. He struggled to shake himself from his drunken slumber, blinking wearily as he looked upon the rejoicing converts, their strange testimony filtering slowly in upon his clouded brain.

He recognized as former boon companions, one or two of those who had reached the shore; and a strange expression of surprise and wonder mingled with his drunken torpor. A conflict of emotion flashed across his sin-stained face. Suddenly he arose, holding to the bench before him.

"I want to get what them fellows got—I don't know nuthin' about this Jesus Christ, but I want to get what them fellows has," he cried, and his words thrilled with the majesty of poverty and need.

In a moment the noble leader was beside him, limping swiftly down the aisle; a little later, a new trophy limped back with him to take his place among the penitent. The leader's face was radiant with the joy of those who joy in harvest.

Soon the evangelist took his place upon the platform, signalling to a stalwart man who stood beside

him. The latter, with a roll of music in his hand, moved over to the organ and prefaced his song with a few broken words of testimony. Three short months ago, he had been grovelling at the muddy bottom of Comic Opera, and, a little later, singing in any bar-room that would give him whiskey for his hire. This story he narrated, his eyes cast down as he told it; then he unfolded his music and began to sing "Grace that opened Heaven to me," his face uplifted as the words rolled on, till it was turned in wistful tenderness toward the struggling swimmers in the vortex he had left behind. Stephen's heart was full to bursting.

He longed to rise to take his place at last among the blood-be-wrinkled ones, his need as great as theirs; he longed to tell them that he, too, had been a dweller in the slums, that no jail-bird among them all had known an imprisonment more dark than his. But the moment passed, and he heard the leader's voice.

"Now, my brothers, we're going to close the meeting. But remember I'll be praying for you all to-night. And remember that He is faithful. It was a dying sailor, a Christian tar, that said with his latest breath: 'Mates, the anchor holds.' That's the word I leave with you all to-night. The anchor holds; the anchor holds. Trust the Saviour and you'll find Him true."

The leader turned a moment on the platform. There was a pause—and Stephen wondered why. The next instant his heart stood still and everything

grew dim and faint before him. For the first note of the now gushing song took his soul into its grip as in the hand of God. Rich, melodious, powerful, loving—it is Hattie's voice—thrilling with eager passion, sometimes quivering with tenderness as she sings:

“Christ receiveth sinful men,”

pleading in every syllable that the wanderers might come home.

She had almost finished before he raised his head; but just as the soulful voice lingered on the closing chords

“Tell it o'er and o'er again,  
Make the message clear and plain,  
Christ receiveth, Christ receiveth,  
Christ receiveth sinful men,”

he slowly raised his eyes till they could see her face. And the handiwork of the unseen was visible upon it; sorrow, loneliness, loyalty, yearning, mingling in their toil, had crowned the always lovely face with the beauty that is not of time—and Stephen pleaded with God to deny him not.

The motley throng was slowly filing out into the street, and Stephen stood within the darkness, his soul fixed in the eager gaze that never turned from the outflowing light.

“No, thank you, it isn't far—and Mrs. Cardiff always goes with me; her door is next to mine,” he heard the voice that rapt his heart in fire; and, stealing forth, he followed the dear form as it glided swiftly homeward.

It was not far, as she had said ; and soon, bidding her friend good-night, she tripped up a little flight of stairs. Her companion disappeared, the door slamming behind her, while Hattie, stooping slightly, tried to adjust her latch-key to the lock. She had not noticed Stephen, though he is now on the very bottom of the steps.

"Hattie," he cried softly, "Hattie, wait."

Amazed, she retreated a step toward the pavement, peering to discern the face ; for an over-hanging lamp, swinging in the wind, suddenly darkened, glimmering dimly.

He repeated the name again.

"Hattie, forgive me—I've come back. Oh, my darling, take me back, take me back. I want you so—my wife, my wife," holding his arms out to her in the darkness.

No word of chiding, nor question, nor remonstrance, nor sign of fear ; nothing but the sweet fragrance of love and trust and healing, as she stole silently into the open arms, her own tightening about his neck in the old clinging way, slowly tightening, as they had done in the cruel dreams that had so often mocked him since she went away.

They sank together upon the steps, the lamp still dim at heaven's bidding ; and the noises of the night, as once before, seemed dull and far away, shut out by a wall of living fire. Then his lips sought her own, upward turned, smiling, waiting, dewy with gladness, thrilling out their story beneath the sacred touch. His hand roved to her cheek, her hair, her

neck, dumbly stroking them as though he were a blind man longing to indentify his love.

