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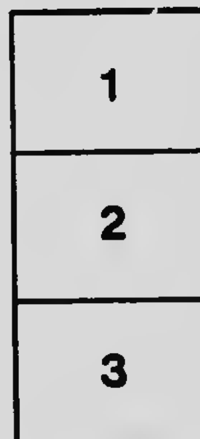

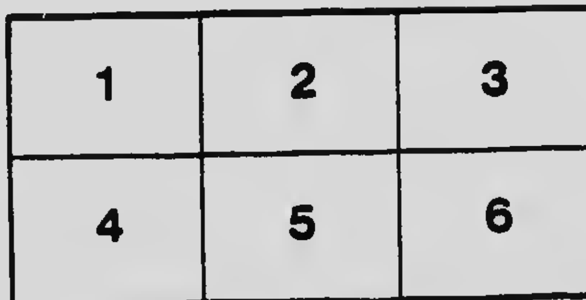

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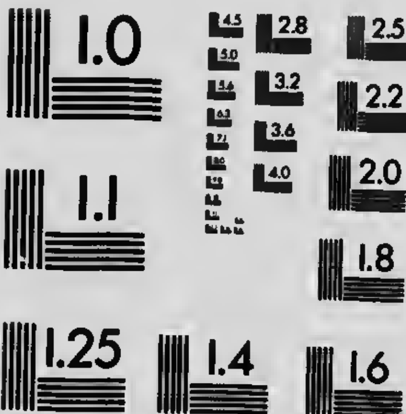

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THE CAGE

HAROLD BEGBIE

Marriage – "may be compared to a cage: the birds without, despaire to get in; and those within, despaire to get out."

Montaigne.

25

Dear Minnie with
love and best wishes
for a Merry Christmas
from
Aunt Annie
1910

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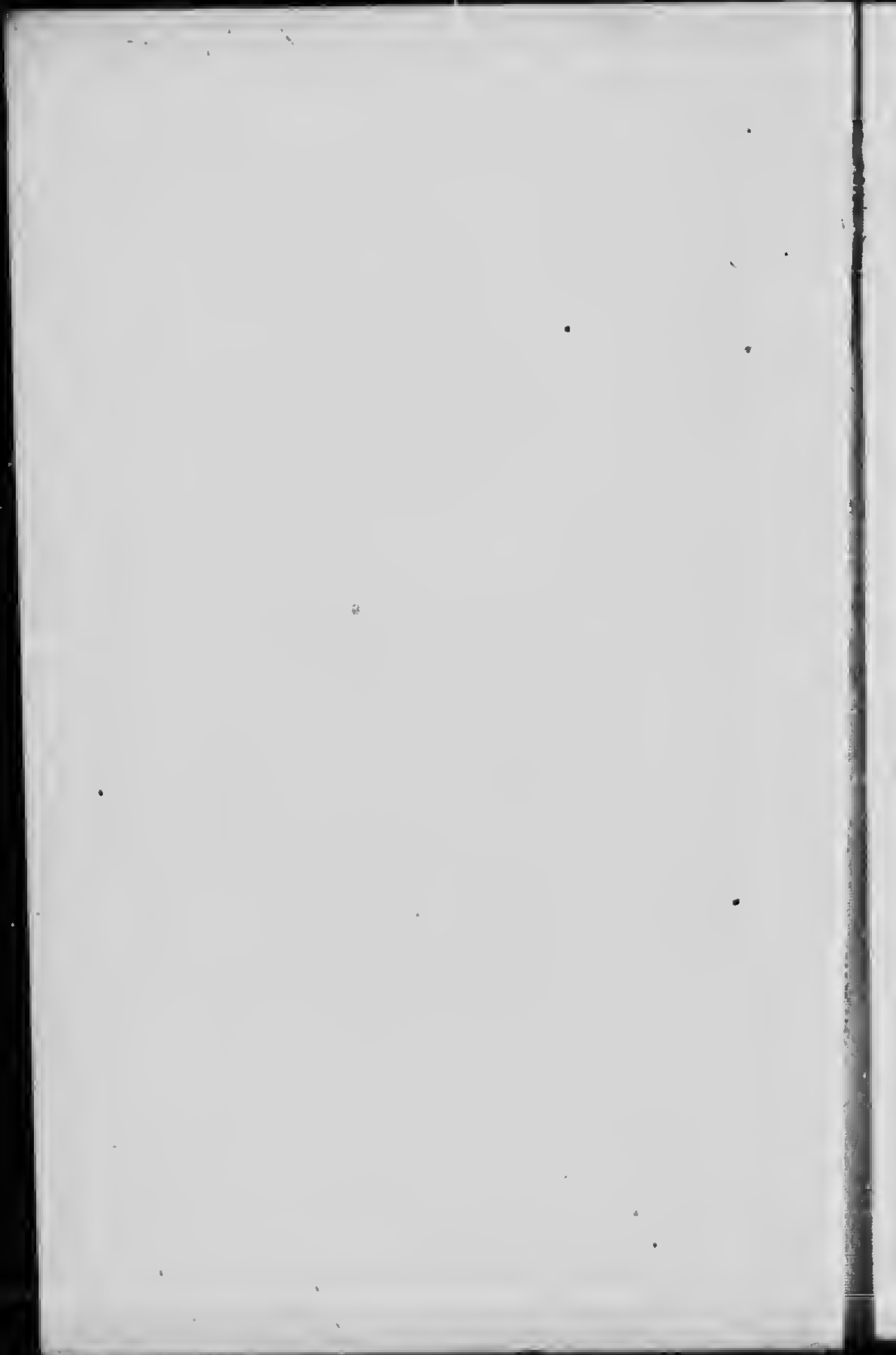

THE CAGE

THE CAGE

BY

HAROLD BEGBIE

It may be compared to a cage: the birds without despaire to get in, and those within despaire to get out.

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"Where women are honoured the divinities are complacent; where they are despised, it is useless to pray to God."

CHAPTER I

HERITAGE

THE name of Robert Campbell Ainslie is still remembered in Edinburgh. Anecdotes concerning him and laconicisms attributed to his lips are almost as numerous, and now are nearly as tedious, as those which embalm for posterity the memories of historical personages. Many sayings are doubtless ascribed to him which he never uttered. He was one of those rough and honest personalities who make an iron impression on a conventional generation, and whose dust mingles with the earth only that their impressive ghosts may stalk the ways of men in the embroideries of *Aberglaube*. For the historian, he was a fashionable physician with common-sense notions on the subject of diet, great honesty and courage, and a penetrating knowledge of human nature.

His father was a second-hand bookseller in St. Giles's Ward, who had enjoyed the patronage of Sir Walter Scott. The tall and narrow shop is still standing; it is still consecrated to the rags and bones of literature: a student of the University is perhaps at this moment running his hand along the dusty shelves in quest of some second-hand text-book which was grubbed and dog's-eared by contemporaries of

Robert Ainslie. In this obscure shop, surrounded by the squalor of a great city and stimulated by the narrow circumstances of his own home, Ainslie studied, meditated, formed his judgments, and grew to manhood. Every morning, when he hurried to school with his long-reaching stride and a strapped bundle of books under his arm, he saw a multitude of barefoot, ragged, ill-nourished and neglected children swarming over the pavements and shivering in little confraternities of suffering at the entry to every pestilential close on the way. Every night, when he bent over his books in a miserable garret at the top of the tall house, he heard through his hands, which were pressed tight over his ears, the drunken laughter and the screaming cries of men and women staggering and fighting in the ill-lit underworld of Edinburgh beneath his window. Perhaps these things influenced his character; for he was one of those rare people who not only observe, but apprehend what they observe. He knew that the men and women who were drunken at night were the fathers and mothers of the children who shivered and starved in the morning, and that the children were Posterity. He used to regard the bugle of the Highlanders ringing "Lights out" from the Castle as a warning to the wicked city. "One night," he said to his younger brothers, "it will be the Last Trump, and Hell will get a bellyful out of Edinburgh."

It was indignation with the follies and perversities of mankind which led him to become a doctor. "People don't interest me," he used to say, "but their

machinery does; I cannot bear the sight of a cheated body." The only absolutism in a period of democracy is that of a physician, and this strong-willed man, who was a scientific and not a sentimental humanitarian, became a doctor in order that he might rule men. "My kingdom," he said, "is posterity."

His practice began with the poor, and ended with the rich. At the outset of his career, when he himself hungered among the hungry, his prescriptions were mostly drafts on charitable societies for meat and bread. "Those whom you call the poor," he once said to a politician, "I call the hungry." He attributed the brutalities of the poor to ill-nourished bodies, and the vices of the rich to over-nourished bodies. He declared diet to be the supreme question of the human race. "Dr. Ainslie," asked a wealthy merchant, troubled in his conscience by the employment of a physician who did not support the Free Kirk, "do you, sir, or do you not, believe in a devil?"

"No," he answered, "I believe in three devils, a trinity of devils; one for each end of the stick, and one for the middle; the devil of the poor is starvation, the devil of the rich is gluttony, and the devil of everybody is ignorance." He earned little or nothing for feeding the poor; the rich paid him extravagant fees for taking away their dinners. "I began my practice," he used to say, "by filling the hungry with good things; I end it by sending the rich empty away." He never cultivated the bedside manner of a fashionable physician. "What do you prescribe for me?" he was once asked by a wealthy and neurotic

woman. "A scrubbing brush," was his answer. To one of his wealthiest patients, a Calvinist who sought to convert him, he said indignantly, "Why, man, your God is my devil."

His vogue did not come till he was at middle age. At that time people said of him that he had the body of Bismarck, the face of Moltke, and the soul of Cromwell. His appearance was certainly handsome and impressive. His heavy and austere countenance bore the marks of endurance rather than the signs of effort and struggle. He had helped all his brothers to make a start in the world, and had buried his father and mother before his fortunes took their turn. The struggle of his early life accounted for the two chief fears which governed his character, the fear of poverty and the fear of wealth. He felt the terrible injustice of the one, and the frightful responsibility of the other. These two fears became more forceful the more he succeeded. He earned money only to give it away. He practised the severest economies. He regarded the least of luxuries in the light of a vice.

Ainslie fell in love but once in his life. This was with an old English soldier, a general in the Madras Army, who, with his wife and daughter, came to Edinburgh, his body shattered by wounds, and tortured by fever, to put himself under Ainslie's care. The two men grew fond of each other. The old bearded soldier was a hero of what Heine called the mattress-grave. In spite of great physical pain and the misery of being nailed to a bed, he was radiant with cheerfulness, easily provoked to humour, and

always grateful for kindness. The man believed in God. Ainslie would sit for sometimes a whole hour on the edge of the old warrior's bed, regarding affectionately the wasting, ivory-coloured face with its long greying beard, and listening with a profound sympathy to the faint voice of this once vigorous commander of artillery. They exchanged anecdotes. They quoted Burns against each other. They laughed at the new theory of microbes. They discussed the politics of the day. They smiled together, laughed together, shook hands with a clasp that meant affection. The general loved the doctor—his large eyes shone and his face became illumined with pleasure at Ainslie's entrance. "The sight of you does me good!" he used to say, smiling. And the doctor loved the old soldier. "General Dobson," he said, "you've taught me the pleasure of a chat." During their intimacy came the failure of the Oriental Bank, ruining General Dobson. Ainslie kept the news from him. He provided Mrs. Dobson with money, and bound her to secrecy. The general died without knowing of his ruin. After his death, Ainslie married the daughter.

He explained to this lady, a capable, vigorous, and rather amusing woman of the world, who was then thirty years of age, and to her mother, his convictions concerning money. He made it plain to his future wife that she was marrying a poor man, and one who intended, God helping him, to remain poor all the days of his life. "I have no wish to be rich," she said; "only comfortable." "While people are hungry

no one can be comfortable," he answered. "That is very true," said the lady, feeling suddenly cold, but quickly recovering her self-confidence.

At the age of fifty-three, Dr. Ainslie became the father of a daughter, who was named Anne, after her English grandmother, the old and diminutive Mrs. Dobson, who now formed a member of the household. The child brought happiness to the doctor's heart. He had the tenderness of all stern and lofty souls for little children. His own child came close to his soul, like a whisper from heaven, like a touch from God. It was difficult to believe that the stern and bluff physician of the consulting-room was the same man as the father carrying his child in his arms and bending upon it looks and smiles of the most ingratiating gentleness. It was this child who made Robert Ainslie an open and avowed enemy of priestly authority. He refused to have the infant baptized. "If God has set a curse upon my child," he declared, "I'll have nothing to do with Him. Such a God is a Monster." A righteous man's defiance of the Almighty may be a matter for rebuke, it is not contemptible. But Ainslie did not think that he defied God.

Mrs. Ainslie, who was becoming a figure in Edinburgh society on account of her husband's fame, watched the tenderness of the doctor towards their child with a secret hope. She was sick to death of the mean circumstances which governed her home. Her vigorous efforts to break Ainslie of parsimonious habits had quite failed. She hoped to stop the

stream of her husband's charities with the hands of her child. With considerable care, for the doctor was not a man to be duped, she spoke about the future of the little Anne. She constantly referred in his hearing to her own childhood, to the refinements of her home, to the educating splendours of her youth when her father commanded the Madras Artillery and reigned at St. Thomas's Mount. "A gloomy home darkens the minds of children," she said to one of her friends, "it makes them long for foolish pleasures and dangerous vanities; don't you think that is true?" "It depends on the mother," interrupted the doctor, "and sometimes on the father."

The man whose personality was easily the chief force in the Edinburgh of that day, and whose fame as a consulting physician spread into foreign countries, lived in one of the grey houses in Darnaway Street, wore threadbare broadcloth and a shabby hat, kept no carriage, employed but two servants, and allowed his wife fifty pounds a year for the clothes of herself, her mother and her child. This little family had porridge for breakfast, and dined in the middle of the day. The linen was coarse, the furniture was solid and plain; the walls of the rooms were distempered. To a woman with social ambitions, this home was like a prison. To a woman of taste, as can easily be imagined, it was horribly ugly. To the doctor, who hurried up the narrow stairs to his child's nursery, it was an altar.

At the height of his fame, and when [illegible] hour of

his time was engaged, Ainslie was still the personal friend and comforter of the poor. His handsome figure and austere countenance, to the end of his days, were familiar in St. Giles's Ward. He helped the sons of poor people in their education, assisted families to emigrate, provided food for the starving, clothes for the naked, work for the unemployed, and homes for the homeless. He was a menace to owners of insanitary properties, a terror to sellers of adulterated food, and a thorn in the side of civic authority. No private man was ever so effective a politician. Few men have ever exercised so generous a liberality. It is said of him that when his income stood at twelve thousand pounds a year, he was living on five hundred and, beyond insurance, saving not a penny.

Dr. Ainslie, in spite of his tenderness for Anne and his sympathy with the sufferings of the poor, did not permit himself the luxury of emotion. He was perhaps too busy a man to be religious. He did not dream. He neither regarded the flowers at his feet nor contemplated the stars over his head. His universe was the body of man. Materialism could boast in him of a man who was religious without a religion. If he lacked that sweetness of nature and that beautiful yearning after God which makes Victor Hugo's Bishop Myriel so delightful, so enchanting a character, he yet possessed a more robust and heroic hatred of injustice, and this, as we have seen, was not without its service to humanity. Religion in our day does not deny her immense obligation to the

apostles of *physical morality*. Thirty years ago the antagonism between faith and science was fiercer and perhaps more honest. Dr. Ainslie could never wholly forget the unscrupulous and wicked opposition which science had encountered from religion. "Most of the attacks upon science," he once said, "have come from men wearing spectacles." To a short-sighted minister who ventured to argue with him on the limitations of human knowledge, Ainslie replied, "What are the facts? You don't believe in miracles. You believe in the oculist."

One winter's afternoon, in the year 1885, a note was brought to Dr. Ainslie, as he sat in his consulting-room at the back of the house with his dark grey eyes fixed upon the face of a gentleman who had travelled from Chicago to describe his sufferings from dyspepsia. The letter was marked "Urgent," and the servant said that the messenger awaited an answer. Dr. Ainslie opened the envelope swiftly by means of a paper-knife, and drew out a thin sheet of paper. His heavy eyebrows came together as he read; then a light of illumination shone in his face; he looked up quickly, and said to the servant, "Say I will come directly."

He rose from his chair like a man in a hurry. "You crossed in a steamer?" he asked, looking down at his patient.

"Yes."

"Were you sick?"

"A little."

"Wait for the equinox and go back in a sailing ship."

The waiting-room was full of patients. He opened the door, and addressed the group, who rose at his entrance. In a sentence he announced that he was called away and that he would be absent for an hour. He begged them to excuse him. As he picked up his hat in the hall, the front door opened and his wife and daughter entered. The child, seven years of age at this time, ran forward to her father and embraced his legs, laughing up into his face. "I am in hurry," he said, and disengaged himself.

He left the house, and walking at a great pace made the descent to Princes Street, and crossing the city took his way past Heriot's Hospital to a small *cul de sac* running out of a turning from Lauriston Place. His thoughts were so deeply engaged by the message which had brought him to this neighbourhood that his wonderful faculty of observation was entirely unemployed; he saw nothing, heard nothing, noticed nothing. He could hardly have told by what route he had come. The message which carried his feet to this dingy locality had sent his soul a journey into the past.

Ten years ago he had received a visit from a well-dressed, boyish and soldier-like young Englishman who gave his name as Napier, and instantly disowned that name when he came into the doctor's presence.

"I have a matter of the greatest delicacy and importance to lay before you, sir," he had said, standing in the lamplight of the doctor's study. "I cannot

explain to you all the circumstances, but I ask you to trust me and to do what I most earnestly beg you to do. You are not only a great doctor; you are a good man; that is why I have come to you."

The busy doctor, who had Wellington's wholesome disgust for flattery, made a movement of impatience with his hands. "Sit down," he said, and pointed to a chair. The walls of the consulting-room were dark with books. Dull red curtains were drawn across the windows. The floor was polished and spread with cheap rugs. A gas-stove burned in the fire-place with a saucer of water in front of it. The doctor sat in shadow; the green-shaded lamp threw its light on the delicate, flushed face of the visitor.

"What do you want?" asked Ainslie.

The young man continued his story: "There is a girl living at this address in the name of Mrs. Napier, who will shortly become a mother." He reached forward and handed the doctor a piece of paper. "I am called away; I cannot possibly remain; I am anxious for the mother's sake and for the child's that she should not suffer. If I can leave matters in your hands, I shall be satisfied; my conscience will be lighter, and my heart will be less miserable. I have brought with me some bank-notes, a little over a thousand pounds, and I ask you—I implore you, sir, to take this money and use it as you think best for the mother and for the child. Don't, I beg you, tell the mother that I gave you this money. Don't say a single good word for me. Say that I sent you to her, and that is all. When she is over her trouble

let her think that you yourself are helping her out of kindness of heart. I want her to forget me. If she hates me so much the better."

"You mean, in plain language," said the doctor, who hated sentimentalism and despised emotion, "that after ruining this poor girl, you are deserting her?"

"Let me remind you, sir," said the young man, "that you do not know all the circumstances."

"Only the facts," retorted the busy man, beginning to be irritated.

The visitor did not wince. The terrible judgment in the great doctor's eyes would perhaps have shaken an assassin; this graceful young man remained imperturbable and composed. After a moment he said quietly—

"For God's sake, sir, do what I ask."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," replied the doctor, getting up. He stood between the lamp and his visitor. "You have broken a woman's heart and ruined her life. You want me to patch things up with a thousand pounds. You're a blackguard." He pointed to the door, and moved again towards his table.

The young man remained where he was. He met the angry challenge of the doctor's eyes with unflinching humility. "You are quite right. I am a blackguard. That is why I have come to you."

"Why don't you marry this girl?"

"I cannot, for her own sake."

"Are you a married man?"

"No."

"Then I'll tell you what you are. You are a liar. You *can* marry this girl. You ought to marry her. Instead you're deserting her."

"No."

"You said you were going away?"

"Yes, that is true."

"Why must you go?"

"It is against my will." He paused a moment. "I can assure you of that. If you only knew!"

"Knew what?"

"How I want to stay."

"Where are you going?"

For a moment the young man kept silence. The doctor could hear his breathing. Then he answered—

"To prison."

In the lamplight of the room the two men looked at each other.

The doctor studied his visitor with a closer scrutiny. The young man was something more than a gentleman. He was refined, elegant and gracious. There was charm in his presence, in his manner, in his gesture, in his voice. He was pleasant, brilliant, in quite a manly fashion beautiful. It was difficult to believe that this almost girlish young aristocrat was going into prison; it was impossible to think that he was lying.

"I am sorry for you," said the doctor, at the end of the scrutiny.

"I am sorry for the girl," answered the youth. Then he added, "Don't tell her that I am going to

prison. I beg you not to. It would make her fonder of me."

In spite of the doctor's arguments, he refused to tell his real name or to give any details of the crime which was carrying him to prison. He said that his arrest might be delayed, but that it was inevitable. He had one overmastering desire, that the woman should be led to believe, when she was well enough to bear it, that he had deserted her. Again and again he repeated with transparent sincerity this eager desire. "I have just written to my mother," he concluded; "it is my confession of everything. I have told her that this particular matter is in your hands. She is a proud woman, but I hope she will help the child, through you, in case anything should happen to me. The money, which I leave with you, I regret to say, is the last penny I possess in the world."

Dr. Ainslie most unwillingly accepted the mission. The young man passed out of his house and out of his life, but not out of his memory. He attended the woman through her confinement, and visited her frequently after the child was born, a healthy boy, the express image of his father. Then, before he had spent a shilling of the money left in his hands for their well-being, the mother and the baby disappeared. The landlady could tell him nothing. The woman had paid her bill and taken her departure.

Dr. Ainslie, such was his nature, and so numerous were his occupations, was more vexed by than interested in this mystery. He made no inquiries about the woman and child; he was but little curious con-

cerning the father. In the busy life of such a man romance finds no welcome, mystery is driven from the door. He invested the money left in his hands, and attended to his business.

One day, some months after the disappearance of mother and child, an old lady called upon Dr. Ainslie and refused to give any name. It was the mother of the youth who had gone to prison. She was dressed in heavy mourning, and wore a dark veil over her face. She asked for news of the woman and the child. Dr. Ainslie had to confess his ignorance of their whereabouts. The old lady seemed relieved. He spoke of money left in his hands, and declared his wish to get rid of it. "I could not touch it," said the voice behind the veil. "And I cannot keep it, ma'am," he retorted. "It is a solemn trust," answered the voice sternly; "some day the child will demand it of you." She went away, and next day the post brought Dr. Ainslie a five-pound note enclosed in a piece of paper on which was written "Dr. Ainslie's fee," in the thin pointed handwriting of an old lady. For seven years the mysterious visitor presented herself once a year at the house of the doctor; on each occasion she came heavily veiled, and on each occasion she refused to accept the accumulating money which the doctor pressed her to take, and on each occasion her visit was followed by a five-pound note enclosed in a sheet of paper with the inscription, "Dr. Ainslie's fee."

Then the visits ceased.

Three years had passed away since that last visit, and now in the winter of 1885 the whole memory of

this mysterious affair was suddenly and tragically revived. The note which had summoned the doctor so urgently was from the girl abandoned by the young man who had gone to prison. She was dying.

Dr. Ainslie was conducted to a small bedroom at the back of the house so high up that it caught all the red splendours of a winter sunset. A bird was singing loudly in its cage by the window. The little apartment was neatly furnished and not without touches of refinement. The walls were covered with a blue-and-white paper; the dressing-table was draped with blue-glazed linen covered by white muslin; where the carpet, which was only a blue felt, did not reach the walls the floor boards were painted white. On a bed against the wall, which was covered by a knitted cotton counterpane, with her head towards the window and her feet towards the fire-place, lay the woman he had come to see. She had seven or eight hours to live.

Ainslie brought a chair to the bedside and sat down. The woman was passing through a fit of gasping. The counterpane rose and fell with the violent heavings of her body. He took a soft towel and passed it gently over her streaming forehead. Her eyes, which were filled with a staring terror, the effect of her pain, turned towards him and thanked him for this kindness. The bird sang cheerfully in its cage.

"You will be easier in a moment," he said, and placed one of his hands on the feverish and wasted fingers which were picking at the sheets. "Be in no

hurry. I remember you perfectly. I am here to help you."

The sunset illumined the little room, but left the woman's face in shadow. It looked dark and obscure on the pillows, which were grey in the shadow. Her dark hair was like a sea of death in which the poor drowning face floated mistily.

When the spasm was over, and she had moistened her lips, she said to him, "Will you tell him, after I'm gone, that I was happy?"

The doctor hesitated. "Yes," he said, "I will tell him."

The flicker of a smile passed over the woman's face. "I haven't been a trouble to him," she said, in a whisper; "I haven't spoilt his life."

"Does this bird worry you? Shall I move it from the window?"

"Oh no; it doesn't worry me."

"Why did you go away from me?" asked Ainslie, bending nearer to her. The bird was singing so cheerfully that he had difficulty in hearing the woman's voice.

"So as not to trouble him," she answered. "I was ruining his life. I knew he would come back to me." She gasped for a moment. "Everything helped me," she continued. "The baby came when the regiment was going away; he had to leave me in Edinburgh; he couldn't help it, and that was my chance to save him."

"And the baby?"

"I thought of the baby, too," she answered.

"It was a boy, the image of his father."

"I have paid a woman to bring him up as her own child."

"So that he might not trouble his father?"

"Yes; and never be ashamed of his mother."

"Where is he now?"

"Leave him. It is better. He will never know."

"But his father gave me a sum of money for you and the child, too."

Her eyes brightened; the wax-like pallor of her face was suffused with a soft fire; her lips parted in a smile. The doctor never forgot the look in those dying eyes as she breathed the proud words, "He loved me!"

"You appear to have loved him, too," answered the doctor.

She closed her eyes; she was still smiling. Her expression was sublime enough for Simeon at the moment when he breathed the first *Nunc Dimittis*. She was satisfied. Life had no more to give.

The last flame of sunset died away; the room became cold; the bird stopped singing.

"You must tell me where this boy is," said the doctor. "You have sacrificed yourself for the man. You have been noble there. But you are a mother. You owe it to your child that he should have the protection and the influence of his father. Besides, I must get rid of the money."

Very gently he reasoned with her, and at last, chiefly because she herself had saved a sum of money for the child, she yielded to his insistence. He

received from her dying lips the whereabouts of the son she had given up for the sake of the father from whom she had hidden her life. From those dying lips, too, he received the simple story of her existence during the past ten years. She had first obtained employment in one of the smaller Edinburgh hotels, and out of her wages had paid for the support of her child; her one object in life had been to prevent the man she loved from discovering her. Neither she nor the child must ever irk that life. Then she had become the stewardess of a Club in George Street, and not only had paid the increased demands of her child's foster-parents, but had laid by a sum of money to meet any future demands in case she should lose her employment or fall ill. She had provided for every contingency. Her life had been one long, cheerful devotion to duty; her happiness had been the certain knowledge that she was no longer a source of ruin to the man she had loved.

It was quite clear to the doctor that she knew nothing of her lover's crime or imprisonment. But she knew what he did not know. The true name of the lover.

"Did you hear nothing of this man all through your solitude?" he asked, in the deepening darkness of the room.

She shook her head.

"Or read nothing about him in the newspapers?"

Her eyes brightened. "Is he married?" she asked. The tone of her voice told him that her eyes had brightened.

The doctor bent nearer to her. "I must tell you something," he said. "I do not know his name. I know nothing about him. He came to see me. He showed me that he loved you. He left money with me. Then he went away——"

"With his regiment."

"You are sure of that?"

"His regiment went away; he had to go with it."

"And you have never heard a word about him since?"

She shook her head proudly. "I haven't tried," she answered. Then she began to think. "But, how will you tell him that I have been happy? You don't know who he is?"

"No."

She was silent for a long time. "Perhaps it is best," she said at last, very slowly and almost wearily. "He may have forgotten by now. Yes, don't try and find him. Only, if he comes to see you, some day, tell him I have been happy."

"His mother comes to see me."

"His mother!" Her eyes opened wide. "His mother! Are you telling me the truth?"

"Yes. She has been to see me. Seven times. When she comes again, I will tell her about you. She will tell her son. He shall know."

"His mother!" she whispered. "His mother! How strange that seems."

"She will help your child."

"I can't understand. His mother! Why did his mother come?"

"It was his wish that she should be kind to you."

The trouble left her face. "Oh!" she breathed in a long-drawn pleasure. Then she whispered, "How beautiful! How beautiful!"

"Would it not be best for you," asked the doctor presently, "to tell me the name of the man?"

"No! Oh no!" she answered, with a smile. "It has never passed my lips."

When Ainslie left her it was after six o'clock. He lighted a lamp for her, and left her with the landlady. Snow was falling with a steady persistency when he came into the street. He hurried back to his house, saw those patients who were waiting for him, and without taking food set out again for the address given him by the woman. For the first time since his child was born he did not visit her in her cot. The clocks were striking nine when he opened the door. It was still snowing.

He took a tram at Waterloo Place, and travelled to Leith. His way ran through an apparently interminable mean street of small houses, whose shuttered windows were rimmed with light, and whose roofs were white with snow. No one was to be seen in the long vista of snow and gaslight. Not a sound issued from the shuttered houses. At last he perceived at the end of the avenue of gas lamps a black mass of buildings with immense chimney-stacks fluttering tongues of crimson fire in the black sky. He knew now that he was in the neighbourhood of the street for which he was seeking. Arrived before the buildings, he pulled up and looked about him. He could see

the masts of ships over the roofs of houses. Sounds of life came from a dirty public-house at a distant corner. Through the flakes of descending snow he saw white letters on the great gates of the building: Paton's Engineering Works. As he looked at the familiar name, the dark figure of a child passed across the white letters. The doctor hailed the boy, and the little figure stopped in front of the dark gates.

Ainslie crossed the road, and asked the direction of the street he was seeking. The boy pointed ahead. The finger that he lifted was blue with cold. Ainslie looked down and saw that the boy was shoeless; that the little legs were stooping forward, that the shoulders were rounded, that the face of the child was glassy with cold and hunger.

"Why aren't you at home?" he asked, feeling in his pocket.

"I'm going."

"Do you live in this part of the world?"

The boy nodded.

"Whereabouts?"

"Same street as yours," answered the boy. His teeth rattled.

"Come along with me, then," said the doctor, and gave his hand. "Have you got a father and a mother?" he asked, as they went forward through the snow.

"And three brothers and four sisters," answered the boy.

"Is your father unkind to you?"

"Not unless I'm late home."

"You are late to-night? Why? What have you been doing?"

"Looking at the Works."

"What Works do you mean?"

"Paton's."

"Why have you been looking at them?"

"I like them."

They arrived in the street. "I want number thirty-six," said the doctor.

"That's ours," said the boy.

The doctor stopped. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Hugh."

"And your surname?"

"Logan."

"How old are you?"

"Ten."

The doctor walked on till they came to a lamp. He stopped again. "Look up at me, laddie," he said. In the flickering light of the gas he recognized this shivering boy as the child of the mystery. A strange emotion visited the old doctor's heart. He thought of the handsome young father who had left him to go to a prison; he thought of the mother who was probably dying at that very moment. And here, holding his hand, was the child. After a brief scrutiny, he said, "You're the boy."

"I've done nothing wrong," answered the child.

When Ainslie knocked at the door of number thirty-six, it was opened by a harsh-faced woman,

who no sooner saw the boy in a man's charge than she turned round to the lighted room, and exclaimed over her shoulder, "The young devil's been up to mischief."

A man rose behind her, and there was a clatter of children's feet on the floor.

"The boy has done no harm," said the doctor.

He stood in the entrance of the room, holding the child's hand.

It was a working-man's kitchen—small, low-roofed, draughty, and stone-floored. A table was laid with a rough supper in the middle of the room. An oil-lamp with a tin reflector hung from one of the walls. There was a fire in the grate. On the top of the range a soot-blackened kettle was hissing steam and the lid of a greasy saucepan was beginning to heave and fall with a low bubbling sound, emitting a pungent smell which reeked into the room.

Seated at the table was a young man shabbily dressed, but marked by education with unmistakable signs of refinement. It was evident that this young man was a lodger. As soon as he perceived the doctor he rose hastily from his chair. The man Logan had just begun to speak; the wife was frowning at the visitor; the children were clamouring round the group in the doorway.

"Mr. Logan," said the young man in a solemn voice, standing in a dramatic attitude of repose, "this is the great Dr. Ainslie."

Ainslie looked over the heads of the workman and

his wife, who at once stared their astonishment at the visitor, and said to the young man, "I've seen you before."

"My name, sir, is Ramsay M'Gavin," answered the young man.

The doctor nodded. "I remember you very well. I'm pleased to see you, Mr. M'Gavin."

He then removed his hat, and came further into the room. "Mrs. Logan," he said, "if you'll kindly give the laddie his supper, and get him to bed, I'll be better able to talk to you and the goodman. I've some business with you." Then, after a long study of the boy's face, he turned to M'Gavin.

"I didn't know you were lodging in these parts, Mr. M'Gavin."

"It's a very healthy locality, sir," answered the young man, with a faint flush.

The doctor looked about him. "There's a kettle boiling on the fire, Mr. M'Gavin," he said after a pause. "If you've a bath on the premises, it would be an admirable mixture to put the water in the bath, add the boy, stir quickly with a good brush or a piece of flannel, and then empty the boy into warm blankets."

"I'll see to it, sir."

"I think his feet must be a little wet."

"It's verra likely, sir."

When the children had left the room, and while their shoes could be heard clattering up the rickety stairs, Ainslie explained to Logan and his wife that he had come for the boy Hugh, come to take him

away. "I understand there's nothing owing," he concluded.

"He's been well mithered, doctor," said the man, who felt an instinctive fear of Ainslie.

"We've always treated him as one of our ain," said the woman, not without challenge.

"You'll no doubt have done your best."

"But, doctor," said the woman suddenly, "how did you know that Hughie was the one. He doesn't know himself, and we've always called him a Logan."

"I recognized him," said the doctor, and fixed his eyes on the woman.

"Ay," said the man Logan, "he was always different from the others."

Before he took his departure, Ainslie paid a visit to the room occupied by M'Gavin. It was a garret under the slates, with a truckle bed in one corner, a kitchen table in the window, a chest of drawers and a washstand side by side against the wall near the door. The table was crowded with books, and there were books on the chest of drawers, the bed, and the floor. A little brass lamp, a penny bottle of ink, a sheet of blotting-paper, and several exercise books were squeezed between the many piles of volumes stacked upon the table. On the walls were two pictures, one of Pasteur, the other of Lister.

The great doctor realized that here was a painful and laborious student of medicine who knew infinitely more than he knew about that science, and who would yet never succeed. "M.D.," he thought to himself, "will never mean Many Dinners for this poor lad."

Knowledge of human nature was wanting; the well-stored brain lacked the synthesis of a personality. He felt a father's pity for the young man.

Ramsay M'Gavin was one of many obscure young men at the Royal Infirmary for whom Dr. Ainslie provided. He was the son of a widow who had once been a servant in the doctor's house. His first step was to serve in Ainslie's dispensary and deliver medicines at the houses of patients. The young man's life since then had been one long effort to justify the patronage of the great physician. Every examination that he passed was to him a glory; every scholarship that he won was an ecstasy. "Dr. Ainslie will hear of this," he used to say. He went first to the University and then to the Infirmary. The turning point in his career was the visit of Pasteur to Edinburgh for the tercentenary of the University. M'Gavin came under the spell of that very great man. Ainslie was his providence; Pasteur was his god. It was from Ainslie he got the opportunity to become a respectable professional man; it was from Pasteur he received the divine enthusiasm to be a man of science.

"So you're lodging here?" asked Dr. Ainslie, looking about him. "And your mother, Mr. M'Gavin? Where is that grand woman?"

"Through your kindness, sir," replied the student, whose heart was swelling at the thought that Robert Ainslie stood in his room, "she's living in great comfort in Peeblesshire."

"You're supporting her, no doubt?"

"Out of your bounty, sir."

The great doctor's thoughts went back to his student days. "You'll be the better man for the struggle, Mr. M'Gavin."

"I'm wanting for nothing, sir."

Dr. Ainslie thought for a moment. "Mr. M'Gavin," he said, "I'm taking away the boy Hugh to-morrow. He's not the son of these Logans. I happen to know something about his antecedents. It occurs to me that he might go to Portobello for a bit. Would it suit your convenience to take charge of him? Portobello's a rare air for study."

"I am your servant, sir."

"You've observed the boy, I dare say," said the doctor, after a pause. "What do you make of him, Mr. M'Gavin?"

The student, with one of the dramatic gestures which were quite natural to him, indicated his books. "I've had no time, sir, for observation."

Dr. Ainslie thought to himself, "And that just damns you, my poor boy, as a doctor." Aloud he said, "He's been fairly treated on the whole, I suppose?"

"The Logans are decent people, sir. I've always understood the boy was not precisely their own. They have no doubt been hard on him occasionally. But perhaps not without justice. He has a disposition to go wandering about the streets, sir. He has played the truant many a time. He's verra often late to his meals."

Ainslie nodded his head. "Well, Mr. M'Gavin,"

he said, "may I ask you to say nothing to these people as to the boy's destination, and to bring him to me to-morrow at one o'clock?" He put his hand in his pocket and produced a bank-note. "If you'll be so considerate as to provide him with a small wardrobe and a carpet bag, I'll be greatly obliged to you."

The doctor took his departure. He gave the Logans a couple of sovereigns, and told them that Mr. M'Gavin would take charge of the boy in the morning.

"I've no doubt, sir," called the wife as he moved to the street door, "that the laddie's mother is a rich lady?"

"No, ma'am," he answered, "she's a dead woman."

As he made his lonely way to the tram, the old doctor said to himself, "A dead woman! I know no more of the boy than they do."

CHAPTER II

THE TWO DESTINIES

MANY people in Portobello who can recall the latter part of the 'eighties, may still remember the pretty picture which was made winter and summer, in all winds and weather, by two charming children straying together on the seashore. Their companionship was so continual that it attracted attention; the perfect understanding which existed between them was so amiable that it delighted the observer. The boy, some three years the senior of the girl, was a slim, vigorous, gracefully-made child, with dark hair, a sun-burned, freckled face, and brown eyes remarkable for their size and brilliance. He wore neither cap to his head nor stockings to his feet, and was usually dressed in a blue jersey, flannel knickerbockers, and sandshoes. The little girl, who was much shorter and plumper, had black hair, grey eyes, and a skin that was almost golden. She wore in summer a Zulu hat, which was more often in her hand or hanging down her back than on her head, and cotton frocks, pink or pale blue, with a girdle round the waist. In winter she was generally seen in a brown jersey and a brown skirt, with a knitted cap pressed close over

her head. She, too, winter and summer, went bare-legged.

The beautiful intimacy of these two children, who would often stray so far away on the lonely sands that they looked like specks in the distance, was presided over by a little old lady and a grave young man, who sat together on a bench facing the sea, each with a book. Occasionally, two or three times a week, perhaps, these guardians would be joined by a heavily built and severe-looking old man, who, greeting them and telling them to stay where they were, would stride away across the sands, like one in a vast hurry, and make his way to the children. Residents in Portobello recognized this visitor and pointed him out to their friends. "That is the great Dr. Ainslie of Edinburgh," they would say, with something of the pride of possession.

Dr. Ainslie had placed the boy Hugh under the care of Ramsay M'Gavin in a house close to the sea, occupied by the widow of a medical man whom he had long befriended. He gave the boy the name of Napier, under which his mother had lived when he first visited her. On the mother's grave in Edinburgh cemetery, to which he took the boy, was the name of Mary Napier, and the date of her death. "You must be proud of your mother," he said, standing there with a hand resting on the boy's shoulder; and then he added in a tone of voice which Napier never forgot, "Your mother was a loyal woman; a brave woman; a good woman." Hugh was told that he had been placed under the care of the Logans at

Leith because of a great sorrow which took his father away from Edinburgh and made it necessary for his mother to live alone. "You need not talk of these things to any one," said the doctor, watching the boy's brown eyes, "but you must remember them; and if your father comes back, you must tell him that you are proud of your mother."

The rapid change made in the boy's appearance by cleanly habits, wholesome food, and the bracing air of Portobello, satisfied the observant doctor, and having assured himself that the boy was a good boy and clean-minded, he sent Mrs. Dobson and Anne to take up their quarters with Ramsay M'Gavin and Hugh Napier in the widow's house. He saw that the streets of Edinburgh were not good for his child, that the solitude of her nursery was beginning to depress her; he spoke to his wife, made his request to Mrs. Dobson, and the change was effected. Anne went to Portobello for a few weeks, and stayed there for all the impressionable years of her childhood.

It was at this period that Dr. Ainslie, seeing the solitude of his wife and being frankly addressed on the subject by M.s. Dobson, made an ampler allowance for household expenses, a generosity which permitted Mrs. Ainslie to consolidate her position in Edinburgh society. She gave a musical afternoon once a fortnight, entertained eight or ten guests to dinner once a week, and, arrayed in fashionable millinery, made a distinguished figure in the Assembly Rooms and in the drawing-rooms of such plutocrats as the Patons.

While the mother, with an ever-increasing excitement, adventured further and further into the distractions of the polite world, the daughter, straying at the side of Hugh Napier along the Portobello sands, with—

> "The delight of the wind in her eyes
> And the hand of the wind in her hair,"

entered the enchanted world of a child's friendship—that exquisite Eden from which the flaming sword of maturity too soon drives us forth.

The temperaments of these two children were as distinct as their sex. Napier was keen and vivid, with a boy's love of daring, a boy's delight in action and accomplishment. Anne was practical, with a girl's receptiveness for the breathings and glances of nature, with a quiet sense of the ridiculous. But their communion was perfect. He, with his high talk of the things he meant to do in life and his impatience of Ramsay M'Gavin's tedious lessons, was never so loquacious and never so happy in being loquacious as when he walked with this little girl, who carried a doll in her arms, kept her eye upon the tea-hour, and who would sometimes stop him to say: "Isn't that a lovely cloud?"

He was friendly with boatmen and fishermen. He liked to sit on the side of a boat against which sailors were leaning their broad backs, listening to their talk. While he was so engaged, Anne sat on the sand, with her doll in her lap, her eyes gazing out to sea, her lips murmuring soft words to a dulcet lilt. He would come back to her, throw himself down

at her side, and plunging his fists into the thin sand, say: "I should like to have a boat. But these men don't know much. You see real sailors at Leith."

She understood him perfectly. His ways were not her ways, but she could see things with his eyes. A boy, she felt, ought to sail a boat, ought to wish to be a fisherman, ought to talk about the business of the sea rather than of the sea itself. She admired him for the swiftness of his paces, for the strength of his little arms, for his wonderful knowledge of ships and their gear. When he made fun of her doll's house, her tea-set, her cooking-stove, and her habit of putting her dolls to bed, she liked it and smiled at him.