"Come in," she murmured by and by, "I have just a little room here—it's a lodging house—but come in. Oh, Stephen, I have prayed for this so long. Last night I had the sweetest dream—I dreamed we were at Morven, dear, you and I together in the manse."

He said nothing, but passed with her into the long hall, still holding her close as they walked along in the semi-darkness. She paused before a door, beneath which there flowed a gleam of light.

"All right, Mamie, you may run to your room now. And thank you, dear."

In a moment a little girl came out, rubbing her eyes. She looked up at Hattie, beginning to speak; but Hattie motioned to her to be still, and she passed silently along the hall. They went in together, and Hattie turned and locked the door. Then she held her arms out to her husband, her face shining with the purity of love, and he folded her with silent rapture to his heart again.

"Stephen," she whispered, "you will never leave me again, will you, darling?"

He held her closer.

"Not even to-night—nor ever? You'll stay here with us to-night, won't you, Stephen—my husband, my husband!" and the face is moist that rests on his.

He started at the word. She drew herself gently from his arms, taking his hand in hers.

"Come, Stephen," she said, her voice shaking. "Come."

She led him to the bed, and they looked down together.

The room was warm; and there lay, slumbering sweetly, the chubby limbs all bare before them, one dimpled hand thrown carelessly above the flaxen hair, a baby face which the most careless eye could tell was fashioned like the storm-swept face above it.

Slowly Stephen's eyes crept about his wife, his breast heaving stormily, his face wrung with this new emotion of his soul. Long they gazed in silence, the little sleeper stirring as they looked, Hattie's glance turned now and then in eager pride upon her husband.

"Look at his little feet, Stephen," she crooned, "his toes—and his wee fingers. Oh, just wait till you see his eyes. They're yours, Stephen, they're yours."

But he spoke no word, nor turned his gaze away, looking through swimming eyes as though he could never look enough.

After a little she drew him gently downward, till their faces met above their child. The dimpled hand moved restlessly, poised a moment, then rested on Stephen's cheek; the baby woke, his big eyes fixing their startled gaze upon his mother, then wandering to his father's face. Wondering, he took a long look into the unfamiliar eyes, as if afraid; then suddenly the baby lips broke into a smile that seemed to Stephen like the light of God.



Hattie lifted the little one up between them, his fingers toying with his father's hair. Slowly she sank down beside the bed, her husband kneeling with her.

"Pray, Stephen," she said.

"I can't, Hattie, I can't—you pray," his choking voice replied.

And Hattie prayed, pleading her own before her God.

## THE NEW COVENANT

“**S**HURE 'twas a little bird that tould me the christenin' was to-noight—and I was bint on givin' my blessin' to the boy; and I've half a moind to salute the bride.” Father O'Rourke's merry laugh rang through the old Roschill farmhouse as his eyes turned, first on the mite in Hattie's arms, then on the blushing Bessie.

“Besoides, I wanted to see my curate again,” he went on jauntily. “I hadn't but a thimbleful of him in London—and that ould Maloney, that brought me back wid his paralysis, is as hearty as a two-year-old again; the ould sinner, the next toime I go abroad, I'll kill him wid a club before I go.”

The priest's mirthful banter was interrupted by a voice without.

Robert Wishart, still wreathed in smiles, opened the door and admitted his well-loved minister.

“Come in, Mr. Shearer. We're a' ready for the bapteezin'—the bairn's fine, never a cheep oot o' him. Tak the rockin' chair; ye ken a' the folk.”

Close beside his son stood Robert Wishart, his face anointed with the oil of gladness as Stephen and Hattie presented their first-born for the holy rite. Mr. Shearer addressed to them a few words of earnest counsel.

"What is the child's name?" he then enquired.

"Reuben," answered Stephen; and as he spoke the name, he turned, looking full upon his brother with ineffable love and tenderness. Reuben saw the glance, interpreting its great significance with silent joy; but he did not see another face, glowing with reverent love, that looked on his with a devoted pride which was to fill all his after life with blessing. For she stood close beside him, close clinging in wifely love.

The sacramental drops still bedewed the infant's head when Father O'Rourke took him from his mother's arms, looking long down on the unconscious child. Gently he kissed the baby brow, and Stephen heard him murmuring low: "The angel that redeemed me from all evil bless the lad."

Happy beyond description was the little company that gathered about the hospitable board, Robert Wishart at the head, every word a safety-valve for the joy that overflowed his heart. Stephen was beside Mr. Shearer.

"It's this day fortnight you're to be settled at Morven, is it not?" he asked the former; "I hope to be there."

"Yes," Stephen answered, "and by the way, the elders have asked me to give their church a name. It has always been called the Morven church; but they want something more distinctive, and they've asked me to select it. I'm getting my friends to help me. At least, I have asked my wife to suggest a name—and you might aid us both."

"Leave it to your wife," said Mr. Shearer, smiling toward the lovely face, crowned now with the new beauty of mother-love.

The evening had fallen when the company dispersed, and Robert Wishart was saying farewell to Mr. Shearer at the gate.

"I shud be prayin', I suppose, that He'd let His servant gang till his rest in peace, noo my cup o' joy is full. But I dinna feel that way—I'd sooner bide a wee, and see wee Reuben a bit along the path." And Mr. Shearer blessed the noble heresy as he said good-night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Richly blessed did the Morven worshippers deem themselves that Sabbath morning, two weeks later, when their new minister's first sermon flowed about them in rich tides of earnestness and love.

Beautiful was the face that looked out upon them from the pulpit he was now proud to call his own. For time is a wondrous workman, if he have but the proper tools. Nor had these been spared on Stephen's face; sorrow, remorse, loneliness, all-torturing love, all-conquering hope—with these ever favourite tools had the untiring craftsman plied his silent toil, pausing not to look upon the labour of his hands, leaving the fruits of his industry to the great Taskmaster's eye. In the fruitful night had he done his work, without sound of hammer or blow of chisel, without gleam of knife or glow of refiner's flame. But it had been done, and all men saw its beauty save Stephen only.

Strength, tenderness, compassion, purpose, love, all these spoke through the lips that burned now with a new and chastened eloquence; and the peace of God was upon the hushed and rejoicing throng.

Before the benediction was pronounced, Stephen glanced toward the choir in the old-fashioned gallery at the end of the church. Then he quietly took his seat and waited.

Deep silence reigned a moment; the next, rich thrilling tones poured forth, the same he had first heard in far-off London when his soul first awakened at the voice of love. The same hymn, but farther on in its deepening stream:

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down.  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

Rejoicing ones had detained him a few minutes at the church. And as Stephen hurried across the soft sward, peering eagerly toward the manse, the unclouded sun poured down on Hattie, her eyes bent on little Reuben asleep in the hammock that swung gently beneath the trees.

Her hand stole into her husband's as they stood together looking down upon the slumberer's face.

"Oh, Stephen," she said eagerly, "I've thought of a name; I'm sure it's the right one. Let us call it 'The Church of the New Covenant.'"

The strong note of a strong man's love was in his

voice as he took her in his arms. "Yes, darling, the new covenant, new, my darling."

Which their lips sealed as they met in silentness and song, blending in the hymn of praise that angels cannot learn.

THE END

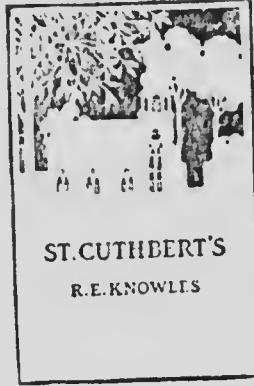


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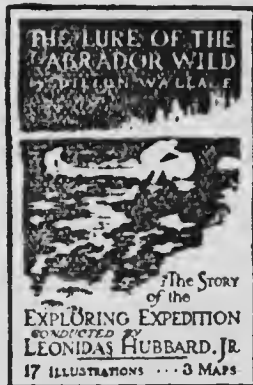
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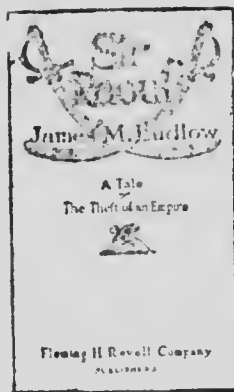
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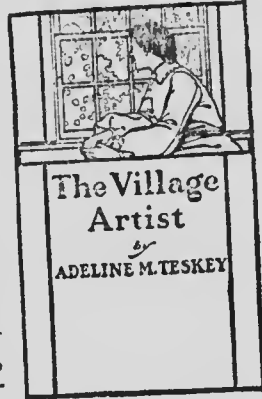
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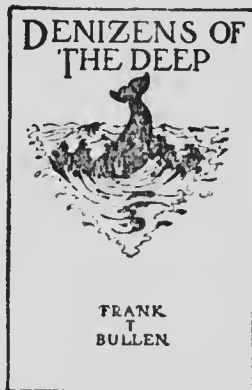
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