There was nothing sentimental in their friendship. They came down to breakfast, the freshness of early morning in their veins, not only to eat, but to banter each other, to argue, even to quarrel. Later in the morning when Anne was dismissed by her governess and Hugh by Mr. M'Gavin, they would compare notes of what they had learned, Hugh grumbling at the dullness of his task and Anne championing the cause of learning. When they lay on the sands, after their bathe in the sea, eating water biscuits, which made a great many crumbs in their laps, Hugh would be silent and turn over on his side if Anne talked. And in the afternoon, when they met again for delightful hours on the sands, their companionship would begin with a certain amount of roughness and disputation. Hugh would snatch her doll from her hands, and run away with it; or take her up in his

arms and pretend to push her in the sea; or tease her for being a good girl who never dirtied her pinafore, and who sapped at her lessons. Or, he would stray away from her, and join groups of fishermen, and forget that she was waiting for him alone on the sands.

But their real relationship to each other manifested itself when the pulses quieted towards the evening. Then it was, quite unconsciously, that Hugh would put his arm round her neck as they dragged their feet homewards, and talk to her as freely as he talked to his own soul. Then it was that gentleness existed between them and all the pretty seriousness of childhood. The games of the day were over, the quarrels forgotten, the banter exhausted. The handsome boy, with his arm round the little girl's neck, his eyes on the sand before him, his feet kicking lazily at pebbles, starfish, or shell of hermit crab, would speak about his future in which Anne was always to have a place. "I shall be an engineer at Paton's," he would say; "and I shall live in Portobello, and have a boat here, and I'll take you sailing alone, and we'll catch fish and bring them home for our tea; and when my holidays come we'll go on a big ship to foreign countries, and see the West Indies." And if she ever asked about his life at Leith he would tell her of Paton's Engineering Works —the noise of hammering on steel, the row of monster furnaces, the incredible strength of gigantic cranes, the grinding, buzzing, and hammering of innumerable turning wheels He would tell her of

the immense piers, the vast docks, of ships from Holland, and Germany, and Russia; of the real sailors he had talked with in those mighty docks. He spoke of his foster-father to mention his immense strength. His foster-mother, he used to say, was very strict with him. If Anne asked about the children of those parents, Hugh would speak of the strength of the boys, and tell her how they fought other boys. He never breathed a word concerning the poverty of that home. Leith for him was the gate to the sea. The Logan household faded more and more in his mind as only a grey and unnecessary background to the docks, the pier, the shipping and the sea.

When they went to Edinburgh on half-holidays Anne liked to go to Cumming's Bazaar in Cockburn Street; Hugh preferred Lennie, in Princes Street, the optician who sold engines and all manner of mechanical toys. If they went to Robert Grant's book-shop in Princes Street, or to Andrew Elliott's, they drifted to different shelves, Hugh in quest of adventure books, Anne in search of romance. It was only at Vallance's sweet-shop in Hanover Street that they manifested a common taste; Edinburgh Rock united them.

Anne noticed that Hugh had great influence with her father. One day the doctor met them and asked if they were happy. "I should like a pony," Hugh had answered. The two children had seen the English cavalry regiment from Jock's Lodge exercising their horses on the sand, and the sight had made a great impression on the boy. The doctor said that

they should have a pony between them. "Father gives you whatever you ask for," Anne said to him that evening. "He's jolly kind," answered Hugh.

The pony was a great pleasure to them, but while Hugh soon tired of riding and returned to his affection for ships, Anne loved the little shaggy creature for itself, and paid many visits to its big loose-box—where it looked no larger than a mouse—with sugar and chopped carrot. The pony would follow her about. Hugh said it was not a real horse; it was more like a pet lamb.

There was one incident in their childhood which Hugh never told to Anne. She was amazed one day as they walked on the sand to hear him say to her under his breath, "That boy wants to fight me." A group of dirty little boys, familiar enough on these sands, had just gone by; Anne had scarcely noticed them. "Why should he want to fight you?" she asked. "I know he does," Hugh answered. The two boys had never spoken to each other; they had merely passed a dozen times, perhaps, and looked into each other's eyes. The spontaneous enmities of boys are not to be explained.

One evening Mrs. Dobson asked Hugh to take a letter to the post. On his way home he came suddenly upon his little enemy of the sands. He was accompanied by a much bigger boy, a youth, almost a young man. As they approached Hugh, the boy pointed at him with his finger and spoke to his companion. Hugh felt his heart begin to beat hard and

was troubled in his breathing; he kept close to the wall, and came on at a slower pace. When they were quite close, the young man suddenly stepped in front of Hugh and stopped his progress with a menacing attitude perfectly terrible to the lonely boy. Then this bully turned to the smaller boy, his companion, and said, "Go on; hit him!" At this the little boy came forward, he was about the same size as Hugh, and hit him suddenly a stinging blow on the mouth; after that he ran away, and the big boy covered his flight, scowling down on Hugh, but without speaking a word. The tears rushed to Hugh's eyes; his lips, which were numb from the blow, began to quiver; he stood there, shaking all over, miserable, defeated, and afraid. When the big boy moved away, which he did very slowly at first, looking back over his shoulder at Hugh with the same terrible menace in his scowling eyes, Hugh, manfully fighting his sobs, continued his way with hanging head and choking rage in his heart. There is scarcely anything more shattering to a high-spirited boy than to feel that he has played the coward.

He never told Anne of this incident. It became one of the secrets of his life. He was glum and sullen for several days after, and told Dr. Ainslie that he should like to go to school. He felt ashamed of being seen in the streets of Portobello, with the memory of that blow on his lips. He thought that every lad who looked at him must know about it.

One day as he and Anne were returning from a walk on the sands, the little girl was first astonished and

then terrified to see Hugh spring suddenly forward from his side and rush towards a group of little boys who were walking home with nets and bottles of fish. Into this group rushed the furious Hugh, very white of face and trembling in every limb. He got in front of one of the boys and shouted to him, in a thick voice which shook with nervous excitement, "Come on! Hit me, now! I dare you!"

Anne felt as if the world were coming to an end. She stood where he had left her. The sky was going round; the sands were in commotion. Then she gave a little cry and clutched her doll tight to her breast. Hugh was fighting. He looked like a devil.

The fight ended quickly. Down went the enemy of Hugh, bellowing and bleeding, and the other boys, stooping over him, shouted in a loud and terrifying chorus, each shaking and wagging a threatening bare hand at the victor, "I'll tell my father of you!"

Hugh walked away, and Anne ran after him. "Why did you fight like that?" she exclaimed.

"He cheeked me," rejoined Hugh, breathing hard.

Warned by the now satisfied boy not to say a word about this matter either to Mrs. Dobson or her father, Anne kept the terrible memory in her heart. She often lived the scene over again as she lay in bed with her doll nestled against her breast. It was a memory which made her suspicious of boys. She thought it was horrible. She felt that Hugh was a hero, but wicked. She always now hurried him away from groups of boys on the sands. She told him that if he fought again she should run home.

The chief personal influence on Anne's character was not Hugh, and not her governess, but the grandmother who adored this charming little girl. Mrs. Dobson was about the same age as her son-in-law, that is to say, she was in the neighbourhood of sixty. Her appearance was remarkable. She was extremely small, under five feet, with a well-shaped, intellectual head something too large for her body, and a strong, sweet, brown face, which while it was intensely feminine had yet the intellectual agility and the masculine spirituality which one associates with a scholarly ecclesiastic. Instead of the little lace cap which covered the iron-grey hair worn in two swelling wings over the ears, one wanted to see the scarlet cap of a cardinal. The brow was high and bold; the eyes dark grey ringed with pale blue; the nose aquiline; the lips thin and firm; the chin long and gentle. The colour of her skin was almost of gypsy brown, and the wrinkles, which were numerous, had all the fineness of a spider's web.

This delightful little old lady spent her days between literature and music. She played Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Chopin and Schubert. She read biographies and novels. Her memory was very good. She could remember vividly, and describe with animation incidents in her childhood and books which she had read as a girl. She spoke French very prettily, and could read a little German. She never did any needlework, and was not in the least interested in flowers. For the sea she had a great aversion. She said that she preferred its ozone to its company. Her

views as regards nature were very much those of Dr. Johnson.

The mind of this little dry old woman was exceedingly active and playful. She had the serenity of a comic spirit. Whatever humanity was about, it amused her. She expressed neither disdain nor anger for her aversions, she laughed at them. People were always merry in her company. She bantered Mr. Ramsay M'Gavin on his devotion to Pasteur. She laughed at Hugh for his blunders in the humanities and his friendships with fishermen. She teased the widow-landlady by hiding her knitting needles or pinning the lawn streamers of her cap to an antimacassar. She amused herself by arguing about politics with Anne's governess, a lady who established in her own mind a correlation between the strictest interpretation of Christianity and the most intolerant conservatism of privilege. It was only to Anne herself that the old lady showed any mothering tenderness.

From Mrs. Dobson, not from her governess, Anne received a taste for reading and music. She would stand by the piano while the old lady's withered hands moved over the keys, watching the smiling face which reflected the sweetness of the music. She practised with the hope of one day being able to play like her grandmother. Then they read aloud to each other; the grandmother in a straight-backed arm-chair, the child on a stool at her feet. When Anne mispronounced a long word, the grandmother smiled, laughed gently, and correcting her, bent down to kiss

the little face upturned to her with a child's shame of a fault.

But Anne received something more from her grandmother than a taste for music and a taste for reading. She caught the active and energetic spirit of the old lady's disposition. Anne had the slightest of stammers, a nervous hesitancy over words beginning with a hard consonant. "You must fight that habit," said Mrs. Dobson; "it is as bad as tippling. Tighten up your will. Say to yourself, *I can; I will!*" If Anne asked her how to spell a word, the old lady told her to hunt it up in the dictionary. She was for ever educating the child to be self-dependent. Hugh found his old companion less disposed for the frolics of early morning, and more unwilling for the quarrelsome arguments of the afternoon. "Let's be sensible," was one of her phrases. He was amazed presently to find that she laughed at him for being a dunce. When she preferred sitting with her grandmother to going a walk with him on the sands, he felt the insufficiency of the feminine sex. He wanted a boy friend.

At last something like a separation occurred. Hugh went to school in Edinburgh, and his evenings were spent with Ramsay M'Gavin preparing his homework. The children only saw each other on half-holidays, which they sometimes spent together on the sea; where Hugh, with his hand on the tiller, was far too occupied in talking to the fisherman who held the main-sheet to take notice of Anne.

Ramsay M'Gavin had now taken his degree and

another brass plate, which made his bosom swell with pride every time he beheld it, was at last fixed to the iron gate of the dead doctor's house. But M'Gavin earned more money as Hugh's tutor than he did as a doctor. People did not send for him; his circle of acquaintance was small; the influence of Dr. Ainslie was not exerted in his behalf. The poor fellow, with his immense knowledge of medicine, had the mortification of sitting in his room waiting for patients who never came. When a case did fall into his hands he filled a note-book with his comments and made a fresh study of the authorities with critical marginalia sufficient to fill a volume.

Hugh Napier went to the university. He had grown away from Anne, and was entirely devoted to his dawning manhood. He had high spirits, great pluck, and the blood ran hot in his veins. Among his acquaintances was the son and heir of Paton, the engineer. They both played football; they were both fond of the sea. This acquaintance never became a real friendship. Dick Paton was rich, his friends were the sons of rich men, and he was older than Hugh. He hated work; he was famous for adventures in the streets of Edinburgh; he boasted of the whisky he could drink; he told stories which were not nice. But Napier, who had a clean and healthy mind, was drawn to him because he represented Paton's Engineering Works, and because he possessed a small yacht and knew a good deal about sailing. They visited the works together, and went for an occasional cruise. Napier also met Paton at Dr. Ainslie's house

in Darnaway Street on Sunday afternoons, where Mrs. Paton, the mother, was a constant visitor.

One day Paton said to Hugh, inspired by his mother to ask the question, "Are you any relation of Lord Napier?"

"No," said Hugh.

"It's not a common name. What's your father?"

It was the first question of the kind ever addressed to Hugh. "He's abroad," he answered.

He noticed that Paton avoided him after this; he also noticed that other students began to look at him in an odd way. Paton had spread the story. "Did you ever know a man," he asked, "who described his father's profession as being abroad!"

Hugh Napier grew sensitive. At this time he was a good-looking boy, tall, slim, square-shouldered, with a wonderful lightness of limb and great swiftness of movement. He was really immensely strong, and his constitution was that of a workman. He played games with a hot earnestness. He hated to be beaten. In social slippered hours he was cheerful and inclined to quiet laughter. Sensitiveness was something new to him. He tried to fight it. He sought the society of fellow-students. He discovered that he was less self-conscious with Anne than with these men. She was now living in Darnaway Street, and he saw her there on many occasions. Now and then they would make excursions by tram to Portobello, and go over the ground of their childhood, sailing on the sea in the very boat of their old cruises. Anne learned to take the tiller to help the boat in a gybe, to keep her

in the wind. "You'll make a first-rate sailor," Napier told her.

It happened once that when they returned from one of these outings, the servant in Darnaway Street told Hugh that Dr. Ainslie wished to see him in the consulting-room immediately. A cab was waiting at the door, and Hugh instantly connected this message with the vehicle. He left Anne at the foot of the stairs, and went forward to the doctor's room with a feeling of crisis in his heart.

He found there an old lady in black, who wore a very dark veil over her face. Dr. Ainslie was sitting at his table, his hands in his lap, his grave eyes fixed upon Napier.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Hugh.

The doctor turned to the old lady. "This is the young man," he said.

She rose from her chair, and placing one of her hands on Hugh's arm, said in a gentle voice, "Come to the window, will you?" and led him forward. She stood in front of him, her back to the window, and studied his face, which was very pale. Hugh felt her fingers working against his arm, and behind her heavy veil caught sight of her eyes shining darkly.

"Yes," she said, "he is rather like." Then, letting her hand drop from his arm, she said more briskly, looking up at him, squaring her shoulders a little, her hands crossed in front of her, "Well, Mr. Napier, what do you want to be?"

He kept silence, too surprised by the question to think.

"Come," she said, "what profession do you wish to follow?"

Still he was silent.

"You've got tastes, I suppose; wishes, inclinations. What are they?"

"I should like to go to sea," he said.

"To sea! You're too old for the Navy."

"I'm fond of the sea," he answered, shifting his position. "I shouldn't mind how I went to it."

"Would you like to emigrate?"

"I don't think so."

"People are very happy in Canada, and New Zealand, and places like that."

He was silent.

"Why wouldn't you like to make a start in a young country?" she asked, putting her hand on his arm again, and moving it gently up and down.

"I don't know," he answered, and glanced at the doctor.

"You're fond of the sea?"

"Yes."

"Well, we must think about it. I'm not sure that it is not a good idea. The merchant service is a vigorous career for a young man."

She stood looking at him for some time in silence, and then she walked back with him to her chair beside the doctor's table, her hand still on Hugh's arm.

"Will you leave us for a moment?" she said, and Dr. Ainslie got up and went from the room.

The old lady stood in front of Hugh, a hand on each of his arms, and looked up at him.

"I will do what I can to make you happy," she said. "I will help you. Tell me, now, if you have been happy here?"

"Yes."

"Dr. Ainslie has been good and kind to you?"

"Oh, yes; very kind."

"And nothing has troubled you?" She waited. "Why don't you answer?"

"Well," he said, and hesitated.

"Yes?"

"I don't know who you are?" He laughed quite frankly.

"I am an old friend of your family. You can tell me everything."

Hugh became serious again. "Well," he said slowly, "I should like to know who my father is. That troubles me."

"People have asked you?"

"Yes."

The old lady considered. "Tell them that your father is dead," she said quietly.

"Is he?" Hugh asked, looking at the eyes behind the veil.

"No," she answered.

"Shall I never see him?"

"No."

"You cannot tell me why?"

"He has disgraced himself."

"Oughtn't I," Hugh asked, after a pause, "to be with him, helping him, perhaps?"

She shook her head. Something in the handsome

boy's face touched her. "I will tell you something. I am the moth of your father. He is my youngest son. I once loved him more than all his brothers. And he has broken my heart. You don't know what that means. I pray God that you never may. It is more than a phrase. Now, listen. Never try to discover your father's identity. It means grief and ruin for you. Be content with your present name. Make your own life. Live it out like a man." She pressed her hands closer to his arms. "And now kiss me?" she said.

He stooped his head, and kissed her through the veil. He could see that the dark eyes behind the veil were wet with tears.

He went out, strangely shaken, and Dr. Ainslie returned to the room.

For some weeks Napier lived an intensely lonely life, keeping away from his friends, and staying away from lectures. His high spirits deserted him. He realized his place in society. The grave of his mother in that beautiful Edinburgh cemetery which lies beyond the Botanic Gardens haunted his thoughts and filled his imagination with cruel reflections on his origin. He was a man under the law, but unacknowledged by the law. The love passion of his father and mother had become his crime. Man, as well as God, visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. Society asked him whence he came: he could not answer. Religion, taking into sheltering arms the lawful children of love to mark them with the salvation of Mary's Son, frowned darkly upon

this unlawful son of love. He could never enter freely the ways of men; never find an abiding place in their homes. The most innocent question would disclose his shame; the lightest word bring hot blood to his brow. He was different. A man like unto other men, he found himself an outlaw of society. The most stinging word in the dictionary was his title.

He met Paton one day, who stopped him in the street, and said, "I hear you are going away, Napier; is that true?"

"I'm thinking of it."

"Oh, I'm sorry. We shall miss you. Where are you going?—to look for your father?"

"What do you mean?" asked Napier, very quickly.

"You told me he was abroad," answered Paton. "Don't you remember?"

This encounter kept Napier away from the house in Darnaway Street, where Paton was now a constant visitor. He walked often along the Queen's Drive and climbed to Arthur's Seat; or wandered to the top of Carlton Hill and, looking northward, rested his troubled gaze upon the mist-wreathed peak of Ben Lomond, swimming like a cloud above the haze of the sea. It was to the sea that his eyes looked most hopefully—the unfenced, churchless and triumphant sea, which is supreme in its freedom from the little tyrannies of humanity; the great sea promised him all that his fellow-man refused. It would ask him no questions; would care nothing for his origin; and it would call out in him all those qualities of his character which witnessed to a full manhood. Out there—in

the heave of the great dark waters and the rush and music of the winds—there was solitude with labour, labour with delight, and delight with adventure. To be still, to abide in a city, to hang on the skirts of little groups, coteries, and families—this was impossible. The sea called with the cheerful voice of adventure. The very thought of it revived his high spirits.

One day he received a letter from Dr. Ainslie telling him to call in Darnaway Street. The time had come for Hugh to take his life into his own hands. Dr. Ainslie had said to his wife, "I see young Paton with Anne a great deal. There must be nothing of that kind. His father died a drunkard. The young man is making a bad start. You must keep Anne from any attachment there, as you would keep her from infection."

"But she must see men," Mrs. Ainslie had returned, "it would not do for her to see only this mysterious young Napier." That remark had set the doctor thinking.

Hugh presented himself, and the great physician noticed a change in him. "What is the matter with you?" he asked.

"My parents," answered Napier.

The doctor spoke brave and sincere words to him. "And now," he concluded, "what I advise you to do is to take your degree—don't be beaten by the University—and then travel. Travel will do you good. If you like, Ramsay M'Gavin could go with you. He can do nothing in Portobello, and he is waiting now to purchase a practice in England. If you like,

you can have his company. If not, go alone. See the world. Move with men of other nations. Observe and reflect. Form your judgments, and be interested in the human race. You will have means enough to travel at your leisure. Your mother saved some money for you, and your father left with me a sum of money which has accumulated, and now represents, with the other, an income of eighty pounds a year. The lady whom you saw here the other day——"

"My father's mother?"

"She told you then? Well, yes; your grandmother; she has placed in my hands certain stock which will increase this income to three hundred pounds a year. You can draw on the Royal Bank for that amount, and they will receive your dividends for you. There is a sum of a hundred pounds standing to your credit, on which you can draw for making a start in life. If anything should happen to me and you should need legal advice at any time you can call upon David Caverton, Writer to the Signet, in St. Andrew Square. Keep him informed of your movements. Mr. Caverton knows what I know about you, what Mrs. Ainslie, Mrs. Dobson and Anne know about you—that you are the son of a patient of mine who is dead, and whose relations in England are disposed to be kind to you. They know this, and nothing more." The old man, who had spoken with the precision and coldness of a lawyer, rose from his chair. He stood looking at Napier with grave, questioning eyes, the corners of his lips firmly depressed. Then he slowly extended his hand, which Napier took

mechanically. "Remember," said the doctor, holding his hand, "you are a man. You were born like every other man. In the sight of God you are one with the rest of the world. Nothing can make a human being illegitimate. Keep your head up; look men in the face; do something with your life."

Napier looked up with a quick and merry smile, which reminded the doctor of the boy's bright childhood in Portobello. The money had changed the colour of his horizon. "I'll do my best, sir," he said. "I certainly don't mean to mope. At the same time, I *am* different; and different I shall have to be to the end of my chapter. For instance——"

"Well?"

"Suppose, just suppose," said Napier slowly, and quite diffidently, but with an amused smile, "that I was——"

"Well?"

"Well, that I was in love with Miss Ainslie," he said, with a laugh. He looked towards the window. "It is a pure hypothesis. But you see what I mean, sir?"

He looked quickly at the doctor, and then looked away again. He disengaged his hand. He half-turned to the door. "No, sir," he said, "I realize that I am different. But I'm in good spirits. I'm glad of this money. I know what I shall do. I shall buy a boat and go a cruise. A degree is useless to me. I shan't stay in Edinburgh. I shan't trouble cities very much. But I should like sometimes to come back and see you. I want to do that. I should pass my

father in the street without recognizing him; I'd go to the ends of the earth to do your bidding. You've been splendid to me. I owe you everything, except my doubtful origin."

He walked to the door, Ainslie at his side. The doctor held out his hand once more. The boy, taking that strong hand looked up again into the austere, pale face of the big old man, and again uttered his farewell and his gratitude. He knew the doctor hated flattery, and concluded with a smile, "In my father's name, which I don't know, and in my own, I thank you, sir, for all your goodness."

"God bless you, Hugh Napier," said the doctor slowly. Then he added, "Don't lose sight of us. Come here whenever you wish."

Napier said to himself, as he walked past the Queen Street Gardens, "That man loves me, but he would not let me marry his daughter!" This thought stuck in his mind. It did not promise well for the future. But he was in high spirits. He could get to sea.

He paid a visit to Ramsay M'Gavin, and found that solemn man overseeing a workman, who was removing the brass plate from the iron railings of the house. "Through Dr. Ainslie's bounty," said M'Gavin, "I'm purchasing a verra decent practice in a place called Borhaven on the Norfolk coast. You must come on a visit to me, Hugh; if you've the time and the inclination." He produced with slow dignity a visiting-card on which was printed, not engraved, "Dr. Ramsay M'Gavin, M.D., M.A. Edin., Church House, Borhaven, Norfolk."

Here at least was a friend. Napier was surprised to find himself grateful for the existence of a man who had once teased his life. He put it down to his high spirits; placed the card in his pocket-book and thought no more about it.

One day, towards the end of his preparations, Napier paid a last visit to his mother's grave. As he drew near to the familiar spot he was startled to see a beautiful wreath of white and violet flowers resting on the stone. He approached the grave, and bending down saw a card attached to the flowers, on which was written in a masculine hand the one word, "Souvenir," followed by the initial "A."

He felt an overmastering conviction that his father had visited the grave. His heart began to beat rapidly. His lungs became oppressed. He raised his head from the grave and looked about him, to the north, to the south, to the east, to the west. There were groups of people scattered over this garden of graves; a man in shirt-sleeves was wheeling a barrow, laden with grave-diggers' tools, over some planks which led from grave to gravel path; a widow was weeding a patch of flowers; two children were running down one of the paths, calling to each other.

The father whom he would pass in the street, had visited this place, was now somewhere within the little radius of Edinburgh—for the flowers were quite fresh —and the son could not reach him.

That evening he went to Dr. Ainslie's house. The servant asked him to go to the drawing-room. He hesitated, thinking that he should ask to see the doctor

alone. Then he thought that he might as well say good-bye to the other members of the family, and went up the stairs.

The Patons were there. Mrs. Paton sat with Mrs. Ainslie on a sofa near the windows. Mrs. Dobson was playing a game of cribbage with the doctor. "I'm not supposed to be very well," said Ainslie; "this is Mrs. Dobson's prescription; homœopathic!" Anne was seated at the piano, not playing, but looking over a volume of music which Dick Paton was holding in his hand, turning the leaves and saying, "Oh, sing this; I like this; this is a jolly thing; a stunner; do sing it."

Napier had come to ask the doctor about his father, to tell him about the flowers on the grave. The scene in the drawing-room, a scene of comfortable family life, put the thought out of his head.

He said that he had come to say good-bye; that he was going down to Lowestoft in a day or two's time to look at a boat; and that he would do some cruising before he returned. "Lowestoft," said the doctor; "M'Gavin's down in that neighbourhood, somewhere thereabouts."

He only stayed for half-an-hour; but just before he rose to go there was an incident which delayed his departure. Mrs. Dobson suddenly exclaimed, "Why, Robert, what's the matter with you?" Anne hastened with a little cry to her father's side. Everybody got up. "Ring the bell, Hugh," said Mrs. Ainslie. The doctor, who was very white, with a thick perspiration on his forehead, and his chin hang-

ing a little, said in a resolute voice, "Put me to bed. Don't make a fuss. Put me to bed."

Napier waited till the old man had been put safely to bed. The Patons left a little before him. He did not see Anne, who remained with her father. Mrs. Ainslie brought him the news that the doctor was easier. "A good night will restore him," she said.

As he left the house a man crossed the street towards him. They almost brushed shoulders. The man did not look at him, for his eyes were fixed upon the door of the doctor's house. Napier scarcely saw him, for his mind was entirely occupied by this anxious and distressing event of which he had just been a witness. They passed each other, the son going down to Edinburgh, the father standing at the door of Dr. Ainslie's house, where Death was knocking.

Before midnight the Spectre entered. A globule of blood stopped the working of that capable brain.

Napier attended the funeral. Among the vast congregation in the cemetery was his father.

The doctor left to his widow the house and furniture in Darnaway Street and an income of five hundred pounds a year, with reversion to his daughter. To Anne he left an income of one hundred and fifty pounds a year. His will expressed the testator's desire to preserve his wife and child from the perils of riches and the pains of poverty. There were no fewer than sixteen hundred beneficiaries under this remarkable will, most of them poor people living in Cannongate and Cowgate.

After the death of the great physician, Mrs. Ainslie, whose indignation over the doctor's will increased with every year of her widowhood, set herself to secure Dick Paton as a husband for Anne. The beautiful girl, who could not bear to hear her mother's miserable strictures on the dead father whom she had loved devotedly, welcomed, when the period of mourning was over, every distraction which carried her away from home. She went on a visit to the Paton's country house in Ross-shire. She enjoyed driving and sailing with Dick Paton. It gave her pleasure to go with him to the stables, to the home farm, to the distant cottages of keepers. She came from the school-room and the limitations of narrow circumstances to the luxury, ease, and diversions of boundless wealth. She was very young. She found life a good thing. Mrs. Paton was like a mother to her. She bought her beautiful dresses, made her presents of jewelry and lace, treated her with all the endearing indulgence of a favourite.

This genial, good-natured soul was really fond of Anne; but above all other things she desired that her headstrong son should settle down. He was living a dangerous life. The mother, who had nursed her husband through endless attacks of alcoholism, saw that Dick was fond of Anne, and she determined that Anne should be his rescue. Anne was extremely pretty; she was beginning to arouse admiration in Edinburgh; she was distinguished-looking, and charming. Mrs. Paton took the child into her embrace, mothered her, fondled her and mortgaged

the beautiful heart with a hundred favours. Then when Dick proposed, and Anne, in her ignorance of the world, hesitated, Mrs. Paton embraced her, and said, "He loves you. He is breaking his heart for you. Don't be cruel; don't be hard-hearted, Anne."

While Anne, fresh from the school-room and with only the smallest acquaintance among men, was yielding to this appeal, for she liked Dick Paton, and only a trifling uncertainty held her back, Mrs. Ainslie said to her, "How can you hesitate? You profess to be so fond of your father, and this is the marriage that he wished you to make." She carried that lie to heaven.

At the age of nineteen, Anne was married to Richard Paton. Everybody told her she was a lucky girl. She felt excessively happy.

"It is a great thing for a girl," Mrs. Ainslie said to one of her friends, with a smile of satisfaction, "to be married in her teens. Catch the bird young, and it gets used to the cage."

CHAPTER III

THE BIRD WITHIN

EVERY now and then the Divorce Court startles the world with what newspapers appropriately call *revelations*. A curtain is drawn away from the Incredible. Virtuous people are horrified; the disreputable thank God that they are not as other men. For a few days English society is agitated by new knowledge.

These revelations, however, constitute the customary and familiar conditions of a great many people's lives. They appear to them, too, perfectly natural until they are removed for a brief hour from the social world to the dissecting-room of the law courts, and even then the effect is only that of conscience turning over in its sleep. The number of people who have no moral principles, who acknowledge no authority over their wills, and recognize no responsibility in life is not only very great, but tends to increase every day in a society whose entire activities belong exclusively to the material sphere. There are philosophers clear-sighted enough to perceive, and honest enough to admit, that the negation of religion leads logically and definitely to the negation of moral principles. The wonder is that society is not worse.

These devoted materialists, who have no occupations, can see no purpose in the universe; their habitual gluttony obfuscates their souls; they shrug their shoulders at the idea of God; respectability wears in their eyes the ludicrous garment of provincialism; they have no check to their passions, ambitions, and desires other than those afforded by the limitation of their purses and the capacities of their physical energy. If there was no want or suffering in the world, the lives of these people would be merely stupid; as it is they are crimes. If there was no God these people would be only fools; as it is they are devils. Their repentance is boredom, their remorse is satiety. The incredible which startles us is the inevitable. Everything base is possible to these people. "The Possible is a terrible matrix."

Anne Paton found herself in a world which first amazed her, then horrified her, and afterwards disgusted her. It was a world which the Divorce Court has now made familiar and which has therefore ceased to be incredible. Her story begins from the moment when this world had become intolerable. What has gone before is necessary to understand what follows.

When she left her husband it was with the innocence of her childhood torn away, the gaiety of her youth silenced, the confusion of early womanhood brought to definite knowledge. But her character remained unaltered. She was still the daughter of Robert Ainslie. Her spirit was fearless, confident, and self-reliant. Her heart was not broken, her will was not weakened. She was the child of the Porto-

bello sands, quiet, contemplative, gentle, tender, caressing, full of grace and apparently pliant, but self-directed, conscious of right and wrong, in command of her feelings.

Robert Ainslie had said to her governess, "The Bible, but no dogma." Anne was not religious, but she was wholesome.

In the early days of her marriage, the days of her amazement, Richard Paton had laughed at her; later, in the days of her horror, when she pleaded and appealed to him, he had shown impatience; finally, in the days of her disgust, he had answered her remonstrance with indifference which was dismissal.

There was no final rupture, no definite moment of separation. Her appeals had been in vain, her remonstrance had effected nothing; they separated in their dispositions before they avoided each other's society. It was this avoidance which grew into definite separation.

Anne was happy in the companionship of her grandmother, who had come to live with her six months after her marriage. This little old lady, who looked at life with amusement and discussed it with irony, was a friending and strengthening presence in the first months of Anne's disillusion. She kept her granddaughter's mind healthily vigorous. She would allow of no brooding. Instead of condemning Richard Paton she laughed at him. Instead of advising mutiny she counselled compromise. "Your marriage is not a success," she said, "but it might have been worse. That is one of the advantages of being a

lady; our husbands don't kick us. Richard is disagreeable, but harmless. In a cottage, with hobnails, he would be terrible."

Mrs. Dobson favoured the plan of avoidance. "Married people with more than one house," she explained, "can practise a Box and Cox arrangement without any trouble. We can go to London when Richard and his Corybantic crew are in Ross-shire; and we can go to Ross-shire when he is in London. You are only hit in the matter of the seasons. He will have the pick."

Mrs. Ainslie gradually supplanted Anne as the hostess of Richard Paton. The widow of Dr. Ainslie liked cheerful people, she was really blind to iniquity in fine clothes, in the conduct of her rich son-in-law she could see nothing to disgust a wife or offend society; she condemned Anne for what she called fanciful ideas, and reminded her with no little eloquence of her marriage vows. She made her maternity a pulpit from which she preached a perpetual sermon on the Fifth Commandment.

Five years after marriage, when she was four-and-twenty, Anne tired of the Box and Cox arrangement. She wanted to be free of Mrs. Ainslie who scolded her, and of Mrs. Paton who was offended because she had neither checked Richard's excesses nor given him an heir; she wanted, too, to possess some little place which should be entirely her own, some plot of earth which she could call home, some anchorage where she could be free.

This anxiety was increased by the growing

infirmities of old Mrs. Dobson, who was ill in London and who began to suffer from long railway journeys.

One of the few friends of her girlhood with whom Anne had maintained any intimacy was Ramsay M'Gavin. He had stayed once or twice, on his visits to London, at her house in Wilton Crescent. Anne had met him once in Paris, where he had gone for a celebration in honour of Pasteur. He was pleasant to her because he represented the past. She liked him because he interested her in serious things. The tutor of Hugh Napier had become the family doctor, the scientific investigator, the politician, the philosopher, the serious citizen of a great empire, the watchful disciple of progress. He wore a perpetual frock-coat, close-buttoned; his collar was wide at the throat; his cravat never deviated from black; his face was dour. Mrs. Dobson entangled his slow-working mind with questions not the less searching for their quality of persiflage; she was quick to see that he had no originality, that he formed himself upon the model of Dr. Ainslie, that his atheism and socialism were born of the laboratory and the study, not of the world. It diverted her to break up his imposing syllogisms and his grandiose inductions with the first stick picked from the littered ground of human experience. She, too, liked Ramsay M'Gavin. He amused her.

A visit had been paid by the two ladies to Borhaven, where Dr. M'Gavin, whose mother kept house for him, felt the pulse and examined the tongue of humanity with "the air of his own Statue erected by

National Subscription." Norfolk was Mrs. Dobson's native county; she had been well in Borhaven. Anne had felt the charm of this little fishing town, with its ancient houses, its wide sands, its broad river, its wooded hills, and its wild commons yellow with gorse and purple with heather.

When the idea came to her of independence she thought of Borhaven.

In reply to her letter, Dr. M'Gavin wrote to say that there was only one empty house which would suit her, and unfortunately this cottage was nearly two miles from the town. He sent a careful plan of the house, with exact measurements of the rooms, passages, and staircases, but enclosed no photograph and gave no description of the garden. It had been, he said, the dwelling of an old woman whose son was the principal grocer in the town; she had died a year ago, of no infectious disease. The drains were satisfactory. This little house, where the old lady had liked to entertain her grandchildren in the summer, was situated on the side of a creek opening from the river, about a mile above the town. It was well built; the owner, who had been rich, had spent a great deal of money on the fittings; the only fault with the little place was its distance from the town and the absence of a road to the door. The rent was £20 a year; the local taxes amounted to £3 10*s*.

Anne went to Borhaven with her camera, and returned to London satisfied and persuasive. Mrs. Dobson listened to her descriptions, and when the pictures came from the photographer, examined them

carefully through a magnifying-glass. "If the chimneys don't smoke and the walls are not damp," she said, "it will do very well for me to die in."

"We shall be able to live on my own money," said Anne. "We are free."

CHAPTER IV

BORHAVEN

THE town of Borhaven, thanks to the nine miles which separate it from the railway, has preserved in its outward aspect the antique, cheerful, and humorous spirit of our ancestors. The sunny harbour at the mouth of the river, with its stump of a lighthouse, its loose and slippery wooden steps, its weed-slimed piles, its barges and fishing-smacks, its tarred sheds and its litter of gear, looks as if it had been knocked together for the scenery of a theatre. The red-faced fishermen who lounge there in blue jerseys and vast sea-boots which creak when they walk, are the true old-fashioned children of the North Sea; they are remarkable not for good looks and vigour, but for strength, cheerfulness, reliability. Their full faces, burned by the sun and tanned by the wind, round, full faces lit by little twinkling eyes and decorated with oiled hair, present themselves before one stolidly with the self-conscious but contented comedy of a pantomime mask. This is, indeed, one of the places which has escaped the thunders and the rushings of modern progress. The streets are dark and tortuous; the gabled houses lean and stoop and slant with the irregularity of

tombstones; the iron-rimmed wheels of fish-barrow and farmer's tumbril grind out a perpetual clatter from the cobble-stones. And there is something of antiquity in the odours of the place.

The shops have cellar-flaps in the pavement, and dark interiors a step below the level of the street; in their polished windows, full of good wares, one's reflection catches a look of settled prosperity. The bow-windowed inns, with beflowered porches and trees in tubs at the side of the broad doors, look like souvenirs of the stage-coach. On market days the principal square of the town, which has a poultry-cross in the centre and at one of the corners a little timbered and diamond-paned moot-hall, is crowded with carriers' carts from twenty neighbouring villages. In the months of summer the inns and even the cottages are filled with visitors, and it is at this time that the numerous shops which deal in old furniture and prints make their harvest for the winter.

Through the open doors of the little houses, a visitor sees as he saunters through the narrow streets, dark interiors peopled by children playing on the stone floors, and ancient dames in cap and apron, knitting or nodding in grandfather chairs beside the hearth. In the gardens at the backs of their humble dwellings he sees women busy at the wash-tub or fastening with wooden pins clean linen to a rope strung across potatoes and currant bushes. Cats doze on garden walls. The cackle of poultry fills the air. A dog's angry bark and the metallic rattle of its jerked chain occasionally strike across the more peaceable

sounds of humming insects and mothers singing to their babes. From the beer-houses issue, with the smell of ale and tobacco, the deep-toned buzz of seafaring argument, and from morning to night one sees in the bright interiors of these little places a cluster of humanity clad in reefer coats and peaked caps, decorated with gold rings in their ears. The pavement of the square is generally thronged by people. Pilots and bargemen and the wives of fishermen move there, with ladies who have ridden in on bicycles from neighbouring villages to exchange their books at the library or to make household purchases at other shops. Obliging tradesmen in white aprons, with pencils behind their ears, step quickly from behind counters to take the orders of rich ladies seated in old-fashioned landaus at the shop door. There is often a procession of farm carts passing through the square with hay, corn, beans, or peas for barges moored against the side of the quay. The centre of the square, with its white-railed cattle-pens for market day, is usually occupied by children whose noisy play is scarcely noticed in the continual rumble of wheels over the cobble-stones.

The conservative character of the little town is due not only to its distance from the railway. The country round is before everything else a game estate. The landlord sets his face against building houses.

In this way, while the picturesque character of the town is saved from the ugliness of the modern builder, there is below the gracious and charming appearance of the archaic place an undercurrent of unhappiness

and immorality. The place is stagnant. At the will of one man, movement is arrested. Young men are unable to marry because there are no houses for them to occupy. The daughters of fishermen and labourers bring up children with the help of their mothers, in the houses of their own fathers. It is possible to exaggerate the vice and to forget the virtue of this place; but the immorality exists and is persistent. All the efforts of religion to prevent this state of affairs have failed.

Anne had felt the charm of Borhaven when for the first time she and Mrs. Dobson had taken up their quarters in the Harbour Hotel, an ancient structure, half wood and half white brick, whose bow-windows overlook the quay, and are sometimes drenched by the spray of the North Sea.

She had stood at the bow-window of her bedroom looking with pleased eyes at the scene before her. Beyond the quay, where a string of carts waited to load a sprit barge with hay, she saw on the other side of the shining river, and towering above four or five little wooden cottages, two immense black-tarred hulks, with curtained windows let into their sides, and with flowers growing in boxes on their roofed-in decks. Steps led from the tops of these strange dwellings to the grass below, and on these steps children were seated, whose bright pinafores fluttered in the wind. At a little distance from the mastless hulks, which looked like Noah's Arks, were the ruins of a malt-house, a granary, and three or four wharves—brick buildings from which the glass and the frames

of windows, the tiles from the rafters, and the doors from the hinges, had long since disappeared. A sandy road led past these ruins, with only a few loose-hanging galvanized wires strung from nodding posts between it and a long, almost unbroken, vista of green marshes, dotted with cattle, a prospect which just then was bathed in the glittering haze of sunset.

To the woman conscious of a desire for emancipation, this wide scene of river and marsh, so beautiful in its restfulness and so consolatory in its eternal quiet, made an instant and powerful appeal.

It seemed to her then that she could be content with the place; that her nature would never clamour for excitement; that her temperament would be always still; that for ever she could look at the sea and be satisfied. The spell of environment was on her soul. In this ancient sanctuary of Nature she became for the moment a passionless nun.

"You are almost as enthusiastic as the major," said Dr. M'Gavin. While Anne wondered who this major was, the careful and far-seeing doctor proceeded to balance the disadvantages of Borhaven against its delights. He spoke of the drains.

Anne was not long in making acquaintance with the major. She was introduced to this personage on her first walk through Borhaven. "Ah, here comes the major," M'Gavin said, as they entered the square. Anne looked up quickly, and recognized an inmate of the hotel. She saw approaching her a little, corpulent, tight man, with a heavy red face and a white moustache, who walked swiftly with the unmistakable

carriage of a soldier proud of his profession. He wore on his big head a very small, fawn-coloured Homburg hat, pinched at the crown. His jacket was buttoned across his chest, which was disproportionately broad and deep; this little shabby jacket was short in the sleeves, and was so strained in at the waist that it showed a considerable expanse of trouser-seat behind. The trousers fitted tightly round the short legs, which were a trifle bowed, and were turned high up over a pair of well-polished ammunition-boots. He carried in his right hand an old ash stick with much of the bark missing, and with the ferrule blunted to a crumpled ring. A long-legged fox terrier, with a head almost like a hound's, followed at the major's heels.

They stopped and spoke. "I came here," he said to her, laughing, "for six weeks. I have stayed for eleven years!" He assured her that it was the finest place in England. He had never been so well in his life. "An old fellow like me, too!" he said, laughing. He narrated that he had split the riding muscle of his right thigh in India, that he had got a bullet in his bridle arm in Egypt, and that he had broken his collar-bone badly at Punchestown and rather worse at Aintree. "And yet I feel like a two-year-old: fit for anything," he said cheerfully. He appealed to the doctor. "Am I a fit man?—am I sound? By Jove! I should think I was! Forty-six and three-quarter inches round the chest; arms like a blacksmith's, legs like a postman's! Ask Trooper if I can walk." He patted his dog's head, laughed good-humouredly,

assured Anne that she would enjoy Borhaven, and raising the little Homburg hat with an elaborate bow, strode forward, the faithful Trooper at his heels.

"Major Lauden," said the M'Gavin, as they continued their walk, "is a very remarkable man. He contradicts that broad generalization of Huxley's that Nature sends physical disease after physical trespasses. He is a sad toper. He was in what they call a crack cavalry regiment. In ten years he had wasted eighty thousand pounds. And yet the man's body remains a very perfect physical instrument. He walks ten or fifteen miles a day. He swims in the sea winter and summer. Sometimes he goes out with the fishing fleet for two or three nights at a time, and helps pull in the nets. He never suffers from dyspepsia, his heart is normal, he has no lung trouble, and he is fairly intelligent in his ideas. I have never known an abstemious man more efficient in the body."

M'Gavin told Anne that, so far as he understood the matter, Major Lauden was something of a pensioner; that is to say, the sons and married daughters of the incorrigible gentleman clubbed together and paid him a purposely narrow pittance on condition that he remained at Borhaven and never left it. "There is a gentleman here," said M'Gavin, "the district officer of the coastguards, Lieutenant Henry Pleasant by name, who tells me that it is no uncommon thing in England to find some more or less disreputable member of a good family living permanently in an out-of-the-way hotel on an allowance made by his people."

Anne interrupted the doctor with an exclamation of

pleasure. "How picturesque that is!" she said, stopping to look at a scene in a narrow street full of old stone houses by which they were just passing. The sight which had moved her admiration was a common spectacle in Borhaven. She saw the vicar of the town, in cassock and biretta, coming slowly from evensong surrounded by a swarm of affectionate children. In the little ancient street, whose crowded perspective ended in a massy arch, over which, in the midst of the trees, could be seen the tower of the church, the progress of this group made a romantic and beguiling picture. It was such a scene as charms the traveller in Latin countries. The vicar, a tall, lean, scholarly-looking man, with dark hair and a reddish-brown moustache and beard, walked among the crowding children like a veritable father in God. He wore spectacles, and through these glasses Anne could see that his dark eyes beamed indulgently on the children chattering at his side and jostling each other for the privilege of holding his hands. The man breathed a spirit of universal benevolence. "That is our quack doctor," said M'Gavin; "an incoherent man."

CHAPTER V

CREEK COTTAGE

THE house chosen by Anne for her future home was a little white-brick cottage, whose walls were covered by trellis-work once green and now faded to a dull blue. This little cottage, which stood on greensward some fifty yards from the water's edge, was surrounded by a low wall sprinkled with the gold of lichen. At the gate there were two sentinel bay-trees clipped to a precise pattern. A path formed of millstones with cobbles in the interstices led from the gate in the wall, between two broad herbaceous borders, to the front door. There was a rustic arch half-way up this path covered by roses—Lady Gay, Dorothy Perkins, Crimson Rambler, and Aglaia. Over the porch of the front door and hanging in great tangled clusters from the trellis-work on the walls, were clematis, jasmine and honeysuckle. When Anne paid her first visit, a scent of honey breathed in the little garden, which was full of the hum of bees and the singing of birds.

The cottage answered every desire in Anne's heart. It was small, but beautiful; it was solitary, but comfortable.

There were two sitting-rooms, four bedrooms, and a little bath-room, a hot-air linen cupboard, and a use-

ful and practical suite of domestic offices. From the back-door one walked into a very good kitchen garden, with fruit-trees planted at the sides of the walks. At the back of this garden was a little cliff of sandstone and gravel, with firs and pines on the crest. "You are sheltered from the worst winds," said the doctor, "and you get all the sunlight."

"It is just what I want," said Anne.

"The postman comes here last of all," said the doctor; "you could get him to pump the water and do the rough work of the garden for ten shillings a week."

"It is the very thing for me," said Anne.

Anne took great pleasure in furnishing this little place, which was to be her home, her own dwelling The money left by her father had accumulated, and out of this sum she made her purchases. She enjoyed buying old furniture, choosing wall-papers and chintzes, providing herself with household linen, and planning the decoration of her tiny abode.

One of her chief purchases was Mrs. Beeton's cookery book. She became an industrious student of domestic economy.

A little frightened servant was engaged for twelve pounds a year. Mrs. Dobson dubbed her "the minion." Anne said the name was too adult, and called her "minionette." This little creature, whose real name was Emily, adored Anne, and an intimacy grew between them such as exists between mistress and servant in France. They both contrived to keep down the bills.

CHAPTER VI

CURIOSITY

BORHAVEN said, "She is charming, beautiful, a great acquisition—but, where is her husband?"

The question interested different people in different ways.

It interested Mr. Aldrich, one of the three curates, from the religious point of view. He was a lean and bony man with a cavernous face, in which people saw a resemblance to Savonarola. It was Mr. Aldrich who denounced with a terrible invective the immorality of Borhaven. He was the least compromising of men. He was the most earnest priest of the parish. Canon Case, the scholarly vicar, did not deserve his nickname of the Accusative Case; he was a theologian more than a parish priest; he rarely interfered with the lives of the people; he took no part in the social life of the town; his one theatre of operation outside the vicarage study, where he wrote books of theology and contributed learned articles to the reviews, was the school; he devoted himself to the next generation.

But Mr. Aldrich, the senior curate, was a real accuser. He neglected children because he could not strike them. He struck at men and women with the

burning indignation of a pure soul, an incorruptible mind, a heart that had never known temptation. He was a born fighter. In one of his sermons, on sinning against the light, he had said, "I accuse you now to your faces; in the next world I will accuse you to God."

To this earnest and scrupulous priest the question of Mrs. Paton's husband became a matter of serious consideration. Any looseness of opinion regarding the marriage laws roused the lion in his breast.

He knew what the rest of the parish knew, after many months of sounding Dr. M'Gavin. Soon after Anne's arrival Dr. M'Gavin's practice had suddenly become brisk. He was called in by all the spinsters for several miles round the town. Miss Potter, the busiest and most indefatigable church worker, was the first to be struck down. There was an epidemic of curiosity. He found his patients perfectly well, but inquisitive. He felt their pulses and evaded their questions. He sent them medicine and increased their curiosity.

Mr. Aldrich only knew that there *was* a Mr. Paton, and that no divorce or separation had taken place. This invisible husband, gossips said, was immensely rich—the owner of racehorses, with great houses in London and Scotland. Why Mrs. Paton should be living in a little cottage with one servant was incomprehensible. The neighbourhood arrived at a general conclusion: there was something wrong somewhere.

But Anne was charming; about her not the basest mind in the place imagined scandal. The question

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of her husband only added charm; it made her interesting.

People who have lived in a small town will know without being told how the neighbours talked about this mysterious new-comer. It was natural that they should talk. How stupid they would have been if they had not been curious. Is not romance the breath of existence?

Mr. Aldrich said, "I will handle this woman's soul."

CHAPTER VII

MR. ALDRICH MAKES A MOVE

MRS. DOBSON did not go to church. "Sunday," she would say, "is the occasion when people put on their best clothes and call themselves miserable sinners." The thought of a rich landowner, receiving first the homage of poor people at the lych-gate of a church, and then proceeding to take the chief place in the temple near to the priest who flourished under his patronage, always made her scornful. "The most important man in an English church," she used to say, "is the unhappy person who can no more enter the kingdom of heaven than a camel can go through the eye of a needle." If people ventured to expostulate with her for this raillery, "Ah, but, you see, I take Christianity seriously," was her confounding apology.

She disliked hearing beautiful language intoned. Wretched singing set her teeth on edge. Long prayers made her restless. The sentiments of the hymnology made her indignant. This little old lady had the realism of a man of science. It was her fixed conviction that not one person in thirty realized the meanings of words, or ever thought about what they were saying. "Churches are full of parrots," she would say.

But the little lady was not irreligious. On Sundays she always read the collect, epistle and gospel for the day, one or two of her favourite psalms, and a sermon by F. W. Robertson or Charles Kingsley. She never uttered a creed, because, as she said, she only knew accurately what she did not believe; and she never discussed religion, which she called a "painful subject."

Anne, who been brought up without any religious training, did not go to church in Borhaven. She had thought about religion, read about religion, but now was in that condition of mind when people are quite indifferent to the formal observances of their intellectual attitude towards God. In a common phrase, she did not give a thought to Church observance. Her mind, it must be remembered, had never been brought quietly and solemnly to contemplate the avenues of approach to God which experience has laid across the ages. She found herself quite happy and restful without church-going. When she lived in London she had gone on two or three occasions to a fashionable church in the neighbourhood of Wilton Crescent. She described to her grandmother the magnificent hats and the gorgeous dresses of the congregation. The old lady had smiled and said, "Ah, my dear, you have evidently been worshipping God with people who have solemnly promised and vowed to renounce the pomps and vanity of this wicked world." "Is it all a sham?" Anne had asked. From that time she had put church-going out of her head. She had not thought about it.

Mr. Aldrich remarked the absence from Borhaven church of these two interesting ladies.

He began his work by asking Anne to come to church. He pointed out that in the country people of Anne's class exercise a considerable influence on the poor.

Anne, who hated to give pain, readily promised to come to church. It was all new and strange to her; she was almost a stranger to the English liturgy; when she made her first communion she was filled with nervousness. A few months after she had kept this promise, Mr. Aldrich persuaded her to take a district in the town. She shrank from the commission, but accepted it because of his earnestness. She visited a little area of mean houses, helped various ladies of the neighbourhood in such parochial charities as the Maternity Fund and the Girls' Friendly Society, and became gradually acquainted with all the careful organization of an English parish. The day came when she looked forward to visiting certain old people in her district. She and Minionette made little jellies and dishes which Anne carried on her rounds. She grew to be fond of the Church in her own tranquil and restful manner.

Peter Lott was the chief yeoman farmer of the district, a justice of the peace and a county councillor. His daughters were handsome, well-educated and efficient women. They were devoted workers in the parish, and Anne caught from these cheerful, wholesome women not only something of a zeal for unselfish work, but something of their loyalty to the historic

Church of England. She often visited Ferry Hall, which was a beautiful and well-ordered place. The five daughters of the old yeoman came frequently to Creek Cottage.

A year had passed away when one day Anne met Mr. Aldrich at Ferry Hall. The clergyman was rather silent: his eyes rested very often on her face; he did not speak with his usual energy. Anne felt that his eyes disconcerted her. When she left he rose and said he would go with her. Anne felt uncomfortable. As they walked across the fields to the town, he said to her: "If you will let me, Mrs. Paton, I should like to talk to you about yourself. May I do so?"

He turned his head, and looked at her. The man had a disconcerting power of personality. His earnestness was overwhelming. One felt that none of the ordinary social reticencies existed in his mind. He was like a father confessor, self-appointed.

"I don't quite understand," said Anne.

"It is about your marriage," replied the priest. "I am distressed to think you are unhappy. I feel very deeply for you."

"Oh, but please," said Anne, wanting to quicken her pace, "don't be distressed." She affected to laugh. "I am perfectly happy, I assure you."

"Will you tell me about your marriage?" he inquired, a note of intimacy in his voice. "You do not live with your husband? You have been here a year, I think?"

"There is really little to tell. My husband and I

have different tastes. Instead of living unhappily together, we live happily alone. That is all there is to say."

The priest shook his head.

"These separations are dangerous." He turned and looked at her. "May I suggest to you that it is your duty to remain at your husband's side, whatever the disagreeables may be?"

Anne, who felt more than ever her desire to escape, replied hastily, "Forgive me, but I have settled this matter. I do not think about it."

"You are very young, Mrs. Paton," said the clergyman. "Let me, as your priest, make the suggestion that God's purpose with you perhaps may be the salvation of your husband's soul. Have you weighed such a thought? Have you considered your responsibility? To say that you have settled the matter is—forgive me for saying it—only a hasty expression of disrelish for a consideration of duty. There is nothing more dangerous in modern times than the lightness with which people regard their marriage obligations. It is the sapping of society. It makes for carelessness, flippancy, immorality. The Church has no plainer duty in our time than to insist on the solemnity of the marriage sacrament. On the manner in which society regards the seriousness and the religious character of marriage, depends the future of humanity. It is the base of civilization. Let me, pray let me, beg of you to consider whether this separation is not dangerous for your husband, and whether it is not

God's will with you that you should fulfil, however hard and bitter, your marriage vows."

Anne did not answer. Her heart was beating fast. Her face was pale. She felt a commotion in her thoughts. If any one else in the world had spoken to her in this manner she would have been swift to resentment. But what could she say to the priest at her side, with his solemn voice, his terrible earnestness, his obvious sympathy with her fate? She had received from his hands the Eucharist.

"Don't let me hurt you; don't let me offend you," he said. "I have a profound interest in you. Let me leave in your heart just this one idea, Whether you might not see your husband once more, and once again endeavour to fulfil your vows?" He stopped, holding out his hand to her. They had reached a turning where their ways separated. "I shall pray," he said in his intense way, looking deeply into her eyes, "that God will help you to do your duty."

She could not answer. To keep her eyes upon him was difficult. She released her hand, and with a hurried farewell, turned away.

She felt how good it was to be walking swiftly.

She went home in a vexed mood, which did not altogether disappear at sight of the little grandmother standing on a chair to fasten a drooping tendril of clematis to the trellis-work on the house. Creek Cottage had made even Mrs. Dobson fond of flowers.

Anne had been a y ar in her cottage, a year of joy and peace and happiness, and now this inquisitive

priest had begun to irritate her with a reminder of the miserable past. She stayed away from church on the following Sunday. She was surprised to find that she missed the service. She did not know that quietly, imperceptibly, and with all the tender graciousness of a summer dawn, the Liturgy of the Church had been entering into her soul, colouring and suffusing her thoughts with the sublime imagination of religion, filling her character with the continual incense of worship. She had not realized till this empty Sunday, how much nearer during the past year she had drawn in the dim and silent chancel of her soul to the thought, the idea of God.

But she had the cottage, and she had the garden, and she had her little grandmother. The days could not be too long for her. She possessed the genius of the house. Like all restful women, the home became more and more her altar. She found an unceasing pleasure in keeping it beautiful and making it express her feelings. What the woman of fashion finds in a new frock, Anne found, but with much deeper satisfaction, in the things of the house. She placed flowers in vases, and composed with their colours ideas that floated in her soul. The cottage was a canvas on which she painted, a book in which she wrote. The garden was herself.

Then, too, she had her friends. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Pleasant were delightful. The Miss Lotts pleased her; she liked their simple good lives; she learned from them such diverse arts as how to help poor people and how to make jam. Then there was

Major Lauden, who came often to the cottage for tea, bringing Trooper with him, and always vowing at the door that he had carefully shut the dog outside the gate, and would it matter if the old fellow stayed in the garden?—a question which ended in Trooper entering the house. Major Lauden occasionally borrowed a sovereign from Anne, good-naturedly, laughing at the transaction. She liked him too well to refuse. And he diverted the little grandmother by his revolutionary ideas, crudely and hotly uttered, for Major Lauden was a socialist and an agnostic.

No; she was not unhappy. Her life was pleasant. This interfering priest had only disturbed her. The deep waters of her soul were still; presently she almost forgot that they had been ruffled.

And then one day something occurred to divert her thoughts from any wandering inclinations towards introspection. It was in July. Anne woke just before six o'clock. The sun was level with her window, making it a splendour. From the garden, like an orchestra of aërial flutes came the piping rivalries of little birds. The golden atmosphere of her room was sweet with the scent of roses, mignonette and honeysuckle. The breath of the dawn, drenched with thick dews and glittering with sunbeams fresh from the sea, entered the little low-ceiled chamber like a salutation.

Anne threw back the coverlet, pushed her hair from her eyes, and rising from the warm bed, stepped into the morning air. She brushed back the hair from her eyes, and crossed the floor to the window.

At first her eyes were dazzled by the sun, and she thought only of the change wrought in the night; she had stood at this window before going to sleep, looking at a nearly full moon which poured down on the river a shaft of silver light, and made a ghostly beauty of the dark green shrubs in the still and silent garden.

Then her eyes grew used to the light. She drew back quickly, her hands at her breast. For a moment she stood confused; then she peeped out again from behind the vantage of a chintz curtain. A sailing-vessel, something like a fishing-boat, and something like a yacht, was lying in the river at some distance from the cottage, heeled over on its side, the boom swinging, the sail flapping. The accident had evidently only just occurred. A man on deck was hastily picking up a quant when she first reached the window, and now she watched him at the end of this long pole pushing hard to get the yacht off again. He appeared to her in the distance a slim, broad-shouldered man, bareheaded, clad in a thin linen shirt and flannel trousers.

"My friend," she said, laughing to herself, "you will have to wait there till the tide rises again."

She turned away from the window, put on a dressing-gown, slipped her pretty feet into list-shoes, and gathering up her towels, sponges, and soap-dish, opened the door and went along the passage to the bath-room.

When she came back, she amused herself as she dressed by glancing out of the window at the boat

on the mud and the struggling man on the shelving deck. Before she had finished her toilet, he had abandoned his struggles, and was leaning against the mast, filling a pipe, and staring disconsolately at the falling tide.

Anne went down-stairs. She opened all the windows; unbarred and unlocked the doors; greeted Minionette, who came sleepily into the kitchen with paper and sticks for the fire, and then went out through the back door to raise the hatch of the fowl-house. She stood watching the emerging hens for a moment, who shook their feathers and stretched their wings along an elongated leg, and refused until this operation was over to run after the hypothetical worms to which chanticleer was summoning them with the most tremendous puffings of his hackle feathers, the most ceaseless and urgent duckings and bobbings of his scarlet-capped head, and the most expostulatory and inflammatory words of the barndoor vocabulary. Anne laughed at them, and then entered the garden and made her way to the front of the house. "I must go and help that poor man," she said.

She lifted the latch of the gate in the wall, and crossed the grass on the river-bank. She reached the hard, where her feet made a pleasant sound on the dew-glistening gravel, and stood on the edge of the little quay. The man who was doing something with tackle, looked up and saw her in the distance. He waited to see what she would do.

"How much do you draw?" called Anne, putting

her hand to her mouth and speaking very slowly and distinctly.

He took his pipe from his mouth. "A little over seven feet," he said, lifting his back from the mast. The voice came with wonderful distinctness across the water; the features of the face were indistinguishable.

"I'm afraid you'll have to wait till the flood's at the full," called Anne; "the mud just here is very soft."

He nodded his head. "There's no room for throwing out a kedge," he shouted, with humour. Then he added, by way of apology, "I was congratulating myself on a long tack. It looked like a lot of water."

Anne smiled. "Can we be of any service to you? Have you got food?"

"Yes, thanks. I shall be all right. This isn't a new experience, I'm afraid! Many thanks all the same."

She nodded, and turned back to the garden. He put his pipe in his mouth, and looked along the deck of his vessel.

Anne went indoors. She was amused and felt happy. An incident of any kind is delightful to people who live in simple quiet. She took Mrs. Dobson the old lady's early cup of tea, told her of the boat on the mud, and then went down to see about breakfast. When the table was laid and the drawing-room dusted, she picked up her basket and scissors and went into the garden for fresh flowers.

She looked up to see how the sailor was getting on, and beheld him in the act of hurling a dinghey overboard. The little boat made a great splash as it struck the water, and ran out with the tide to the end of the rope. Then Anne saw the sailor pick up a pair of oars, and pull the boat in to the ship's side.

"He's coming ashore," she said; "we must ask him to breakfast."

She began to wonder what he was like.

The sailor dropped his coat into the dinghey, and then stepped in after it with the oars under his arm. But instead of pulling to the shore, he got the dinghey into midstream and rowed quietly away with the ebbing tide.

"He's going back to Borhaven," said Anne; "we shan't have to boil another egg after all."

The afternoon passed away.

The flood came up and lifted the deserted boat off the mud. Anne watched its reflection trembling in the running water. It made a difference, this strange craft, to the familiar seclusion of the river scene.

Just before tea the latch of the gate opened, and Ramsay M'Gavin walked up the stone path followed by the man from the boat. Anne was reading in the shade of a tree, with the little grandmother asleep in a lounge-chair at her side. She got up and crossed the square of grass to the path.

She looked at M'Gavin. His serious face made her smile: he looked like Destiny, so solemn, so bloodless, so unalterable. She glanced at the stranger,

He smiled at her. Then he laughed. Stranger no longer!

"Hugh!" she said, and held out her hand.

He came forward with the pleasure and animation of an old friend. He was laughing. "It's like a breath from Portobello," said M'Gavin.

CHAPTER VIII

THE *SAND WASP*

THE advent of Napier produced a great change in the life of Anne Paton. This companion of her childhood not only revived in her heart the memory of days inexpressibly sweet and innocent, not only brought back to her and made intensely vivid the whole pre-existence of her delightful and joyous childhood, but produced in the stagnant calm of her present life the disturbing influence of his new character, his new personality, the change which had overtaken him in the years of their separation.

In some ways he was of all living creatures the most familiar to her consciousness; in others, the most unknown.

He had lived, she discovered, a nomad existence, with no other dwelling than his little ship, which he employed as an Arab uses both tent and camel. The sea had been his desert, the harbours of the world his oases and camping-grounds. But the solitude of this existence had not infected his mind with gloom or bitterness; on the contrary, he appeared in her eyes as the one profoundly and largely happy person she had ever known. The immense width of sea horizons, the rejoicing strength of huge masses of

water, the wild liberty and unhampered freedom of the great winds, seemed to have given something of their splendour and their power to his mind. He wore in his countenance nothing of the grey of cities; his vocabulary stammered with no pedantries of convention; he was wonderfully free of the ennui, weariness, and pessimism of a dyspeptic and overworked age.

Anne perceived in this man a solid depth of character which distinguished him from the mere *flaneur*, as a rock is distinguished from a pebble. She read, in the hard lines of his bronzed face, in the solidity of the broad temples, in the strength and security of his dark eyes, the history of many a fight on the high seas, many a long and silent struggle with the winds of God. And these great contests seemed to her only the allegories of his soul, which had been buffeted and shaped in tempests.

She was interested in the quality of strength which breathed from his personality. It was not the strength which she had seen in the grave and austere countenance of her father. It was some new form of strength with which she had not yet made acquaintance. The man's eyes, from which the smile seldom went, his voice, which had a resonant undertone, impressed her with a sense of courage, daring, joy—she knew not what of adventure, hardihood, and entire self-reliance. He seemed to have come into the green quiet of her little trim garden from the escarpment of some terrible wind-swept mountain, where he had laughed at the thunder and thrown stones at the lightning. Strength was his cleaving-mark.

This man disturbed her by the question which his whole personality presented continually to her own life. Hitherto she had found her present existence, with its simple duties, its regular routine, its humble occupations, and its settled peace, a perfectly satisfactory employment of time. But now, as she listened, like Desdemona, to the stories and histories of this traveller, she found herself becoming every day more conscious of smallness and narrowness in her life. He had the same disturbing and stimulating effect upon her quiet life that Lady Austen had on the Olney household. Outside her cottage, Anne began to realize, was the world.

The tiny dwelling which her exquisite taste had made so charming and beautiful, and which stirred the inhabitants of Borhaven to exclamations of admiration, shrank in her eyes as she watched the amusement it afforded to this strong-limbed Ulysses. "It reminds me," he said, "of your little doll's house at Portobello. Do you remember?—you saved up your pocket-money and bought it at Cumming's Bazaar, in Cockburn Street. The entire front—red bricks, green door, and little curtained windows—opened to show the inside; and you saved up more money and bought little furniture, and ornaments, and pictures, and vases of flowers for the interior. Do you remember? There was a little brass lamp, with a chimney and white globe, on the drawing-room table, which was of gilt." He picked up a precious piece of Dresden china, a comfit-box, from the table at his side. "This is exactly the kind of thing you used to buy for your

doll's house; it is only a little bigger, and cost more money. Does it"—he looked up at her, smiling—"give you as much pleasure as the old toys?"

Her old doll's house! She had forgotten it. She had forgotten it in the excitement of a bigger doll's house. This cottage was only a continuance of her old make-believe; she was still playing at keeping house; her mind was still in the nursery. The limitations of her sex came home to her. Women began life with dolls and dolls' houses; they ended with babies and housekeeping.

The mention of her old doll's house revived a hundred memories. She recollected her old disputations with Hugh Napier. She remembered how he had laughed at her, when he returned from sailing with Portobello fishermen, to find her dusting the little chambers of her doll's house and preparing the dinner for its tiny inhabitants. In those days she had called him a rough boy, and had countered his attack on her doll's housekeeping with ironical references to his blunders in the schoolroom. And now, she told herself, it was just the same. He came from the big sea to laugh at her doll's house. There was no difference in his eyes between a farthing toy and a priceless piece of Dresden china. They me[illegible] ter many years on the old ground of sexual dispute. He was still the boy. She was still the girl.

But the quarrel would not resume its old freedom. He did not scorn her with roughness; he smiled at her with polite and charming tolerance. And she could not now charge this strong and self-possessed

traveller, who had seen the great world and sailed himself over the great seas, with blunders in grammar and mistakes in spelling and arithmetic. Besides, there was something deep, and profound, and perplexing in his character. He not only came to church, but he visited poor people, was particularly kind to the children of bad parents, and assisted some of the worst outcasts whom no curate or district-visitor ever went near.

The man had some greatness in him which made an impression on her. Above everything else, he perplexed her.

He had told her on the first day of his arrival that he intended to stay only a few days in Norfolk waters. He was going, he said, to the most beautiful place on the earth—to Svendborg, in Denmark. He described to her the scenery, spoke about the delightful hospitality of the people, and mentioned the names of many friends in that country. "I had no idea that I should find you here," he said; "I only came to see how M'Gavin was getting on."

But he did not go away. His ship, the *Sand Wasp*, lay in the harbour of Borhaven. He rowed his dinghey almost every day up the river to Creek Cottage. He sat with Mrs. Dobson in the garden while Anne was busy in the house, and after tea would walk with Anne along the river-bank, or row her to the opposite shore and explore the woods, which stretched far away to distant moorland. Sometimes he met her in Borhaven when she was making the round of her district. He never spoke about going

away, and never referred to Svenborg. "I had no idea," he would say, "that Norfolk was so beautiful." Once he said to her, as they watched a blue-heron flying among six or seven owls, which their walking had put up from the long grass on the sea-wall, "I think I shall stay to see the wildfowl arrive in the winter."

No companion could have been pleasanter. His temperament had caught the quiet of nature, with which he withstood the enmity of nature. The summer of his soul met the winter of misfortune and laughed at it. He and Anne were very happy together. He had so much to tell; she had so willing an inclination to hear.

Soon after his arrival, she paid one morning a visit to his ship. It was there that the manner of his life came home to her. The *Sand Wasp* was a solid and compact vessel, with a length of forty feet and a beam of eleven, drawing seven foot of water. His sleeping cabin was aft—a small chamber fitted with two bunks and a place for washing, like a cabin in a mail steamer. The saloon amidships, with the mast coming through the decks at the fore-end, had a broad lounge on the port side, with a bookshelf above it; and on the starboard side there were curved lockers and a table. This was a comfortable and cheerful place, despite its smoky roof and the extreme simplicity of its fittings. There was a fireplace and mantelpiece at the end nearest the bows, and a cupboard for crockery and provisions against the forward bulkhead.

They went forward, and he showed her the little fore-peak where he kept his Primus stove, his oil, his spare gear, and where he did his cooking. Through the chain-pipe in the deck above ran the links of his cable, massive and rusty; the end of this monster lay on the floor in a thick and clumsy coil. "One realizes your journeys looking at this chain," said Anne.

"There are two sounds I am very fond of," he said; "the running out and the coming home of a cable."

She thought for a moment, and then said, "Arrival and Departure?"

"Yes."

They climbed by the steep companion to the deck, and sat down in the sun on the cabin top, leaning their backs against the folds of the stowed mainsail.

"Do you like her?" Hugh asked.

"Yes; she's workmanlike; a traveller."

He said that he had built her in the same spirit as that in which Dr. Primrose had chosen his wife and she her wedding-gown. He described her good qualities. "You must excuse my enthusiasm," he said, laughing; "this is my home, my doll's house."

"Why did you call her the *Sand Wasp?*"

"The sand wasp," he said, "is a little insect which never sees its father or its mother, and which hasn't the least notion in the world how it came into existence. It finds itself alive, and that is all. But when the time arrives for this creature to lay its eggs, it deposits them in the sand, and surrounds them with the food exactly suitable for the young, but which is

food that she herself does not eat. Then off she goes." He turned and looked at his companion. "I know just about as much of myself as the awaking sand wasp," he said slowly. "I gave my home a companionable name."

CHAPTER IX

1857

ONE day, at a party given by the Henry Pleasants, conversation turned upon marriage. Mr. Aldrich had preached an extraordinary sermon on the previous day, denouncing with fiery eloquence the modern world's impatience of the sanctity of marriage.

Among the guests were Anne Paton and Hugh Napier.

Miss Potter, secretary to the Girls' Friendly Society in Borhaven, a most masterful Sunday-school teacher, and a district visitor who was far too sharp ever to be imposed upon, declared boldly that the sermon was not a whit too strong and deserved to be printed.

The general feeling among the numerous Miss Lotts seemed to favour the gentle idea, expressed in a murmur, that perhaps Mr. Aldrich looked too much on the black side of things.

Henry Pleasant, who was modest and self-conscious, a tall, thin, hatchet-faced man, quite unlike the average naval officer, suggested that the marriage laws pressed hardly on certain people.

The voice of Ramsay M'Gavin broke in upon this tentative discussion.

"I will make a remark," he said in his solemn way. Everybody turned to look at the doctor. "The Act of 1857," he went on, folding his arms over his breast, and crossing his legs, "is condemned by every intelligent man who has studied it. Great suffering, exceeding cruelty, and enormous immorality are the only fruits, so far as I am aware, of that pernicious, ill-considered and bigoted enactment. I have not had the advantage of hearing the sermon to which reference has been made, but I take it that Mr. Aldrich limited himself to the rhetoric of this question, and made no excursion into the domain of actual experience. He is probably not aware, for instance, that the number of men and women whose husbands are incarcerated in lunatic asylums, and who can get no release from their impossible union, is something like sixty thousand. The children of the husbands are denied stepmothers; the children of the wives are denied breadwinners. I do not know whether this state of things commends itself to the religious conscience; but I can say with confidence that science regards it as irrational, dangerous, and against the best interests of the State."

He paused for a moment, and there was a low murmur of amazement at the number of men and women in society deprived by insanity of their wives and husbands. Miss Potter, whose cheeks had reddened a little, and whose eyes blinked and shone, kept a challenging gaze fixed upon the doctor.

"Mr. Aldrich is also probably unaware," resumed M'Gavin, "of the profound problem which the Act

of 1857 has introduced into the body politic by making it comparatively easy to get a separation order. These separation orders do not allow of re-marriage. The number annually granted in this country is somewhere in the neighbourhood of ten thousand. It must be borne in mind that ten thousand separation orders affect twenty thousand human beings. Now, a very little reflection should be sufficient to make even an ordinarily obtuse intellect cognisant of the grave situation produced by separating every year twenty thousand men and women, and forbidding them ever to marry again. If their relations justify separation, their humanity justifies re-marriage. I am on delicate ground."

"I think," said Miss Potter, "that the law has no right to separate them."

"But the fact stands," replied M'Gavin, "that the law does separate them."

"Then," said Miss Potter quickly, seeing light and immediately beginning to get up steam, "if they can't agree, and if they choose to be legally separated—denying, mind you, their solemn altar vows—if they do that, let them suffer; they deserve to suffer."

She panted with the strength of her conviction.

"I am willing to agree with you," began Dr. M'Gavin; but Miss Potter got off again.

"If for some trumpery reason of temper or disposition they go into the law courts and get an order for separation," she said vigorously, "they invite whatever suffering comes to them; they bring it on themselves. No two people, I should think, ever agreed.

Marriage, I have always understood, is a give-and-take arrangement. A nice state of things, if every man who had a tiff with his wife ran off to the magistrate and got a separation order! Those who do choose to do such a thing—cowards and sneaks and feeble creatures, I call them—instead of deserving our pity merit our most unmitigated contempt!"

People smiled and agreed.

"As I remarked a moment ago," said Dr. M'Gavin, "I am perfectly——"

With a toss of her head away from him, feeling that she now had the suffrages of the meeting entirely on her side, Miss Potter was off again. "Marriage," she said, "isn't forced upon these people. They do it themselves. It's their own act, their own choice. They know perfectly well what they are about. They are not children. If they make a mistake it's their own fault. A man who marries an empty-head doll deserves to suffer. A woman who marries a good-for-nothing man deserves all she gets. No one forced them into these unions. A pretty condition of things, if the consequences of our own wilful misdoing are to be an excuse for altering the laws of the land! When I hear of unhappy marriages I say, They did it themselves. People go about the world seeming to think that marriage is ordered by the policeman and consummated, if I may use the word, by the tax-collector. They talk about it as if it was nothing more nor less than conscription. Marriage is a person's own choice. I don't care how young the girl is or how green the man is, they are both at a time

of life when anybody who is going to be any good at all ought to have common-sense. If they haven't got common-sense they are a nuisance to the rest of the world. Experience is a school for fools as well as for wise men; it certainly isn't a sweet-shop or a kindergarten. People have no right to blame the laws. Whatever happens, *they do it themselves*."

Again the vigorous views of Miss Potter met with the general approbation. Henry Pleasant, however, had a modest notion that she had not exhausted the subject. "Dr. M'Gavin, I think, wants to say something," he said diffidently, with an air of apology.

"Dr. M'Gavin," said Miss Potter, "is a medical man, and ought to know better than to talk nonsense. Oh, it's no laughing matter. If he goes into the houses of poor people telling them that they have a perfect right to separate and live how they like, we shall soon have pandemonium. What people require to be told is that they must do their duty. People don't want slacking; they want tightening up. All this talk of democracy and the rights of man and the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is a slacking of the human race. If you want to see a dirty doorstep, a miserable kitchen, starving children and disgusting parents, go into the houses of Borhaven where the men talk about their rights. Religious people—people who don't talk about their rights but who do their duty—keep a clean doorstep, have a bright kitchen, bake their own bread, take a pride

in their children, and would rather starve than beg or go on the parish. These things are the facts of life. People go up in the sky and forget facts when they talk about ideas. Dr. M'Gavin knows as well as I do that these things are facts. Slack a person, and you send him to ruin. Screw him up, and you keep him moving. All this talk about the hardships of marriage laws is a slacking of society. It means ruin."

One of the Miss Lotts suddenly remembered that Anne Paton was living separated from her husband. She glanced across the room as Miss Potter was speaking, saw, or thought she saw, a look of pain in Anne's face, and immediately whispered to one of her sisters that it would be well to change the subject.

Miss Potter noticed this whispering and stopped abruptly. Her flushed cheeks became suddenly scarlet under the terrible misgiving that she had said something indelicate. Her stricken pause was the doctor's opportunity.

"I should like to make one addendum to my previous remarks," he said, with a steady persistency which admitted of no interruptions. "I am perfectly willing to say that the sixty thousand people with their mates in lunatic asylums, and the twenty thousand people annually separated but not divorced, constitute a negligible section of the community. I will even go so far as to say with Miss Potter, though I doubt the Christian character of the remark, Let

them suffer. But, what of their children? Let us be careful. We are speaking of posterity."

Before Miss Potter could make a reply the numerous family of the Lotts made an imposing diversion, by rising to take leave of their hostess.

Napier walked back with Anne.

The conversation, curiously enough, had made them think of each other. Anne had felt that Miss Potter's remarks must have hurt Napier in the person of his mother; Napier had felt, with the Miss Lotts, that the discussion must be painful to the separated wife of Richard Paton.

When Anne had gone out, Mrs. Pleasant said, "I never thought of Mrs. Paton! I hope she didn't think we were talking of her."

To which Miss Potter made reply, "She was not in my mind, but I rejoice that she was present."

Darkness was falling over the earth as Napier and Anne left the lighted streets of Borhaven behind them and entered the wide fields through which a narrow path led to the creek. A few stars were visible. A cold wind blew from the north. The sound of the sea came to them in a dull monotone.

Refreshed by the coldness and confident in the darkness, Anne said to Napier, "Who do you think had the best of the duel?"

He laughed. "M'Gavin always amuses me. His measured utterance, his professorial manner, his dramatic tone, his expression of pompous gravity—he is the least conversational of men."

"And Miss Potter?"

"She has the crudeness which inspires, the energy which acts, the common-sense which achieves. It would be easy to laugh at Miss Potter. But the world is better for her. I always admire people who do things."

"And her opinions?"

He was afraid to cause her pain, and said that the question of the discussion was too big for settlement across cold tea-cups.

"I think that I am on the side of Ramsay M'Gavin," she said. "Oh, yes, I am altogether on his side. What a barbarity to force people to live together who cannot agree. Think of it in a little house, where they cannot avoid each other! The daily, hourly jar upon the nerves: the perpetual irritation: the continued absence of peace and tranquillity: the mind always living in a state of siege. How dreadful! Why should they live this cat-and-dog life? They are human beings. Their lives ought to be as beautiful as possible; they are made as wretched as it possible to conceive."

"No doubt the marriage laws press hardly on certain people."

"I am quite with Ramsay M'Gavin. He is pompous and a little ridiculous; but he is right."

"No; he is wrong."

She was surprised by this sudden challenge, and turned her eyes to look at him. He was walking beside her in the stubble, which was a little lower

than the footpath; the obscure profile of his face was on a level with her own. She could see in the darkness a vague seriousness hardening the shadowy outline of his face. His eyes were looking straight ahead of him.

"Why is he wrong?" she asked.

"He is tampering with the fundamentals of human society."

She made no answer.

"In particular cases he might seem right; but for humanity in general he is wrong."

"You think the human race is not to be trusted?"

"I am sure that civilization depends upon man's respect for woman."

She thought over this remark, and they walked on in silence. The noise of his boots brushing against the hard stubble made a rhythmic and liquid accompaniment to her thoughts. His long stride had a quality of persistence which suggested destiny. In the darkness, with the cold wind blowing through her and past her, she felt as though something cruel and inexorable was following her, that escape was impossible.

"Marriage," he said presently, "has given woman her position of honour and respect. To preserve that position is essential. Like music, woman either exalts man or degrades him. Civilization is the work of men, but it is in the hands of women."

"I agree with you; but unhappy marriages do not make for anything useful. To dissolve them would

not injure happy marriages. On the contrary, unhappy marriages tend to discredit the marriage state. Why shouldn't people be happy?"

It was his turn to keep silence.

"Why shouldn't they be happy?" she asked.

"Miss Potter would tell you that we are not here to be happy."

"But do you believe that?"

"I believe that discipline is more essential than gratification."

"But it is a natural impulse to wish to be happy?"

"That impulse carries us beyond this earth, into the universe up yonder"—he looked for a moment towards the stars. "To be satisfied here is impossible. Directly one begins to think, one knows that happiness here is a will-o'-th'-wisp. The pessimism of philosophy, from Job to Schopenhauer, is its optimism. The natural impulse for happiness is bigger than the satisfactions of the earth. It is immortal. We can't be happy here, because we belong to the infinite. A man who is satisfied with this life is an animal."

"Still, I think one may try to put an end to wretchedness."

"Not at the cost of discipline."

"You are a Calvinist!"

"Perhaps."

"Where did you find your religion?"

"In the world."

"Your seriousness surprises me."

"Yo' ' ave touched one of the two subjects on which I am always serious."

"Marriage?"

"The restraints of society."

"And the other subject?"

"Children."

"Ramsay M'Gavin is serious on that subject, too."

"He would build his posterity without a foundation. To-morrow is nothing without to-day."

She said to him, half-laughing, "You are almost as terrible as Mr. Aldrich."

"I have no objection to laughter. It depends on one's mood. Sometimes I am inclined to rail at the world; sometimes to laugh at it. But my principles remain the same."

"On the whole, I think it is better to laugh."

"It depends on the mood."

"You were serious as a boy."

"Anything is better than tittering."

"Perhaps you live too much alone."

"At sea one is never alone. On shore I mix with all sorts and conditions of men. It seems a lonely life, but it isn't, really. If I had a hand on board I should be conscious of solitude."

They came through a gate and made the descent of the little cliff to the cottage.

"You are coming in?" she asked.

"Not to-night."

"But do; we can give you dinner."

He thanked her, but refused.

As she gave him her hand she said, "Next time we meet I shall want you to laugh at the enemies of your principles."

"I hope I haven't depressed you."

"I am not sure. I will tell you when we meet again. You have surprised me."

CHAPTER X

FLIGHTING

A MAN who sets a woman thinking makes love to her.

Anne began to think about Napier. He became an obsession. When she was watching the gardener's winter digging, working with Minionette in the kitchen, helping Mrs. Dobson to dress, or sitting by herself with a book, this enigmatical man presented himself to her mind and became the master of her thoughts.

A step on the path of millstones made her look expectantly from the window; she was disappointed when the visitor was not Napier.

His opinions on marriage were more than a surprise to her; they were an irritation. She felt vexed with him. If his experience had been hers would he maintain those stringent opinions? It was impossible to think of him as a Puritan; he could not really be a Calvinist; but he was apparently religious with a severity that struck her as unusual and unpleasant.

A man in a cassock might pardonably hold the views of Mr. Aldrich; but these views did not fit a man of the world who sailed the seas single-

handed, who knew cities and men, who could laugh and be amusing, who was interesting to women, and whose attraction was his strong manhood.

She was puzzled to know from whence he got these severe ideas. His presence in church had not seemed strange to her; she had accepted it without thinking as part of the formalism and conformity of the age. His visits to the houses of poor people, his kindness to children, his benevolence to the outcasts at whose doors no district visitor ever knocked, had seemed to her the expression of an interest and a curiosity which a student of humanity might exercise without missionary zeal. The idea that he was religious struck her as strange and confusing. She was disturbed by it. But the more she reflected on what he had said to her during that walk across the dark fields the more it came home to her that this quiet and interesting man, whose mind had once seemed an open book to her, was religious. This thought, as we have said, disturbed her.

She was led to wonder what view he entertained of her own situation. Did he, too, think with the interfering and impossible priest that she should go back to her husband, go back to a life that was hateful and degrading, and attempt to save a soul that was dead even to the alphabet of refinement? Would he say to her one day, It is God's will that you should go back?

It seemed to her impossible.

The next time she saw him, much to her disquiet, she found herself self-conscious. When we think

incessantly of a single person the actual presence is sometimes strangely agitating.

He presented himself one bitter dark evening at Creek Cottage, with a large duffle coat over his arm and with a gun in his hand. He wore a fisherman's jersey, and had heavy sea-boots on his feet. He did not enter the drawing-room, but stood in the door. He asked Anne if she would like to make experience with flighting. He seemed happy and vigorous. His face shone from the exercise of rowing, his dark eyes were bright and animated. This cheerfulness of his demeanour, reminiscent of their childhood, restored Anne's composure. Mrs. Dobson, on her sofa, regarded him over her spectacles as he stood, cap in hand, at the doorway. "Ladylike work, killing ducks," she said maliciously.

"It's the poetry of shooting," he answered; "it's not the killing that's good, but the watching."

"And catching cold."

"Anne must wrap up."

To be with him pleased her. She said she would come.

While she was up-stairs, putting on thick boots and an ulster, Mrs. Dobson said to Napier, "When are you going to Denmark?"

"It is too cold now."

"You intend to stay here?"

"For the present."

She watched him with a steady gaze which was almost a scrutiny. "You live rather an idle life, don't you? Is that wise? Idleness, you know, is danger-

ous. Why don't you get some work to do, marry, and settle down? It would be good for you."

He smiled and shook his head. "I am quite safe," he answered.

She seemed about to speak, but checked, an' turned to her book. "In the meantime, you are making me sit in a draught."

"I will wait outside." He wished her good-night, closed the door, and went into the garden. As he stood at the gate, looking back to the cottage, he saw the light in Anne's window and her shadow on the blind.

Anne came down-stairs, made up the drawing-room fire, kissed her little grandmother, and joined Napier in the garden, who still had his coat over his arm.

It was quite dark. The creek was almost full. There was no hard blowing wind, but the air stung the face and hardened the flesh. A sense of ice coldness came from the ripples of the river breaking on the shingle of the hard.

They got upon the sea wall and walked in Indian file along the narrow path. The grey-coloured grass was up to their knees. Not a sound reached their ears. The rising river flowed without noise over the saltings. They did not speak after their first sentences of commonplace.

When they had gone half-a-mile up the creek Napier slackened his pace and began to look about him.

"This will do," he said, in a low voice. "Do you

mind lying down in the grass? I will spread my coat for you."

"But you will be cold?"

"No; I'm well wrapped up."

He laid the duffle coat on the side of the wall, and she lay down, the grass closing about her.

"Somehow this reminds me of Portobello," she said, settling herself into a comfortable position. "It is in the nature of an adventure. There's something boyish about it."

He loaded his gun, looked down the creek to sea, then across the marshes, inclined his ear to the sky, listening, and then lay down in the long grass at a little distance from her.

"It's great fun, flighting," he said, "even if one doesn't get a shot. You'll enjoy hearing the duck go over our heads—if they do! They make a queer ghostly noise, and it's so high up, something mysterious about it."

They kept silence for some time, Napier listening, Anne thinking.

"They're wonderfully clever birds," he said in his low voice. "They've learned by experience that the marshes aren't safe by day. They go out to sea and wait for the night to fall, hungry all the time. Then they come creeping across the skies at night to feed in the rivers."

He half raised himself on an elbow, listening. The melancholy cry of a redshank on the opposite shore reached their ears. "That's the policeman of

waterfowl," he whispered, lying down flat. "Something is moving."

The sound ceased; silence settled over land and river; the wind began to move through the grass.

Napier looked up at the sky. "I hope the moon won't show. We shan't be able to see the duck if it does."

An owl skimmed over their heads and glided away into the darkness.

"Birds are wonderful creatures," he said, in a voice which brought back to her his boyhood in an extraordinary real and convincing fashion; it was as if he was speaking to himself; the voice was low and quiet, and sounded strangely in the silence and the darkness. "No one can explain why some of them live to be a hundred and over, whilst others die as young as a dog. What makes the difference in time between the life of a rook and a blackbird?"

When they had waited some time he turned towards Anne, and said, "It's rather horrible, when you think of it, this killing of wildfowl. There's something splendid in their flight from the Baltic; the long journey through all kinds of weather; the steady beating of their brave wings all the hungry, homeless way, and then, when they sight rest and food at last, England receives them with a charge of shot. What a welcome! what a reward for valour! But flighting isn't so bad as gunning. Henry Pleasant offered me the use of his punt the other day;

I was tempted, but I resisted. It's curious how conscience interferes even in the small things of life."

"Your conscience," she said, smiling and speaking very softly, "is much more sensitive than it used to be. I find it difficult sometimes to attach you to Portobello. The only link seems to be the *Sand Wasp*. In everything else you have changed."

"I used to be rather rude to you! I was as rough as could be. But they were good days. I often think of your father."

"It was great fun when he took us into Edinburgh."

"Yes. I wish I could thank him now. A boy never realizes kindness. He expects it. I should like to thank your father."

"I think he was quite satisfied. He was very fond of you."

"His influence lasts with me, which is something. He was one of the best men I have ever known." He laughed. "Doesn't old M'Gavin make you smile at times?—the way in which he tries to assume your father's manner!"

Napier's low laughter sounded softly in the still air.

"One thing always puzzles me about my father," she said, turning on her side and looking towards the water. "He was a very good man, as you say, but he wasn't religious. He would have been very hard, for instance, on Mr. Aldrich."

"Would he? I am not quite sure."

"I don't think he would even applaud some of your opinions!"

"Mine!" He turned to her, smiling. "You are thinking of the other night. I am afraid I rather depressed you. I thought about it afterwards. You said I surprised you, and as I walked back it came to me that I had forgotten my *rôle* of schoolfellow. I might have been addressing a public meeting!"

"But you hold those views."

"I might have expressed them differently."

"You would still be a disciple of our Savonarola!"

"Who is that?"

"Mr. Aldrich."

"I have heard him preach. I rather approve of him. He has the courage and common sense to preach a hell. That brings us back to your father. Your father wasn't really a man without religion; he hated evil; he was only opposed to a particular form of religion which happened to surround him and interfere with his work. I am not at all sure that he wouldn't have seen good in a man like Aldrich." He stopped speaking for a moment, plucking at the grass in front of him. "You see, Anne," he resumed, speaking slowly, as though troubled about the choice of his words, "there is really an unmistakable need now-a-days for recovering some of humanity's ancient landmarks; one can't go about the world, meet people, read books and newspapers, study the condition of society and watch the movements of politics without feeling that people are making the most dangerous and foolhardy experi-

ments with civilization. It's like an engineer trying experiments with the engines of a battleship in mid-ocean. A great many things in civilization are ridiculous, but the fundamentals are essential. One can't help being serious when flippancy on the one side and materialism on the other are reducing life to a meaningless experiment. Anarchy is the only result. I have met several intelligent anarchists in Spain; they are much more logical and consistent than the socialists, materialists, and *flaneurs* of Protestant countries; if there is no God, no hereafter, no conscience, and no progress of the spiritual life, this life becomes a scramble, a chaos of self-assertion and greed. Anything else is irrational. What is evil if there is no good, and what is good if there is no God? The State makes crime, but the conscience makes iniquity. Do away with conscience, and only the policeman is left. Do you think a policeman can carry the human race as far as, let us say, St. Paul, to go no higher? Who can really say that literature would be safer with Oscar Wilde for its authority than Wordsworth?—or art, with Aubrey Beardsley than Michael Angelo?—or politics, with Horace Walpole than Burke or Garibaldi? I think everybody must feel conscious of a hell and ruin in front of the human race if the main road of advance is not to be treated seriously. And I can't conceive where the quality of seriousness is to be found if we rule out a destiny in the infinite."

He got upon an elbow, and turned towards her. "You would be quite as serious as I am," he said, "if

you knew how flippancy is gaining ground all over the world, among the great powers, as the chief force of social life. The great powers, by the way, are few in number. The vast majority of nations are savages. That is important to remember. As for this spirit of flippancy it is the most detestable spirit in the world. It belittles the universe, dwarfs existence, and makes men and women horrible. One laughs at the smooth creatures who creep about the drawing-rooms of the world with insidious sneers and poisonous mockery; but they are really as dangerous as microbes. Atheism is a lion or a tiger; flippancy is a bacillus. If you would know how deadly this bacillus is, go into Russian society. Nothing is more horrible than a godless nation. I am serious because I loathe the titterer; and I loathe him because I see his danger. If civilization were something permanent and impossible of destruction I should not be afraid of flippancy. But civilization, when one knows the nations of the world, is a candle in the midst of a hurricane. A few men in a very few nations represent the soul of civilization."

"I can agree with everything you say," she answered. "I shouldn't at all like you to be flippant."

"To come back to your father," he said; but she interrupted him.

"I want just to say this. One can be dissatisfied with human laws and wish to alter them, without being either flippant or irreligious. No one would accuse Ramsay M'Gavin of flippancy!"

He made no reply for a moment. Something in

his silence warned her. She experienced that strange telepathic sensation of expectation and disquiet which tells us that our companion is going to bring conversation home to us, to make it intimate and personal. She wondered what he would say to her.

"Since I last saw you," he said, slowly and diffidently, "I have thought a good deal of our talk about marriage. I was discussing the matter in a general way, in the abstract. Perhaps—(it's rather difficult to put it nicely)—you were thinking of an individual case. We are very old friends, Anne, but even brothers and sisters sometimes find it delicate work to talk about their own private affairs; perhaps you would rather I didn't say anything more?"

She found it difficult to make an answer. For some reasons she would have liked to discuss her own experience with this man; she even had a feeling that it was necessary, to justify her point of view. At the same time, a feeling of constraint held her back; in some unaccountable fashion her marriage made her ashamed; it seemed to degrade her.

But curiosity, that most potent impulse in women, settled her decision.

"You are thinking of my own experience?" she asked, without looking at him. "I don't think it influences my ideas. You see, it doesn't interfere with my life. I am quite free."

"No; you are scarcely free, Anne. I mean, you can't marry again."

"But I don't want to. I am perfectly content.

No; my own case doesn't influence me. I think of people tied to each other in one house, who can't escape from one another, who live a double life in one, who are perpetually miserable, wretched, and irked. That seems to me a shameful existence, unthinkable. And, after all, marriage is a human arrangement, so that one doesn't see why its regulations should not be improved."

She wanted to discuss her own experience; she wanted to tell her own story; she wanted to discover what he thought about it; but the difficulty, the delicacy of such a colloquy had unconsciously urged her away from the personal point of view.

"Don't you think that marriage is important just because it is a human arrangement?" he asked quietly. "Humanity makes law for its own well-being. Because marriage is such a fundamental and essential thing, men like Aldrich resist any tampering with its safeguards. The human race can't afford to make experiments with its foundations. The religious point of view, which so many people consider intolerant, is founded, after all, upon the instruction of One who said that the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath. The interests of humanity were certainly never closer to any man's heart than they were to His. He, quite evidently, attached enormous importance to the sanctity of marriage."

"And yet," she said, rather wearily, "one cannot be blind to all this wretchedness and misery."

"Isn't it possible to exaggerate the wretchedness, and to attribute to marriage the misery which is

really due to quite different causes? You spoke about people tied to each other in one house. In the words of Miss Potter, They did it themselves! That remark of hers can be developed. I don't believe that any difference can be irreconcilable between a man and a woman who have been married. They may make it so, but, in fact, it is not. It is inconceivable that any feud should be everlasting and hopeless between two people who have once been man and wife. There must be somewhere, on one side or the other, the materials for a good understanding. Then the question follows, Is it better for them that they should fly asunder and follow their own inclinations wherever they lead, or that they set themselves to fulfil their vows, practise forbearance, seek points of agreement, and make the best of each other? There is no doubt which is the wiser course to preach to democracy. The other seems to me dangerous."

She was profoundly serious now. "What you have said sounds as if it should be true. Believe me, it is not."

The tone of her voice brought him from the general to the particular. There seemed to be pain in her words. He felt sorry that he had said what he had said. Her own story, the drama of her own life, the passion of her own soul, began to press upon him. He wondered what she had suffered, what the differences were which had sundered her from Paton. For the first time it came home to him that she had definitely suffered. This realization pained him; it shocked him. That the marriage had been what

people call "unhappy" he knew; until now it had never occurred to him that she had experienced pain. It hurt him to think that she had.

"You forget," she said, in the same low voice of deep feeling, "the age at which many people are married; *not* marry, but, are married. A girl who is quite ignorant of the world and who is married by her mother before she has really looked at life, may find with experience that the differences existing between her husband and herself are irreconcilable. What happens, do you think, in the case where the one goes on developing and maturing, and the other remains stationary? Would you say that the differences of disposition and character and taste, which must develop from such a condition of things, are fairly to be described as reconcilable? I assure you they are not."

"What you say," he said, after a pause, "sounds dreadful. You make me think. I can't say any more."

His principles remained unshaken. But how could he prescribe for the human race with the pain of one soul so close and near to his sympathy?

They were both silent for a long time.

A faint sound came to their ears, high up and distant in the sky.

Napier became instantly alert. "Crouch!" he whispered, laying hands on his gun. She saw the dark outline of his face in the long grass; it expressed excitement, pleasure, some wonderful concentration of purpose. She recognized the hunter.

"Look!" he whispered, without turning to her; "here they come; do you see that jolly old mallard leading the way? Listen to the noise."

The whiffle in the air grew more distinct.

Suddenly Napier got upon one knee, at the same instant the gun rose to his shoulder. For a moment Anne was conscious of alarm among the string of birds in the air, then, quickly following each other, the two barrels emptied themselves into the night.

Napier dropped his gun, rose to his feet, and disappeared over the wall in the direction of the marshes. In the distance a dog began to bark.

Anne sat up. The air was full of disturbing melancholy cries. A flight of little birds, making a strange creaking sound with their wings, passed rapidly down the creek, flying low to the water. The raucous note of a goose came from the other side. A heron beat its way out of the reeds a little distance up the river, and with dangling legs made for the opposite bank, the tips of its wide wings striking the water. Over the marshes numerous owls were wheeling in a state of panic, like ghosts new to purgatory. The wind seemed to make the grasses afraid. The whole night was ruffled. The echoes of the gun appeared to live in the distant woods. Death had spoken. The peace of the earth was shattered. Anne became aware of a colder coldness in the night.

She stood up, lifting the duffle coat from the bank, which was wet and felt extraordinarily heavy. She stood upon the wall looking in the direction taken by Napier. The dykes intersecting the marshes were

dimly discernible. She could see the owls that were close to her. Presently she saw the dark figure of Napier stooping and groping with his hands on the ground. She watched him moving round in a gradually increasing circle, now visible and now invisible, becoming at one moment a part of the darkness, at the next a shadow moving through the gloom.

She saw him make a sudden movement, pick something up, and then turn towards her. He came with swift strides, now jumping narrow dykes, now wading through a broader one, stumbling over the rough ground, his sea-boots making a dull thud as he got upon the sward beside the wall. He brought back with him three birds.

As they started back he asked her if she were cold, and suggested that she should put his coat over her ulster. She said that the walk would warm her, and started off ahead of him at a good pace. They hardly spoke at all till they reached the cottage.

"I will leave the birds at the door," he said. "They may appease Mrs. Dobson for my interruption of your evening."

She asked him to come in. He said that he must take advantage of the tide.

They parted with a certain constraint of which both were conscious.

CHAPTER XI

NAPIER'S RELIGION

NAPIER rowed back to Borhaven thinking of Anne. He was still under the spell of his new thought that she had suffered. The transition in his ideas from the loose supposition of an unhappy marriage to the definite conviction of a tragic marriage became a revolution of his attitude towards Anne.

As he entered the harbour he saw standing on the quay the old boatman, Tricker by name, who looked after his ship when he was away, and did little jobs for him. The headlight was burning on the *Sand Wasp*.

As Napier approached, resting on his oars, the old man said to him, "I gave a look to your stove about half-an-hour ago. But I reckon you'll find it mighty cold in the cabin to-night. There's a rare frost. Had any luck with the gun?"

Napier told him, gave him an order for the morning, and, pulling out to the ship, wished him good-night. The old man tramped away, muttering to himself. Napier's oars made a duet with his footsteps.

When he had eaten his supper and made up the fire, he lighted a pipe and lay down at full length on the lounge.

He remained perfectly quiet, never changing his position, like a man in a reverie rather than one whose mind was restless with the ferment of a new idea. The smoke came slowly, at long intervals, from his lips. When the pipe was finished he laid it down on the floor at his side without moving his head or altering the direction of his gaze. He settled himself more carefully on the broad of his back, placing his hands, the fingers interlaced, behind his head. The only sounds which entered the saloon were the lapping of the water against the ship's side, the faint creaking of the timbers, the moan of the wind overhead, the murmur of the sea. There was a gentle movement of the vessel which would have had a lulling effect upon a man who was undisturbed in his thoughts.

Napier's principles stood firm. Concessions on the question of marriage meant parleying with the enemy. He regarded this problem from the universal point of view of humanity. He was a Stoic, at war with Epicureans. The modern tendency to enervate the race met with his disapproval. The hostility of nature seemed to him purposive; he recognized in the harshness of terrestrial conditions a strengthening quality, something which braced the fibres of the mind and ennobled the soul by opposing it. Mankind appeared to him as merchantmen crossing an ocean with bills of lading; not as a party of pleasure cruisers. There was a port of destination; compass and chart were necessary; knowledge of the laws of nature was essential; seriousness was becoming to the

environment. He was conscious of the grandeur of the universe.

It must be explained how this man had got his religion.

Most people's knowledge of life may be compared to the holiday seeker's knowledge of the sea. At Brighton one does not know the ocean. From the pavement of a parade, or in the corner of a glass shelter, or even on the end of a pier, where the band plays and palmists tell fortunes, it is not possible to make acquaintance with nature's unfathomable masterpiece. The hurricane, the tempest, the sea-snowstorm, the typhoon, the waterspout; the great cavernous rocks, haunted by seabirds, and hiding in their caves hideous and appalling monsters which shake men's faith in God; the floating iceberg, the reef, the shoal, the quicksand; the huge creatures who swim in the sightless depths, the foul and grisly Things which crawl in the slime; the swift and terrible changes in the moods of this vast mass of moving water, the different sounds which it utters, the different colours with which it decks itself, the sublime majesty of its wrath, the treacherous melancholy of its peace; these things are not to be apprehended from the shore.

The ocean is not more terrible than life. The hideous things which prey upon each other in the sea have their counterparts on land. The mind of man has its unfathomable depths.

Napier knew humanity as he knew the ocean. He had visited many countries, his acquaintance lay

among men whose business it is to know men, he had seen with his own eyes. The morality of treaty-ports in China and Japan, of the tropics, of places like Naples and Port Said, was known to him in a degree which the hurried traveller does not reach. He had penetrated behind the scenes of depravity; he was familiar with the workings of those international gangs whose commerce is a traffic in maidenhood; he knew the toll which iniquity lays on childhood; he had visited those dreadful hospitals which the world shuns, and had seen the physical consequences of sin; he had explored madhouses where alienists watch the disintegration of the soul; he had talked with doctors of all nations, lawyers of all nations, sailors of all nations, priests of all nations; the infamy of mankind was more than a phrase to him, it was a fact; iniquity ceased with him to be a term for men's actions, it became a force; he had seen the corruption of men's bodies, the mortification of their souls; he knew there was a devil-fish in the sea, he believed there was a devil-man in the world.

People whose only acquaintance with evil is made through the medium of polite literature or the columns of respectable newspapers can account for the presence of this power from the action of evolution; they find it unnecessary to believe in a devil. An excuse-seeking theology, assuming the *rôle* of God's Apologist, has made the idea of hell repellent to decent and respectable persons who live on the surface. The general attitude of civilized society towards sin is one of tolerating disapproval. The phrase Eternal Hope,

however, which consoles an English congregation, would sound oddly in the chuckling bordels of debauchery. Napier knew iniquity as an an[illegible]nist knows the human body. He knew to what dread abysses the mind of man can descend. He accepted the teaching—

> "That in a boundless universe
> Is boundless better, boundless worse."

At the base of his mind was the conviction that evolution has two definite streams of tendency, good and evil. He saw that the earth was inhabited by beautiful creatures innocent and peaceful; and by hideous creatures cruel and ferocious. The parasites, the blood-suckers, the ghouls, and vampires, and scavengers of nature seemed to him to have followed a line of their own inclination, ending in horrid shapes and ghastly appetites, like the octopus. He believed that this tendency was eternal. In a boundless universe he saw boundless evil, boundless horror. The duality of all things lay for him in those two streams of tendency: the everlasting evolution of good, the everlasting evolution of iniquity.

Few men, even among philosophers, courageously confront the hideous and repulsive side of nature's face. Napier had truly seen life steadily and seen it whole. The majority of men to whom this praise is given see but the little fragment of life called civilization, and of that only the part which flatters their imposing optimism. Evil, for Napier, was a definite tendency working through evolution. It was the enemy of God.

From what we have said it will be seen that Napier's religion was born of a knowledge of evil. It was not the most exalting form of religion. He had no experience of ecstasy. The element of love was, perhaps, lacking. It might be said that he hated the devil more than he adored God. But he was filled with an immense reverence for the universe, he acknowledged with every beat of his heart the necessity for Christianity; it was because he saw, with the same intelligence that a sailor sees a cloud on the horizon, the ominous nature of evil that his attitude was that of the fighter rather than that of the devotee.

He was sufficiently an historian to know that the progress of mankind had been interrupted, had not been continuous. This is a fact which evolutionists sometimes forget.

He was sufficiently a traveller to know that among all the nations of the earth the number really civilized may be counted on the fingers of one hand. This is a fact which politicians ignore, or do not know.

It can easily be imagined that a man who regarded civilization as a ship at sea, who saw that it was not as something fixed and rooted in the earth, but as something fragile and vulnerable exposed to crowding dangers and beset by some deadly and sinister enmity, would be watchful and apprehensive as regards the horizon, careful and inexorable as regards his instruments.

At the foundation of civilization he saw respect for women. He hated with a great vehemence vice which degrades women, flippancy which makes them jests,

dilettantism which makes them merely curious and interesting. Christianity seemed to him divine because alone of all religions it had ennobled women and exalted their sphere.

Therefore the advance of woman was for him the working of the leaven, the growth of the mustard seed. Marriage was the woman's holy of holies, her sanctuary, her altar. To drag her thence and exhibit her in the market-place was more than profanation, it was the first step to race-suicide, it was a return to barbarism, a reversion to chaos, on the part of the Little Flock.

To make marriage a state into which men and women could enter and from which they could go out at their will; to strip it of its sacred character; to render it a commercial undertaking; to see in it nothing but the whims and caprice of the individual; this was for him a denial of the discipline of life, a confession that materialism had triumphed, a rejection of God.

But now his thoughts were disturbed by a particular case.

His gaze was removed from humanity; it rested upon one woman. This woman was in the dust at his feet. She had suffered. Marriage had meant for her torture and pain. This pain had become intolerable.

What could that pain have been to bow a creature so strong and resolute?

He began to recast his ideas about Paton, to build up from the fragments of reminiscence some complete idea of the man. Although few men had greater

control over thought and could exercise a more steadfast power of direction, Napier found himself on this occasion wandering away from the personality of Paton to memories of his childhood's companion. The formless apparition of Paton melted into insubstantial mist; the picture of Anne grew more vivid, and distinct, and insistent.

This little girl had grown up, had married, had suffered.

A strange compassion for his old playmate became active in his mind.

There is in the pity of strong men something protective and sheltering; it does not easily pass by on the other side; it does not exhaust itself with sighs. Action becomes imperative.

Cruelty to a child rouses the whole soul of such men. To Napier Anne had become the child of his boyhood.

He got up suddenly from the lounge and went on deck.

The wind was blowing freshly, crying as it went. The sky was invisible darkness. The moan of the sea was, as it were, the background of the cry of the wind. In the harbour the lanterns on vessels lifted and fell; surrounding the harbour were the lights in the windows of houses, which were motionless. The solemn, measured sound of men walking up the street reached the boat, like the march of a multitude. This sound ceased as the church clock struck the hour, and came again as the last stroke vibrated into silence. A woman's shrill laughter broke suddenly from the

town, like the rent of a garment. A moment afterwards the discordant singing of some drunken sailors rose noisily into the night. The public-houses were closing their doors.

The lights in the houses began to go out. Silence settled upon the town.

Napier stood with his back leaning against the mast, looking out to sea. The wind, rushing in from the cold spaces of ocean to the warmer fields of the earth, struck freshly on his face. He tasted the salt of the sea on his lips, and in his nostrils received the great scents of the ocean. From the bar, dimly discernible like a shapeless stretch of shadowed moonlight, rose the grinding roar of the low-keeping waves, an anger that was eternal, a variance that was irrevocable.

Bitterness against Paton, compassion for Anne, filled the mind of the man motionless against the mast.

Nearly an hour passed, and these feelings had deepened their intensity. There was one difference. The bitterness became the shadow of the compassion.

He began to walk round the deck. His thoughts were of Anne. Her image was clear to him; her presence was insistent. Unconsciously he stopped and examined his lantern; his thoughts continued their flow. He looked up at the sky; he inspected his ship; he listened to the wind. He was conscious of the same obsession.

As he turned to the companion, suddenly and unaccountably the words of Mrs. Dobson came into his

mind: "Idleness, you know, is rather dangerous. Why don't you get some work to do, marry, and settle down? It would be good for you."

These words assumed a disconcerting significance in his mind. They kept him wakeful in his bed. When he fell asleep his dreams were of Anne; she appeared to him as a child in a print dress, running towards him on the sands, her eyes full of tears, her arms outstretched, her face expressing terror; his dream ended in a fight—not with Paton, but with the boy who had struck him in the streets of Portobello.

The morning was wild and grey. He studied the sky carefully, consulted his weather-glass several times, and appeared to be undecided.

At last his mind was made up. He went below, wrote a letter to Anne saying that he was going South, and excusing himself from calling to say good-bye. He went ashore with this letter, bathed from the sands beyond the Harbour Hotel, made some purchases in the town, posted his letter, paid a few visits of farewell, returned to the quay, said good-bye to old Tricker, who was surprised at his departure on such a day, and then went aboard the *Sand Wasp*.

In a few minutes his anchor was up, and the ship was moving to sea.

CHAPTER XII

A DOOR IS CLOSED

THE spring came, bringing with it, after a wild winter, those kindly opportunities which are the joy of a gardener. Anne was busy from morning till night. She was not happy.

Her industry occupied her time but not her thoughts. The appearance of bulbs above the soil pleased her eyes, but did not soothe the pain in her heart. One might have said, seeing her so busy in this little garden, which was full of sunshine and birds' singing and the scents of the earth, that her satisfaction was complete, that no distraction could lift the latch of the gate, that in such a sanctuary no unrest could make its dwelling.

It did not appear in her face that she was unhappy. The grey eyes with their dark lashes remained tender and gentle; no sad hardening overshadowed the delicacy of her golden skin; the young mouth was entirely without bitterness.

A more emotional nature, perhaps, would have shown the mind's unrest in its manner. Anne was habitually quiet and subdued; she soared to no heights, descended to no depths. Mrs. Dobson observed nothing.

Her sorrow, indeed, was a hidden life. As the purest saints are conscious of evil suggestions moving in their minds, so Anne was conscious of her pain. It was not herself, but could not have been without her. It accompanied her thoughts as her shadow accompanied her movements. She did not acknowledge it to herself. She did not make any effort to get rid of it. She knew that it was there as a traveller whose mind is concentrated upon the goal of his journey may know that rain is falling and the wind blowing. She accepted it as something that came from the outside. Fatalism is never of the brain; it is of the heart. Anne met life with her brain; she was conscious of destiny in her heart.

This sorrow might be roughly expressed in a single sentence. She missed Napier. It would be dangerous, perhaps untrue, to carry it further.

People who questioned her about Hugh detected no change in her manner when she replied. In the streets of Borhaven she often met poor people who asked when he was coming back. She smiled when she told them that she did not know. She was not aware that Miss Potter searched her face when that good lady inquired for the explanation of Napier's sudden departure. Her only thought was that this curiosity was a little impertinent. Old Mrs. M'Gavin, the dour mother of the doctor, spoke about Hugh as a noble boy, a great son for any mother to be proud of; she said that his absence was a loss to all. Anne felt pleased that people should praise him.

It was the activity of her life which kept her from

the dangers of introspection. She had long resumed her church-going, interrupted only for a few Sundays by the interference of Mr. Aldrich; she was conscientious in the work of district visiting; she assisted in the considerable secretarial work of two or three important charities; in addition to these things, there was the care of her grandmother, the work of the house, the work of the garden, the engagements of hospitality, and her reading.

The spring deepened to summer; summer moved towards autumn; the separation from Hugh Napier was as complete as the separation from Richard Paton.

Her mind was enlarging. She discussed interesting subjects with Ramsay M'Gavin. He lent her books which opened a new world to her. Among these books was Letourneau's *Evolution of Marriage.*

One afternoon Miss Potter came to Creek Cottage on a matter of parish business. Anne was in the garden with gauntlet gloves on her hands, a bunch of bass fastened to a button of her jacket and hanging down in front of her. They went into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Dobson was lying on the sofa reading a novel by Anatole France. While Miss Potter was speaking, her sharp eyes caught sight of the word "Marriage" on M'Gavin's book. She looked more closely, and saw that this ominous word was preceded by the hateful term Evolution. She reached forward and snatched the wicked thing from the table.

"You surely don't read books like this?" she demanded.

Mrs. Dobson looked across the room from her sofa. "What book is that?"

Anne answered her grandmother, and turning to Miss Potter, said that she was reading the work with interest. Miss Potter, glancing through the pages with impatience, as if she would have liked to box their ears, exclaimed that books of the kind did enormous harm. She replaced it with displeasure, looked at Mrs. Dobson and said, "I hope *you* don't approve of books that criticize marriage."

"It doesn't criticize marriage," Anne said quietly; "it explains it."

"Explanations are dangerous things," retorted Miss Potter. "People think now-a-days that they can explain everything. And they can't even explain themselves, the ridiculous things!"

Conversation became gradually a controversy. The discussion was triangular. Miss Potter stood for unquestioning obedience; Anne, in her quiet but resolute manner, for investigation; Mrs. Dobson for impartial banter of both points of view.

Miss Potter spoke about the unanimity of the priesthood on this question. Mrs. Dobson said, "On all other questions except marriage they are divorced." Anne replied to Miss Potter that ecclesiastical opinion ought to have no weight on a matter of sociology. "In Scotland," she said, "we do not regard the ministers of religion as Church people regard the clergy in England. I can quite understand your position, however. You are an Anglican, and see it from

the Anglican standpoint. You must remember that I am a Scot."

"We are all members of the Catholic Church," answered Miss Potter. "You are a Catholic. You ought to take the Catholic standpoint."

The controversy ended amicably.

Miss Potter, however, did not forget this dispute. Anne's position seemed to her perilous. She mentioned the matter one day to Mr. Aldrich. She spoke about Anne's extraordinary statement that she was not an Anglican. "A pretty sort of assertion for a Church worker!" she exclaimed.

"And a communicant," said Mr. Aldrich, who had listened attentively.

It happened at this time that Canon Case was away. The senior curate was in charge. Perhaps if Canon Case had been at home he might have consulted him, and perhaps the gentle and amiable vicar would have averted the disaster. As it was, Mr. Aldrich took the matter into his own hands.

On the following day there was a meeting of the District Visitors' Society. It was held at the vicarage, which was the clergy house. Mr. Aldrich asked Anne to remain behind. When the door had closed on the last of the departing district visitors, he looked up from his papers on the table and said to Anne, who was standing by the mantelpiece—

"Mrs. Paton, have you been baptized?"

He rose as he spoke, and came towards her.

There was something hostile in his expression and in the tone of his voice. He was like a barrister rising

to cross-examine a witness. He assumed an air of authority. The dark eyes were hard with antagonism, the gaunt face was pitiless, like stone; the severity of his mouth was a threat to guilt, an affront to innocence. Anne resented his hostility; but she flinched under his earnestness.

"No," she answered, moving unconsciously a pace away from him.

"Which Church did you belong to in Scotland?"

"To neither."

"I don't understand."

"My father had no religion."

"You have never received religious instruction?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Then you do not know that Holy Baptism is essential to Church membership?"

"No."

"The Eucharist is only for members of the Church."

"You mean that I am not a member?"

"Precisely."

"And that I have no right to come to Communion?"

"It is my duty to forbid you to come."

"I am excommunicated?"

"No; you are not a member of the Catholic Church."

"I think I understand what you mean. You dismiss me; is that it?"

"God forbid."

"Then what do you mean?"

He came nearer to her. His penetrating gaze was fixed upon her eyes. He was reading her soul.

"I am calling your attention to the laws of Christ. You must submit yourself for the rite of Holy Baptism before you can come to the Eucharist."

Anne was struck dumb.

"If your religious life," he said, speaking slowly, "has been a real and intimate necessity; if it has been something more than a convention and a formalism; if you are conscious in your heart and mind and soul that Christ is essential to your salvation; if you earnestly desire to live as God would have you live that one day you may stand in His presence; if this is so, you will come to the Church for Holy Baptism."

The effect of this invitation was to antagonize Anne, and to throw her back on the position of her father.

It must be remembered that Mr. Aldrich deeply and sincerely doubted the reality of Anne's spiritual life. Perhaps he was right. But the degrees of spirituality are infinite. Between the two poles of the religious life, the saint and the moral man, swings a world of multiform goodness. Isaiah is not farther from Arnold of Rugby than Thomas à Kempis or Francis of Assisi from John Howard, Wesley, William Booth and Andrew Carnegie. Nay, in one man there is infinity. Saul of Tarsus was a righteous man, but his distance from Paul the Apostle is immeasurable. And among the company of God's struggling children we must make room, perhaps, for such as Peter Abelard.

Anne might be far from the standpoint of the priest, and yet on the same road. All vehicles do not move at the same pace; the brain is the vehicle of the soul.

The priest, too, forgot the Unexpected foretold of the Judgment Day. However difficult for the orthodox to understand, it is written that the blessing will go to those who anticipate the curse, and the curse to those who anticipate the blessing. How that staggers the brain! "Security," says Thomas Adams, "is the very suburbs of hell."

One thing else he forgot—those terrible words which apparently make no allowance for the indiscretion of the proselytizer: "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."

One of the great dangers of an ecclesiasticism which rests more upon tradition than it yields itself to the spirit of Christ, lies in its historic blindness to the terrible possibility that offence may come even from the sanctified. Do these good people never start with fear at the thought that perhaps they *misrepresent* the Son of God? What a frightful thing, to obtrude ourselves between the World, and the Light of the World; to be ourselves the shadow of those that sit in darkness and who but for us would see the Light!

It is not always observed that the children thrust from Christ's side by His disciples interrupted an important discussion. It was this interruption of a serious matter which made the disciples indignant. When, at the Master's command, however, the children were admitted, He blessed them. Mr. Aldrich would have banged the door.

Anne fixed her gaze upon the eyes of the priest. "I shall never come," she said quietly.

"You deny Christ?"

"I reject the Church."

She moved towards the door. "One word," he said, and she turned and looked at him. "Don't trifle with your soul, Mrs. Paton!"

"How do I trifle with it?"

He stood upright with his head stooping forward like a hawk. The brightness of his eyes heightened the pallor of his face. As he spoke he lifted his right hand, and with the forefinger pointed towards her, began to beat the air. His voice was low, passionate, inflexible. He said—

"In this wicked world, this world of hates and jealousies and sensualities innumerable, there is one force fighting evil, one force standing for God, one force making for holiness, the Church founded by the Son of God. On the authority of the Son of God I tell you that either you must be on the side of His Church or against it. There is no middle course. If you reject the Church, you reject God. Why do you reject your Creator? Is it out of a little pride, a little self-will? Weigh your present feelings against Eternity. If it does not profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul, how can it profit you to safeguard your pride at the cost of your immortality? What reason can you give me, what reason can you give yourself, for refusing to submit to the ordinance of Christ Himself? Don't go till you have answered that question."

It was impossible for her, even in the height of her resentment, not to feel the spell of the priest's sincerity. This vigilant and faithful son of the Church was in earnest. His zeal was real. His passion was pure. His devotion was absolute.

"I find that I need give myself no reason," she answered, gently but firmly. "My whole nature acquits me of your charge."

"Is that nature regenerate?"

"It is as God made it."

"Did He make it self-righteous?"

"No; self-respecting."

"Self-respect is sometimes another word for self-satisfaction."

"I will bear the consequences."

"Here. But hereafter?"

"I am not afraid."

"That is your danger. You do not realize that Holy Baptism is the ordinance of God Himself?"

"I cannot feel that it is necessary."

"But do you realize that God ordained it?"

"No."

"It is the immemorial custom of the Church, it is enjoined in holy scripture."

"I do not feel that eternity hangs upon it."

His eyes flashed. "Ah, but what does it do? It tests your character; it searches your soul! This rejection shows me your soul. You are unregenerate. You have not made the surrender. You have not been born again. Listen to me: by this rejection of Holy Baptism you deny the whole scheme of redemption.

What does your rejection mean? It means that you can do without Christ. It means that you are self-sufficient. It means that you are superior to God. I warn you. Unless you bow your will, unless you humble your reason, unless you meekly and obediently accept the mercy and redemption of the Most High, you *cannot* enter the kingdom of heaven. Question your soul; it will justify me. Look back on your past life since you came here; you have visited the poor, you have befriended the helpless, you have comforted the sorrowful—in whose name? your own, or in Christ's? Be very honest with yourself. If in your own name, you have practised philanthropy. And if in Christ's Name, why do you reject Him now? Believe me, you are living in a false world. You do not know that the kingdom of heaven is union with the will of God. Self-will is the wilderness, the abyss, the hell of human beings. It is by yielding our will, bowing our pride, uprooting our vanity, and destroying every poisonous vestige of self, that we enter the kingdom. Have you bowed your pride and uprooted your vanity? Are you conscious of any central touch between you and your God? Is it true that you have surrendered your self, that your life is consecrated to God, that you have no will but His? Can you tell me that there has been a moment in your life when you threw yourself into the arms of the Infinite and became conscious of a new birth, a new nature, a new life? Religion, Mrs. Paton, has no compromises. It is either a reality, or it is a lie. With a lie we can deceive men, we can deceive ourselves; but not God."

She turned away her gaze, and made a motion as though she would go. "I could not discuss these things with you, Mr. Aldrich, even if I wished to do so; we use a different vocabulary. I have, what a great many other people have, a distaste for the discussion of my inner life. I am sorry, but I cannot satisfy your curiosity—that is wrong, I should not have said that; I cannot appease your anxiety for my welfare, which I am quite sure is sincere. I thank you for your interest. I put an end to the discussion."

As she reached the door he came forward. "One thing before you go," he said, close at her side. "You cannot come to the altar till you have passed the font; but do not forsake the Church. Come to public worship; continue your social work; and pray for guidance. The day may come when you will wish to bow your will."

"I will think," she said, and left him.

She was walking through the High Street, going over in her mind this strange interview with the priest, when she came face to face with Major Lauden, whose face broke into delighted smiles at sight of her. The red-faced old man, with Trooper at his heels, was returning dusty and hot from his afternoon's walk.

"I say, I've got news for you," he exclaimed. "I've just seen Henry Pleasant. But perhaps you have heard it."

She shook her head. "What is it?"

"He's back!"

"Who is back?"

"As if you don't know!" He laughed. "Why, ma'am, the romantic skipper of the *Sand Wasp*."

Anne felt her face light up. Her heart, which had been numb and cold, began to beat quickly. The world altered for her.

"I'm going down to see him now," continued the cheerful major. "I'll get him to come and dine with me. Any message? I'll tell him that I've seen you, and that you're looking—charming!"

"Tell him that I'm glad he is back."

CHAPTER XIII

ANOTHER IS OPENED

When Anne arrived at the cottage and announced to Mrs. Dobson that Napier had returned, the old lady's eyes blinked, and she said abruptly, "Why?"

This question was an accusation, a warning, and a disclosure. In certain situations a single word says everything. To a dying man the "Whither?" of Death is the whole universe articulate.

The two women looked at each other.

"He had better go away again," said the grandmother; "as soon as possible."

On the following morning the post brought Anne a letter from her husband. The familiar writing on the envelope, unfamiliar now for over two years, revived the terrible past and made the dangerous present a crisis. For a few moments she regarded her own name on the envelope. That name was Paton.

The letter did not accuse her. It made no reference to the past, and uttered neither complaint nor apology. Richard Paton wrote to say that he had returned from America, that he wanted to entertain a few interesting people in the following week, and that, as Mrs. Ainslie was in Scotland, he would be

glad if she could come up to London. The letter concluded with a postscript, "I very much want to have a talk."

Anne had said nothing to Mrs. Dobson about her scene with the clergyman, but she took this letter to the old lady's bedroom. "What do you advise me to do?" she asked, when the grandmother, in bed with an invalid's breakfast-table before her, had read the letter.

"Your duty," said Mrs. Dobson.

Anne sat down by the bedside, and the old lady resumed her breakfast.

"I can't go back to that life," Anne said, with resolution and composure. "If I obey this order, I acknowledge his authority. I must deny it."

"The law enables a man to divorce the wife who refuses to live with him."

Anne thought. "That means freedom for the woman," she said, conscious of a hope.

"Would you like to go through the divorce court?"

"I should be the accuser."

"The world would be your detractor."

Anne looked towards the open window. She could see the woods on the further shore sloping up to the blue sky, which had little white clouds floating between its luminous turquoise and the earth's green. The air was cool and sweet. The scents of the creepers on the trellis, whose flowers swayed gently round the square of the window, entered the little white room like the breathing of a child. In the trees birds were

keeping up a perpetual chirping, which gave cheerfulness to nature's quiet and vitality to her peace. It was one of those summer mornings when human nature responds with gladness to the smile of its mother.

She said, "I cannot go back."

Mrs. Dobson lifted her cup of hot milk and drank slowly.

"Have you forgotten," Anne asked, "the horror of that life? Think what we went through! You used to say it was unendurable. You told me that I had a right to rebel. It was not the insults I minded, not the humiliation I resented; it was the degradation. It was not my honour that suffered; it was my soul. Duty, surely, ceases to be duty when it debases self-respect. That life defiled me. You can't really mean that I should go back. To what?—to pollution, to bitter shame, to infamy! No. You have forgotten Richard. It is too long since you saw him. Try to remember him. I am sure you will not tell me to go back."

"Very well, then; do not go back."

Anne put a hand on her grandmother's arm. "It wouldn't be possible, would it?"

"But send Hugh away."

Anne turned pale. "Why do you say that?"

"Because I am an old woman."

"It hurts me."

"My dear, listen to me. If Hugh stays in Borhaven, he will come here to see you every day. You will go out for walks together. People will talk. To

be talked about is the worst thing that can happen to a woman. It makes her rebellious. Besides, talk of that kind has wings, and a homing instinct. It flies to the dangerous quarter. That is where it is aimed. The consequences might be your social ruin. You do not wish to live with your husband; that is *your* position; suppose he wants to get rid of you? This letter that he has written may be a trap. I don't say it is; but it may be. He says he wants very much to have a talk with you. Why? Remember he has no moral sense; tales may have reached him already; he may have a disgraceful proposal to make to you. Whatever is to happen, your position must be uncompromised. Send danger away, give risk notice to quit."

Anne could not answer. Mrs. Dobson did not look at her; she was buttering a finger of toast.

"The working-classes," said the old lady, "are not only our masters; in some things they are our models. In that rank of life a married woman does not walk out with other men. Never! Borhaven would be a maelstrom of scandal if the butcher walked out with the grocer's wife, or if the plumber's wife walked out with the ironmonger. They are very wise, those people. It is all over with a country that grows superior to public opinion. Public opinion is the conscience of a nation. The working-class is a conscience. Compare the working-class to the crew of people your husband likes to surround himself with! No; it is not good for a married woman to have an *alter ego* of the sex that complements her own. What

working-people know by a rude instinct you can realize through your intellect and your grandmother. Don't let us say any more about the matter. Take away my tray, like a good girl, and give me my book."

Anne went down-stairs and entered the drawing-room with Paton's letter in her hand. She sat down at her bureau between the two windows. For some moments she remained with her hands in her lap, her gaze turned to the garden. She was not thinking what she should write.

She rose presently and went into the hall. She picked up her gloves, scissors, and basket from the table, and passed into the garden. She walked slowly on the grass, beside the borders, pausing every now and then to cut a flower or tie up a plant with bass. It was quite clear that her thoughts were absent from her work.

Before her basket was filled she returned to the house and entered the drawing-room. She put the basket on the floor at her feet, drew off her gloves, and sat down at the bureau. She did not wait to put the flowers in water.

She wrote to Richard Paton. Her letter was a declaration of independence. She announced her determination to be free, refused to obey his summons, and requested that their communication might cease.

She had not been thinking of him when she walked in the garden; perhaps it was not distaste for her husband that dictated the vigour of this letter.

Mrs. Dobson, it will be remembered, had made her conscious of a new hope.

If Paton divorced her, on the grounds of this refusal to obey his commands, she would be free.

She was addressing the envelope, when she heard the gate swing, followed by the sound of approaching footsteps on the path. Her breathing became faster, and a flush overspread her face. She finished her writing.

Napier came into view. She rose and went to the window. "Welcome," she said quietly, and put out her hand.

His face lighted at sight of her. He looked older, graver, sadder. There was a new tenderness in his eyes. The strength of his countenance was softened by a gentleness acquired since she had last seen him.

She passed through the window, and they crossed the lawn to a seat under one of the trees. As they went they talked of his return; he told her where he had been, and inquired after Mrs. Dobson.

The society of this man was delightful to her. To look at his face, to hear his voice, to watch him and recognize little habits of manner wonderfully familiar, to know that his long absence was ended, to think that he was really back again, to feel the spirit of his presence and the soul of his companionship close to her, this was for Anne a forgetfulness of sorrow, a sufficient satisfaction for the perplexities of her life.

From the seat under the tree, which stood on a mound raising it above the level of the lawn, they looked across the beautiful small garden through a

frame of green branches and green leaves to the broad river, shining and sparkling in the sun, full from shore to shore. The house was behind them and on one side, hidden by the tree. Nothing was moving but the river. The only sounds came from invisible birds and bees moving slowly from flower to flower. It was as if they were alone in the world.

She remembered that it was from this self-same seat she had seen Hugh when he first came to the cottage.

"I have been haunted by remorse ever since I left you," he said, "and tortured by curiosity."

"Tell me why."

"Remorse, because I seemed to show you no sympathy. I have recalled a hundred times all we said to each other, when we talked about marriage. I can remember not a single word on my part which showed the smallest sympathy with your own experience, which I have grown to feel was a hard one. You can't think how this has reproached me. Our old friendship has risen up against me. We used to share our troubles in those days. We didn't dogmatize; we sympathized. It was better. To lay down the law to you on an abstract question was absurd. You don't know how I have blamed myself. That is one of the reasons I have come back. To tell you I am sorry."

They did not look at each other, but sat side by side with their eyes towards the river.

"I have never blamed you," she said. "I didn't agree with you; I haven't come round to your point

of view; but I never felt that you did not sympathize with me, or rather that you wouldn't sympathize with me if you knew."

"That is the other reason of my return. Righteous curiosity, I promise you. Anne, if I may, I want to know. May I? If I presume too much, tell me. You mustn't lose your old trick of putting me right."

"I should like to tell you." She smiled, as she added, "Perhaps it will lessen your enthusiasm for Miss Potter. My case, I suppose, is only one of a great many. The marriage question is certainly more difficult than Miss Potter imagines."

It was a relief to his anxiety that she could speak with a smile. Perhaps after all she had not suffered as his imagination, fed by compassion, had led him to conjecture.

"I have come to feel," he said, "that it may be justifiable for a woman to leave her husband."

"Did you really ever doubt that?"

"I preferred to think that she should accept her destiny and go through with it."

"Even when it was hopeless?"

"That was what I thought."

"You have changed your opinion?"

"Yes."

"What has made you do that?"

"I have thought about you."

This avowal made her happy. It carried sympathy forward on a wave of affection. It gave her a friend. She felt that the sunlight and the warmth in the garden entered and possessed her. At the same time

she was not unaware of a certain nervous diffidence, and hurried to the telling of her story.

She found it a difficult narrative. The avowal he had just made rendered it perhaps more difficult. Besides, she was wholesome-minded; it was natural for her to make light of her own troubles; certainly she was averse from what we call making a martyr of oneself. Another woman might surely have poured into Mrs. Dobson's ears the disputation with the senior curate, made a mountain out of that mole-hill; Anne had said nothing. She was not only self-possessed, she was fastidious.

Napier realized that he was listening to an outline. His knowledge of the world and his sympathy with the beautiful girl at his side filled in the details. The sketch in this way became the picture. Anne told half the story to Napier, Napier told the other half to himself.

His acquaintance with the laxity, licentiousness and self-indulgence of English plutocracy was not great; he had general notions of its intemperance and luxury; he was inclined to mass the sensualism of these people in the comprehensive idea of vulgarity, which is something contemptible and disgusting, rather than infamous. Nevertheless, although he knew really nothing of the corruption of this modern hedonism, he quite comprehended from Anne's story that her situation had been insufferable. She was careful to say nothing of her husband; it was not a man she arraigned but an atmosphere she described, a mode of existence she denounced. There was a certain dis-

dain, a righteous haughtiness of contempt, in her description of the life she had been expected to live, the class of persons she had been expected to like. From the tone of her voice one might have thought that the memory almost amused her.

"It was impossible," he said, at the end of the narrative.

"Quite impossible."

"I wish your father had been alive to save you."

"My mother told me he desired the marriage."

"That puzzles me."

"It is probably untrue."

Her bitterness made him say, "I am so sorry for you, Anne."

She recovered her placidity. "It is good of you to be interested," she said, smiling. "My experience of marriage is useful in thinking about the whole question, because it is so commonplace. Let me see if I can convert you. At the beginning we must say that it was a difference in disposition, temperament and taste which divided me from my husband and my husband from me. There is his point of view. He liked people and occupations impossible for me to like. We separated without an explanation. None was necessary. We both felt that the thing was impossible. You agree that I was justified in leaving him? You don't accuse me of breaking my vows? But the problem is only just beginning. Am I entitled to my freedom? I don't mean to marry again, but to keep my freedom unmolested. Suppose my husband wrote to me after this long separation and

asked me—shall we say ordered me?—to come and play hostess to his friends; ought I to obey, is it my duty to be obedient?"

He sat silent at her side, and for the first time she turned and looked at him. "I suppose not," he said slowly. "In your case I should say No."

She was surprised at the slowness with which he made this concession. "I received such a letter this morning," she said, turning away.

She was conscious that he started. The movement was almost imperceptible. "You refuse to go?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I think you are right."

There was no tardiness in this statement; it was emphatic.

She said with some energy, "I am certainly right. There is nothing in the world that would make me submit to humiliation. I reject the religion, the law, the public opinion that says one human creature has the right to degrade another. I stand clear of all that. But even now the problem is only at a beginning. I refuse to go. I defend my freedom. The law, however, will have nothing to do with me. I shelter and defend myself, outside the law. That is the woman's fate. The law, if it wish, can seek me out, drag me before the world, and punish me, for what?—my self-respect. Do you think that is quite fair? Do you think that the law should not be altered?"

"I don't understand."

"A husband can divorce his wife if she refuse to live with him."

He turned and looked at her. "I had forgotten that," he said.

"Have I converted you?" she inquired, and met his gaze for a moment.

"You have refused to go back?"

"Yes. Quite definitely."

"Whatever the consequences?"

"Nothing could make me go back."

"If he wants to be free he would be glad of this refusal?"

"I know."

"He might bring an action? It is almost certain that he will."

"It would be better than molestation."

"I like to think of you free, but——"

"One would suffer a little, be a scandal to Miss Potter for ever, but one would be free."

The door opened and Mrs. Dobson appeared, with Minionette close behind ready to put up a sunshade. The little old lady wore a mushroom hat and had a white shawl of Indian silk over her shoulders. She stood outside the porch, a book in her hands, blinking at the sunshine.

Anne and Napier, who heard the opening of the door, rose from their seat.

As they descended the mound he said to her, "You have converted me. I want you to be free."

He had said everything.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TWO LETTERS

On the afternoon of this same day Hugh Napier went into the Harbour Hotel. He entered the smoking-room. Major Lauden, with the felt hat which was too small for him cocked on one side of his head, was sitting on an upright chair, asleep. The fat but still athletic body showed none of the collapse of slumber; one leg was crossed energetically, the knee pointing upward; the shoulders were square; in the expression of the squab hands, one of which grasped the bowl of his pipe, there was action; the face was not without a certain alert dignity; one felt that if he were awakened he would spring to attention, clicking his heels together, expecting an order. The mouth was firmly closed. The eyelids were compressed. There was a frown between the brows. Through the nostrils came a raucous sound, almost a moan.

An empty tumbler stood on a table at his side; like a death's head.

Napier sat down, with a newspaper in his hand. Later, when the light faded, he dropped the paper at his side, and settled further down in his chair, his eyes turned towards the windows, his thoughts with Anne.

He was roused by an exclamation bursting from the sleeping man.

He turned his head in that direction, and saw that the old soldier was sitting forward excitedly, a hand on each knee, staring at him through the twilight of the room with open mouth and eyes of amazement.

With another exclamation, hoarsely uttered on account of his sleep, the major suddenly sprang to his feet and came down the room. "My dear fellow," he said, clearing his throat, "you gave me a frightful start. I woke up, saw you, and went back thirty years in my life. You're the image—the *living image*—of a man in my regiment. I could have sworn I was back in the past." He laid a hand on Napier's shoulder, and went on, "You've always puzzled me. You've always half-suggested some one to me. Just now, in the grey of the room, with the light from the window on your face, sitting over here in a kind of reverie, your profile was not a likeness, it was the actual face of poor Arthur Gorham. You must be some relation."

Napier shook his head.

"Oh, but, my dear fellow, you must be!"

Napier smiled. "No; I assure you."

"You know who I mean, don't you?"

"I've never heard the name before."

"Not Arthur Gorham? Poor Arthur Gorham? By George, how the world forgets! A good thing, a deuced good thing. But you were a boy at the time." He checked for a moment, and then said, "Arthur Gorham is brother to the present Lord Stamford, son

of the old marquis who shot Colonel Channing in Brussels. You're the image of him. Not so much now as you were a moment ago. What were you doing, dreaming? Arthur wasn't a dreamer, but there was something romantic about him. I assure you, a moment ago you were the actual living image of that man. It was the look in your face—sadness, reverie, a kind of languor. The first time I've seen you in the mood. The likeness jumped to me."

The major could not get over this suddenly detected likeness. When he was left alonc he kept marching up and down the room, in and out of the tables, muttering to himself that it was thc strangest thing in the world. A small incident is a perturbation in the life of a man with nothing to do but drink himself to death. Lauden mentioned the mattèr to the barmaid, to the wife of the proprietor, to the chambermaid when he went up-stairs to search among his old photographs for a possible portrait of Arthur Gorham, to the ostler when he went into the yard with a plate of bones for Trooper. He was back in the past. The days of his soldiering returned to him. This old man, who had broken his heart over the death of his youngest son in the South African war, had his eyes filled with moisture as he recalled the follies, the wildness, the adventurcs, the high spirits and the devilries of his youth.

In the midst of these reminiscences was the conviction that some mystery united Arthur Gorham and Hugh Napier.

The idea grew with him. The more he talked the

more he became convinced of it. He began to recall, too, certain conversations in Borhaven concerning Napier. Who was this romantic man, this lonely sailor, who made no mention of father or mother, brother or sister, who appeared to have no birthplace, no home, no past? People had talked, Lauden had talked with them; the mystery came back to him.

He began to make calculations. The age of Napier. The time when the regiment was at Edinburgh.

"By George," he exclaimed suddenly, "I'll write to Arthur. I will! It may be nothing. It may be the deuce of a romance. I'll write."

While Major Lauden was in this condition of excitement, Anne was quietly tearing up the letter she had written to her husband.

A new decision had been formed in her mind. Napier's last words had inspired her with a fresh impulse to freedom. She was one of those composed women who are courageous, clear-sighted, and, when the situation demands it, resolute. When she saw a course before her there was something tenacious in her determination to go forward. Circumstance might have made her merely an obstinate woman, but for heredity; she was the daughter of Robert Ainslie.

It seemed to her that to clear her life of confusion, to make her path, once and for all, straight before her feet; to disentangle herself from the bonds of the past, and for ever to stand clear of their complications, it was necessary that she should see her husband and make her announcement face to face. She had grown tired of half-lights, unsettlement, vagueness, a com-

promise never made, a freedom never ratified, the tacitness of her independence. The distaste for a personal conflict was overcome by the hope of its issue.

In this way it came about that a letter from Anne telling her husband that she would come to London the day after the morrow, lay that evening in Borhaven Post Office with a letter from Major Lauden to the father of Hugh Napier.

On the next day Anne told Napier of her intention. He looked at her and said, "I think that you are right; I know that you are brave."

CHAPTER XV

THE UNEXPECTED

THE fly taking Anne to the railway station on this momentous journey had hardly got a quarter of a mile out of Borhaven when she felt the horse pulled up, and looking forward, perceived Napier at the side of the road coming towards her.

This surprise pleased her. She had been feeling lonely. He entered the dusty old carriage, with its white holland coverings and its sheepskin mat, saying, "I thought you wouldn't mind."

She answered, "This is very nice of you. I am glad."

He sat on the opposite seat so that he might see her.

At first they spoke indifferently of anything that entered their heads. The pure air of the early morning made them cheerful, the scent of the gorse rose like honey to their nostrils, the bright sunlight, caught and reflected by the dew, gladdened their senses. They were climbing to high country, with the sea drawing farther behind them, and yet becoming with every turn of the wheels more visible—a misty circle of iridescent water to which Napier more than once pointed Anne's gaze.

"Even a collier looks well from here," he said.

"However, the difference of sails! Look at those Lowestoft drifters!" He explained to her that these Lowestoft smacks have their mizzens raked forward, and that they set large reaching jibs when the wind is light.

As they began to descend the hill on the other side of this high ground, losing the sea which always inspired him with enthusiasm, Napier turned his gaze to Anne's face, sat forward on his seat, leaning towards her, and began to speak of her journey.

The protector was strong in him. He had been thinking all the previous day of this solitary woman, little more than a girl, going to face a man whom vice had made odious and marriage her tyrant.

He tried as delicately as he could to convey his sympathy, to repress his admiration.

Finally he said, "I wish I could go for you."

"I might have written," she replied, acknowledging this sympathy with her eyes. "It is better that I should say what there is to say." She paused for a moment, and added, "It is a long time since I saw him. I feel as if I were going to see a stranger. But I am not afraid."

"One day you will forget that he existed."

At the railway station he took her ticket, bought magazines and newspapers for her at the bookstall, and then walked at her side to and fro on the platform, waiting for the London train.

"I shall be here when you come back," he said.

"Oh, no," she made answer. "It will be late. You will have nothing to do all day."

"I shall be waiting for you," he said, and their eyes met.

When the train departed, he turned his back on the station, and passing through the least frequented streets in the town, came out on a road which led to high country and woods.

Anne did not read the newspapers he had laid at her side in the carriage. She found her thoughts tending to run riot, and set herself to bring them into order. She essayed to dominate these errant and undisciplined children of the brain with the one and central resolution to be firm.

But her thoughts would not be ruled. They ran hither and thither in her brain, carrying little tapers into dim corners, and flourishing these tiny brands through long corridors which had many doors and no windows. These tapers, these ideas, distracted her at every moment of her musings. She found herself looking at things covered with the dust of ages, and contemplating vistas which led whither she could not see. Her father seemed to be standing in the shadow of one of those half-opened doors. Her little grandmother called to her from the end of the corridor. Behind her sounded the footsteps of her childhood. At every moment the thoughts ran on, staying at no door, resting at no corner, but always finding fresh darkness into which to plunge and brandish their flames.

Anne closed her eyes, and endeavoured to still her thoughts. She revolted against these innumerable

ideas. Her brain rebelled, as well as her central intelligence. She tried to think of something else.

She thought of Napier.

When the train arrived in London she was cold and numb with a nervous disquiet. She feared the ordeal. She felt no energy for her task. She was inspired by no iron resolution of will. The long apprehension and anticipation of this great determining event had exhausted her strength. "I must go through it," she said, with a sigh; and left the issue to chance.

She was crossing the platform to the cab-rank when, in the midst of the crowd, she felt her arm touched lightly from behind, and heard at the same time her name spoken by her husband.

She turned to him a face that was quite white.

Her first view of him was a blurred picture, a glimpse of a familiar figure caught through frosted glass. She only saw that he was tall, fresh-coloured, and that he smiled. She was conscious in him of awkwardness and a strange sense of protecting kindness. As she looked away from his face she heard him speaking. He said something about her long journey; she heard the word motor-car; she walked with him up the platform, struggling for control of her nerves.

A footman opened the door of a motor-car, touching his cap as she set her foot upon the step. She found herself sitting in a corner of a roomy, drab-lined interior, and saw her husband stooping to place

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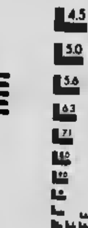

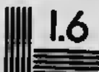

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a hassock for her feet. He said something in praise of the car, asking her if she found it comfortable. "We shall get some air directly she moves," he said, and sat back.

He was dressed in a grey suit, with a black tie, a soft felt hat, and linen gaiters on his boots. She was conscious, as she half turned to answer his questions, of an atmosphere about him which was new, which was strange, which was baffling. The old sense of great wealth was there, the sense which in some subtle way made for power; prosperity showed in the least detail of his simple dress; he was still the man of the world, the man of great possessions, the true lord of an age absorbed by industrialism. But there was something superadded, some fresh emanation, and this new something had taken the place of some old quality which she missed in him.

Gradually it came to her, the truth of this change. The missing quality was animalism. The new quality was health.

A fresh vigour had come to him. His great body, with its massive shoulders and its bull neck, was less loaded with flesh. The line of his cheeks was cleaner drawn. The sheen of his skin was no longer clouded by heat. There was an almost crystal brightness in his blue eyes. Even his voice witnessed to this physical regeneration. It had lost its low, bullying, and rather brutal note. There was something fresh and spontaneous, almost boylike, in this new intonation.

When the car was clear of the station, he spoke

about her return that night. "It seems absurd," he laughed, "to go back the very day you arrive. Why didn't you bring Mrs. Dobson with you?"

Anne said that her grandmother was now too old for long journeys.

"Does she like Norfolk?" He turned and looked at her. "I'm not sure that it suits you. You aren't looking as well as I should like to see you. Are you doing too much there, waiting on Mrs. Dobson, and nursing her?"

"Oh, no; I am very well. The place suits me."

"The journey has probably fagged you. I hate trains. You'd better let me take you back in the car!"

He laughed, and she smiled.

"How do you think I'm looking?" he demanded, with a laugh.

She turned to him. His face was bright with pleasant, self-conscious smiles.

"You look wonderfully well," she said in a low voice, "wonderfully well." Her gaze moved quickly to the window at his side of the car; as quickly it turned to look straight ahead.

"I never felt better in my life." She heard him laugh confidently and cheerfully. "I've discovered the secret of health and happiness. What do you think it is?"

"I can't guess."

"Physical culture!" He laughed. "It's my religion," he said, stretching out his legs the length of the car. "Well, a good part of it. I believe a

healthy body is the foundation of everything. One can't get the best out of life with a bad physical apparatus. It's like the engine of a motor-car. There's a rage for physical culture. It's working a kind of revolution. Half the men of my acquaintance are going in for it. Old Phizzy Scott has practically cured himself of gout; he's sixty-two this December; you'd hardly know him for the same man. And it's a kind of policeman, too. It stops a man from playing fast and loose with his chances. I believe there's been more barley-water than whisky drunk at the clubs this year. Fellows are taking care of themselves. It's a good thing. The other's purest folly. No fun in it at all."

She began to realize that something for which she had not prepared had definitely happened, was here as an accomplished fact, near her, quite near and insistent—the unexpected, the surprise. She had framed and strung all her ideas through these last months of revolution on a fact that had passed, on a truth that had become a falsehood. It was impossible to organize on the instant a new set of thoughts, a new school of ideas, to meet this contradiction of her experience. She could only wait to see what burden the thing itself would lay upon her will. Then she would act. Then she would know what to say. For the present her mind was in darkness and confusion. The old troop of ideas had deserted her; of the old thoughts not one remained.

When the car had threaded its way through the City, and the light and air of the Embankment came

to them with the pleasant feeling of increased speed, he spoke more cheerfully and more confidently of the good things life held for those who keep their bodies in fitness. He told her that he had sold his old yacht in the Clyde, and was buying a steamer which was big enough to go anywhere. He was too heavy for hunting, he said; and England was scarcely worth living in after the first month of pheasant shooting; it would be a real pleasure to get away to the Mediterranean in November; the sun kept people alive; there was always amusement along that coast; and the ship was as comfortable as one's own house.

"But you believe in the simple life," he said, laughing. He turned and looked at her with amusement and indulgence. "Don't you?"

"We have been doing with one servant," she replied, trying to smile.

He exclaimed at behaviour so extraordinary. "I hope you haven't been spoiling your hands," he said. The tone of his voice, the sudden note of intimacy, froze her. She shuddered, and he noticed it. "Some one is walking over your grave!" he said. "You aren't cold, are you? Shall I pull up that window?"

"Oh no," she answered; "I'm not cold." She leaned a little forward and looked from the window as though something had attracted her attention.

"London must seem new to you," he said. "Let's see; how long is it since you started on your pilgrimage of the simple life? It must be nearly two years."

"Yes, I suppose it is."

"That's a long time to be away from London. Don't you want to shop?"

"I might pay one or two calls on my way to the station this afternoon."

"But you aren't seriously going back so soon?"

"Oh yes."

Her mind realized the peril which had befallen her. The future was definitely divided. No longer did she stand on one straight road, with the familiar alternatives of turning back to what was repugnant, and odious, and abominable, or of going forward to what was beautiful and good. There were two paths, not one road, and they stretched ahead of her. They belonged to the future. She must choose between duty and inclination. She must go forward on one of these two roads. And on whichever way she travelled, conscience, she felt sharply and perplexedly, would upbraid her. It would be better to journey without love; the other path must be haunted by the ghost of duty.

When the car stopped before their house in Wilton Crescent, Anne felt as she crossed the threshold like a person entering a prison. The footmen who stared at her, the butler who bowed to her, were like accomplices in her abduction. They seemed to be waiting for a word from their master, watching her for resistance. The closing of the door behind her struck a chill of terror through her soul. She felt alone, isolated, cut off from help, alone with tremendous danger.

The house revived no memories as she passed

through the hall. The past came more vividly to her mind when she heard her husband speaking to the butler of "Mrs. Paton." She remembered the stair-carpet. The view of the dining-room, seen through a half-open door, became familiar. They told her that her room was ready, and she ascended the stairs. She was conscious of the young men watching her. She heard her husband speaking to the butler as he walked to his room at the end of the hall.

A new housemaid was standing beside her door on the second floor. Anne acknowledged her greeting, and passed into the room without speaking. It was prepared for her. There was not only the can of hot water, covered by a cozy, in the basin, but the bed was made, the dressing-table was spread with its necessaries, and everywhere there were flowers. It was the sight of these flowers which filled her with her first sense of despair.

When she came down-stairs Paton was standing in the hall to receive her. His fresh-coloured face was raised; there was a smile of welcome on his lips; as she reached the last stair he put out his hand. "Come along," he said, and led her into the room.

The big table had been taken away. They sat at a round table in the centre of the room, which was decorated with beautiful flowers and was crowded with glass of the most exquisite workmanship—much of it wedding presents. There were flowers in the boxes of the open windows, and flowers on the sideboard. It was like lunching in a winter garden, open to fresh air.

She spoke about the flowers, eager to find a topic. She felt that the footman who brought her something from the sideboard was looking at her. This consciousness of the servants made her vexed with herself. She took toast from a little rack in front of her, and began to eat what had been set before her. An effort of the will enabled her to appear more cheerful. She spoke about the journey, the early start, the nine-mile drive across open country, the tameness of the pheasants, which lay in the road unfrightened by the carriage, the scent of the gorse, the widening view of the sea as the distance increased. Then she asked him about America, and listened with a wonderful simulation of interest to his broken, dull, and incoherent narrative.

It was impossible for her not to compare this man with the other. The comparison was driven home to her by the mere difference in their narrative power. Napier could make a little village in Denmark vivid and real to her; could people its quay, could open its cottage doors, could lift its church spire above the pines, and make her hear the wheels of the wagons turning on its stones. This man had brought back from the vast and amazing world of America—nothing. He had looked at it, as a farmer looks at fat-stock; it was big, it was noisy, it was busy; people over there were markedly alive; the whole thing was rather imposing. Whatever opinions America had formed in his mind, he uttered them with a tolerant and condescending amusement. He had seen a continent, and could deliver his impressions in a sentence.

After coffee had been served, he asked her if she would come and sit in his room. "Not that I want to smoke," he said, smiling; "but it's more comfortable than the drawing-room. I've knocked off smoking till the evening. I find I'm ever so much better without it."

His room was new to her. She had visited it, perhaps, half-a-dozen times in the past. She was grateful for its shadows, its absence of bright light. The dullness of the carpet and the darkness of the book-lined walls created an atmosphere which helped to compose her mind. As she advanced to the hearth, she saw a photograph of herself on the mantelpiece.

He wheeled a low chair to her. "Is this comfortable?" he asked. When she was seated, he walked over to the table in the window, and, with his back turned, said good-humouredly but nervously, "I've got something to say to you, Anne, which is rather difficult. I suppose you can guess it." He turned and came towards her with a photograph in his hand. "You've got every reason, I'm bound to confess, to know what I ought to say, and what I want to say." He stood with his back to the mantelpiece, smiling, awkward, self-conscious, and yet in some occult fashion pleased with himself. "I want to tell you I'm sorry. I want to beg your pardon. Repentance is always an awkward business. It's one of those queer things in life which aren't easy to talk about. But I want you to know that I'm sorry for past blunders, and that I have made up my mind they shall never be repeated. I hope you forgive me."

This was his offer. The last thing she could have desired was the amendment of life he proffered with such smiling and natural satisfaction. Her course could only be happy if he were iniquitous. His evil was her warrant. His sin was her freedom.

"I forgave all that long ago," she said.

"But the thing is," he answered, still smiling, "can you forget it? Look here, Anne," he added, speaking with more serious energy, "I want to tell you something more. I'm not only seeking to renew the old terms; I want to begin again on new terms, on better terms. I don't want to muddle our life. I want to make it as good as I can. It can be very good. We've got everything in the world to make us happy. It's only ourselves who can prevent this happiness. You have every right to doubt me, every reason to distrust my reform. I was a brute. When I look back, I hate myself. But I want you to hear my story. Don't judge my seriousness in the matter till you've heard the tale. There's a woman in it!" He laughed. "But you're not the kind to be jealous, and she's not the kind to make other women jealous." He put the photograph that he had been holding into her hand.

It was a matronly face, remarkable for a singular sweetness of expression. A photograph—which misses all the qualities of colour—can only represent a face with truth to those who have knowledge of it; to the stranger it can offer nothing but vague suggestion. This picture in Anne's hand suggested to her a kind and benignant personality, a gentle and refined

spirit, a woman whose society would be restful and calming. "It is a sweet face," she said.

"I think it's the greatest Madonna in the world," he said. "I wish you could see her. But some day you will. Do you know, Anne, it's one of my big hopes to bring you two to know each other. That woman has saved my life. Through her we can begin again."

Anne looked into the face in the photograph. Her heart was beating with nervous haste. She was conscious of dryness in her throat. She felt the blood mounting to her cheeks and forehead.

What had this woman done, this smiling, sweet-eyed, commonplace matron? The gentle eyes, the benign lips, the cheeks shadowed by a smile, suggested some secret, some hidden motive, deep-lying and absorbing, like the less spiritual smile of the Mona Lisa. What had she done? What was her power? What ruin had she worked with those kind eyes? What tragedy had she brought about with those smiling lips?

Through her driven and frightened thoughts she heard the voice of her husband, heard the complaisant voice proceeding with evident pleasure, like a schoolboy sure of his recitation. He had met this Mrs. Davidson on the steamer going out. (Whom had he met? Oh, this woman with the smiling lips. She must listen. The story was important.) She was American. She lived in Boston. (This woman with the gentle eyes; this woman who had wrought such havoc.) He had spoken to her on the second day

out. After that they had become inseparables. People must have thought them engaged! (His laughter burst upon her brain.) But their conversation had been about serious things. She made serious things interesting to him. He only played one evening of bridge the whole voyage! She made him think. When she had gone to her cabin, he used to walk up and down the deserted deck, smoking cigars, and thinking things out; used to look up at the stars sometimes!—used to look across the great black circle of heaving water and wonder what the deuce it all meant!—the world, life, men and women, the whole mystery! (Why did he laugh at these things? Why did he patronize the universe? He was the same man, after all.)

She gave him back the photograph, and raised her eyes to his face. He leaned the picture against her own photograph on the mantelpiece.

"Now I must tell you," he said, beginning to smile again, "that Mrs. Davidson belongs to rather a queer sect. She's a Christian Scientist! I never once agreed with her ideas: I think now they're utterly preposterous; and nothing in the world will ever persuade me that the thing has got any sense in it. So you needn't fear that I'm going to join the Salvation Army, or do away with doctors! But there's this about Mrs. Davidson, and about all the women I met at her house, they've got some extraordinary gift of quietness and rest. I don't know how to describe it. It's something quite apart from what they say and what they think. But it's something

which you can't help feeling. They make one feel restful. Rather a strange quality for me to praise! I know. I'm amazed at the change myself. But there it is. Whatever I may think about it, the thing is fact. I'm what you may call converted. The miracle has taken place. I'm born again!"

He laughed in his satisfied fashion, standing straight and tall, with his legs apart, his back to the mantelpiece, his hands beating good-temperedly against his thighs. It is impossible not to feel this man's immense delight in his own physical regeneration, a delight which was composed of vanity and self-esteem. He knew that he looked well, and vigorous, and active; he knew that the freshness of his face and the clearness of his eyes manifested most enviable and exceedingly pleasant health. Many people had told him how well he looked. He could not doubt that Anne admired his splendid appearance.

He talked for a long time of the effect made on him by the niceness and charm of the American ladies he had met at Mrs. Davidson's, and the change which had come over his views and the alteration in his habits from these conversations.

"Mrs. Davidson put me on the track of physical culture," he said, smiling. "She saw that it was hopeless to attempt making me a Christian Scientist, and recommended me to try physical means of getting fit. I started in America. I worked hard on the trip back. And now I find everybody in London at the same game. It's perfectly wonderful what one can do with oneself in this way. I've lost all superfluous

fat; my muscles are hard, my flesh firm, and my lungs are like a three-year-old's." He laughed good-heartedly. "Isn't it a strange thing, this new kind of religion, which is going to alter the face of the world? Repentance has got a new garment. The penitent doesn't go to the priest to confess; he goes to Sandow to get fit. Instead of Bibles in the parlour windows, we shall have Developers on the bedroom doors!"

He saw Anne's glance directed to the clock, and pulled out his watch. "You want to be off?" he asked, without any reproach in his voice. "I hope I haven't bored you by my autobiography? I fear I have been rather egotistical, but the case seemed to require it. Shall I order the car?"

"Are you coming to the station?"

"If I may. But you want to stop?"

"It isn't necessary. No; really it is not necessary. I think if the car came in half-an-hour that would give me plenty of time for the train."

"I wish you were stopping," he said, ringing the bell.

When the servant had answered the summons and retired, Anne began her reply. She did not raise her eyes to her husband, who still stood with his back to the mantelpiece, facing her; but she sat looking over the round of her muff where it reposed on her lap, her head a little declined, her hands motionless in the muff. "I think you have good reason to be proud of yourself," she said slowly. "It is a great thing you have done. I can hardly believe you are the same

man. Indeed, so great is the change, I cannot really get my thoughts into order. You have taken me by surprise. You must let me tell you some other day all I think about this matter. For the present, I want to speak, without hurting your feelings, about something else. I want to speak to you about my feelings towards grandmamma. You can imagine what it was to me, when I found myself alone and rather deserted, to discover an understanding and a faithful companion in that little lady. She has laid me under a great obligation. Indeed, before my marriage she was my most intimate companion, for during my childhood I was with her a great deal oftener than I was with my mother. After my marriage, she became my comfort. Well, she is old now; she is far too fragile to make journeys; she wishes to end her days in our cottage. My place, I feel, is at the side of this old and faithful friend. I cannot desert her. I hope I have not pained you by what I have said. I hope you understand my feelings."

She raised her eyes to his face. "Of course I am sorry that you do not come to me at once," he replied. "I don't conceal from you the—well, the feeling of expectation with which I have been looking forward to this meeting. Ever since I took myself in hand, I have had you for the goal. A school-boy going home for the holidays could not be more excited than I have been about meeting you. And a school-boy, returning to find his home shuttered and deserted, could hardly be more depressed than I am by this—disappointment."

"I am sorry," she answered in a low voice, feeling cold and desolate.

"I had hoped," he said, "that you would be glad of the change I have made; more glad than an expression of congratulation; so glad, in fact, that you would forget and forgive all the past, and begin our life again with real pleasure and delight."

She found herself charged with a crime which hurt her, the crime of discouraging reformation and depressing a pure ardour. Her position pained her in a dreadful manner. She could not embrace with joy this penitent husband without spiritual infidelity. The unsanctioned and unuttered affection of her heart was a pure and holy love to which she could not bring herself to play the courtesan. The thing called Duty might have moved her if the new love had not been so pure and sacred. So pure and sacred was this love that she would have degraded her soul by accepting the embrace of Duty. And yet, to stand loyal to the highest feelings of her soul meant to endanger this man's difficult battle with the forces of evil. She became conscious of responsibility.

"You are a fair and just man," she said quietly. "Consider my position from my point of view. We are husband and wife only in name; our lives have been as separate and distant as those of strangers. It is not easy to pick up fallen threads. We cannot go back at a moment's notice to old feelings and revive old intimacies. There has got to be some bridge-building first."

Before she realized what had happened, he was

kneeling at her side. His face came suddenly so near to her that she turned white, and could not repress the natural instinct to lean back from him. The pressure of his hands upon her arms filled her with terror.

"Let us begin building that bridge now," he said in a soft voice. "My dearest love, you are all the world to me. It will be easy for us to throw that bridge over the years of our misunderstanding. I know what you feel. It is perfectly rational and fair. You think my reformation may not continue. You fear I may relapse. You are quite justified. But I promise, with your help, that will never happen. Never, Anne; I swear it. You may trust me now. I am a changed man. My whole character is altered. I don't profess to be religious; but I've discovered the convenience and the satisfaction of being on the right road. With you for my companion I shall never want to get on the wrong road again. You don't know what you mean to me. When I was trying to get fit, when I was trying to break bad habits, it was in order to show myself to you. I had spoken of you to Mrs. Davidson. She made me feel how badly I had done my duty to you; how splendidly you had suffered my faults and failings. She compared you with the women who play even good husbands false, and showed me that I had wronged an angel. This idea turned and turned in my mind. You became a constant thought to me. I was always building up old memories about you, seeing you again, painting your picture, remembering the tone of your voice,

recalling your quiet manner and the gentle look in your eyes. I promise you, Anne, I should have failed a dozen times but for this thought of you—the thought of wanting to 'show off' before the woman I had been such a precious fool to neglect. And when I saw you this morning, the feeling of wanting to show off was redoubled. You looked so fine, and good, and noble. And now, here in our house, you look so beautiful, and the old spell of your personality is so complete over me, that I don't want to 'show off' any longer. I want to make you love me. I want to possess you."

The pressure of the strong hands on her arms increased, but she was too dazed to notice how the hands trembled and how the eyes straining towards her were moist with tears.

"If I thought that I could not revive your love," he said earnestly and vigorously, "I would destroy myself. You are everything that life holds for me. Nothing is worth a grain of sand to me without you. I had looked forward to this meeting with joy, but the reality of you exceeds my dreams. You are beautiful beyond words. I cannot say what your enchantment is to me. All I know is that I love you now as I never loved you before. And my love is so great that I am positive I can build that bridge. You have only got to let me try, you have only got to tell me to begin, and I will throw such a bridge over our separation that you will run to greet me with open arms." He bent his head and kissed the hand that had been unconsciously raised to hold him back, and which now lay cold as death on her muff. "I won't say any

more now," he said, getting up. "But I had to say what I have said. I hope I haven't made the first step too boldly. I see and know what you mean. My behaviour in the past has half killed your love for me. I must prove myself worthy before it revives. Yes, I know, I understand. I foolishly thought that it would revive at once; I didn't realize that deep natures feel these things more than others. I'm rather glad you are like this. In spite of my disappointment, I can be glad. It would have been too easy if I had won everything at once. It will make me a stronger man to wait and win you. I will set myself to that end. You are the purest and best perfectly beautiful woman I have ever known. It is right that it should take a man to win you."

He drove with her to the station, and on that journey they entered into their pact. He was to write to her and wait till she summoned him. She was to think over this new matter, and write to him when her conclusion was reached. In the meantime she was to devote herself to Mrs. Dobson.

As they walked up the platform they passed a grey-haired and handsome man standing at the open door of a carriage, with newspapers under his arm and an unlighted cigar between his lips. He wore a billy-cock hat and a heavy grey ulster, with a white muffler round his throat. Paton noticed him, and saw how he stared admiringly at Anne. "We have just passed Lord Arthur Gorham," he said; "one of the bright stars of English aristocracy; he began his youth by a forgery which landed him in penal servitude; then he

got mixed up in a card scandal; then his wife divorced him; and now he's living with a couple of religious aunts, and going in for spiritualism! I don't suppose you ever met him or heard his story. It makes me grateful, when I think of a man like that. I might so easily have been the same.'

He saw her comfortably placed in the train, and because it was turning cold sent the footman back to the car for a fur rug. Then he bent over her and said—

"I shall look out for your letters. Be as kind to me as you can. And remember, it will all come right."

She gave him her hand.

"You hope it will all come right?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes," she replied. "I hope it will all come right."

He smiled and bent nearer to her. "God bless you, Anne," he whispered, and left her.

CHAPTER XVI

A FALLING TIDE

OF all cheats and disappointments none is so heartbreaking as the mirage. The desert is terrible, the phantasm of succour makes it hell. Anne felt that she had been mocked. If there were tears in her heart, there was laughter in her ears. Destiny had laid a trap for her, she had fallen into it; the universe laughed at her blunder.

She had seen in the sky the towers, the roofs, and the hanging gardens of freedom; within that city was the promise of love; the desert where she journeyed lost its melancholy at sight of this prospect; she pressed forward; she was close to the gates; the city suddenly dissolved and vanished. Nothing was left but the desert and night. As the train moved through the twilight, leaving suburbs and blackened fields behind, emerging more and more into flat country where alders leaned across narrow brooks and sunset settled over distant woods reflecting itself in pools of water and the windows of her railway carriage, Anne faced without despair but without acquiescence the discipline of necessity, the ruling of fate, which meant for her the sacrifice of friendship, the death of love.

She did not think of the return to Paton. She thought of the separation from Napier. It was not the desert which frightened her, but the mirage which wounded her.

She was conscious of resentment. It must not be supposed that the altercation with Mr. Aldrich had left no impression on her mind. That violent disturbance of her spiritual life had been no good preparation for a moral crisis. She was thrown upon herself. To a mind rendered mutinous by authority resignation is not easy. Anne had found herself unable to accept the religion which the priest laid down for her; now, in the turmoil of her emotions, she was inclined to conduct this crisis in her destiny without reference to any religion at all. A slow indignation, a gradual disgust worked in her wounded mind. Afterwards came despair.

It had long been dark when the train arrived at the station. Napier came quickly towards her out of the shadows of waiting people. She saw by the flickering gas-lamps that something had occurred to distress him. At first, she thought it was the sight of the fur rug which she was dragging from the carriage; it told of a thoughtfulness which would be disagreeable to his feelings. But he took the rug from her without appearing to notice it. He told her his bad news in a sentence. The cab-driver had just stopped him as he entered the station, saying that a visitor to the hotel at Borhaven was arriving by this train, and that the proprietor hoped Mrs. Paton would allow

him to share the cab—a common civility in that neighbourhood. "We shall not be able to talk," he concluded.

They passed through the booking-office into the yard. The cab was standing waiting for them at the door. It was an old-fashioned brougham with a luggage-basket on the roof. The cabman repeated to Anne the tale she had already heard from Napier. She entered the brougham, Napier followed, and the door was closed.

"Well?" he said, and turned to her.

"There has been a change," she answered, in a steady voice. "I found the unexpected. He has altered. He has reformed."

Napier said nothing.

"The surprise has disorganized my ideas," she said presently. "It is difficult to think."

"Do you mean," he asked slowly, "that you are going back?"

"He wishes it."

The cabman opened the door. A porter lifted a couple of bags on to the roof of the cab. A man in a dark ulster, with a white muffler round his throat, came to the door of the carriage. "I fear I am an intruder," he said politely; "I hope you will forgive me."

Napier caught a glimpse in the darkness of grey hair, and made to get off the seat beside Anne; but the newcomer would not permit this courtesy. He took the narrow seat, with his back to the horse, and

assured Napier that he was perfectly comfortable. He hoped that the delay in bringing his luggage had not vexed them.

The cab creaked and jolted out of the yard and was soon on the main road leading away from the town towards the sea and Borhaven. The narrow interior was almost totally dark. The body of the stranger blocked out what little light struggled from the lamps towards the glass pane behind the driver. The windows were lowered, and the fur rug was spread over the knees of the travellers. They spoke about the coldness of these autumn evenings for a few moments and then relapsed into silence. The stranger leaned forward in his seat, looking out of the window. Napier and Anne sat far back in the shadows of the carriage.

The stranger presently leaned back in his seat, folded his arms, and appeared to settle down to sleep. Napier turned his head to Anne, and in a low voice said, "Do you believe in a sudden reformation?"

Anne was conscious of a slight movement on the stranger's part. "I have no experience," she answered, in a voice equally low.

"To risk the future on such a change is dangerous."

"One is entitled to ask for time."

"Which means uncertainty."

She did not answer.

The cab rumbled on. The stranger once more leaned forward and looked out of the window. Napier returned to his thoughts. Anne watched the play of half-lights on the profile of the stranger's face.

Presently they came to a hill, and the stranger said he would walk. He opened the door, and stepped out of the moving cab. For one moment, as he passed the carriage-lamp they both saw his handsome face—the thin, proud, sorrowful face with its iron-grey moustache, and its whitening hair above the ears. He walked forward with a long and easy stride; the smell of a cigarette came back to them as he passed in front of the horse.

"Anne, you must be careful of your life," Napier said quickly. "I can't bear to think of your happiness hanging on the hazard of an experiment. The risk is terrible. There are reformations which are merely interludes. Men go back. It is a truth that the last state is worse than the first. Suppose this change should be momentary. Think of yourself in such a case! What a life for you, what a horror! Never to be certain, always to be expecting the return. And yet——" He stopped speaking.

"Yes, that is the problem," she said. "All the arguments are on one side; but——"

"All the wisdom, all the common sense, all the practical sound reasons on one side," he said slowly; "and on the other, conscience."

"Reason on the side of happiness, conscience on the side of pain."

He covered his face with his hands.

This action of grief saved her. A mothering compassion for his sorrow took possession of her heart. It left no room for self-pity. She was conscious of one desire, to comfort him.

At the top of the hill the stranger re-entered the cab. He spoke about the fine air and the wide view. The walk seemed to have braced his energies; he spoke with spirit, and appeared to be well pleased with himself. Napier did not answer, and Anne found herself entering into conversation with this unknown man. They talked of other countries, and of the various scenery of the world. "But of all the cities I have visited," said the stranger, as they were nearing Borhaven, "I think that I most admire Edinburgh. I expect you know it. Don't you agree that there is some charm about that city which others miss, even the oldest and those situated in southern climates?"

"I am fond of Edinburgh," Anne replied; "[illegible] my birthplace, and I go back to it frequently. [illegible], it is charming and beautiful."

Napier remembered suddenly that there was a way across the fields to Creek Cottage. He spoke of it hastily to Anne, asked her if she were willing to walk, and at the next minute was leaning out of the window to stop the cabman.

"You do not live in Borhaven then?" inquired the stranger.

"A little way out."

The cab stopped and Napier opened the door.

"This is your rug, I think," said the stranger.

"Oh, we will send for it to-morrow," answered Napier.

"Pray make use of it," said Anne, as the door closed.

The cab moved on, with the unknown man in its dark interior; and Napier and Anne crossed the road, opened a gate, and found their way to the field path.

There was scarcely a star to be seen, and the wind blowing lightly from the east was sharply cold. Very little light hung above the earth. The path in front of them was only a blur.

Anne told the narrative of her visit. She was kind to Paton's reformation. The night air refreshed her; she spoke courageously of her duty. She was not bitter, and made reference to the future without any note of despair. The sacrifice was made. She thought only of Napier. Her tale lasted till they were close to the cottage, the light of whose windows could be seen through the surrounding trees.

Napier did not once interrupt her. Every sentence was a hand pushing him away from her. As he walked at her side he was conscious of banishment and isolation.

"What would you think if I tried to alter your mind?" he asked.

"You would not do that."

"No."

"My friend helps me, not hinders me."

"Your friend must forsake you. Oh, Anne!"—he turned and laid a hand lightly upon her arm, stopping in the midst of the dark fields—"I must leave you. It is necessary that I should go away."

His pain melted her. She turned towards him. There were tears in her eyes. They stood facing

each other in the dark fields under a drifting grey scud of night clouds with the cold wind passing between them. "It is difficult," she said, "to say good-bye; but there is nothing good which cannot be obeyed."

"In going back," he said quickly, "you are obeying only what is questionably good."

"I am thinking now of parting with my friend, who is good."

"Tell me one thing; you are not afraid of the future?"

"No, I am not afraid."

"Will you send for me if I can help you?"

"There will be no need. I am sure of myself."

"You know that I would do anything?"

"I shall have always sweet thoughts of you."

They walked on in silence.

At the gate of the cottage she turned and looked at him. All the memory of her childhood rose in her heart and became tender in her eyes.

"It is no use saying that it isn't hard to wish you good-bye. I wish it was not necessary."

"What shall I say to you?"

She was conscious of a greater nearness on his part. His face seemed to come close to hers. She could feel his breathing on her cheek, which was cold from the night air.

"Say good-bye to me," she answered, and put out her hand.

He saw in her face an expression which reminded him ever after of Chopin's *Etude* which describes

the desertion of George Sand. He found his mind repeating the words—

> "Beauty that must die;
> And Joy whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu."

He was terribly shaken by this parting.

"I have just enough courage left to say that word; no more."

In another moment she was standing alone in the darkness and the wind beside the open gate.

The parting was over. Now that it was accomplished the place in her heart held by sorrow and resignation was violently usurped by bitterness and rebellion. She stood alone and motionless in front of the cottage, the sighing of the wind in the trees and the distant murmur of the sea making one moan of affliction and bereavement in her soul, the darkness of night covering her with the solitude of the tomb, the retreating footsteps of her lover sounding a knell in her spirit. She had given up her life, she had sacrificed her happiness. For a scruple of honour, for the sake of a convention, for some intangible and inexpressible idea, she had thrown away material good and solid peace. No angels came and ministered to her. She was exalted by no martyr's feeling of spiritual satisfaction. She was accused by her heart, she was mocked by her conscience. The retreating footsteps of her lover died away. She had sent him from her. For the substance she had given the shadow. Alone in the darkness she realized loneliness.

It is no hyperbole to liken this intense feeling of isolation which possessed and overwhelmed her to the agony of widowhood. Love of the most sacred and noble character had married her to Napier. She was his wife in every respect which makes marriage a divine companionship. His going widowed her. She saw this husband of her heart, this spouse of her spirit, struck down by the assassin Duty. She herself had given the dagger. He was dead. Never again would her eyes behold him, her hands touch him, her ears listen to his voice. The grave had opened and closed above him. He was dead. He was beyond recall. Her life must for ever be empty of him. She would look, and he would not be there; call, and he would not come; speak, and he would not answer. Does death destroy so effectually as farewell?

As she stood there, realizing her widowhood, there came from the house the sound of a moving bolt and the turning of a key. She put her hand to the rail of the gate. The door opened; a flood of light streamed into the darkness; and she saw her grandmother standing there with a lighted candle in her hand.

Napier walked on through the dark night. He was conscious of some unreasoning injustice in human life. An ancient bitterness was born again in his heart. Fate, which had denied him the love of father and mother, denied him now the love of a wife. It was one more blow from destiny, the most grievous, the most cruel

and unjust. From his earliest years he had been conscious of the part played by injustice in the affairs of men. The privations of his childhood had made him acquainted with the sufferings endured by little children in the slums of great cities. His youth had brought home to him the pain of that law which visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. His manhood had made him see that civilization can be cruel to the weak, tyrannous to the just, and merciless to the innocent. He now learned that in the intricacies and complexities of human existence the purest love may become a sin.

Where, now, were his principles? Had he thrown them away from him, had he exorcised conscience, had he broken free from the restraints of moral guidance? That would have been more than a revolution of personality; it would have been an apostasy of soul.

Napier's principles existed. For the rest of humanity. He did not question the rule of conscience. He thought he had found an exception.

And he accepted his destiny. It was quite clear to him that he must go from [illegible]ne for ever. He could no longer remain at her side. He could no longer hope for her love. He never questioned this necessity. It was as clear to him as the sun in a cloudless sky. The man still had unclouded notions of honour. But the spirit in which he accepted the defeat of his hopes and the destruction of his affection was not heroic; it was rebellious. What it would grow to be was the problem of his life.

"To-morrow I will sail away," he said to himself. And he added, "The more it blows, the better I shall be pleased." He felt the hostility of nature.

When he reached the quay, an old boatman, who was standing with a group of pipe-smoking fishermen under the lee of a shed, came forward to meet him.

This was Tricker, who looked after his ship in his absence.

"The major's been asking for you," he said. "He told me to tell you that he'd like you to go up to breakfast to-morrow morning, or if it wasn't too late to look in at the hotel to-night."

Napier was feeling the sense of the sea. He saw the anchored boats, whose headlights moved gently in the darkness swinging slowly round to the river, their sterns to the sea.

"Tide's running out," he said.

"Just turned," said Tricker. "I put a new wick in your lamp, the old one wouldn't turn easy."

Napier walked to the edge of the quay. At the bottom of the wooden steps his dinghey swung and bumped at the end of its rope, the water flopping over the stairs.

He gave the boatman some money.

"What, you aren't going away to-night?" demanded the old man.

"I think so. It's a nice breeze."

"Why, I thought you were here for another spell."

"I want to go South for a few weeks."

"Shall I lend you a hand?"

"No, thanks; I can manage."

He bade the man good-bye, and began to go down the steps. "What shall I tell the major, then?" asked Tricker, stooping down with bent knees, his face leaned over the steps.

"Tell him, I couldn't resist a nice breeze and a falling tide."

A few minutes after, Napier was unlacing his sail-cover, and the port and starboard lights were shining in the rigging. The fishermen on the quay spoke about him as they listened to the clicking of his winch. That noise filled the quiet of the dark night. The work of the lonely man was the only sound in the river, except the noise of wind and tide.

Just as the *Sand Wasp* began to glide away under her jib, and Napier, clear of the harbour, was preparing to hoist his mainsail, the door of the hotel opened and two men smoking cigars strolled into the garden. One of them was a little unsteady on his legs; he was laughing. From the sea came to them the musical sound of a hoisting gaff, the rattle of patent sheaves and the creaking of pulleys.

"Some fellow putting to sea," said Lauden. "We shall see his lights in a moment."

They stood smoking in the dark garden with their backs to the hotel, Lauden swaying on his feet and breathing heavily.

Then a white light glowed in the distant darkness, a black shadow drifted into the general greyness, and a red lamp shone close to the water.

"There it goes," said Lauden, with a laugh; "out

to sea on a falling t' ' ! One of our fishermen: one of the sons of the North Sea. We shall have soles for breakfast, Arthur!"

The other looked towards the harbour. His eyes seemed to consult the lights.

After a moment he said, "Has he come back, I wonder?"

"He'll come up here when he does," replied Lauden; "but I don't expect we shall see him till to-morrow. The lady is a great attraction. And neither of them cares a biscuit for conventions. They keep rum hours."

The other turned towards the hotel. "How extraordinary," he exclaimed, as they walked away, "how extraordinary! What a fatality in things! I drove out from the station with my own son."

Neither of the two men was inclined for bed. They sat under the verandah of the hotel, smoking in deck-chairs with their faces to the sea. Arthur Gorham wore his ulster, Lauden was in his shabby thin suit.

The major crossed his legs and began to smoke. The other sat watching the red lamp at sea.

"Good Lord, Arthur," exclaimed Lauden, after a pause, "what a mystery the whole thing is! Not merely this affair of yours, but life. Who would have thought five-and-twenty years ago, when we were inspecting stables together and playing polo and backing wrong 'uns, that we should one day be sitting, as grey-haired old buffers, under the verandah of a little inn, talking about your son! Where are

all the others of that time? The regiment is still in existence; the same kit is being worn by youngsters; the same plate makes its appearance on guest-nights; the same silly parlour-tricks are being played in the ante-room. Some boy from Sandhurst is now answering the sentry's challenge with 'Visiting Rounds,' and the scabbard of his sword is scraping the gravel of the barrack square. While we sit here he is telling the sentry to give over his orders, and under the stars, wrapped in his cloak and with his carbine at the shoulder, the sentry is answering, 'To take charge of this post,' *et cetera!* The horses are asleep in their stalls; the men are snoring overhead; the canteen is closed; a baby is crying in the married quarters; a couple of troopers are steadying themselves to enter the barracks gate and pass the sergeant of the guard. It is all as it was five-and-twenty years ago. The regiment which was us, has become other people. Its motto, its colours, its uniform, its traditions belong to men we know nothing about. One generation has passed. It has fallen out. We should be challenged at the barrack gate."

"I haven't got the same affection for the regiment as you have," answered Gorham slowly. "I suppose I left too young. You had got your troop before I joined. You wore the Egyptian medal before I could boast a moustache. But the older one grows, the more one is inclined to look back; and this meeting with you makes me look back to the old days with an interest which I quite thought I had lost long ago. I remember men I had forgotten; duties I

had ceased to think about; as you were speaking just now, I got the smell of the stables in my nostrils and the odour of saddle-paste and white-of-egg on Saturday mornings!"

There are few forms of reminiscence more intimate and engaging than the recollections of old soldiers. The common life, the common taste which brought them into the army, and the common duties and friendships of regimental existence, render this reminiscence a lasting and even an increasing pleasure. The life of a soldier, too, tends to check development of individuality, so that while two men who were at school and college together may meet in after years as complete strangers, transformed by their professions into different individuals, two men who have soldiered together always meet on the old ground of their ancient camaraderie with a perfect and complete understanding between them.

To Major Lauden, who had once ridden in gold lace, scattering a fortune to the winds and entangling himself in the coils of innumerable romances, and who was now condemned to spend his few shillings in the comparative solitude of a fishing village, this meeting with an old comrade in arms was an event of the most delightful character. He magnified the soldiering of Arthur Gorham, and would not let his reason tell him that this old comrade, this companion of his roystering life, had soldiered with him for only a matter of four or five years. He persuaded himself that his own long service had been accompanied step by step, and from its beginning to its

end, by his present companion. He spoke of men in the regiment Gorham had never known, and would not listen when Lord Arthur protested his ignorance. He recalled adventures in Egypt and India, before Lord Arthur had joined, and associated him with events which had happened long after he had left. And all through his rattling gossip and his hoarse laughter was the sense of tears—a sadness for days that were dead, a mourning for friends who were departed, a grief for glory that had vanished. Sometimes, too, in this chronicle of the past, flashed something of the old soldier's present—his hatred of priestcraft, his indignation with what he regarded as superstition, his challenging devotion to a wild scheme of anarchy which he called Socialism. At one moment he was laughing at some spree on a guest-night; at the next he was shaking his fist at priest and society.

They sat talking until it was late, and when they rose to go indoors, the red light at sea had dwindled out of vision.

Arthur Gorham looked down to the harbour as they moved towards the door. "Which is his boat, Lauden?"

"That one, I think. Follow the line of this post; the light five inches or so, on the right of it. I expect he's in bed by now. Got back too late to get my message."

In the morning, looking from his bedroom window, Lauden saw that Napier's ship was not in the harbour. With the lather on his face he opened the

door and called to a servant. "Go and find where Mr. Napier has gone," he said, "and bring me back word. Ask Tricker or somebody on the quay."

When he heard that Napier had departed the poor major was filled with the most angry grief. He pulled on his trousers, and with dangling braces and the jacket of his pyjamas gaping open, shuffled down the corridor of the hotel in faded slippers, to break the news to Gorham.

He found Lord Arthur still in bed, reading a book. The hot-water can stood in the bath covered by a couple of towels. A tray with tea rested on a little table at the bedside.

Lauden broke the news.

Gorham closed his book. "And yesterday I sat in the same carriage with him for an hour! Why has he gone away?"

Lauden told all there was to tell, and suggested that after breakfast they should walk over to Creek Cottage and see Anne Paton. They arrived there just before eleven o'clock, Trooper entering the garden, and refusing to go out when the major commanded him to do so with a smiling face.

Lauden exclaimed at Anne's appearance directly she entered the drawing-room, before he had made the usual apology for Trooper, and before he had presented Lord Arthur. "Why, Mrs. Paton, a day in London has played old Harry with you!" he said.

She rallied her spirits, but the red-faced major, with an old-fashioned gallantry, insisted on express-

ing his anxiety for her health all through the interview.

She showed no emotion when she learned that Napier had departed. "I knew he was going," she said. The major inquired if she knew the wanderer's port of destination. She shook her head. "I don't think he quite knows himself," she answered.

"That means no letter-writing," laughed the major. "What an excellent plan for avoiding one's creditors!"

"You don't know," inquired Lord Arthur, "if Mr. Napier is returning to Borhaven?"

"No," she answered.

Just before they rose to go Lord Arthur said to Anne, "We were talking of Edinburgh last night in the cab; and I discover that you are the daughter of a man I knew there and very much respected."

Her eyes brightened a little. "Oh, you knew my father?" she asked, with affectionate pride.

"Yes, I knew him. He was kind enough to do me a considerable service."

"I am glad," she said simply.

"Ah!" cried the major, "the mention of your father's name has restored your appearance to its normal and most charming good health. I don't like to see you looking run-down."

Some idea remained in Anne's mind that she had heard the name of Lord Arthur Gorham, but she could not remember when and where. The effect produced upon her by his likeness to Napier was too paramount for any other consideration. She felt

convinced that she had spoken with her lover's father.

The two men walked back to Borhaven, discussing the disaster which had overtaken their plans. To Lord Arthur the disappointment was keen and disheartening. He had tried many times in recent years to discover the whereabouts of his son. Ever since he yielded himself to the dangerous occupation of spiritualism he had felt an irresistible desire to meet his son and square accounts. Messages from the dead mother had come to him from astute mediums; he even believed that he had heard her voice. He walked about the world believing that he was accompanied by invisible spirits. To obtain his son's forgiveness and to tell him of the dead mother now in spiritland, was a sentimental passion with the irresponsible and still selfish man.

"I will wait till to-morrow," he said, "and then, if we have got no news of him, I will return to London. You can telegraph to me if he returns. I will leave you a letter to give to him in case he should come when I am away."

The morrow brought no news of Napier, and Lord Arthur placed a sealed envelope in the hands of Lauden addressed to Napier, and marked on the outside: "To be returned to Lord Arthur Gorham in the event of Major Lauden's death." Lauden took it, and placed it carefully in an ancient letter-case, which balanced on the right side of his coat the bulge made by his handkerchief on the left. "It isn't a cheerful thing to carry about," he said; "every time

I see it I shall ask myself why I am not dead; but, Arthur, it shall never leave me, and one day Napier shall read it."

Lord Arthur returned to London. All the pressing of Lauden, who borrowed five pounds from him, could not persuade him to remain another day. He was attending a *séance* that evening at which he hoped to hear the voice of Napier's mother.

While his cab carried him out of Borhaven, Anne and her grandmother were reaching something like a conclusion to the difficulty of Anne's situation. Ever since the old lady greeted the poor girl on her return from London, she had been filled with apprehension. Ever since she heard the story and knew that Napier had departed, she had set her brain to discover some solution of the problem. And now it was reached.

"You must encourage Richard to continue in this improvement," she said; "you must let him be quite sure that you are glad of the change in him; and you must hold forth to him the prospect of a return to the old relations. But you have a right to claim time. His reformation must not depend on any sentimental affection. To win you, it must be self-reverent and strong. Ask for a year. In that year your mind will accustom itself to its duty. What seems now repugnant will become bearable. A year will effect much."

So Anne, who had no other feeling in her heart except an overwhelming sense of bereavement, wrote to Richard Paton in this strain.

"Ah, my dear," said the old lady, embracing her, "if my life was only spared to its selfish and useless old age to help you, it was a thing well done. Believe me, no happiness, no rest, could ever have come to you. The future may look hard to you now, but one day you will be glad you walked to meet it along a straight road."

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE GROUND OF HONOUR

ANNE thought that her conflict was decided.

Her sense of honour had determined the decision.

For the opinion of the world she cared nothing, for the commands of clericalism she had no attention. Conscience may be said to have influenced her in some subconscious way difficult to define, but the real power was that mysterious mental force which controls conduct and gives elevation to character, a sense of honour. There is a subtle difference between conscience and a sense of honour. Conscience is something from without, or if within, imposed from without; it is not ourself; it whispers, it warns, it accuses; in the presence of conscience one is in the presence of an angel; conscience is superior to us; we listen, we bow, we submit; to reject it is impious, to destroy it is ruin; conscience is religion; it is God.

A sense of honour is the personality itself. It controls conduct because it is conduct, it elevates character because it is character. We might twist a phrase of Goethe's and say that the behaviour of a man of honour is a mirror in which he sees his own reflection. A high sense of honour does not warn against vice,

it makes vice impossible; it does not reform, it is reformation itself. A man of honour does not keep himself from stealing; he could not steal. He does not struggle with himself to conquer temptations; he has no temptations. It is not more impossible for him to commit murder, deceive a neighbour, destroy a reputation, brutalize a child, or forge a name, than it is to alter the beating of his heart, the vibrations of his brain, or the colour of his blood. The sense of honour is the man himself. It is a term which describes a character.

It is better perhaps to have a conscience than the sense of honour. Conscience is progress; it is never satisfied; it is aware of eternity. A sense of honour is content with itself; it is a noble synonym for self-satisfaction, self-sufficiency. Between conscience and the sense of honour there is the same difference which divides morality from religion. The Pharisee in the temple represents Honour; the poor man who durst not even raise his eyes, Conscience.

Anne rejected Napier because her sense of honour was strong. If it had been weaker she might have kept him.

The misguided earnestness of an honest priest had thrown her back upon this sense of honour. The religious instinct which was forming gradually in her mind, which was giving breath to her conscience and significance to her virtue, suddenly ceased to manifest in her character. She felt herself expelled. At the moment when she was growing accustomed to the region of faith, she was thrust back into the region of

intellect; doubts which have no meaning for faith, difficulties which have no perplexity for worship, scepticism which has no existence for love, presented themselves with new vigour to her mind. Repel a soul, and the brain sets itself to provide consolation. Anne was driven from the altar; her reason, seeking to heal the wound, asked how she could ever have gone thither. There is no physician for wounded pride like the reason. It would not be true to say that she expunged religion from her heart; but she rejected the means through which she had reached definitely into the Infinite.

If she was conscious of any loss, any bereavement of sacramental religion, at any rate she felt her sense of honour sufficient for conduct. She met the crisis of her life with honour, and she triumphed. Religion could claim nothing of the victory.

But temptation, the supreme mimic, the arch impostor, the prince of plagiarists, sometimes appears even in the likeness of honour. That is the danger.

Against his conscience, Herod sacrificed the prophet of God; but he kept his word to a courtesan.

There are such things as debts of honour and honourable lies. A man of honour, to save the reputation of a woman, will tell a lie on his oath. He will call God to witness his chivalry, his honour and his lie. He is not ashamed; he is exalted. Perhaps it is lack of imagination which makes a man summon the eternal God to witness the cunning whereby he deceives the world concerning the true character of a disreputable woman. There are men of honour, aspir-

ing to nothing high and descending to nothing base, who have a decalogue in which Satan himself would suggest no improvements. You could trust your purse to a man of honour, but not the upbringing of your child. Religion has principles; honour has scruples.

Temptation came to Anne in the guise of honour.

A week had passed since her parting with Napier. There was sadness in her heart, perhaps bitterness, but no question.

She submitted to necessity; not to submit was impossible to her sense of honour.

It was inconceivable to her that she should ever call Napier to her side.

That was her victory.

But, to return to her husband? The injunction of honour was here not so distinct. Religion, perhaps, would have been more definite. Christianity, it is said, meets tragedy with tragedy.

Anne was at this point in her crisis—irrevocable rejection of Napier and distasteful submission to duty—when the temptation came. The tempter was Napier himself.

He did not come to her, that would have been in some way to break faith, but he wrote to her, which was a compromise consistent with honour.

This was the letter—

"I have thought so much of your position since I last saw you. There is nothing else left for me to think about. The result of my thinking has brought me to one definite idea. If I suggest it to you it is

not for a selfish purpose; it is because I am anxious for your peace of mind. You will believe this because you trust me.

"The idea is this: Can it ever be the duty of a wife to return to the husband whom she has ceased to love, the husband who has destroyed in her by his own action and his own conduct the possibility of love? At one time I should not have hesitated to say that it was her duty to return; but now I am inclined to think that it can never be right, in any circumstances or for any cause, to sacrifice the highest instincts and the purest feelings. It seems to me that the wife has a right to say that such a submission is not an obedience but a profanation. Marriage without love is a horrible outrage to a good woman. I can conceive of scarcely anything more revolting. It is so dreadful that the thought has begun to haunt me.

"My friendship for you makes me write. It is a true proverb that says absence strengtheneth friendship, where the last recollections were kindly. My friendship is so strengthened that it drives me to write. Can you imagine what it is for me to think of the possibility that you may make this sacrifice only to find you have destroyed self-respect, and obey duty only to find that it has led you into hell?

"At least pause and think well before you take this step. Do not act till you are convinced that the situation would be bearable.

"On the ground of religion, I can't help thinking that a wife would be right to disown a union that

violated her noblest feelings. I am not thinking of modern religious opinion, but of the original spirit. The current idea of virtue is not exalted. Becky Sharp said it was easy to be virtuous on ten thousand a year; Christ said it was impossible. Religion at its dawn was not a conformity, but a rebellion. The whole spirit was a denial of the world's standards, a perception that the highest must be sought at whatever cost. The sacredest family ties were not to count.

"I only say this that you may not think I have shifted my ground entirely. My opinions have changed, but my principles are fixed.

"The question whether a wife can ever be called upon to return to a union likely to destroy her peace of mind, to embitter her nature and deject her reverence had never before occurred to me. Now that it has, I have answered it. Will you answer it, definitely, before you act?"

This was the letter; this was the temptation.

It had been written as honestly as the clergyman's ruling had been delivered. Mr. Aldrich was zealous for God; Napier was zealous for honour.

With what restraint Napier had written the reader may guess; Anne knew. He was not writing a letter of advice to a sister, he was appealing with the force of a righteous jealousy, and out of the depths of a pure love, to the woman he adored. But honour held the pen.

Anne knew by the knowledge that he loved her how great was the restraint of this letter, which swept her off her feet. And it was his knowledge that she loved

him which made every word in the letter a temptation almost impossible of resistance.

Could she say to the man who knew that she loved him, "I am going back to be the wife of a man I do not love"?

Napier had appealed to her on the ground of honour.

She had faced before the terrible sacrifice of this return, but now for the first time the tragedy of it was presented to her in the form of the question, What will he think of me?

It may be easy for a noble nature to accept a hard destiny, but it is difficult for a pure woman to abase herself before the eyes of a man whose respect is the breath of her being.

Rebellion appeared in the form of an angel. Her virtue exceeded the virtue of the Scribes and Pharisees. She repeated the sentence. "Becky Sharp said it was easy to be virtuous on ten thousand a year; Christ said it was impossible." The world's estimate of virtue was respectability; those who would bid her return to duty did not perceive the altitudes of virtue. The height of heights was above the world.

This idea justified the line of selfishness. It made What-I-want-to-do What-I-ought-to-do.

Anne saw that to refuse a renewal of the hateful union opened the gate to a consummation of the happy union.

On righteous grounds, the highest possible grounds, she could say to her husband, "It is impossible. You offer me horror, self-abasement, infamy. To accept would be dishonour. I should sink into

the abyss of shame. My soul would perish. I should be guilty to myself. My sin would be a sin against light. I *know* that I cannot divorce my chastity from my feelings. You have destroyed love. Our union is unthinkable."

And if to this he made answer, "You would be free; very well, I must be free too"—he would be on ground that the law justified.

She saw once more the opening door of freedom.

To such a letter, in her present feelings, only one reply was possible. She did not, however, write her answer that day. She allowed the idea to lodge in her mind. She wanted to exhaust it. Her answer, she perceived clearly, would decide her destiny.

Her communing was interrupted.

On the following morning, when she entered Mrs. Dobson's bedroom, she found her grandmother complaining of a sleepless night and looking wasted and feverish. Anxiety for this most dear and faithful friend at once banished from Anne's mind her thoughts of self-preservation. On the noble face of the little old lady, like the falling dullness of twilight, lay the shadow of death.

The great Silencer hushed the voice of Anne's sorrow and rebuked the consequence with which she had invested her passions. Death enters, and the world recedes. The shadow of his dread invisibility, the haunting sense of his impalpable presence, the helpless knowledge of his relentless purpose, the thought, growing with every vibration of the brain, that his departure would leave all that was beautiful and inno-

cent and kind in her life a memory, wrung from Anne's heart the bitterness of her pain.

A divine sorrow took possession of her.

When Death preaches from the text, "What shall it profit a man," compromise bows its head and equivocation is silent. Who can weave garlands with the hands full of dust and ashes?

As self receded and tenderness for the dying took its place, Anne became conscious of a restful tranquillity. She gave herself to comfort her friend. She lost the sharpness of her pain.

Mrs. Dobson resisted at first the idea that Ramsay M'Gavin should come to see her. "I shall keep my bed; I shall drink no medicine," she said emphatically; and she added, "What is the medicine for *dénouement?*" But later in the day, by gentle reasoning and quiet entreaty, Anne succeeded in turning the old lady's mind. "Do as you like," said Mrs. Dobson; "but no fuss." Ramsay M'Gavin arrived in the afternoon.

Anne saw him in the drawing-room before they went up-stairs. He listened with his usual solemnity. His gravity for death was the same as his gravity for measles. Anne warned him against saying anything to disturb the invalid. "She is of a great age," he said, apparently without feeling; "but her vitality is unusual. I do not anticipate a sudden termination Let us go up-stairs."

As they entered the little white bedroom, Mrs. Dobson turned her dark eyes towards him. He walked slowly forward, close-buttoned and solemn, and said,

with an assumption of cheerfulness, "Well, Mrs. Dobson, and so you're keeping your bed, are you? Not quite yourself, perhaps. A bad night, I understand." He drew a chair to the bedside and sat down. "Allow me just to feel your pulse for a minute. The usual formality."

"The point of departure," she rejoined.

M'Gavin pursed his lips. "It's an old-fashioned beginning," he said, "but founded on reason."

She put out her hand.

"Ah, nothing very serious," he said easily. "A little care in your diet, rest, and perhaps something to ensure you a night's sleep. You've no pain in your heart, I take it?—the breathing easy? Yes; nothing to worry u... You'll have to take things easy for a few days." He began to look about him, first at the open window, then at the height of the ceiling, afterwards at the flowers which Anne had brought that morning fresh into the room. "Plenty of sunshine and air," he said; "a nice cheerful room; not too much open window at night; and perhaps the flowers might be taken outside in the evening. It's a very nice room to be ill in, Mrs. Dobson. You won't feel the fatigue of lying in bed."

While they were speaking there was a knock at the door, which opened a little way, followed by the appearance of Minionette's rather startled face. "If you please, ma'am," she said to Anne, "Canon Case. In the drawing-room. But he said you weren't to come down if you were busy. He didn't know Mrs. Dobson was ill."

Anne hesitated.

"Go down to him," said Mrs. Dobson. "The clergyman and the doctor," she muttered to herself; "most appropriate."

When the door had closed upon Anne, Mrs. Dobson turned to the doctor and said, in her solemn, slow voice, "Ramsay, tell me the truth."

"The truth?"

"How long, Ramsay?"

He made light of the question. He took a cheerful view of her situation. There was no crisis.

She interrupted him. "Is it a matter of weeks or of days? Don't tell me a lie."

He assured her that the question was unreasonable. He endeavoured to persuade her that no doctor who respected his profession would pretend that he had knowledge enough to answer it.

"I am dying," she said. "*I* know it, if you don't. I want you to tell me how long I shall be about it. Dr. Ainslie would have told me. You tell me."

He told her the truth. He anticipated no collapse. He thought it might be a matter of months. No one, he assured her, could say exactly how long. It was the end, certainly; but old age itself may be regarded as the end, and old people who take care of themselves live a long time.

"Instead of sending me a sleeping draught," said Mrs. Dobson, "send me your mother."

"She will be happy, I am sure, to come and sit with you."

In the meantime Anne was in the drawing-room with Canon Case. She found the tall, thin, bearded and spectacled man standing in the centre of the room, his hat and umbrella in his hand, unwilling to keep her or to interrupt her duties. They did not sit down, but stood talking of Mrs. Dobson's illness in low voices. He was sympathetic in a gracious and tranquillizing manner which made an appeal to her.

She scarcely knew him. As we have said, he took little part in the social life of his parish. He was the scholar priest, the student, the theologian, a representative of the intellect of Anglicanism, a defender of the faith. Without straining the proverb that the pen is mightier than the sword, it may be said that Canon Case, as defender of the faith, was entitled to at least some of the glory ascribed to the royal holders of that title.

There were two sides to his character. He crossed swords with men of science; he worked in the Sunday School. He contributed to the Higher Criticism; he was the author of manuals of devotion. His journalism was theological; his literature was religious. His eminence as a Churchman did not exceed the beauty of his Christianity.

The personality of this man had the indefinable quality of charm. Without shining qualities or brilliance of demeanour, he made a profound impression. He was quiet, restful, gentle, but with distinction. His character compelled deference. He never descended, but he was never aloof. There is an aris-

tocracy of the spiritual life. Character has a dignity which makes rank a parvenu. Men may be cowed by arrogance; it is saintliness which makes them reverent.

The grace of God in human character is the union of strength with sweetness, dignity with humility, power with tenderness, authority with sympathy, majesty with humanity. Scholarship and saintliness are two books, but they may be read by one soul. The vicar of Borhaven would have been of the company, whether he defined with Athanasius, discussed with Jewel, or supped with St. Francis.

He was the antithesis of Robert Ainslie; in this world it is difficult to think that the two men could have ever agreed; they might have been opposed to each other; there might have existed a profound antagonism between them; and yet, on some celestial mount, we can imagine that they would meet, look back upon the cities of the world, and understand each other.

Canon Case understood Mr. Aldrich.

In his intellectual conflicts with men of science there was a fine courtesy, a noble conciliation, a spiritual suavity which refined his opponents and kept controversy out of the prize-ring.

This temper of his mind, which gave tone to his writings, was apparent in the expression of his face and sounded in the modulation and sympathy of his voice. While he was speaking to her, Anne became aware of the man. His countenance was his passport; his voice was his autobiography. She had seen him

before, and had admired the dignity of his presence; she had heard him preach and her heart had felt the charm of his utterance; but now his eyes were neither on a congregation nor on a manuscript, but were on her; his voice was addressed not to the world, but to her alone; the difference of the effect can hardly be expressed.

Anne was conscious of a pervasive influence.

When he heard how ill Mrs. Dobson appeared to be, he expressed his sympathy with Anne in a low voice and in words which made her feel that he completely understood her pain. He did not say too much, he did not say too little; in the tone of his voice he said everything.

"I had, of course, no idea at all," he said finally, "that your grandmother was ill. You must not let me keep you from her. But pray remember that if I can be of any help to you, or to her, I shall come most readily when you send for me." He paused for a moment, regarding her thoughtfully through his thin spectacles. "I came," he said presently, speaking very slowly and with sincere feeling, "to offer you my help in another matter. I have been greatly distressed. I fear damage may have been done, unintentionally, of course, yes, with the best intentions in the world, but, unhappily, done. You understand what I mean? I returned yesterday; this morning I was told the story. I have told you how it has distressed me. We will not discuss it now. Another day, if you will let me. But let me say this to you now: Do not

let y · feelings regarding the disciple affect your attitude to the Master. Our mistakes are not His mistakes. And, if I may ask you to do so, I should like you to think kindly even of the disciple. 'To understand all is to forgive all.' Some of Christ's ministers have in them the blood of the crusaders; they can only serve their Lord with the spear; they accomplish great work, but their zeal makes them too eager to discover enemies. Cervantes made his hero, in his eagerness for honour, mistake the obscure and the sinful for the royal and the virtuous; that was a God-like mistake. The knights of religion, unfortunately, are not always so divinely Christian; in their enthusiasm for righteousness they sometimes mistake the seeker for the rejecter, the friend for the enemy. What can we say? Only this: It is magnanimous to forgive them."

He paused for a moment, and then put out his hand.

"I will interrupt you no longer," he said, holding her hand. "Do not close your mind; do not suffer your heart to become hardened—don't do that, will you?"

He regarded her with tenderness and solicitude.

"No," she answered, "I will not do that."

"And when you are less anxious," he said, releasing her hand, "let me come and see you again."

"You are very kind to me," she said gently.

"Your grandmother, too; you will not forget to ask her if she would like me to come?"

Anne went to the door with him. Under the porch he gave her his hand once more, and said to her affectionately, "God bless you, my child."

She stood and watched him depart. At the gate he turned.

They looked at each other.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN EARNEST

MRS. DOBSON lay in her bed, and instead of the doctor, the doctor's mother sat by her side. Mrs. Dobson listened; Mrs. M'Gavin, with occasional slow pauses for the intaking of air which appeared to inflate her entire person, droned. But her droning produced no slumbrous effect. Sometimes Mrs. Dobson would take up her Bible, and write a few words on the fly-leaf.

Anne, in the drawing-room or the garden, would wonder what it was they talked about. Her little grandmother, crouched up in the bed with vigorous eyes and compressed lips, appeared to grow something more restful after each visit. A composure of spirit seemed to brood over the natural sharpness of her disposition. She was less fretful. If Minionette dropped a brush in blacking the grate or put the water-jug back in the basin with a jolt, Mrs. Dobson did not now make a sound of annoyance with her tongue against the roof of her mouth. If Anne entered the room on tiptoe, believing her grandmother to be asleep, Mrs. Dobson did not now rap out impatiently, "Don't walk like a cat!" She was not gentle, but she was not irritable.

Anne wondered what the old ladies talked about.

Mrs. M'Gavin was a dour woman with a settled expression of weary anxiety. She wore a black bonnet, a black mantle, black cotton gloves, elastic-sided boots, which wheezed when she walked, for she was a heavy woman, and a black skirt. She sat on the chair beside Mrs. Dobson's bed with the imperturbability and the eternal immobility of a wax figure. She might have been an exhibit from the galleries of Madame Tussaud, either a German royalty of the last century or a baby farmer whose weapon had been poison. There was something dough-like in the texture of her full face, which was overspread with fine wrinkles, and pouched and puffed and bagged like a quilt; the tired eyes had the vacuity of glass; the pursed lips were a frozen sorrow; the hanging cheeks were flaccid with fatalism; the nose was nothing.

The intellectual difference between Mrs. Dobson, dying, and Mrs. M'Gavin, living, was not greater than the physical dissimilarity of eagle and duck, hare and tortoise, tiger and hippopotamus. Anne and Napier had sometimes laughed together, as they walked back from the doctor's house, at the funereal gloom and the discouraging monosyllables of this old Scots body. Side by side with a sack of flour, there would have been little to choose between the two in shape, nothing in animation.

Puzzled how to account for this dumb old woman's influence over Mrs. Dobson, Anne once said to her at the door, as she was about to depart, "What

do you say to my grandmother to make her so happy?"

Mrs. M'Gavin considered the question with a blank face. Then, "We just chat," came the slow answer. After a pause, as if considering whether she had said too much and had better retract or explain, the dame lifted her skirt with a gradual movement of the hands, repeated her farewell by a tired look of the eyes, and moved slowly away, the boots wheezing a mournful accompaniment.

Ten days had passed; for Mrs. Dobson, ten days of dying; for Anne, ten days of acquaintance with the presence of death. An answer had been sent to Napier's letter, but not the answer. Anne had written merely to explain the calamity of her present situation, which made it impossible to think about her future. To this Napier had replied with sympathy. The matter rested on the ground of honour. Death provided the *entr'acte*.

Mrs. Dobson had refused to see Canon Case. "What is Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?" she had exclaimed vexatiously. On the following day she added to this refusal the following sentence, "There is only one man I should like to come and see me. He can't come, however. I am going to him instead."

Anne looked up from her needlework. "Who is that, grannie?"

"Your father."

Anne reflected. Her father's strength jumped to her mind. With terrible suddenness occurred the idea that her grandmother was afraid to die.

Fear of death!

How dreadful a thing, if her grandmother lay there hour after hour, from dawn to noon, from noon to twilight, from twilight to darkness, wondering, shrinking, fearing, trembling in her soul! An affectionate mother, standing on the dockside and watching the last nervous glances of her young emigrant, with the noise of the sailors' preparations in her ear and the wind of the cold sea in her face, experiences something of the dumb despair which seized upon Anne with the occurrence of this idea. To the poor mother on the dockside how forbidding looks the great ship, how callous the sailors, how hostile the sea, how long and dangerous the voyage, how shadowy, unreal, and hazardous that unknown land to which her child is going, beyond the reach of mothering affection, the consolation of home, the protection of the family. Fear of all fears; will she ever see him again?

If that journey across a human sea can awaken anxiety, how much more shall this other? What loneliness matches this departure? What journey is less explored? What territory more unknown?

There are many things which make men nervous; a surgical operation, bankruptcy, a lonely road on a dark night. The great essayist has not altogether succeeded in making the Dark Road a place without fears.

It is a matter of imagination whether men respect death. A boor will smile at the Venus of Milo; "the nerves of Shelley quivered at the idea of loveliness."

Men have died with a jest; a fool has been known to dismiss God with an epigram.

In one of the books concerning Pasteur which M'Gavin had lent to Anne, these words of that great chemist and heroic man had made an impression on her mind—

> "What is beyond?"—the human mind, actuated by an invincible force, will never cease to ask itself: What is beyond? . . . It is of no use to answer: Beyond is limitless space, limitless time, or limitless grandeur; no one understands those words. He who proclaims the existence of the Infinite—and none can avoid it—accumulates in that affirmation more of the supernatural than is to be found in all the miracles of all the religions; for the notion of the Infinite presents that double character that it forces itself upon us and yet is incomprehensible. When this notion seizes upon our understanding, we can but kneel.
>
> I see everywhere the inevitable expression of the Infinite in the world; through it the supernatural is at the bottom of every heart. The idea of God is a form of the idea of the Infinite.
>
> As long as the mystery of the Infinite weighs on human thought, temples will be erected for the worship of the Infinite, whether God is called Brahma, Allah, Jehovah, or Jesus: and on the pavement of those temples, men will be seen kneeling —prostrated, annihilated in the thought of the Infinite.

The memory of these words, the substance of this idea, returned to Anne's mind. Her powers of imagination were not unusual, she was too controlled by terrestrial common-sense to feel that quick and breathing conviction of limitless space, limitless time, limitless grandeur, which saturates the lofty and aspiring soul; but she did feel now, with the thought that her grandmother was afraid, the naturalness, no, the inevitability of fear of death. How can any one not fear to contemplate the exchange of the Known for the Unknown? For a moment she, too, was afraid. The Infinite!—her soul was appalled. That little old woman in the bed, and the Mystery of Mysteries, the Riddle of Riddles—Infinity!

She resumed her needlework with unsteady fingers, and said, "Will you tell me, grannie dear, why you would like to see him?"

"Because," came the answer, "he would know what to say to me."

"But you aren't distressed, grannie?"

"No; but dumb."

"Tell me what you mean?"

"I am inarticulate."

"How would my father have helped you, I wonder? I wish I knew!"

Mrs. Dobson closed her eyes and was silent. She lay quite still, quite motionless. When Anne raised her eyes from her work she was startled, shocked, all but terrified; it was as if death had suddenly sealed the lips, closed the eyes, folded the hands.

While she was still gazing the lips moved. "Do

you know," said Mrs. Dobson, without opening her eyes, "what Ramsay's mother says to me when she sits by my side? Do you know what we talk about?"

"No, grannie."

"About your father." She paused. Anne heard the faint ticking of the clock, the sounds from the world outside, the heavy, regular breathing of her grandmother. Still speaking, with her eyes closed, the old lady resumed. "The night-bell is still ringing for Dr. Ainslie!" she said, sorrowfully; and after another pause, added, "I feel the need of him, because I know him better. He was greater than I suspected. He would have known what to say to me. That old woman M'Gavin, who saw him three or four times, knows more of your father than you or I do, who knew him always. She doesn't know all. Her son knows nothing. She is a sponge; Ramsay a looking-glass. She sits on that chair, a sponge; my questions squeeze out drop by drop what she absorbed. Sometimes she flows on. That is when I am happy."

There was another pause, this time of greater length. The voice had died away, wearily. The sound of her breathing became heavier. Anne thought that she was falling asleep.

The uneasy silence in the room was suddenly broken.

"It is your life which troubles me."

"Oh, grannie dear, you mustn't think of me."

"You will be alone."

Anne let the needlework rest in her lap, and regarded the inscrutable face of the dying woman.

"You must go back to your husband."

The fear came to Anne that her grandmother would ex' .. a promise.

"To live by yourself is impossible. Besides, there is duty. You will one day be li'-e me, an old woman lying on her bed, waiting for the end of the world. The end of life ought to be accomplishment. To finish and not to have completed is failure; failure is remorse. Look to the end. You are drifting now; you must have a goal. Let it be duty."

"I wish, grannie, that you would not distress yourself with my troubles. Don't be anxious for me. I am making up my mind; I have a year to decide; and it is sure——"

"Decide now."

Anne said nothing.

Presently Mrs. Dobson opened her eyes wearily. She turned slowly upon her side, and rega ..d her granddaughter. It was disturbing to ha.. those glowing eyes fixed upon one. The face wa. the face of death; the eyes were a soul looking on earthly things for the last time. There was no affectionate smile of social agreeableness. The scrutiny of the eyes pierced to the inmost recesses; nothing was hidden.

"Let us talk together. The day of gossip has passed. The .ight of silence is approaching. Let us talk seriously for the last time."

Anne could say nothing. The gaze of her grandmother was like a spell inhibiting action. In a passive numbness of the senses she prepared herself to listen.

"What do you think life is for? what is its object?" asked the grandmother. "That decision is your idea of God. Do you see the truth of that? Tell me what you think life is for, and I will tell you the name of your God. Is that presumptuous of me? Think before you answer. No, it is not presumptuous. For there are only two names to choose from. It is the old division. God and Mammon. Between these two, these two alone, everybody must make choice. Either they think life is for duty, or for pleasure; for self-sacrifice, or for self-assertion; either they think it is a responsibility or a sinecure. Which do *you* think it is? If you feel yourself accountable, you believe in God. If you acknowledge no liability, you believe in Mammon. Now, in your heart of hearts, your soul of souls, which is it?"

"You know which it is, grannie."

"Then, what is your duty?"

"That is the riddle of my life."

"My dear, in the physical world the intellect can answer some riddles; in the moral world the conscience can answer all. Have you presented the riddle of your life to your conscience?"

"Yes."

"And the answer?"

"I do not know it."

"Have you listened only to conscience? One ear to inclination and the other to conscience is Babel. Both ears to conscience is guidance."

Anne was silent.

"Do you know why I am anxious about you? I am

conscious of responsibility. Do you know why I want you to decide definitely for duty? Because I *know* that I shall soon stand in the presence of your father."

Anne wavered for a moment. Her heart was beating unhappily. Her spirit as distressed. Her reason was afraid.

The eyes of death were fixed upon her inexorably. The hour of vacillation was past; compromise had stolen away.

Those words "I shall soon stand in the presence of your father," brought conflict to the decisive moment. Now or never she must justify her reason.

She slipped upon a knee at the bedside, and with her face, beautiful, young, and full of earnestness, close to the almost fleshless face of the dying woman, uttered humanity's protest against the gospel of resignation.

"But, grannie," she cried gently and reproachfully, "are you quite sure that my father would wish this hard thing? Are you quite sure that he will not reproach you for urging me into what is so shameful, horrible, and destructive to me? He was not ruled by what the world thought. He did not respect many ordinances. Was it not against just such a tyranny as this that he would have fought? If I had gone to him and said, 'Father, I cannot do this thing,' would he have sheltered me, or would he have driven me away with the command to obey the law?"

Mrs. Dobson was troubled. The spirit world had become very real. She was so near that shore that

she contemplated with utmost realism her meeting with those who had arrived before. In no mystic ecstasy she dreamed of the communion of saints. By name she thought of those she would encounter; in human speech she anticipated their greetings and their questions. No spirit of that little community of friends drawing near to receive the traveller from earth was so real, so tremendous, so overshadowing as the ghost of the great doctor.

She had to consider whether the advice she gave to his daughter was one with the truth of things.

Presently she said, "Your father sought to alter many laws; he did not command people to break any one of them. Marriage is sacred. The Church does right to contend for the sanctity of marriage. It is the basis of social goodness."

"Yes, the sanctity of marriage which is sanctified."

"My dear, you married of your own will."

"But, grannie, how young I was! I didn't understand."

"Fulfil your vows."

"If they have become false?"

"They were made to God."

Anne sighed, and said nothing. She felt it impossible to convince her grandmother of her true position. How could she speak of her love for Napier, which made this marriage impossible?

It was long since she had reflected on her problem. Now it returned with fresh energy. The obscure but undoubted labour of subconscious mentation had strengthened her antagonism. To call the man she

loved might be impossible; but to obey the man she had ceased to love was impossible.

"Your father," said Mrs. Dobson slowly and solemnly, "reverenced good women. And he thought that motherhood was the highest state in humanity. He thought that no woman could perfectly fulfil her being who was not a mother. I heard him once say in Darnaway Street, 'Adam fell for want of a mother.' When I am gone you must keep my Bible. I have written some of your father's sayings about women on the fly-leaf. He used to talk about mothers to Mrs. M'Gavin. Mrs. M'Gavin was the mother of seven sons; early in life she was left a widow; not one of those sons have gone to ruin. She mended for them, cooked for them, worked for them. She brought them up to be virtuous men. Two of them are successful farmers in Canada. One has a shop in Calcutta. Another is trading in Queensland. One is regimental-sergeant-major in a dragoon regiment. Another is an engineer officer in a line of steamers. The youngest is doctor of Borhaven. Useful men. Not one black sheep in the flock. A woman's work. Think of this one old woman's work spreading all over the empire, her principles reaching out like missionaries to the ends of the earth, her soul merging itself among the nations. Motherhood! I have thought much of that since I came to be here.

"Your father said to Mrs. M'Gavin, 'Englishmen think that a little porridge accounts for the Scot's success; they forget the hand that stirs it.' In all virtue and strength he saw the influence of good

women. In all vice and wickedness the influence of bad women. He certainly saw nothing more sacred than family life." The old lady lifted her Bible from the bed, and began to read her notes of Dr. Ainslie's sayings—

"The ancient anchorage of humanity is the home.

"Only one church for a woman, her home. Only one church for a man, his work. To the man, the home is more than a church; it is his heaven or his hell.

"Monks and mules are not the handiwork of God. A good mother is the incarnation of His Providence.

"There are some comparisons, like God and Mammon, which seem as though they must have been coined in Bedlam. Another is, Nursery and Ballroom.

"A crozier leaves me cold, the worn broom of a peasant woman wakens my reverence.

"It is the women who make a nation; the State is the marriage state; maternity is the politics of the world.

"Show me the unhappy wife and I will show you the woman who does not love children.

"Marriage is either the Nursery or the Precipice."

Mrs. Dobson looked up from her reading. She

closed her book, and let it lie under her hands; her eyes fixed their gaze upon Anne. "These few sayings tell me your father's mind," she said, with conviction. "He would have been the last man to tamper with marriage. His indignation was roused by married women who made light of the married state. What is coming to the world? Women of this generation live as if the millions of years of effort which represent the past had no object but *their* enjoyment! You will hear them say that they detest children. They speak about their figures. They cannot put up with the bother and interruption of a nursery. Child-bearing is regarded as something ugly and coarse. The bearing of immortals is a barbarism. Card-room and race-course are serious matters; the rearing of heroes a bore. What do these women think? That evolution was for *them*, that it stops with them, does not move forward through them, that they have no responsibility towards the future? If there is a God, what will He say to them? Think of the past—how laborious, how Titanic, how magnificent; think of these women's lives, how petty, how sordid—how vulgar!"

She ceased speaking abruptly. There was some colour in her face, and her breath was quicker.

"Grannie, dear," said Anne, placing her hand gently upon the old lady's arm, "it isn't right for you to exhaust yourself like this. Rest a little. I will bring your hot milk, and after you have slept we will talk again."

"What does it matter if I exhaust myself? My

dear, I am at a stage when nothing has significance except immortality. That is why I am in earnest at last. At the door of eternity one is thoughtful. Listen. I want you to go back to your husband; I want you to have a woman's home; I want you to become a mother. If you do not do this, your life will be a hazard. I foresee a great risk for you. At your age women are tempted. Romance blinds the eyes. You are in the midst of youth. You cannot imagine your old age. But you will be forty, with slower pulses; fifty, with pulses slower still; sixty, and grey hairs. Prepare for that time. Don't lay up for yourself remorse. Do your duty. The universe cannot possibly exist for a woman's *drame passionelle*. It must be bigger than that. Fill your life with duty, your old age with peace. Let me," she concluded very earnestly, "tell your father that you are coming to him on the road of duty."

"Oh, grannie dear, you must let me think. I could not give you a promise, and break it. Remember, I have a year to decide. All that you have said will operate in my mind. And you know, I am sure you know, that I shall do nothing wrong. Let us not talk of this any more. But don't be distressed about me."

The matter ended there.

Anne was as zealous for duty as her grandmother; but she asked herself the question, Which duty?

CHAPTER XIX

THE PROMISE

A FEW days after this conversation, Mrs. M'Gavin was laid up with a chill. Mrs. Dobson missed her.

One day she said to Anne, "If Canon Case comes to see you, you may bring him up here."

She had been very silent of late; if the old irritability had not returned, the new restfulness had been gradually leaving her. It was distressing for Anne to mark the disquiet of this old lady, who seemed to repel conversation and withdraw herself from Anne's tenderness and solicitude under a cloud of silence. She wrote to the vicar.

Canon Case came in the afternoon.

While he was sitting with Mrs. Dobson, Ramsay M'Gavin paid his visit. Anne and he sat in the drawing-room waiting for the clergyman to come down.

It happened that just then the newspapers were full of a divorce case in Scotland, a case in which the parties were well-known people in Edinburgh. Anne had met them and entertained them in her husband's house; Ramsay M'Gavin knew them by name.

It was one of those cases which reveal not so much the debauchery of society as its vulgarity, not so much

its iniquity as its flippancy. The minds of the women were laid bare by their letters. In these documents they frankly acknowledged themselves as "rotters," analyzed their characters and with a sickly fatalism criticized existence, mixed up with assignations references to their children, concluded love-letters—which began with ridiculous nicknames—by "God bless you," contemplated suicide, described their lives as "a hell," and declared that existence was insufferable without money.

This was one of those cases which we have said appear every now and then in the newspapers to disconcert society by a revelation of its own doings; a looking-glass brought in at the wrong moment.

Ramsay M'Gavin mentioned the matter, as a philosopher. "People who habitually over-eat and over-drink," he said, "who have no occupation, and who are striving to live with people richer than themselves, are very sure to entangle themselves in vice of this nature. The only thing for society to do is surely to dissolve their marriages. It is pedantry to keep them bound by unions which discredit marriage and lead, in their cases, to degradation. In Scotland we are a great deal more sensible and just in this matter than the people of England. The English law is indefensible. Here a woman cannot divorce a husband unless he has added to the sin of immorality the crime of a blow. In Scotland, on the other hand, a woman is equal with her husband before the law. She need not wait for the husband to divorce her; she herself may accuse him, and even on the grounds that

it is impossible for her honour and self-respect to live with him she may obtain release, and with the release freedom to marry again."

Anne began to listen with an excitement of interest.

"Is it not only just," proceeded M'Gavin, "that a woman should enjoy this equality? If a man has so behaved that his wife cannot respect him any longer, ought she not to possess the power of releasing herself and obtaining freedom? Marriage is a human contract. It is the agreement of two people to live together on certain terms. If any of those terms are violated by the woman or by the man, either of the parties should be free to revoke the contract. I cannot imagine what virtue religious people see in forcing a man or woman who cannot agree to live together. But that is my ignorance. I have been too busy to study the religious mind. A man like Mr. Aldrich is for me a fanatic; Canon Case I find incoherent; as for Miss Potter, she is a person whose reason has atrophied, if it ever existed."

"I had no idea," said Anne, "of this difference between the Scotch and the English law."

It may be imagined what enlightenment meant to her. A few years ago—had she but known it—she might have severed the odious tie binding her to Paton, and with her grandmother's concurrence. She might have been the accuser. Without shame, without dishonour, she might have stood before the world and said, "I cannot live with this satyr." Even now she could do so, but only with cruelty.

M'Gavin explained the matter further. While he talked Anne's thoughts took their own way.

At first she was raced away into the bitter-sweet country of might-have-been. If she had only known her legal position a few years ago, the struggle would now have long been over, all the distress a distant memory, love of the happiest description her present lot. What a Paradise might have been hers! Instead, what a Gehenna!

She felt that destiny was mocking her. As she journeyed to the country of might-have-been, she came face to face with the barred door of too-late. Sadness gave way in her heart to despair, yearning to rebellion.

Life had played a jest upon her.

M'Gavin talked for a considerable time. His explanations of the Scottish law were lucid; he could not help feeling that he would have made a very good lawyer; the sound of his own voice gave him pleasure; and Anne certainly appeared to be listening. He talked on.

Presently, arriving at the end of a period which seemed to be the natural peroration of his discourse, the learned doctor glanced at the clock, confirmed Anne's timepiece by his own watch, and expressed some anxiety as to the length of Canon Case's visit.

Anne asked whether she should go up-stairs and interrupt.

"Long conversations, especially if they are of a trying nature, would certainly fatigue Mrs. Dobson,"

replied the doctor; "but, perhaps, we will give the clergyman another ten minutes."

The ten minutes passed. M'Gavin was still unwilling to interfere with the Church.

But while he was considering whether he could wait any longer, Minionette appeared, asking Anne what should be done about Mrs. Dobson's hot milk, long overdue.

This decided the matter.

"You might certainly interrupt the conversation," said M'Gavin, "not only on the ground of possible fatigue to Mrs. Dobson, but on the ground of nourishment. The milk of the cow is as important as the other kind of milk."

So Anne went up-stairs.

She opened the door very quietly.

Mrs. Dobson was leaning forward to Canon Case, holding one of his hands affectionately between her own; there were tears in her eyes and a gentle smile upon her lips. The clergyman, bending towards her, had his face close to hers, and was speaking as Anne entered in a low voice full of tenderness and consolation.

He looked up at Anne without changing his position; Mrs. Dobson did not remove her gaze from his face. "You have come to turn me away," he said. Then, to Mrs. Dobson, "I will come and see you to-morrow."

The old lady lifted his hand to her lips.

M'Gavin took the clergyman's place at the bedside, but the clergyman did not offer to fill his in the draw-

ing-room. He explained to Anne that his long visit had already made him late for an appointment of some importance. "You and I must talk another day," he said to her.

When Anne was alone with Mrs. Dobson, the old lady said nothing about her conversation with Canon Case. But for the first time since her illness she was gentle and considerate; a new tenderness began to appear in her manner.

The visits of Canon Case were repeated day by day. On each occasion Mrs. Dobson kept him till the last moment. His conversations with Anne were little more than greetings and farewells. Nevertheless, such is the force of personality, even these brief touches of her soul with his were not without their effect for Anne. In some subtle way her mind was conscious of a new influence.

One afternoon, as she sat with Mrs. Dobson after the vicar's departure, the dying woman said to her very gently, "It would be wrong of me, my dear, to make my deathbed a lever for extorting from you a promise which it might embitter you to keep and reproach you to break. I will not do that. At one time I thought it was my duty to make you promise me to go back to your husband. I no longer think that. But I am going to ask you to promise me something; and I want you to keep that promise before I go. It is a difficult thing, but not so difficult as going back to your husband. I want you to tell Canon Case—*everything*."

The proposal shocked Anne. The emphasis on the

last word made her feel how sacred was her secret. *Everything.* Mrs. Dobson made that word eloquent. It would not be sufficient to confess the distastefulness of duty; she must also confess the temptation of inclination.

What! to lay bare her heart of hearts, to consult a clergyman concerning her soul of souls, even as one consults a doctor about the body; to sit on a chair and make conversation of one's secret affections, with the eyes of some one upon her to unveil the sacred places of her hidden life! Impossible! Unthinkable!

She was conscious of a great revulsion.

The world's ideas were not hers. That haunting sentence in Napier's letter recurred to her mind: "Becky Sharp said it was easy to be virtuous on ten thousand a year; Christ said it was impossible." An antagonism to the ideas of the world had grown in her mind. She felt that an infinitely greater world lay beyond them. To be virtuous was not to conform. The highest virtue was rebellion.

She would not discuss her sacred affections; she would not confess to a priest. No; this promise must not be made. Her grandmother had no right to demand it. Cost what it might, she must guard the sanctity of her soul. Conscience was her authority; she would acknowledge no other.

To one lying at the door of death utter confession of the inner life seems no difficult and no unnatural act. But for the living, conscious of no nearness to the spirit world, but rather of an infinite distance from so tremendous an hypothesis; for the living who

are young and responsive to earth's incantation, who are still in the maze of social life and under the influence of human history, to consult with religious authority on the dearest and most intimate things of the heart is not only to shock their own personal ideas, but to act in the very teeth of apparent nature.

On the ground of self-respect Anne resisted the appeal and repulsed the invitation.

Her grandmother did not argue. "To please me," she said, and took the granddaughter's hand.

It was hard to refuse, it hurt her to refuse, but Anne resisted.

"It is the last thing I ask of you," said the old lady, stroking the warm hand, soft and pleasant in her fleshless embrace.

"Grannie dear, I cannot confess myself to a priest."

"I do not ask you to do so," answered the grandmother. "I only ask you to consult a good man. Is that hard? You need not kneel to him. Ask his advice."

"The idea is repugnant to me."

"Just tell him your difficulty, and ask his advice."

"But why, grannie dear? My conscience will guide me."

"A second opinion."

"If there were need."

"My dear, there is need. To trust to our own opinions is dangerous. You say, 'It is my own life; only I myself can decide!' How unwise, how shortsighted! Your own life! Are you sure of that? Dear child, it is not possible to cut out our individual

life from the mass, and say, 'This is mine.' There is only one life. We belong to it. We have done nothing to create our own life. It is something common to the universe. We handle it, but do not possess it. Your experience affects you, but does not belong to you; it belongs to life. And life is so hazardous that experience has taught the human race to make rules for the better obedience of its laws. There are lawyers of life. You would consult your man of business about taking a lease of a property; is it safe to consult no one about the course of your destiny?"

Again and again Anne resisted.

"The man I ask you to consult," said Mrs. Dobson, slowly and with great earnestness, "is one who in a few words dispelled my unrest and brought peace to my soul. I thought your father could have helped me; I half believed that Mrs. M'Gavin, by talking of your father, *was* helping me. It was darkness. But this man has now brought light into my darkness. The universe is intelligible. I understand. I am not afraid to go. Dear child, dear to me from your infancy, and now dearer still because I understand and because I must leave you, there is only one explanation of all human difficulty, only one light for all darkness—don't refuse it, don't turn your back upon it, don't say you are self-sufficient."

"I know what you mean, grannie."

"Do you? Are you quite sure?"

"You mean religion."

"I mean Christ."

Anne made no answer. This synonym rather offended her reason than touched her heart.

While she kept silence, of a sudden she became aware that her grandmother was crying. She looked up quickly. The dark eyes, once so vivid and energetic, were filled with tears; the fine head, once so erect and proud, was bowed in grief; the firm mouth, once so grim in its masterfulness, was soft and weak with sobbings.

Quickly Anne slipped upon her knees at the bedside, laid a sheltering arm about the little grandmother, brought her face close to the dying woman's —so close that the breathings of grief beat against her cheeks—and, in a voice of the most tender consolation, promised to do all that she desired.

Weakness had conquered her.

The grandmother made no answer to this surrender, but continued to weep softly with her face bowed from observation.

CHAPTER XX

THE *SAND WASP* PUTS TO SEA

THE *Sand Wasp* lay at Galmpton in Devonshire. The shipbuilder was making some repairs. Napier was fitting out for a cruise abroad.

It chanced that towards the end of these preparations he picked up a newspaper in the inn and saw the report of the divorce case which Ramsay M'Gavin had discussed with Anne. He recognized the names of the parties and, remembering that they were friends of the Patons, read the account.

At first he was merely disgusted by the empty and vulgar lives revealed in this drama of the modern world. The women filled him with scorn. He thought of Hamlet's words to Ophelia, "God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance." He reflected upon the sufferings and destitution of humanity: the despair of prisoners and captives: the hunger and cold of young children: the tragedies of hospital and penitentiary: the bitterness of broken lives: the miseries of unemployment: the thousand ills of body, soul, and spirit; and he asked himself what could be the doom

of these people who, in the midst of so much sorrow and pain, lived satyr-lives in the lap of self-indulgence. Again he was reminded of Shakespeare; as he considered what possible retribution could await these criminals the words addressed by the Ghost to Hamlet occurred to his mind—

> "But that I am forbid
> To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
> I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
> Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
> Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres."

Yes; there was penalty ahead. In all the religions of the world a hell is implied. It may be the habit of a particular age to slur the word and to draw a curtain over the idea; nevertheless, punishment in the spiritual sphere is an essential of religion, and punishment with horror.

He believed, as we have seen, in two streams of tendency, two impulses of evolution. From the same material, struggle for existence had produced Francis of Assisi and Robespierre, the dove and the vulture, the gazelle and the tiger, the goldfish and the octopus, the butterfly and the bug, the silver birch and the upas, honeysuckle and the wild-garlic, daisy and cactus. In nature there were forms beautiful and horrible, sounds sweet and discordant, odours delicious and disgusting. Everywhere this bipartite evolution, this duality of good and evil; yes, among animals, birds, insects, fishes, flowers and trees this visible and tangible effect of two forces working by

the law of evolution, the one towards goodness and beauty, the other towards iniquity and horror.

If the one persisted after death, why not the other? If evil refused the good now, why should it desire it hereafter?

The Church, to his mind, had lost power over the multitude by insisting that God had made the beautiful things of the earth, and leaving unanswered the riddle of the tiger. The tiger warned. It belonged to the universe. The whole earth swarms with a multitude of monstrous horrors, whose appetites create their forms, and whose forms are iniquity in the concrete; but theologians shut their eyes to them, as though they feared God's goodness.

These teachers and guides of men, safe in the fold of an ancient civilization and ignorant of the world, most ignorant of evil, did not apprehend that a few hours' sailing from England brought a man into the heart of barbarism. They did not know that progress was something local and particular to two or three nations. They did not know that even kindness to animals was the immense achievement of only one race. Progress, for them, was equally spread over the globe's surface. They spoke of the Spains as they would speak of France, and the millions of black skins they ignored altogether. If they perceived how sacred and fragile a charge was this responsibility of civilization, and how perilous was the situation of religion, would they not bestir themselves to warn men against the dreadful retribution of iniquity and rouse England to the realization of

her calling? Would not the soul-destroying idleness and luxury of the profligate classes become impossible under the strength of a righteous public opinion, conscious that evil was a force in evolution with its own line and a parasitical strangling hatred of good? Would not political parties ally themselves to fit and prepare democracy for its high but hazardous destiny? But the age was drugged by indolence. The Church regarded evil as a problem in philosophy; not as an enemy of the human race.

As he read the record of this sordid case in the newspaper, his disgust changed to anger, and as he dropped the paper from his hand anger gave way to clamorous thoughts of Anne.

If she went back to her husband, it must be with this kind of persons that she would mix her life.

Was it right to let her go?

He did not think that this Babylonian rout could degrade the woman he loved or tarnish the brightness of her soul. But he knew that her life must become hateful to her. What! to be surrounded by these flies of the hot-house; to feel the breath of Jezebel on the cheek, to turn a smiling face to Lais, to give the hand to Messalina, to converse with every masqued drab of the drawing-room; always to breathe an atmosphere without purpose or seriousness; to have one's ears ringing with the laughter of rake-hell and deceiver; to sit in the light and watch the intrigues, the cheatings, the impurities of a debased humanity; to be without occupation, but overwhelmed with engagements; to seek nature on the

race-course, humanity in the restaurant, and interest at the card-table; to go to the theatre, not for the eternal things of Shakespeare, but for the last lubricity from France; to go to the opera, not to listen, but to be seen; to go to the Mediterranean, not for the mountains, but for the casino; to live one's life in parade and on show; to be banished from quiet and expelled from peace; never to be doing anything, but always to be tired; never to help a soul, but always to be full of self-pity and complaint; to be in the world and of the world, but never to strike one blow, speak one word, or do one action for the world's progress—what! was this the life into which the woman that he loved was going with her eyes open; no not going, but going back, returning, with full knowledge of all its godless horror and disgust?

Imagine how such a life would strike a man of the open air!

Sick of the Church, which seemed to him but the shadow of its ancient strength, Napier found religion on his side—a religion of his soul which cried out that this return was wicked and iniquitous. The wife of a madman was not called to take up her life in Bedlam. Let Paton come out from his world, let him present himself at the door of his wife, and say, "Take me in," then might it be her duty to open and receive. But to go back to him, to that soulless life of godless animalism; no, on no ground! Morality held her back, religion stood in her way; it was surrender to the devil.

The more this thought worked in his brain, the more he felt driven towards Anne. His letter remained without an answer. If it had said all he felt, that answer would have come at once. No letter could express what he had in his mind. It was unwise to have written. He must go to her, see her face to face, speak to her from his very soul.

But this must mean a declaration of his love.

He checked at that. He was a man of honour. The thought of speaking out his heart while she remained, be it only in name, the wife of another man, offended all the scruples of his fine nature.

And yet, if she were in danger! Was it a crime to say words which might save her soul? He examined his love for her; it absolved him.

The thought grew in his mind, My love can save her.

When he was quieter, a gentle compassion for this lonely woman overcame every other consideration. With deepest pain he thought of her handling in solitude this crisis in her life. She was but a child. He could imagine the dreadful vacillation of her soul, assaulted on all sides by the contradictory voices of religion, duty, conscience, inclination, respectability, public opinion, honour. A child in the desert! What a battle for a woman to fight alone! And death so close to her! He imagined to himself this baffled and frustrated soul ministering to the dying grandmother and in secret wrestling with the toils of destiny. How he pitied her, how he loved her,

how he longed to be near that he might comfort and sustain her!

Then there was the thought that at the death of Mrs. Dobson she would be quite alone. Worse, her husband on one side, her mother on the other, drawing her back to that hell.

"I will go to her," he decided.

It seemed to him no sin to speak his love. His love could save her.

When this resolution was reached he lost no time in giving it effect. He was a man of action. With the wind against him and a wild sea, he hauled up his anchor, set his sail, and started close-hauled with relief and gladness in his heart, on this desperate quest.

From shore the single-handed *Sand Wasp*, driving out to sea and half-buried under the heave of waves, with her sail diminishing in that wide waste of water as she made a long leg for Portland Bill with St. Alban's Race to be passed in the night, presented on that grey day an idea of solitude and depression which might have made the neediest mendicant hug his rags with gratitude for the firm earth.

But Napier, lying on the deck, with his back against the weather rail, his feet purchased against the binnacle, his hand holding the tiller by a rope, his eyes watching the sail, had a look of happiness in his face and was singing in the teeth of the wind.

CHAPTER XXI

THE UNCONQUERABLE HOPE

Two or three days after Anne's surrender to her grandmother Canon Case came down-stairs from Mrs. Dobson's bedroom earlier than usual.

Anne came from the drawing-room to receive him in the hall. She stood in the doorway, very pale and with a set look in her eyes. "Will you come in for a few minutes?" she invited, in a voice that was composed but not happy.

They entered the drawing-room; the door closed; they were alone together.

How would this meeting end? When the door opened again, what decision would have been reached? When they separated, what resolution would have been formed? Destiny, perhaps, had his ear at the keyhole.

In Anne's mind was the determination to abide by her agreement with Richard Paton, a year to decide. This was her just right, and she would hold to it. The priest might influence her to reach the decision of surrender, but it would be only her own will, and at the end of the year. She would permit no coercion.

The natural distress of which she was conscious in discussing the secrets of her heart was aggravated by

the difficulty which she felt would present itself if the clergyman attempted to coerce her will by appeals to her conscience. Hard enough was it to keep her promise to Mrs. Dobson, but how much harder would it be to offer opposition to any kind, affectionate and religious force exerted by this good man. Hard, but inevitable. Even if Mrs. Dobson, with her last breath, implored Anne to surrender, she knew that she would have strength to refuse. She would refuse now if the priest put pressure on her; her life could not be taken out of her discretion and made the experiment of other people; but it would be distasteful, difficult to withstand the appeal of this good man, whose very presence was a spiritual rebuke to self-will and aggression. She dreaded the interview. She feared a scene.

When they were seated she raised her eyes to the clergyman's face but found it distressing to meet his gaze. She looked down.

She began in a low voice by asking if he was willing to listen to the narration of a difficulty which had occurred in her life.

"Most willing," he answered, observing the distress of her manner.

"My grandmother, perhaps, has spoken to you?"

"No."

"She wished me to consult you. To tell you the truth, I should not of myself make the suggestion. It is very kind of you to be willing to listen; but, it is very difficult for me to speak. It is against all the instincts of my being."

She had regained her composure, and looking up met the priest's eyes.

"You are not referring to the action of Mr. Aldrich?"

"No; to my marriage."

A change of expression appeared in the priest's face. "Do I understand that your grandmother has put pressure on you to speak to me?"

"Yes; the pressure of affection."

He leaned a little forward in his chair and said, "You must not speak against your will. Pray put your mind at rest. Don't let this matter distress you. I will speak to your grandmother to-morrow; I will explain to her; and she will give you back your promise. I understand how difficult it is for you to speak on such a matter; you will understand how impossible it is for me to listen against your will."

Anne hesitated. They regarded each other.

In that look, no word between them, was understanding. "If you will let me," she said, with a sudden yielding of her will, "I should like to tell you."

She had thought of herself as dragged away from the sanctuary of independence, forced to stand before the tribunal of authority. She had felt herself to be the victim of an intolerable inquisition. Her inner life was to be laid bare. Not her own conscience, but the conscience of another was to probe the hidden places of her being—probe, examine, question. Against her will, she herself was to draw away the

veil that a stranger might behold the inner recesses, the holy of holies, the secret reservation of her soul. This had been her thought; from this ordeal she had recoiled. But some mysterious emanation, like a diffused grace had issued from the personality of the priest and turned the current of her thoughts. In this atmosphere her feelings suffered a deep change. She saw the man with other eyes. He was not a judge; he was not even a friend; she could not say what she felt him to be; but this inexpressible influence was something high and noble, something lofty and pure, something which breathed the wisdom of the angels with the charity of the human heart; it was a presence in which she felt strangely and restfully at peace; a gaze before which she needed not to veil her eyes; a voice to which she was inclined to listen with the hunger of a soul unsatisfied. It seemed to her that this disclosure which she had dreaded was to become an easeful unburdening.

But when, with the sudden impulse of prepossession she expressed willingness to speak, immediately she lost the first victorious sense of satisfaction which comes with such surrenders, and experienced an almost paralyzing distress. What was the cause? She had spoken from the spiritual region of thought; that inarticulate sphere where wordless inspiration carries the soul forward in a rush of expressionless feeling. Thought is one world; speech is another. One needs no words for a wave of repentance; "I will arise and go to my father" is not a statement but a feeling, an impulse; "and will say unto him"—the difficulty

begins; but when one approaches and beholds the father, what dumb agony of alarm and helplessness takes hold of the soul!—what can be said? where shall we begin? what words will suffice? how shall we speak?

Anne wished to tell, but could not.

Her thoughts were clear to her, but how to express them! That which she wished to tell was untellable.

How different our thoughts of God from our words concerning Him! What a tragedy to be summoned from the region of thought, where we are so ineffably at our ease, and to be made to stammer for utterance in the region of speech! Is it not like a saint subjected to cross-examination on his faith in a police court?

This is Balzac's "two hemispheres of Art," Conception and Execution. But even while we speak of eternity we must wind up the clock. Anne, with her soul eager to utter itself, was tongue-tied.

Canon Case saw her distress. He realized its cause.

"Let us see for a moment," he said gently, "whether, after all, there is any need for you to discuss your private thoughts, which is always so difficult. Perhaps if I tell you my views about marriage in general it will be enough; one can sometimes get help in a personal difficulty from a quite impersonal discussion of the subject that is troubling us. Would you like me to tell you how I regard marriage? We could speak about it together."

His sympathy increased her affection. His in-

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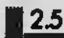

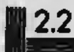

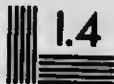
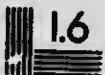

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curiousness heightened her respect. "You are so kind to me," she said, "that it ought to be quite easy for me to tell you everything."

"No, that is impossible; the heart can only say everything to God. Your difficulty is just this, that you cannot say everything; you could tell me this and this, but not all. It is because you cannot say all, that to say a part is so difficult; it would not satisfy you."

"And yet I wish to tell you all."

"Because you are suffering."

He regarded her with his grave eyes, and added, "No confidence between friend and friend, no confession of penitent to priest, no revealment by child to mother ever emptied the heart of its sorrow, its remorse, or its suffering; there is always an unutterable, an entirely inexpressible survival of self, which cannot be surrendered. We may wish to yield it, but when we make the effort we are dumb. It cannot be given. If we could give it, we could explain the difference of one personality from another; for it is our very soul. Our conscience is more real to us than our lungs or our brain, but no anatomist can lay hand upon it. Something there is in man which is neither for human eye nor human ear. It belongs to God."

With only a brief pause, he continued, speaking slowly and intimately. "I tell you this that you may know my attitude towards anything in the nature of confession or confidence. To the penitent I can offer the assurance of God's tenderness and loving

compassion, but the penitent must himself know if his penitence is sincere. I cannot tell that. And also I tell you this, because I want you to understand how assuredly I know that nothing I can say, no advice I can give you, no sympathy and tenderness I can offer you, will have any ultimate power over your pain or your unrest. Therefore, with the confidence of our common humanity we can talk frankly to each other. We meet on the same ground of human limitation. No misunderstanding should be possible, and no disappointment."

She felt her distress draw away from her. The duologue assumed the naturalness of soliloquy. With this man, who understood so perfectly, she was alone with her soul.

"Tell me," she said, in her gentle voice which never lost the tone of courage and in its most feminine softness had the character of strength; "tell me if you think it can ever be right for a wife to leave her husband?"

He considered for a moment, regarding her with thoughtful eyes, and answered, "If you had asked me whether it can ever be right for a husband to leave his wife, I should say, No."

This answer gave pause to her thoughts.

"I have known," he continued, "particularly among humble people, wonderful instances of devotion on the husband's part, devotion of an heroic nature. I have known a man cling to the wife who had lost him his place in the world, ruined his prospects, wrecked his home, and caused dreadful suffering to his children;

and his reward was a deathbed plea for forgiveness, in a prison."

"Noble," she said slowly; "but, for the children's sake, was it right?"

"Only God can answer that." He continued after a moment, speaking thoughtfully, "But for the wife to leave the husband, that is another question. I can conceive of circumstances—very terrible circumstances—when it might be justifiable."

"But if ever he called her back, it would be her duty to return?"

"You mean if he had repented?"

"Altered his habits."

"There is a vast difference. You are right." He paused, and added with quiet emphasis, "But it would be her duty, a hard one, to go back and help him."

"Yes; I see that. The problem, however, is deeper. It is much deeper. If, in the period of their separation, she had ceased altogether to feel even affectionately disposed towards him; if love had become quite dead, was non-existent in her heart, the love which makes union possible; would she be justified, do you think, in saying that she could not go back?"

"That goes deep indeed," he replied. To a celibate Anne's objection would appeal with greater force than to the average married person with the Stevensonian idea that any man can be happily married to any nine women out of ten. The refined and pure-minded priest felt the full force of this beautiful girl's argument; he realized the wholesome goodness of her mind

by the quiet courage with which she had expressed it. "It would be a hard duty," he said slowly, "but still a duty—especially if his safety depended in any way upon her compliance."

"It might be treading underfoot," she said, "everything high and refined in the woman's nature."

"Except charity."

"And suppose——" She paused.

"Yes?" he inquired gently.

Now she felt again the distress of her soul. 'You would pluck out the heart of my mystery!' How noble a reproof! How could she make plain her position, how could she fulfil the promise to tell 'everything,' without unveiling the most sacred, the most occulted secret of her heart, nay, the very soul itself?

"I don't think I can say any more," she said, very pale and distressed.

"Is there a greater difficulty? Can there possibly be a harder condition?"

"Oh, yes." And then, with hasting words she told him. "The wife, in the long years of separation, might learn to feel the highest regard and the purest affection for a man nearer to her by character and disposition."

"That," he said, "seems to me to drive her back to the husband."

The words were gently uttered; they were full of the kindest sympathy; but they had the inexorable conviction of a religious principle. They were not counsel; they were command.

"But, have you thought," she said, speaking very slowly, with pauses half nervous and half earnest between the words, "that to go back to the husband means for the woman to abase herself in the eyes of the man she respects?"

"Would a good man think that the fulfilment of a vow, the saving of a soul, could possibly abase a woman?"

"I think he must shudder."

"His love would be a guilty love."

"Oh, is that kind?" She raised her head. A light came into her eyes. "If he had never spoken; if he had kept always an honourable silence; if his love remained the highest form of purest sympathy—— How does love of this kind come? Is it really a wicked thing, can it really be called wrong?"

"Love of *that* kind would strengthen the woman to do her duty. If it does not strengthen her, it has crossed from the sphere of a noble affection into the region of a guilty love."

"Even if—— Oh, Canon Case!" she said suddenly, rising from her chair and walking away from him, "do you not see that his love might be the shield of the woman's honour? He would know that she loved him. In his eyes it would be a horrible crime on her part if, loving him, she returned to a loveless marriage. Could he keep silence? Could he see her go to this self-degradation, this horror of horrors?" She turned, and came back to him. She stood at his side. "Canon Case," she said, in a low voice, "don't tell me to go back." She drew forward a low stool

and sat at the side of his chair, resting her hand upon the arm. "I tell you everything in saying that. My heart cries out for a man I love; fate has made that perfect happiness impossible; but, if I stand secure there, may I not also stand resolute against the baser surrender? Need I humiliate myself in the eyes of my friend? Tell me what you think. See the position, consider the horror, and tell me whether it can be right, with a great and silent love in my heart, that I should go to the dishonour of a loveless marriage?"

"Need I answer that question?" he asked gently, and placed his hand upon her shoulder.

"I am fighting for my self-respect, for everything that makes life endurable."

"I cannot answer your question."

"I think there is no answer."

"Yes."

"Where shall I find it?"

"Where do you look for guidance?"

"To my conscience."

"And is that silent?"

She considered. "Yes, I think it is silent."

"Silent now?"

"Yes."

"But silent for ever? Look forward. What keeps you from the fulfilment of your desire? what is it that keeps this great temptation at arm's length? The knowledge that your conscience, silent now, would for ever upbraid you if you took that step. And if conscience would upbraid you for that gratification of what seems so right and natural and even noble to

your inclination, will it, do you think, be silent if you refuse to help a drowning man? Look forward. The long years ahead of you—every minute of them haunted by remorse, weighted by the reproach that you let a soul perish; can you go forward to such a certain destiny?"

"There would be remorse, too, if I went back to duty. My conscience, whichever way I take, will upbraid me. I do not know what to do. My will is tortured. Conscience says to me, 'On this road I will persecute you, and on that road I will trouble you.' I cannot escape; there is no straight road before me; no goal that is clear to my eyes."

The hand pressed affectionately on her shoulder. "There are two roads before you," he said, "but only one conscience. On either road, *on either road*, it depends upon the spirit in which you make your journey whether conscience upbraids or confirms you. Let us suppose that you take the road of self-indulgence; if you set out with scruples in your mind, with the whisperings of all your purest aspirations still breathing in your soul, bitterly will conscience accompany you; but if you set out in a spirit of defiance, if you harden your heart, show an indifferent face to immortality, and reject the thought of God, conscience will find it difficult to make you hear; it will not trouble you. On the other road, the road of duty, if you go with no principles of conduct, with a grudging submission to a hard destiny, conscience will be there to mock you; but if, on the other hand, you take that path with a will surrendered to God's love, a

heart set only upon fulfilment of His purposes, a charity bent and concentrated upon saving another's soul, conscience, I assure you, will comfort and confirm every step of the way and will bring you into peace."

"I see what you mean."

"We are at the Cross now," he said quietly, reverently, earnestly. "Every sorrow brings us there, and every difficulty. The significance of all life is there. Christianity, one has said, is a religion which meets tragedy with tragedy. When the accusing world points to terrible calamities in nature, the Church answers by pointing to Calvary. There, and there alone, is explanation. Nothing else in the history of mankind is comparable with that sublime and sufficing answer. You must look there for the solution of your problem."

Her head was bowed and her face hidden from him. His hand still rested on her shoulder with paternal affection.

While he was speaking, and while she was listening to every word, her thoughts were yet pursuing their own way. It was now, she felt, that her reason was really besieged. Religion! This good and loving man had gradually drawn her away from the real problem of her being into a region where reason is abandoned and the soul yields itself to the impulse of emotion.

She was in that condition, or at that stage of development, when mortality imagines that ratiocination is a higher function of the mind than faith.

This is the condition which renders men *suspicious* of religion, making them feel that its divine expandings into the universe and its sublime trust in the Infinite are insidious enemies of the intellect. Reason, which weighs and measures in the sidereal vast, seems something grander than faith, which merely illumines the soul.

The heritage of her father was still strong in Anne. She was far-seeing, cautious, clear-headed; one of those people to whom the reason is an admirable and sufficing guide for the business of life. She experienced a distinct unwillingness to accompany the priest into the religious sphere, whither he had so suddenly preceded her.

Perhaps unconscious of this antagonism, and taking her silence for that pause which the troubled soul makes at the threshold of religion, he continued to press home the necessity in all human difficulties for a reference to the Cross.

He spoke about life's inevitable sorrow. "Prosperity is the Blessing of the Old Testament; Adversity is the Blessing of the New; which carrieth the greater Benediction, and the Clearer Revelation of God's Favour . . . the Pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the Afflictions of Job, than the Felicities of Solomon." Religion is the Worship of Sorrow. But Christianity makes sorrow "obedient, approachable, humble, amiable, gentle and patient inasmuch as it comes down from the love of God. . . . False sorrow is bitter, impatient, hard, full of rancour and fruitless grief and

penal despair." The Worship of Sorrow is sorrow transfigured.

He drew her into the field of politics and showed her democracy filled with unrest and dissatisfaction, vainly endeavouring to inscribe the word Happiness in a book of statutes.

"It is not our curse," he said, "but our blessing that nothing transitory and terrestrial can appease our insatiable desire for happiness. This certitude of human experience is a warranty of faith. Because we are immortal nothing mortal can content us; because we are heirs of eternal life nothing human can satisfy us. We are not tenants of the earth, but heirs of eternity. The brain is obliged to postulate infinity; the heart to assume Fatherhood. If we contemplate our griefs with this thought of eternity in our hearts, if we are assured that human life is but a day in the experience of our immortality, that onward and upward, for ever and for ever, we shall move and mount to profounder understanding and greater love, then, light will appear our heaviest burden, our sharpest pain will become endurable, we shall feel ourselves rational creatures in a rational universe.

"But it is hard to attain this faith. I do not minimise the difficulty. For most of us it is only in momentary uprushes of feeling that the vision is clear. But, a step is taken if our hearts consent to this—that, given the truth of eternity, given the truth of our immortal destiny, all sorrow, suffering, grief, pain and affliction would become endurable.

Let me ask you that question. Have you felt in your heart that eternity, if true, answers all difficulties?"

She was silent for a moment, drawn suddenly from the flow of her own thoughts to a definite and personal point in his argument. How should she answer? With her head still bowed she replied, but not willingly, that eternity, if true, answered all questions.

"Are you quite sure of that?" he asked gently.

"Yes," she said, with decision; "I am quite sure."

It came to her with a great illumination that immortality, the thing of which people talked and wrote, the word which could be written down with pen and ink, if a fact of the universe, did satisfy all cravings, did silence all disquiet. For a moment she experienced that infinite pleasure which exalts and intoxicates the spirit apprehending the fact of eternity in all the beauty of its consolation and in all the plenitude of its revelation.

"Then, I can tell you how you may be sure that it is a truth." He bent a little nearer to her, and in a lower voice said, with a fatherly persuasion which touched her heart, "Faith becomes a principle of action only by submission of the will. That is the supreme revelation of Christ as regards the religious life. Subdual of the passions, control of the will, is morality; a yielding of the will is religion. If you think that to yield the will is weakness, I beg you to contemplate to Whom you are asked to make this submission. It is to God. Can there be weakness for humanity in yielding itself to the will of Omni-

potence? Once more we are at the Cross. It is there that you are asked to lay down your will. At the feet of Love. Why must you lay it down?—that you may make room for the growth of your own soul. None of your ideals can give room for that expansion. You must look to the Highest. You must desire not to be anything that you yourself can imagine, but you must hunger and thirst to approach the unapproachable perfection of Christ. And, do believe me, when that submission is made, when your will is laid down, when your soul believes with all its energies of love and thankfulness that Christ did not deceive men, did not teach a lie, and did not die for an hypothesis, you will *know* as the most certain fact in your life that immortality is the truth including all truths, the verity of God Himself, even the Father."

Without waiting for her to reply he proceeded, gently and quietly, to show her how the Idea of Christ had worked in human history, sweetening the relations of life, purifying conduct, solacing pain, and dignifying the state. He pressed upon her without emphasis and without the desire to convert her, but with a gradual and increasing force of conviction, the thought of how Christ's Idea, surrounded by all the forces of lustful selfishness and malignant evil, had grown in the world with miraculous persistence, grown and spread in spite of antagonism from without the Church and madness within, until it had shaped the soul of Europe.

As he spoke to her of more and more sacred things there mingled with the tenderness and kindness of his

voice a divine solicitude which was irresistible in its earnestness and sympathy. The attraction of his personality breathed a new power. She was conscious that his amiable sweetness drew nearer to her. She began to listen, with affection in her heart.

He spoke of how this divine Christ had dignified the state of woman, and had placed in her hands incomparable powers for good.

"Because He knew the goodness of woman He exalted her; because He knew her weakness He guarded her. That guard was Marriage. He Who alone of all teachers and revealers of God's will made woman the equal of man, bound her with a stringency to the marriage law such as no other attempted. *Do not forget that His object was love.*"

For a moment he paused that she might receive into her mind the force of that reminder, which for him was the basis of loyalty to the Master, and then he resumed, "The Church does not obey her Lord in this matter of marriage with a doubting and puzzled obedience, but with a glowing love for His divine instruction. She sees that woman's safety lies in devotion to His law. Outside marriage, it is a chaos. And when the world says to the Church, 'But see how hardly this law of marriage presses here, and there, in this case, and in that,' she does not reply, 'They must suffer for the good of the greater number,' but, armed with the invitation, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,' she calls the unhappy ones to her side and shows them where they may obtain rest; she does not exclude them from the

discipline of life or from the consolation of Christ. My child, God is speaking to you in this grief. I do not say that He sent you this sorrow; I do not say that He married you to this man; but being married your marriage belongs to Him, and being in sorrow your sorrow belongs to Him also. Take your grief to Him, and listen to His voice. It was for you, sorely tempted and greatly stricken, that divine Love became incarnate. If for you that great love was given, will you not listen when He speaks?

"He says to you, Take up your cross.

"But, wait.

"He tells you in what spirit you should take it, 'And follow Me.' Follow the Highest, not with distress and unwillingness, but with devotion and love, willing to suffer because He suffered, patient in suffering because He was patient, helping others because He gave His life for men — looking to Him, and to Him alone, your Master and your Saviour.

"On that road of self-denial, which leads to eternal love, you will find peace. On that road, and no other."

He leaned forward again, and, very close to her ear, said encouragingly and with great tenderness, "If love for your husband is dead in your heart, it is only human love. Let God create in its place that divine charity which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Go to your husband with this divine charity in your heart, consecrate yourself to lift him from reformation

of habits to the sphere of the religious life, endeavour by sweet influence to turn his thoughts to God, to make his life of service to mankind; draw him by sympathy, kindness, and example from selfishness and uselessness to unselfishness and service; and, if you appear to fail in this, even if he goes back to the old offences, ask the idea of Christ, which will all this time have been growing in your heart, whether you should still follow with pleading and forgiveness, or whether you should turn back. Make your appeal not to your conscience, but always to your Christ. Let Him decide; by Him and Him alone be guided. I think you will follow. I think you will find that in the care of your husband lies the vocation of your soul. Can any destiny be happier for you than to save a soul for Christ, your Saviour? If in this spirit you go to your husband, charity will sweeten your communion with him, sympathy for his struggles will grow into kindness, and time will show you God's will. Because Love has done so much for you, do this for Love.

"Think of these things, not as my counsel and advice, but as the teaching, clear and very emphatic, of Christ the Light of the World. Do not for one moment put yourself on the side of those people who would treat marriage as a human institution without divine significance, and who would substitute passion and caprice for charity and devotion, liberty and licence for discipline and forbearance. They are against Christ, however pure their motives, however humane their object. Do not side with the enemies

of your Saviour. Be among those good women whose exalted virtue and gracious purity uplifts the race. Teach by your life the lesson that charity makes all things possible. Let others, weaker than yourself and tempted to do evil, learn from you that marriage is a part of this life's discipline, and that without forgiveness and forbearance the union of any man and any woman is impossible. Teach them by your married life that Christianity is the religion of reconciliation. Make your home an influence for Christ. Above all things, I pray you, do not put yourself even in thought and for one moment on the side of those who 'from the name of Saviour can condescend to the bare term of Prophet.' Call Christ your Saviour; accustom yourself to the thought that He has saved you; realize that through Him we call the Universe, home, and the Infinite, Father. Submit your will to Him, and with gratitude in your heart for His salvation most personal and precious to you yourself, love Him, love Him with all your soul, and lift up your cross and follow Him."

His voice had never once passed from the quiet of intimacy into the passion of proselytism, but in these last sentences it became vibrant with intensity of feeling.

The hand laid upon her shoulder was removed. It rested for a moment lightly on her head. "God bless you; help you; comfort you; guide you; and give you peace."

The words were uttered close to her ear, with the moving emphasis of profound sympathy and sincere

earnestness. It was this blessing which turned the scale of her decision.

She lifted her face and, looking at him with gratitude in her eyes, "I can thank you," she said, "for listening to me and speaking to me; but how can I thank you for giving me a vocation?"

She went with him into the garden and remained there when he had left.

At the moment of his departure the *Sand Wasp* dropped anchor in Borhaven harbour.

Anne could not immediately go back to her duties.

There are pauses in the soul's experience, when even the face of nature in her fairest mood is, as it were, a disturbance, an interruption, an intrusion. We would close our eyes, abandon our thoughts, and be still. So great is our vision that we would not see; so overwhelming our light that we would be in the dark. To think is to be called back from the ecstasy. To examine the blessing is to lose the joy. Solitude of the body is not enough, we must have solitude of the soul.

The problem of Anne's life had solved itself. The solution was the example of Christ.

If she had contemplated, as she stood in the garden, the return to her husband, even in its noblest view of service and devotion; or if she had contemplated the banishment from her heart of love for Napier, even in its noblest view of self-sacrifice, she would have lost the deep sense of joy which pervaded her soul like a glory.

That joy consisted of spiritual emotion. The

sensation of God's love, the conviction of immortality. It had nothing to do with the earth.

She was lifted above all problems and distress. The answer to every question of the human heart breathed in her spirit. The details of mortal existence vanished in the satisfaction of love and the comprehension of eternity.

She had been pointed to the Highest, and from the Highest she could not withdraw her gaze.

She was conscious of a Saviour.

The sceptic is learning slowly the truth of Swift's epigram that you cannot "argue men out of convictions which they have never been argued into." The phenomenon of conversion puzzles the rationalist, until he perceives that the region of faith has laws, like the region of intellect. Those laws we can observe in their effects—regeneration and the birth of sweetness—but the causes are hidden in the love of God. We cannot explain conversion; but we see its fruits in the lives of the saints.

Anne herself could not have analyzed her spiritual feelings, or said, "At such a moment while he was speaking to me I became conscious of a change in my nature." Not only this; she would have denied that this change occurred suddenly in the midst of listening to the priest. It was to her as if it had always been working in her soul. Always she had been on the brink of this surrender which brought unspeakable pleasure to her heart, unutterable peace to her mind. At her Communions, in her prayers, during her reading, while she worked in the garden,

walked by the river-side, visited the poor, listened to the sermons of a preacher, the arguments of Ramsay M'Gavin, the blustering atheism of Major Lauden—even then she had been conscious, yes, again and again, of impulses towards the sheltering Personality of Christ and surrender to His will—inarticulate and transitory impulses, but *movements* of the soul, falterings and gropings towards the light.

This peace which had come to her, if she had examined it, would not have seemed to her in the nature of a palingenesis; rather as an end to vacillation. She had ceased to be undecided. Her soul had made its choice. She was conscious of Vision, not of revision. Canon Case had helped her to make up her mind.

Later in her life she was to look back with truer vision and call that change of mind by a nobler name.

But now it was enough for her to dwell in this pause of her soul, to feel the joy which closed about her like the air, the blessing which rose in her heart like a fragrance, the peace which breathed upon her like a communion with eternity.

No thought disturbed this tranquillity of pure emotion.

She was conscious of serenity.

In the repose of a still and quiet conscience the comprehension came to her that she had been led to the Summit, and standing there, as it were, in the light of a new dawn, she felt the unconquerable hope of humanity grow in her soul to be a knowledge one

with existence. Immortality!—it was like an angel's kiss upon her brow. The barriers of time and space fell asunder; the noise of the earth died down; gates were at last open before her, and through those gates, which had opened so soundlessly, she gazed into the wide silence of infinity with calm and comprehending eyes, conscious of the everlasting and the Divine.

CHAPTER XXII

BACK TO EARTH

SHE was roused from her reverie by a sound approaching from the direction of the river. With the haze of this reverie still hanging like a cloud between her soul and her senses, she realized that Napier was coming towards her. He was like a figure in a dream.

For a moment the dream sensation lasted. She was undisturbed. She inhabited a region of silence and serenity. The figure approaching her, seen through the miasm of her own abstraction, appeared with perfect congruousness—a spirit like herself, with whom she would presently commune quite naturally in the language of her own ineffable peace.

This spiritual delusion lasted for a moment.

The figure approaching emerged from the haze, and wore the likeness of a man. She recognized him for the fact that he was, the man who loved her.

Of a sudden she was back on the earth, a woman tortured by the extreme of self-consciousness, fettered by all the little social humanities of time and place, surrounded by all the irrefragable necessities of use and want, and feeling this terrestrial and human position with a terrible sharpness of apprehension

caused by the immense contrast of her profound and quite solitary spiritual experience.

What could she say to him?

Her lips knew only the language of earthly commerce. She could no more translate into that language the fresh sensations which had bathed her soul in light and understanding than she could explain to herself what had happened in the hidden recesses of her being. She was on earth, with a changed heart, but with only a fading memory of the revolution itself. She felt herself indefensible. She had no explanation. From the spiritual sphere she had been brought suddenly into the rational. The instruments of the rational sphere could not serve her need. She was inarticulate.

Stranger still, she felt guilty.

Yes, it came to her that she had deserted this man who cared for her so much. She had allowed herself to be carried away on a wave of feeling into the world of emotion, an unreal and visionary world, a world which could only be glimpsed by those who abandoned reason and surrendered conscious control. Where was that world now? Invisible to her eyes, distant from her heart! It had melted like a dream. She was standing on solid ground, with the wind in her face, the liftings and fallings of branch and bough visible to her eyes, the noise of the river in her ear, the atmosphere of the old earth conscious and real to her senses. How wild a notion that she had ever inhabited any other world, that she had stood upon spiritual heights, that she had seen the light that never was, on sea or land!

In the midst of her distress he came to her, and she greeted him.

"I have come to you," he said, "for the answer to my letter."

"I am going back," she answered, with the weakness forced upon her by this violent change in her emotions.

"No."

"You must say nothing that will make it difficult," she pleaded.

"I will make it impossible."

The strength and conviction in his voice roused her moral being to oppose him. She became conscious of support, and was unafraid. In a moment, timorousness dropped from her.

"Anne," he said softly, "you must not go back."

She felt suddenly cold. The appeal in his voice roused her compassion, as the command had roused her opposition. "Don't let us speak of this," she said gently. "Let us leave it as it is, quite unalterable and predestined."

"I can alter it; I can make you a new destiny," he replied. "I have only to speak, and I make it impossible for you to go back."

"You must not speak."

"But you are going to torment, self-destruction, and remorse! Not speak? I can't look on unmoved. I can't stand still and see you perish. Anne, do you realize what you are doing?"

"Yes," she answered firmly. She felt strong and composed. "I realize all, and I am not afraid. Listen; you must not speak of this again. Your

friendship," she said steadily, but with great affection, "is quite the most precious thing to me on earth. Don't rob me of it, Hugh. You mustn't do that. I can't tell you how I want to have you for my friend."

He looked up quickly, with a certain fierceness clouding his eyes. "But you *don't* realize! You don't. Why, you are speaking in utter ignorance. My friendship! You think you can keep that, and go to your husband? Consider, for pity's sake. You don't think that I shall come to your house, sit at your table, drive in your carriage, go with you here and there, and be to you in your husband's presence what I have been to you here? You don't think that, do you?"

"Why not?" she asked.

Her firmness, which was almost a challenge to his character, daunted him for a moment, but he said, with some energy, "It is impossible. No; if I must hold my peace, at least you must know that to go back is to turn me out of your life for ever."

"I shall feel that," she answered; "you know how I shall feel it. But I shall dree my weird, nevertheless."

He was moved by the pain in her voice; he was too well acquainted with her character to be astonished at the courage and resolution in her words.

"You know what I would say to you?" he asked. "Knowing that, knowing what is in my heart and what is in your heart, you are going back to——"

She interrupted him.

"I do not hear you, Hugh. Don't speak like that. Let it all go. I will tell you why I am going back, as well as I can, and then—let us begin on

another plane. It is not impossible. I know it is not impossible." She walked forward, and they stood together by the gate in the wall, their faces to the river.

The light of day began to fade.

"I am converted to your old point of view, and to something higher," she said quietly. "I can see as clearly as you once saw how right it is that I should go back to my duty. When you first spoke to me you were unbiassed and quite honest with yourself. You saw the world as a place where some people are trying to preserve the essentials of righteousness and where others are tampering with those essentials; you realized the danger of experimenting with the base of civilization. I see now, very clearly, that every good woman who is loyal to civilization is of service to humanity, and that every woman who is in the least disloyal, whatever her motives, is an enemy of the human race. The complex of life has become simple for me. Out of the trackless forest of various opinions and personal inclinations, I have come into the wide clearing made by history and experience, where one sees simply right and wrong. All great and eternal revelations have this character of simplicity. Philosophers call God by names which crush the brain and leave the soul unsatisfied; Christ, in a peasant's robe, called him Father, and with simplicity advanced evolution by a bound immeasurable. Is it not wiser to see that simplicity is the highest? Is it not better to confess that complex is an unsuitable word? I think it is. I am sure it is. Right and wrong is the old division of conduct, and if in some particular of our lives human experience does not tell

us which is right and which is wrong, and if even our conscience seems to be perplexed, we can solve the difficulty by presenting it to the highest Character we know, to our Ideal of humanity. You know this, Hugh. In your heart of hearts, you have known it always. I do not say you knew it before I did, for everybody in the world knows that it is true. But while I was hiding myself from this knowledge and making myself a standard for the world's conduct, you knew it, and you told me you knew it. Go back to that knowledge. Let us both stand where all good people stand—in the broad clearing made by human experience; we know what is right, don't let us deceive ourselves and seek to make the world's wrong our right. I am happy, I am secure, because I know now what it is right for me to do. I have simplified existence."

"My conscience is emphatic," he answered, without looking at her. "It is a crime for you to go back. It is moral suicide."

He said, before she could reply, "Anne, I love you with all the force and power of my being. You have divined that long ago. If you go back to the life from which you once fled with horror, knowing that I love you, you tear by the roots out of my heart the purest and noblest emotions I shall ever know. But"—he paused for a moment, and then continued slowly and earnestly—"if you go back to that man from whom you once turned, knowing in your heart of hearts that you love me, I say you commit a crime against your own soul. Yes; you keep the laws of men, but you deny the laws of God."

She was neither frightened nor ashamed by this sudden and quiet onslaught, so direct and pitiless. She was aware of a wonderful calm in her brain, an inexpressible composure of spirit. She waited for him to resume, astonished at herself.

"Dare you say to your own soul," he asked, with the same quiet, measured, almost detached earnestness, "that the Creator of the universe married you to that man, and that your insistent affinity with me is a machination of iniquity? Was it the Almighty, or was it your mother, who married you to that man whom you find it impossible to respect? Is your marriage one of those unions where any but a blasphemer dare say that he sees the hand of God? Those whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder. I abide by that commandment. Very well. Did God ordain your marriage?"

"It is among the accomplished things of my life," she answered.

"The law can set you free."

"My conscience is above the law."

"Do you mean that your conscience absolves you from all sense of guiltiness in returning to a union without affection, without even self-respect?"

"It is a union not without self-respect; but self-respect is something I can afford to do without. I am conscious of something higher."

"What is that?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Do you mean you cannot tell me, or you will not tell me?"

"I cannot tell you."

"You are on perilous ground if you are surrendering yourself to a caprice of the emotions."

"It is something deeper than that."

"But I cannot imagine even a religious principle of the highest kind which should absolve you from the unthinkable violation of going to your husband with love in your heart for another man."

"Hugh! why do you say that to me?"

"Because I would save you from remorse."

"You have said a terrible thing."

"And very brutally. But I see your danger. You do not."

"I wish you had never said those words."

"I pray that they will cling to your soul, and save you."

"Hugh," she said after a moment, "you have given me strength to do what I never thought I could do honestly. You have strengthened me to deny my love for you."

He turned and looked at her. "What do you mean?" he asked. "I know you love me."

"If I love you," she replied very quietly, "it is with a love pure and true, which does not throw a shadow on my path. This is the truth, the truth of my soul. With what love I have for you in my heart I can go to my duty. Yes, unashamed. Do you understand that? And do you understand that any other love I would empty from my heart with haste and with shame?"

"No," he said quickly, and with a new intensity in his voice; "you are a woman, and I am a man; say what you will, the step you dare to contemplate is a crime."

"Oh, you don't see," she cried, almost with pity for him, "that a soul may have visions which are wider than human life. You and I have talked about immortality. Without that, life has neither why nor wherefore; renunciation has no reason; all virtue and goodness are irrational; there is no reason whatever, none, none, none, why people should struggle towards their dim and shadowy vision of perfection. But if immortality is true, and you, I know, think it is true, then, what difficulty exists for the soul confronted by a hard duty? what considerations of the world and society can deter the spirit from its course? Don't you feel that, Hugh? Do you never have that vision which makes it possible to say, which makes it so foolish and childish not to say, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world? If immortality is true, nothing on earth can either pain or frighten us. And it is true, because only by immortality does the place of Christianity in human history become intelligible."

He was silent for a moment. Then he spoke, bitterly.

"Are you thinking—I must ask you this—of saving your soul?" In the darkness that was falling about them thicker and thicker he turned and looked at her.

"No," she answered quite gently and without reproach; "I have surrendered all thought of myself." She paused, and added finely, "Don't you see, Hugh, that is why I am so strong and secure?"

He suddenly stretched out a hand and placed it upon her arm. "I want you," he cried hoarsely. "Anne, don't forsake me."

The touch upon her arm, the tragedy of his voice, the nearness of his breathing, shook her and filled her heart with anguish. She herself was amazed that with her woman's heart so shaken and so stirred, her soul preserved its unclouded serenity.

"I have such pity for you," she said, meeting his gaze with fearless sympathy. "But I must not listen to you."

"You must listen, you must!" he cried suddenly, and drew nearer to her. "I love you, body and soul. I, and no other, love you as you deserve to be loved. In all this big world I am alone but for you. I have tried to live without you. I can't. I have gone away, and I have returned. There is something in my heart which will not let me rest without you. I must be always within reach of you. If I cannot possess you, at least I must be near enough to hear your voice, to look in your eyes—which are so strong and true—oh, God, how I love you, Anne!—your eyes are my security and my honour and my passion; in them only I have visions of immortality and God. I cannot bear that you should go away. Let me always be able to see you. I am so alone in the world; your love is everything to me. Never, never go away from me; never, never give yourself to another; be true to all the sweetest and noblest motions of your soul, don't be afraid to go where they urge you; I believe it is right for you to obey those impulses, which are so pure and so powerful; but even if to obey them is a sin, obey them, for God will forgive you—my need is so great."

She was filled with compassion for him; her eyes

were tender with divinest and most human pity; but her soul was yet more perfectly secure than before. Passion, beating against a spirit utterly surrendered, breaks into foam and becomes not grand but pitiful. She had compassion for the man; she pitied the weakness which swept him away.

"I cannot hear you," she said. "It would be quite easy for me to persuade myself that I should listen, and that I should endeavour to comfort you. But the place where I stand makes it impossible for me to lie, even to you. It is not right that I should listen. By urging me to listen, you do wrong. But I will say this to you, because it is the very truth of my soul and because I desire with all my heart that you should be where I am now—out of the reach of all pain and distress. *Hugh, I can think of you as my friend for ever.* Does that put your love to the test? I can think of you as being often my companion, of sharing much of my confidence, of helping me to help others, of being my pleasantest and kindest friend, almost the chief influence in my life. And without pain, rather with pleasure, should I see my friend married to a woman who would dwarf my little vanities by an immense superiority. Such is my feeling towards you. The purest friendship. That I offer to you now. It is for you to keep or reject it; that is to say, it is for you to give me your friendship, your kindness and your help, or to say good-bye to me now for the last time on earth."

His face darkened as he listened. For one moment it was as if he despised her. Then he exclaimed suddenly—

"You say you are out of the reach of all pain and all distress. I do not wish that state for myself. I am human, and I will not strangle my nature. What you have proposed to me is impossible. It is because you deny your human nature that you can think for an instant that it is possible. Descend from your brain to your heart, and see how impossible it is."

"With God," she said, interrupting him, "all things are possible."

"You mean you are no longer human?"

She considered, and then replied steadily, "I am above passion."

"Yes, above the natural passions of the human race. You stultify your being. You deny the garment with which God has clothed you. Oh, Anne, don't let some impulse, some emotion of religion blind you to the truth of your nature."

"You would have me let some impulse of poor transitory passion blind me to the truth of eternity?"

"But you will be human as long as you live on this earth. You can't be rid of your nature. If you do this thing, in the long years ahead of you, the years of monotony and ice-cold retrospection, you will bewail with a terrible bitterness that you let religious emotion make a lie of your love and your humanity."

"The older I live the nearer I shall be to eternity." She looked towards him in the darkness, watched his shadowed eyes, and asked wonderingly, "Can you conceive of no one living above the plane of passion?"

The question threw him into the mud of inferiority.

She spoke quite tenderly, but with a certain pride. She seemed to stand above him, while he gazed up at

her from a place of license, weakness and carnality. To cry out that she was cold and passionless would have been to charge the stars with a lack of scarlet shades and restaurant music. To arraign her as a woman dehumanized would have been to glorify "the painted disasters of the street." He recognized her at that moment as a woman infinitely tender and infinitely lovable, but pure with a chastity which rebuked the headlong passion of his heart. In that recognition of her divine nature was his salvation. She made him ashamed of his feelings. She revealed to him a higher love than he had dreamed of. He was exalted by the purity of her spirit.

If Napier had been a decadent of cities, if he had lived by a philosophy which endeavours to strike a philandering balance between the æsthetic vices of the Greeks and the brutal passions of the negro, he would easily have turned the shaft of her reproach with the shield of a degenerate tolerance. But he was a man of the open air. He was eminently wholesome. The cleansing winds of nature's truth blew through his mind, which never went to sleep with a shut window. His body was braced and manful; his vision was clear and unobscured; he knew right from wrong as he knew black from white, cleanness from uncleanness. He was civilized human nature at its highest, a clean mind in a clean body. Such a man never mistakes chastity for the dull hebetude of an anæmic insensibility.

While she was speaking a light rose in his soul, and by that light he not only recognized the moral grandeur of her nature, but he caught a glimpse of

some divine existence high above the mist of animal passion and far beyond the disturbance and unrest of physical expression. There was, he felt, some infinite and celestial satisfaction for the yearnings of the human heart, the joys of which exceeded the capacities of the body as the snow of the mountain crest excelled the trodden slush of the pavement.

In the darkness of the garden, encompassed by the deepening hush of nature, and with the low and beautiful sound of her voice stealing like music through his soul, he lost the sense of inferiority which had first humbled him at her reproach in a steady, quiet, but most determined aspiration to stand where she stood, to breathe the air of her own pure heaven. A father who hides his animalism from his daughter is sometimes visited by an intense yearning to be as guiltless, as innocent, as white in purity as his child.

But with this aspiration, the groundswell of his soul sounded its melancholy and persistent bitterness. He was lonely. His passion for this dear and noble woman was not base, was not unworthy; it was a craving for sympathy, it was a natural impulse towards friendship, it was the cry of a lonely heart for companionship and love. The bird seeks his mate, as he sought the surrender of this woman.

The thought of taking her to his breast, of placing his arms about her, of bending down his face and resting his lips upon hers, was a longing inexpressible, unanalyzable, but perfectly holy and just. He was shaken through all his body as the whisper sounded in his soul, "Take her in your arms, even if it be in farewell; do not go to your grave without

having kissed her lips and realized the beauty of her love." To touch her!—to be close to her breathing loveliness!—for one moment, to gather her into the hunger of his embrace! The temptation was terrible because of his loneliness.

He set his teeth, fought the sob in his throat, and waited for her to speak again.

"Be my friend," she said, "for ever. There is one explanation for everything in life. Only one. The tragedies of the world lie in our denial of that explanation. Once bow before the Figure which answers every cry of the heart, and the impossible becomes possible, renunciation becomes fulfilment. Hugh, I will not talk to you now about my change of mind. That will be one of the conversations between us in the clearer and the kinder future. But do see this, that one must accept the Ideal of humanity, if we accept Him at all, in everything. There can be no compromise and no duality. The world would insist upon the division of sacred and secular—politics would keep its sphere out of His instruction, social life would keep its appetites out of His rebuke, art would keep its little sphere entirely to its little self. Hence is all confusion. But He must be for everything human. The universe exists in Him; can we shut Him out from anything on earth? What is 'sacred,' and what is 'secular'?—life itself belongs to Him. *Think when our one soul understands!* Oh, yes, the universe is too vast and glorious to you and me, for a mistake."

She turned and put out her hand.

"Let it not be good-bye between us," she said

very tenderly. "I have dreams of our friendship, ambitions for our faithful love. I think that we might do something, you and I, to further all that is good and noble and enduring. Will you not help me, Hugh? It is a fine thing to work for humanity."

He raised her hand half-way to his lips, and then gently relinquished it and stood upright.

"It is not good-bye," he said; "but God knows how many bitter days must pass before we greet again."

"I am satisfied. You will come back to me."

"When I come back I shall be a different man. Shall I be man at all? Or, a beaten dog? But I shall come back. Will you recognize me, I wonder!"

"You will be stronger, greater. You must be. Because only the leading of the Highest can bring you back."

"If I can come back, strong and great, and still a man," he said, lifting his head, "I will give you my life to do what you will with it."

"It will not then be yours to give," she answered gently. "Wait, and you will see. But come back."

He said to her as he passed through the gate, looking back towards her, "I recognize how fine you must be to go so bravely to duty so terrible. That conquers me."

The darkness prevented them from seeing each other.

CHAPTER XXIII

A SECOND MARRIAGE

When Anne turned from Napier she was met by her little servant with news that expelled her peace. Mrs. Dobson was much worse.

With anxiety she left the garden and the silence of her soul, and hurried to her grandmother's side.

Directly she entered the room, the dying lady turned to her a gaze of wistful inquiry, and smiling with the sweet affection of extreme weakness, watched and waited for her to speak.

Anne knelt at her bedside. "Grannie dear, you are not feeling well? Tell me what it is. You have been left too long alone. Let me make your pillow comfortable, and then I will light the candles and read to you. Dear little grannie, I am angry with myself for leaving you alone."

There was still the same wistful inquiry in the fading eyes. "Tell me, dear," asked the dying woman in a low voice, speaking with difficulty, "are you happy now?"

Anne answered the question with her lips and with her eyes.

Afterwards she said, still holding the little lady in her embrace, "I am so happy, grannie dear. I owe it

all to you. How can I thank you? You have helped me to find the answer to more than my difficulty. You have helped me to find the answer to all difficulties and all questions. From my earliest years it has always been you who have helped me. And now you have given rest to my soul and made the way straighter before me. Grannie dear, I love you so."

The face of the old lady shone with love. She lifted one of her feeble hands and slowly placed it on Anne's head, pressing gently the blessing she could not utter.

For a moment they were silent.

"Now you must feel better and happier," Anne said, taking the hand as it descended and bending her lips to it. "I will light the candles, and we will sit and talk, or I will read to you."

As she rose, the old lady said, "This is my *Nunc Dimittis*. I am happy. I want to go now. Think what I shall have to tell your father l"

When the candles were lighted she inquired if the gardener was still on the premises. "I should like him to take a telegram. I want your mother to come. It had better be to-morrow. Will you ask Richard, too? You shall decide that. But your mother must come."

Anne wrote the telegram. At eight o'clock an answer was delivered. It announced the hour of arrival at the station. It was signed "Richard."

Mrs. Dobson's last night on earth passed almost without sleep. Anne, who sat at her side, would have read to her, but the old lady preferred silence. "I am

not unhappy," she said. "Sleep is not necessary now. But you must rest. I want you to sleep."

The faith which had come to Anne found expression that night in constant service to this friend of her life. Every little act seemed now to have a new significance. There was a consecration in her devotion. She did not wish to sleep. No thought of the encounter with Richard Paton crossed her mind. Devotion to this soul hovering on the borderland was a sufficient occupation.

As the small hours approached she began to dread. The room struck coldly. The candlelight became pallid. Once or twice her grandmother sighed and slipped down in the bed.

Anne lighted the spirit-kettle and poured milk into the saucepan.

"Do not trouble about me," said Mrs. Dobson; "I shall live till to-morrow."

The dawn came grey and chilling, with a high wind which blew up great cumbrous clouds from the east.

At seven o'clock Anne drew the curtains and put out the candles.

"Another day," said Mrs. Dodson. "Is the sun shining?"

"Not yet, grannie dear."

"The form is hidden, but the presence is visible."

"It will soon be bright."

"I believe in a God Whom I shall see. He has given form to all things, even to light. For our sakes He will give form to Himself. We shall awake with His likeness and be satisfied."

Anne came to the bed, bent over her grandmother, and kissed her. "Grannie dear, we are nearer now to each other than we have ever been."

"There must be a blessing; the Love was so great." For a moment the fading eyes brightened. "I am not doubting; I am not afraid; but the words come back, 'So much to do, so little done;' I wish I had been less selfish."

"But for you, grannie dear, I, for one, should be in the darkness and on the edge of the precipice."

"We must believe in forgiveness."

Very gently Anne led the poor, failing mind away from thoughts of wasted hours and lost opportunities to the contemplation of infinite love.

While she was speaking a cloud parted in the east, and for a moment the room was bright with sunshine.

The grandmother turned to her and said, "You make me happy; because I know you understand."

Early in the afternoon Mrs. Ainslie arrived with Richard Paton.

The wind was blowing hard, the sky was threatening, the troubled river gave a sense of coldness and melancholy to the grey landscape.

Anne met them at the gate.

She was calm and self-possessed, but with a new serenity of spirit.

There was no need for her to think how she should greet her husband or to rehearse what she should say to him. It sufficed that she went to him. She was impelled by a noble conviction of duty, she was upheld by an invisible power.

So serene was her soul at this difficult moment of her life that the shadow thrown for a moment by her mother across the road of duty did not chill her or deject her courage.

Mrs. Ainslie might have made a weaker nature repent and take fresh counsel with herself.

This one woman, approaching the cottage, was the life to which Anne was going back. She represented London; she was Plutocracy; she was Vanity Fair; she was Existence—the existence of the voluptuous self-indulgent mob of wealth.

Let us for a moment look at her, that we may understand Anne's destiny.

This widow, who was approaching sixty, was as much in love with life as a girl of sixteen. By life she understood public appearances, shop windows, high living, constant excitement, and parade with the paraders. She was one of those contemporary women who justify the boast that now-a-days no one is old. It was not only the Beauty Doctor who kept her young; her delight in the world preserved her animation. She was *not* old. In the same way, she was not good. She did not deny the laws of God; she snubbed them.

She said her prayers every night, with her hair on the dressing-table, her face and hands anointed with complexion-cream. She had done nothing to help man, woman, child, or dumb animal; she had thought nothing noble, been conscious of no generous emotion, felt no compassion for suffering or pain, encouraged no one fighting against sin, ignorance, or disease;

worse still, she had experienced not a moment's misgiving of conscience, not a second's dread of God; but she said her prayers. She never missed saying her prayers, even if the card-table had kept her up till two or three in the morning; in the same manner, she never missed brushing her teeth the last thing at night. Her prayers were a part of her toilet.

A nature like this is severely orthodox in religion, politics, and conduct. It would alter nothing, for fear of discomfort. Mrs. Ainslie was satisfied with the world; she was satisfied with its imperfections, which flattered her. Her orthodoxy was consistent. She went to church; and she would not walk through the Park with a shabby person. She rendered to God the things that were God's, and to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. She expressed indignation at the revelations of the divorce court, and she was grateful for these scandals, which confirmed her delusion that she was virtuous; she said that newspapers which exposed these things performed a national service; she meant that they canonized indifference. Her idea of the wedding-garment was the last fashion from Paris.

Mrs. Ainslie, in a word, was a criminal.

Her religious conformity was a frightful blasphemy. Her indifference to the sufferings of humanity was a sin. Her profitless and self-indulgent existence in a world crowded with clamorous pity was a crime.

She not only attempted to hoodwink the Almighty, she misrepresented Him. Her servants, seeing her go to church, said that they wanted nothing to do

with religion. The poor, watching her enter, felt themselves beneath the notice of God. Young girls, beginning their life in London, imagined, from her presence at the altar, that religion was a form...

She was virtuous, respectable, cheerful, and incapable of cruelty, meanness, or revenge. But she was an enemy of the human race.

Perhaps she was too happy, too contented, too cheerful.

> "Quand le riche rit, le diable rit avec lui ;
> Quand le riche pleure, le diable pleure aussi."

Mrs. Ainslie had no misgiving. She never wept.

What was the impression made by the challenging effrontery of this old woman of fashion on the soul of Anne fresh from the pure ablution of new-birth?

The daughter regarded the mother, and pitied her. There was no fear in her heart, and no judgment. She thought how strange it was that this mother should be the daughter of the sweet grandmother. She hoped that time and God's mercy would change the harsh tone of her character. She considered that once the mother must have been different, for she had been the wife of her father. It came home to her how the mere vulgarity of the world can debase a mind and ruin a soul.

Mrs. Ainslie had been put out a little by the walk across a rough field, with a great, scornful wind derisive at her back. The plumes of her immense hat were disarranged; the hat itself, and with the hat the hair, had suffered a severe tilt. Her rustling gar-

ments, too, wore a blown-about appearance, disconcerting to an elderly and orthodox lady of fashion.

She exclaimed at the cottage, before she inquired for her mother.

When she learned that the end was close at hand she became very solemn, but blamed Anne because she had not telegraphed before. "I must go to her at once," she said; "my place is at her side."

Anne, as soon as she had seen her grandmother through this difficult greeting, returned to Richard Paton, who was standing in the drawing-room, waiting for her.

He was kind and understanding. He expressed sympathy with her in the sorrow that was so close and near. Anne was touched by his goodness.

When they were seated he admired her drawing-room, smiled at the smallness of the little house, but acknowledged its charm. "One sees your taste in the room and your character in the place. It is very quiet and restful. It is nature in a kind mood."

He avoided saying anything that was intimate to their relations.

Presently he said to her, "I had a surprise in Borhaven. We stopped at the hotel to leave our luggage, and as I got out of our cab a fly drew up behind us, and out of it got Lord Arthur Gorham. I had seen him on the station at Liverpool Street, and I remembered that when I saw you off—do you recall it?—he was travelling by the same train as you. But that is not my surprise. As I entered the hotel, out came a little, shabby old fellow, something soldier-

like about him, and—who do you think? Hugh Napier!"

"He has been here," she said.

"I remembered afterwards about Ramsay M'Gavin. But it was a tremendous surprise for me, and for him, too. He started as if he had seen a ghost. He looks ever so much older, and harried, as if something had gone wrong with him. I hope to heaven he is not mixing himself up with that fellow Gorham. If you see him, warn him. The man is really bad. He'll wear the stamp of the prison to his dying day. Those people never change. There's a kink in the natures which cannot be straightened. When I came out from the hotel he was walking up the cliff with his arm through Napier's."

Anne bore all this with composure. But she was conscious of a great compassion for Hugh Napier. His continued presence in Borhaven, however, did not disturb her. She felt that she could see him and confirm her decision.

After some moments Mrs. Ainslie was heard descending the stairs; Anne went to the door to greet her. There was a set and rigid look in the mother's face, an expression almost of awe. "She would like you both to go up," she said in a strained voice, and went to the window, turning her back upon them, standing there with her handkerchief to her mouth.

As they went up the stairs, Richard Paton said to Anne, "I hope I shall be able to say what I ought to say, and do what I ought to do; but I am inexperienced in these sorrowful things. Don't think badly

of me if I blunder. It won't be lack of feeling, but lack of experience."

"You have nothing to fear," she said encouragingly, and at the door she gave him her hand.

The grandmother was lying with her eyes closed. She was perfectly motionless. It was difficult to see that she breathed.

Paton was struck dumb by the terribly wasted and shrunken appearance of this old lady, who had been once so vivacious, lively, and ironical. Anne had grown accustomed to the gradual dwindling of vitality, and did not realize the change.

"Anne? Is that you?" The eyes did not open.

"Yes, grannie dear."

"And Richard?"

"Yes; he has come to see you."

The dying woman opened her eyes. "Richard?" she inquired. "I cannot see clearly. Come nearer to me. Both of you. Richard, I hope you are well and happy. Let me take your hand. Anne, where is yours? Have I got them both? There, they are joined; joined again. Richard, be very good to her. I am going to her father. You must love each other. Life is but a shadow. It passes away. Try to do something, both of you, to make the world more worthy of God's love. Will you try? I will tell Dr. Ainslie. There; I won't keep you. *What is that noise?* Richard, are you crying? Don't cry for me. Why should you cry? It is only a sleep, dear Richard. We shall meet again. It will be well for us. I am neither afraid nor unwilling. Now that I

know my darling is safe I am glad to go. Take care of her. Be very good to her. Love and cherish her all your life long."

Anne was kneeling at the bedside, and Paton, mastering his emotions, knelt at her side.

"Mrs. Dobson," he said gently, "I want you to know that I am sorry for the past—sorry with all my heart."

"God hears you say that."

"And I promise you that I will shield and love and honour my wife, if she will come back to me, till the end of my life."

"I have come back," Anne said, and took his hand and held it.

There was no sound in the room but the breathing of the dying lady, which began to be laboured.

Presently they heard her say in a whisper, which died away in a sigh—

> "Nothing in my hand I bring,
> Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

On that sigh her soul passed into the Light.

THE END

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